



**PRODIGAL**

**CHURCH**

**SERIES:** PRODIGAL CHURCH

**DATE:** SUNDAY, 30 AUGUST 2020

**SPEAKER:** ROB STACEY

**SERMON TITLE:** WHOSE WE ARE NOT WHO WE ARE.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 CORINTHIANS 7:8-24

**Q1. If you were able to watch Sunday's sermon what challenged you or impacted you the most?**

We are continuing in our series called the Prodigal Church in the letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Paul has been pretty direct about a number of issues that were pertinent to that particular 1st century culture.

There had been an exchange of four or five letters that Paul, who planted and discipled the Corinthian church, is responding to. There were a number of questions posed by these group of believers in the city. The context here is very important to grasp as it does help make sense of what is being spoken about and why and to understand how this may apply to us today.

The passages in 1 Corinthians 7 are vast and cover things like marriage, divorce, re-marriage, slavery and circumcision all within a very particular context. Last week, Pastor Craig brought a challenging word on sexual immorality, and how we are 'called out and called up.' That we are not our own. We were bought at a price. That in turn necessitates a different way of being...a different way of living. It spoke to our personal walk in Christ and its immediate impact on us and those we love.

We have been 'called out and called up' to a new humanity. Rob said that this new humanity expresses itself in community and influences new community.

**Q2. When you approach your own personal faith journey, are the decisions you make about yourself and your own well-being or do you also consider how your decisions impact the wider community?**

There is a social awareness now, especially with young people, about what, how and the way we personally consume anything will affect our planet. For example: To recycle or not to recycle? Buy new or second hand? Electric car versus a V8? Paper or plastic?

**Q3. What other examples can you come up with?**

You see, Paul is wanting to remind us that our personal decisions are never just about us. Our personal choices of morality and ethics affect the wider society. In particular, our Christian community.

**Q4. Are we, therefore, our brother's keeper? Do we have the right to challenge others about their personal behaviours and consumption?**

In keeping with the way we live our lives and the views society has on our distinctions, marriage is still seen in the Christian community as a high value which reflects Jesus' and Paul's teaching.

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:8-16.**

*<sup>8</sup> Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. <sup>9</sup> But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

*<sup>10</sup> To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. <sup>11</sup> But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

*<sup>12</sup> To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.<sup>13</sup> And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*

*<sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. <sup>16</sup> How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?*

**Q5. How challenging is it in today's climate to contend for marriage? Do you increasingly feel marginalized by the Scriptures high view of marriage?**

**Q6. Discuss at least 3 principals regarding marriage and family you see in this text.**

**Q7. What principles from the chapter so far, could help us minister to Christians who are considering separation or divorce?**

For the Corinthian's, Paul is wanting to see transformation come to life in them.

But the surrounding city and its values, temptations and its pressure to conform to the culture sent believers into a bit of a tizz.

Believers were wrestling with their God-given physical and emotional needs and desires. Believers were facing a bewildering array of moral questions and difficulties made harder by pressures from Christians themselves.

These factions were saying that sexual relations, even within marriage, were a poor second best to a life of abstinence. Even the more 'righteous types' would be single like Paul. This is the minefield Paul is picking his way through

Paul is redirecting their worldview back to the lens Jesus gave and to the values he lifted to prominence in regard to the issues they have written to him about. N.T. Wright said this:

*We, who live in many different situations, never envisaged by either Jesus or Paul, need wisdom, humility and faithfulness to apply their teaching afresh in our own day.*

## **WITH THAT IN MIND LET'S LOOK AT VERSES 10-11:**

*<sup>10</sup> To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. <sup>11</sup> But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

When it comes to divorce Paul leans very much back into the gospels about marriage reflecting Mark 10:9: *Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."*

Marriage, for Paul, was a union and bond that reflected God's image back into the world. So, whatever broke that image was dishonouring to God. What Paul isn't discussing is the problems that arise within marriage that can lead to its breakdown.

Paul is speaking to a cultural pressure to separate from a husband or wife to foolishly show some sort of ascetism for faith. While God's ideal for marriage is forever, it is a reflection of his own covenant relationship with humanity.

But it was never about enduring physical, sexual or emotional abuse. It was never about staying in unsafe circumstances. God's ideal is a covenant relationship of mutual submission and love. (In your own personal study or if you have time in your Life Groups read Ephesians 5.)

## CONCERNING CHANGE OF STATUS

<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. <sup>18</sup> Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. <sup>19</sup> Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. <sup>20</sup> Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

<sup>21</sup> Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. <sup>22</sup> For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. <sup>24</sup> Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

**Q8. In the above verses Paul counsels those who think they are in the wrong situation in life. How does he explain and illustrate the "rule" that applies to such people?**

The danger of breaking up a chapter like 1 Corinthians 7 into smaller pieces is that we can easily lose the thread of where Paul is going. It looks as though this passage is about circumcision and slavery... and it is...but why in the middle of a chapter on marriage and sex?

A simple answer is that Paul is using them to illustrate the larger point he's making. Here we find repeated 3 times: *Don't try and change the status you had when you became a Christian.*

We shouldn't feel pressure to change our status. Why does Paul use these two illustrations and why are they big deal?

## IN ESSENCE, PAUL IS TRYING TO SAY THAT: IT'S ABOUT WHOSE WE ARE NOT WHO WE ARE!

In Galatians 3:28 Paul lays down one of his basic principles of living within the Christian family: *There is now no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. We are one in the Messiah. Our passage is about male and female and how that works out in community*

It's not about your place in society, but Christ in you. Being Christ's first necessitates a different way of being.

Paul is tearing down the cultural strongholds that were binding people, that were causing harm in this new community birthed out of their new humanity.

We live in a society in the 21st century that requires conformity dictated by social norms. Married people are told that if your spouse gets fat or doesn't live up to your projected standards for him or her just divorce them and find someone better suited to your desires and needs. We are told we need to look a certain way, wear the right brands or have a certain house. Great marketers know how to create just enough dissatisfaction with your status to drive you to consume or chase after that which fulfils that need.

**Q9. What are some practical ways to resist the pull of culture? What advice would you give to someone younger than you?**

You are called to be set apart - to be different and to not conform to the pattern of this world. We are called to reflect God's character, personally and in community, no matter what situation you are in, to a broken and bent world.

Paul's heart and his passion in these chapters is to point the us all as Christ followers to the higher calling of Jesus. And to remember whose we are and allow that to direct who we are.... no matter our what our circumstances.

**END YOUR TIME TOGETHER WITH PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER.**