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“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.” ***COL.3.1***

1 CORINTHIANS 7.
(Part 2).

An Address (revised)

***At 61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate.
18th November, 1915.***

by

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1 CORINTHIANS 7. (Part 2).

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Last time we legalized that this epistle gives us first inspired instruction, secondly the inspired record of the godly opinion of a godly man; that the two parts of the chapter are clearly indicated, not that the first half is divine instruction, and the other half containing godly advice, but rather that we have certain arrangement which are said definitely to be a commandment, and other arrangements intermingled respecting which we have such language as this, "I speak by permission, not of commandment". Several times, we noticed, the apostle speaks of that which is good, using the word for "good" which implies "manifestly good". He was most concerned that God's dear people should glorify God in ALL their circumstances of daily life. He desired that there should be a "beautiful testimony" of the Christian assembly. I want now to deal with a few further thoughts concerning marriage relationship, and then to take the bearing of the passage on daily business, and much else. First, we notice how the apostle APPROVES of marriage, IN CONTRAST WITH those who forbid to marry. We remember the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Marriage is honorable in all" (a Divine attack on certain forms of Spiritism and Romanism). Secondly we see that the apostle lays a great stress upon the responsibility, the mutual responsibility of husband and wife. This is brought out in the earlier verses and incidentally, or (shall I say?) suggestively, by such a verse as the 32nd. The husband and the wife had a due the one to the other, as verse 3 words it, "a debt". They were not units, but in unity. The concerns of one were the concerns of the other, and it was deeply important that there should be a definite fellowship and earnestness. Thirdly the apostle brings us that the things of God need wondrous emphasis. I say, thirdly, - primarily, if we come to relative stress. We notice for example in verse 5, the allusion to giving oneself to prayer, and the apostle showed that this was to be so emphasized that other things were to be put aside for prayer. Let me again in passing refer to the other passage, - 1 Pet. 3 where we have the united prayer of the home: - "That your prayers (the prayers of husband

and wife together) be not hindered". In accord with these thoughts the apostle is very careful that he says with respect to that position of those who are unmarried, but undoubtedly sets forth that, freed from certain home claims and home ties, they are expected to make manifest their freedom in a life of intense devotion to the Lord, (a principle which many in this nation now stress nationally). I hesitate to word it thus lest married brethren and sisters should think I imply they need not be so devoted. Such a thought is a misconception of the apostle's idea. May I illustrate what I mean in another way? There are not a few who in certain times of their earthly life wish to give up all daily business in the sense of secular business, as men use the word "secular"; they want to go into Christian work. I suppose we have all met such, they are most enthusiastic to live only for the Lord, as they would word it. How it is plain that Scripture does show certain children of God called to devote a special amount of time to direct service unto their Lord, but if one has not received this as a proper gift of God, if I might apply verse 7, if one has not received this as a proper gift of God, the throwing aside of ordinary daily business for that which seems to be more spiritual will only become less spiritual, and the instruction may well be given, - Do your daily work to the glory of God, let there be a holy activity, even in tiny things, for nothing is too small to be spiritual. I daresay you think I have left the marriage subject for the daily business subject. I am simply using the latter to illustrate the former. They are linked. This Scripture illustrates the relationship. The Lord Jesus showed that certain ones remaining unmarried could devote a special amount of time to that which was DIRECTLY for Him and the apostle emphasize the same aspect. But my concern is this, I believe it is the concern of the apostle; first, lest those who are married should think that they must have the things of this life and settle down in the world. To such one would say, - As the child of God who wants to devote all his time to Christian work may be instructed to glorify God in his daily business, so the married believer may be told to glorify God in the details of the home. Every necessary time-taking arrangement must be done unto the Lord, or it is unsatisfactory. The work may not seem so directly unto Him as preaching in the open air, but it must be definitely unto Him, and may I suggest that such an aspect of home life will remove a large amount of the time-wasting worldliness which lays hold or ever we are aware of it. And the second caution I would like to make is this. The child of God who is unmarried must not necessarily assume that he is one specially called by God to the peculiar

