

Let Him Remain with God
1 Corinthians 7:17-24

I. Paul summarizes the Principle

A. Three times in eight verses

1. v. 17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him
2. v. 20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.
3. v. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

B. Review

1. Happily married? So remain with God
2. Widowed? So remain with God
3. Married to an unbeliever willing to stay? So remain with God
4. Slave? So remain with God

C. Principle Expressed

1. Don't leave. Lead!
2. Don't look for a change of circumstances. Look for a change of heart.

II. Examples

A. Social Impact of Circumcision and Slavery

1. Practice of reverse circumcision as a result of pressure to social conformity
2. Slavery as a social condition irrelevant to status with Christ

B. For both examples:

1. It is the internal faithfulness to Christ, not the external situation that defines the Christian response.
2. No matter what your circumstances are, you can effectively serve and honor Christ, spreading the knowledge of the glory of the Lord through your life
 - a. Keeping the commandments of God is what matters.
 - b. Remaining faithful to God in all circumstances, whatever they may be, is what matters.

III. Christian contentment

A. The challenge

1. "Secular" questions about jobs, careers, and positions usually find expression in terms of self-fulfillment, self-advantage, status, and self-promotion; more "Christian" attitudes explore vocation. Issues of vocation need to be restored to Christian reflection.
2. Not: what would be better for me, but what is best for God's glory!
 - a. Jesus' temptations:
 - (1) in the wilderness = the temptation to change the conditions of His relationship to the Father, the Devil, and the World
 - (2) in the garden = the temptation to change the condition of His relationship to the Father's will
 - (3) on the cross = the temptation to change the condition of His relationship to the Father's plan (in the words of the mocking crowd)
 - b. Consistent temptation to take the conditions of his existence into His own hands and to impose His will rather than the will of the Father.
 - (1) This is our everyday temptation as well, to in some way exalt self-will over God's will.
 - (2) Paul urges the strategy of Christian contentment on believers who

do not want to fall into the enemy's trap.

B. Contentment

1. Definition - It is not a passive acceptance of the status quo, but the positive assurance that God has supplied one's needs, and the consequent release from unnecessary desire.
2. Contentment is the practical release from anxiety by personal satisfaction in the revealed Person, promise, and purpose of God for our lives.
 - a. **Philippians 4:10-13 (ESV)** *10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*
 - b. Paul's contentment stems from active faith in the ever-present, ever-purposeful, ever-powerful Savior.
 - (1) **Matthew 28:20b (ESV)** *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*
 - (2) **Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)** *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*
 - (3) **Ephesians 3:20-21 (ESV)** *²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
3. Contentment means trusting that God is all He says He is, and that He will do all He says He will do, and that that truth applies fully and completely to you no matter what your circumstances are.
 - a. Contentment does not mean
 - (1) That God will never lead you into different circumstances
 - (2) That you must never pray or seek God's will relative to your circumstances
 - (3) You must settle permanently for the status quo
 - b. Contentment does mean that regardless of the situation of the moment, you are satisfied with God, not resisting nor resenting Him, but seeking His glory as your life priority in that moment and that situation!
4. **The driving question is not, “How do I get out of this?,” or “How do I change this?” but “how do I manifest the glory of God in this?”**