

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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ABIDE IN THAT CALLING

By: Jerry Fite

Paul writes, “Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called” (I Corinthians 7:20).

The New Testament gives only two acceptable reasons for breaking the bond in marriage: (1) death—Romans 7:1-4; (2) Putting away your spouse when they have committed fornication (Matthew 19:9). Nowhere do the Scriptures offer the reasons, “We just could not get along;” or “We were not compatible;” or “We simply fell out of love.” No, just two reasons, and if they are not present, the next marriage or sexual relationship one enters a man “committeth adultery,” or a woman is called by our just God “an adulteress.”

Consider for a moment the person who is now in a unlawful marriage, and he or she responds to the call of the Gospel. Through study, the person learns that according to the Scriptures, he or she is living in adultery. Rationalization sets in: “Surely God wants me to be happy.” Some even give God the credit for leading them to their compatible mate. But their conscience still bothers them with the strictness of Jesus’

teaching. They are in a dilemma. They want salvation, but they want their spouse also. It is clear that one cannot enjoy salvation while living in adultery (Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 6:9; Revelation 21:8). So what are these sincere seekers of truth to do?

Some find the answer in our text: “abide in that calling wherein he was called.” Paul is speaking about marriage in I Corinthians 7. He does point out that God has called us in “peace” (I Corinthians 7:15). So, one concludes that in order to keep peace, God allows one to stay with his or her spouse and begin serving the Lord.

At least three things are wrong with such reasoning. First, Paul is not considering marriages that are unlawful, therefore adulterous. He is speaking of people abiding in “circumcision” or “uncircumcision;” and as a “bondservant” or “free” (I Corinthians 7:19,21). Paul is saying that regardless if one is a Jew or Greek; or if he is a slave or free, he can serve God acceptably.

Second, Paul writes in verse 24, “Brethren let each man wherein he was called, therein

abide with God.” Abiding with God demands walking with God. Since He “is light and in Him is no darkness at all”, to “say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...” (I John 1:5-6). As people remain in an unlawful marriage (cf. Mark 6:17-18), they live in adultery (Colossians 3:5-7). How can anyone living in adultery therein “abide with God”?

Third, God does not cleanse sinful “relationships” He cleanses “sinners” when they turn away from their sin (Acts 3:19). God does not automatically make a thievery ring a righteous relationship, because all the members have become Christians. Thieves must repent and turn again so that “your sins may be blotted out.” The same is true if we find ourselves in a marriage that is unlawful. The sinner is cleansed from his or her sin, when he or she turns away from an unlawful relationship.

May we abide in lawful relationships, and thus abide with God.