responsibilities which will occupy the whole of a life of more manifest Christian service. You will see from this hint that I feel the marriage and business question are closely related. They are indeed often viewed as parts of one whole. But it is peculiarly dangerous that one in any sphere should come to regard himself as “better” than others, though it is well he should feel “How many privileges I have beyond others whatever be my sphere, and how much will the Lord expect from me, for unto whom men commit the more, of him they will ask the more”. The apostle made it perfectly clear that to remain unmarried was a good action, in verse 8. This, I think is important, for it implies that the remaining unmarried is not exclusively for those who devote all their time, (if I might so put it) to definite Gospel work. It was a good thing to remain unmarried. The inference is NOT that it was a bad thing to marry. The apostle viewed both actions as good providing they had certain safeguards. If there was a remaining unmarried, it was needful that there should be a godly purpose of heart; else the action would be bad. If there was a marriage it was needful that it should be in the Lord, else the action would be bad. Both actions were in themselves good. Each individual was therefore called before God to solemnly review his condition of heart and the way the Lord had led him, and in connection with the Lord’s guidance, and the advice of godly brethren he was to act. I say, the advice of godly brethren, for the apostle lays a great stress in this chapter, perhaps beyond what he lays in any other chapter, on the importance of advising people. I suppose there is no subject upon which there is more need for advice than that which concerns marriage or business. We noticed last week that the apostle laid stress on continuance when any were married, in the due recognition of that relationship. One might be called by grace AFTER marriage, and the wife or the husband might remain unsaved. I need hardly say that the apostle makes it clear that if one were saved before marriage that one would only marry a believer. The end of the chapter is definite upon this point. But if one were saved after marriage, the partner in life might not be a partner as to heavenly life. Some with a mock purity of life perhaps thought they could only live with saved ones and break off the marriage. The apostle sternly forbid this, thus showing the danger of sentimental imitation godliness, but incidentally limiting the children of God, implying that they would not reside in fellowship WITH unsaved ones, nor seek the COMPANY of unsaved ones, unless there was a very close relationship and responsibility. Hence we have twofold advice. But the point would be raised- “Suppose the unbelieving

one departed". The apostle decided that case was then altered to this extent. The believing partner should simply remain alone, need not force his or her company on the unbeliever that refused it, but called in peace, could simply seek to please the Lord. For the argument is definitely put in verse 16 "What knowest thou O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" There was to be a holy uncertainty, albeit spiritual fervency, upon this matter, and therefore not an impatience but a willingness to leave everything with the Lord. The intervening section is mainly as to daily business, and this coming in the middle shows what I suggested, the two parts of the subject are definitely linked. Then the apostle returns to questions respecting marriage, and gives his opinion as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. Again he uses the word "good in verse 26 with a reference to the present distress or necessity. Looking on to verse 27, Hast thou been bound unto a wife? Do not seek a loosing. Hast thou been loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But, and if thou marry thou hast not sinned. The apostle's argument seems clear, there was not to be an occupation with earthly things at all, and marriage is earthly as the Gospel of Luke shows so clearly. "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage". Hence there was to be no occupation with the thought of this, but rather an occupation with the things of the Lord. There was not a sin in having married, but there would be tribulation in the flesh, at the time of the "present necessity" especially, and the apostle says, "I spare you". But what about these who WERE married at such a period? There are the added words "It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none". There must be no settling down in the world. These preparatory words are deeply important in connection with this section. "And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not using it down, or not using it to the full." Then comes the striking statement, "For the fashion (the scheme, literally, the outward appearance, is implied, that which is not deep down but rather on the surface). The fashion of this world passed away". Here is the apostle's argument. Do not touch things of earth with a grasp that occupies your mind and your thoughts. Do not be taken up with that which vanishes away. Marriage businesses, weeping, rejoicing, are not your goal. Do not be held by your "feelings". Do not be held by your home, be held by the Lord. The fashion of these things passeth away. "The things which are seen are temporal; the things which are not seen are eternal".

Never allow your business to come in between you and the Lord. Never allow your home relationships to come in between you and the Lord. Put Him first. We remember the awful words, solemnizing beyond measure, in the parable of Luke 14. There is the welcome to the feast, "They all with one consent began to make excuse, I have bought I have married". In the days before the flood they bought, they sold, they married, and were given in marriage. In the days of Lot it was in like manner. And the apostle says, "Those that have wives be as those that have none". "Those that buy as though they possessed not". You see the thought, an entire contrast with the condition of the one who said, I have bought, "I go to prove these things", an entire contrast with the one who said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come". There was to be a holy separation from the chains of earthly ties. Scripture never appointed that earthly things should bind God's dear people to earth, but rather that they should use these things for the Lord, and have a victory over all snares and temptations. Here the apostle quickly says, "But I would have you without anxiety". This is seemingly parallel with 28. "But I spare you". Hence the following words, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he that is married careth for things of the world, how he may please his wife". The apostle here sets forth the "Distraction" which is so common in connection with the home. Do not read this verse without the PRECEDING verse. The apostle has declared that these who have wives are to be as those that have none. In other words, believers are to realize grace "giving a" victory OVER distraction. The apostle's argument is not that every believing husband is anxious about the things of the world, and that he is approved by God in being anxious. Not in the least. The argument is rather the contrast. THAT is the natural result of marriage, for it the natural tendency with man to misuse everything. If we have food, we indulge ourselves, instead of eating and drinking to the glory of God. Sleep is a very wonderful gift, but laziness steals on us or ever we are aware of it. The things of earth are more fascinating than we realize, and the apostle gives the "NORMAL" condition of one that was married. But before that, he shows that the children of God are to seek to be abnormal. They are to be those who are devoted unto the Lord, and concerned with pleasing Him. Then we have the third statement like those two we have already noticed. We have already noticed, "I spare you," and "I would have you without distraction". The third is in verse 35, "I speak for your profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is

comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction". Another word to emphasize the "without carefulness" of verse 32, implying "without being drawn", without being drawn around some other center than the Lord. You need to be as a chaste virgin devoted to HIM, to quote from the argument of 2 Cor. 11. There is the need for a holy simplicity in this matter. Then what is the meaning of the added advice from verse 36? I think it centers round the words at the end. "He sinned not". We have already had a similar expression, verse 28, "Thou hast not sinned", "She hath not sinned". There were some who were ready to grasp at the apostle's words, and his clear testimony as to the dangers of home life would be misused by not a few. They would say he forbids us to marry. The apostle therefore particularly avoided giving such a command, which he knew would be sinful. He particularly showed that marriage was not sinful in itself, but appointed by God, but that there were tremendous dangers connected with it. Dangers of settling down in the world, and he did not want the children of God to be led astray in that connection. Hence he was concerned that if they married he should put them on their guard FIRST, that it might be clearly understood by the brother marrying, and the sister to whom he was to be married, that there should be a carrying out of the Lord's appointment, that those who had wives were to be as those that had not, in putting the Lord first; and would not allow a distraction. The apostle wanted to make it very clear at the outset, because he knew if it was not clear at the outset it would not become clear afterwards. He knew there was a very grave crisis at the time of marriage, and the child of God needed careful guarding in this matter. The latter verse, moreover, show the parental responsibility, for the arrangements are largely made by the father in this context, and such teaching is not unimportant in days of independency and self-choosing. The last words concern a widow. After speaking of marriage in the Lord by one who could arrange it herself being a widow, the apostle shows the danger of losing happiness by setting down in the world. "She is happier if she have thus remained according to my opinion". Here is the "opinion" once more. This is not a command, but in accord with my "opinion" she is happier. Here then is a fourth statement to be read with the previous ones. "I spare you". "I would have you without carefulness", "That ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction", "She is happier if she so abide". All these statements bring before children of God the tremendous difficulties of married life; if there is to be devotion to the Lord and happiness in the things of the Lord. Only as He is

exalted, and as these things are recognized at the first, can there be a blessing; for if we allow the things of earth to bind us with a slight to-day, we shall find a thicker chain to-morrow. On few subjects does the apostle speak so outspokenly, so definitely, so heart-searchingly. Unmarried himself, he nevertheless ventured to give not only Divine commands, but advice, and it is important that we should lay a stress on both in these days of weakness.

I pass next to notice the relationship of this chapter to daily business. The apostle says, "Is any one called being circumcised, let him not be uncircumcised; is any called in circumcision, let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandment of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant, care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free" (the next words are the most difficult in the whole chapter) "use *it* rather", says our version. Leave out the "it", which is in italics. "Use rather". Use what? We shall have to ponder this wording in a moment, "For he that is called in the Lord being a servant is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called in the Lord being free is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price, become not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God". I do not think these words of Divine advice, Divine commandment, primarily indicate that the child of God must remain in the same situation as that in which he is found. I do think they apply against changeableness. A believer (this seems to be the underlying principle), a believer should be very guarded before making any change, and as this comes in the advice chapter, I think he should take the advice of godly brethren as well as ponder these things before the Lord. I need hardly say the same principles concern sisters in the Lord; but the interpretation goes further. We do not have brought before us two situations, or the question, shall I change my situation? Rather two CONDITIONS of life. The one of the bondservant, and the other of the freeman, and the apostle is dealing with relationship to these. In like manner we have two nationalities, shall I say, in verse 18. We have the position of the Jew, and the position of the Gentile. I am not quite sure if the words of verse 18 have not. In general, a certain bearing upon the question of being "naturalized". The apostle seems to indicate a little the warning in that relation. He emphasizes that the child of God is to be occupied with obedience to the Lord. So we have the keeping of the commandments of God in verse 19. Of

necessity this affects other things, - for example, if one is in ANY calling where he cannot keep the commandments of God, and an honorable way out is granted, (whatever that calling be, use the word as you will), he should thank God for the open door: in any case he must not be disobedient. The apostle is definite. Let every man wherein he is called therein abide WITH GOD. If one be called in a sphere in which he dishonors the Name of the Lord by doing positive sin, of necessity he cannot abide with God therein, and thus the passage would apply to certain further circumstances incidentally. But the special reference is to change of nationality, or change of condition. Art thou called being a bondservant, let it not be an object of care to thee, but if thou mayest be made free, or as it is more forcibly, though our English version misses it, But even if, or if also, thou hast power, or even thou hast power to have become free, rather afford thy service. I cannot but feel that the passage means, If thou, slave, Christian slave, cannot obtain a freedom from thy slavery, do not seek after this betterment before the world, rather afford thy service as a slave. Remain with thy master though thou mayest be free; for to continue in the position that thou hast occupied, and thus testify how FREE thou art from all self-seeking, will be a witness. It has been well pointed out that such an interpretation is an entire contrast with the spirit of the age. Our translators could not think it possible, and they put in the little word "it", "Use *it* rather", implying to an ordinary reader, "Obtain thy freedom", but the apostle checked such a thought, he did not want the minds of believers to be centered on going forward in this world (Note the two-fold thought in Philemon as to Onesimus). If thou hast an advantage rather take the lower place, that men may see that thou art what they account "mad" because thou art occupied with greater riches, and greater treasures and pleasures in Christ. This seems the interpretation by the added "for" of verse 22. "For he that is called in the Lord a servant, a slave, is the Lord's freeman". The "for" implies, Do not be ashamed of thy position as a slave for thou art the Lord's freeman. Earth's downtrodden ones may be heaven's noblemen. Do not be concerned as to what thy reward is in this life, be concerned as to thy reward in heaven. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye are bondservants to the Lord Christ. I suppose in these favored days we can hardly enter into what it means to have a number of slaves in the gathering. Children of God have such an easy time now. You sometimes hear them saying, - I cannot do this, or, I cannot do that; when they are urged to be more devoted to the Lord, but they have not the "cannot" of

the slave. They can easily arrange their home responsibilities to have more time for the things of God, and for gathering with saints. They can easily put themselves out a little more, and have further fellowship with the Lord's people. It is so easy to shelter oneself behind the man-made fortress of the word "cannot". But if we only love the Lord we shall sweep aside many hindrances. The slave had real hindrances, and naturally there would be a definite line of demarcation between a freeman and a slave, but in Christ they all meet together. There was neither bond nor free, and the freeman was not to look down on the slave. If the latter could be free he need not trouble about it. Let him stay where he was for a testimony. I need hardly say there was not a thought of staying in evil, there was not a thought of neglecting an open door when the Lord gave it, but he WAS in reality, against human ideas, to embrace the open door for witness which was then granted. How often the Lord gives opportunities that we may have grace not to take them. We often think that an open door means something we must go in. An open door is often granted us that we may give the tremendous witness of saying, No, I will not take that beautiful opportunity, I will not take that which is to my advantage, but be willing to lose for the Lord. Cf. Moses in Egypt. Herein is the witness. We need grace to know why the open door is given, and the wondrous vagueness of this expression which led our translators to put the vague "Use *it* rather", the wondrous vagueness is perhaps to check absolute misinterpretation either way, that whatever comes across our path we may be led of the Lord to depend on Him, to seek His guidance very definitely. At the present time, beloved friends, we do not have slaves and freemen. In this land we are emancipated from such a hindrance. But there are different spheres. I can realize only two walks of life which are found to-day. I am not now speaking of the home. In the home life we have seen the freedom of the unmarried, and the responsibility in peculiar difficulties of the one married. In business the two spheres are surely civil and military, - the only two which exist. Now other question may come up in this connection, I am not now dealing with the solemn points before a child of God of the Address on the mount, I am not now dealing with the solemn responsibilities of a child of God with respect to the heavenly calling in the proclamation of the Gospel of peace, and a life in character therewith. I need hardly say that the believer a daily life is to illustrate grace, not justice, though justice is necessary and right in its sphere, right, I mean, governmentally. God always shows us two spheres in the present time, the

sphere of the little flock who shall inherit the kingdom, and the sphere of government which is recognized by believers, honored by believers, but IN which they should take no share, even to a vote, Ah, you say, there is one share they must take, that of paying taxes. The Lord knew that, and therefore selected that for a special command, showing children of God were to pay those readily and without any withholding. The picking out of this particularly makes clear the path of the obedient child of God as to OTHER things. If the Lord meant us to take a share in such, He would surely have told us. But I am not now specially dealing with any other points. The thought before me is the freedom of a child of God. The Scripture says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called", and again, "Ye are bought with a price, become not ye the servants of men". "Brethren let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God". A nation has a right to demand that those who share in its government, those who share in its politics, should share its military responsibilities. It has a right to call upon those who are able bodied and who have been using their strength for themselves, to call upon them to defend it in its time of peril and alarm. The child of God however is distinct from those who have an earthly position in an earthly nation. The child of God takes no share in its government, he is occupied with living for the Lord in such a way that he should be the greatest, though "unnoticed", or "overlooked", blessing that a country can have. Whereas to the men of the world, to be identified with a movement for the defense of the country is a step further forward in national usefulness, for a child of God to be identified with the movement, in which saved ones and unsaved are together seeking after justice; for a child of God, this is a step backward. He is already, or should be already doing MUCH MORE for the country than any soldier can possibly do. His position as a believer in the land devoted to the Lord should be of the greatest importance, and if he is called in that wondrous freedom, the freedom which civil life brings about FOR HIM, he is there to abide with God. The path is made clear for such an one, he cannot become a servant of men. In other words he cannot take a position in which he will place himself under absolute human control, for he is free that he may use his time and his strength for the Lord. He is privileged as to his gathering with the Lord's people, as to where he lives, and he cannot take a position which would remove this freedom. If he does, he becomes a hindrance to the land of his birth, and not only a hindrance to the land of his birth, but also a hindrance to fellow believers with respect to their spiritual

progress. Hence the path of the small minority, who seek by grace to take God's words literally, is clear. But to assume this path, and to take this standpoint, without the other part of the life corresponding is to take an action which borders on hypocrisy, and disgraces the Name of the Lord. In other words the child of God who resting on 1 Cor. 7 says, I am free and I dare not do anything to imperil my freedom, that child of God must abide in his calling WITH GOD, and devote his time to the things of GOD, else the claim is unholy, if not untruthful. Yes if it is unholy it must be untruthful, and for a child of God to tell a lie is a solemn sin. Beloved friends, let me particularly urge upon all who speak upon these subjects at the present time to remember they are not to dictate to the world, to remember they are not to argue with the world, to remember they need meekness of wisdom, to remember that God has graciously granted in this favored land in answer to prayer, and with a blessing upon His people in this land, a wondrous freedom to fulfill that which is impressed upon our hearts and consciences, and that if in any way we wander from Him we are imperiling that freedom, which we must not claim with agitating argument. We dare not claim it with self-exaltation. We must not claim it with contempt for others. 'Tis the mercy of God that we have so long enjoyed wondrous freedom, and it will be the mercy of God if we continue to enjoy it. But we can only hope to enjoy with holy confidence as we seek to use the time and strength that we have for the Lord. There is surely a call upon every child of God at such a time as this to make manifest that he does more for the Lord than men do for earthly responsibilities. Particularly I feel that brethren of military age who are approached in this crisis, need to have a very clear conscience that they have given up more for the Lord than those who have given up much to take their share in military responsibilities, and if children of God have not a clear conscience in this matter, if their life is not one of great devotion to the Lord, and great enthusiasm for the Lord, I doubt if they will be able to bear a good witness by their lives at such a time. The world will only think that they are unfair, but if they show without displaying it in a manner of human pride, if they show by strenuous lives that they are in the small minority who are fit for spiritual urgent work, then there will at least be the testimony of consistency in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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