

引言 INTRODUCTION

It has been about a month since we last looked at 1 Corinthians. It would be helpful to recap what Paul teaches in the first half of chapter 7. Among other things, he gives instructions on marriage, intimacy, separation and divorce. Paul's overall advice can be summed up in a simple phrase: "stay as you are." In other words, you should not feel pressured to change your situation unless the Lord clearly leads you to do so. For example, Paul encourages married believers in Corinth to remain in their marriages, whether one or both spouses are Christians. He reminds them that marriage is a gift from God and it is a healthy way to guard against immorality. At the same time, Paul shares about his special calling from God to remain single. In the second half of the chapter, he explains why singleness can be a better choice in certain situations. Again, Paul stresses that getting married is not a bad thing. In fact, that is God's plan for most people. Therefore, to Paul, the difference between getting married versus singleness is not right versus wrong but about good versus better options. It all depends on God's calling and circumstances. As such, he is not saying that everyone has to follow his example. One key thing in understanding this passage is to define the word "virgins," which appears five times in this chapter. The original Greek word can refer to men or women who have never married. Some Bible scholars believe Paul is talking about young women who are engaged. Using this example, Paul discusses whether an engaged woman should go through with the marriage or to dissolve the engagement altogether. He then applies similar reasoning to single men. The general lesson for us is this: whether to get married or to remain single will have lasting impacts. In either case, we need God's wisdom. Those who put God first will truly be blessed.

EXPLANATION

1. 減少壓力 Decrease in Stress

Paul gives three reasons why staying single can be a good choice. First, it can lead to a decrease in stress. Let us look at **verses 25–31**. Paul states upfront that he is sharing his personal advice as a faithful servant of God, not a direct command from the Lord. His readers should not feel compelled to follow Paul's decision not to marry. We can make a quick application based on this point. The Bible gives us timeless truth on many issues. Besides those general principles, God has a specific will for each person. That is why we need to seek His wisdom when making decisions. On dating and marriage, believers should choose a godly Christian partner. But beyond that basic requirement, you may meet several people who seem to be suitable candidates. You might even make a list:

appearance, personality, family background, and so on. Here is the reality: you will never find a perfect person. At some point, you will have to weigh the pros and cons and make a choice. You trust that God will guide you as you follow Him wholeheartedly. Now, while most people choose marriage, some remain single, like Paul. He says doing so will decrease stress. What kind of stress is he talking about? He describes them as “**present distress**” (v. 26) and “**worldly troubles**” (v. 28). In addition, he says in verse 29, “**the appointed time has grown very short**” and also verse 31: “**For the present form of this world is passing away.**” In summary, Paul is reminding us that this world is temporary. He also anticipates increasing persecution against Christians. Following Jesus would become more difficult and costly. Paul was being realistic instead of pessimistic. For example, church leaders would suffer if they were arrested. If they had a family, that hardship would affect their spouse and children. From that perspective, Paul suggests that those who are engaged might consider not marrying—though he quickly adds that it is not a sin if they do. He wraps up this section by listing different life situations: those who have spouses, those who mourn, those who rejoice, those who buy, and those who use the things of the world. Then he says we should live as if these things or relationships do not define us. That does not mean ignoring life—it means not becoming overly attached to it. After all, everything in this world will finally fade away. Nothing we now have will last forever. This is consistent with what Jesus says in Matthew 6:21: “**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**” Christians must live today’s life with a heavenly perspective. And that changes how we make decisions. When choosing a spouse, the goal is not to impress others by finding a good-looking someone. It is not about securing a lifelong meal ticket or a permanent maid either. Instead, you should ask: Does this person share my desire to serve the Lord? Marriage becomes a way to live out and testify your faith together. The same goes for how we buy and use things. The focus should not be on drawing attention to ourselves, but on reflecting God’s values. When we put God first in our decisions, we feel less pressure from others’ expectations. You do not need to live like others. It will give you a sense of freedom. Our goal shifts from making ourselves happy or meeting the world’s standards to simply pleasing the Lord.

2. 忠心服事 Devotion to Services

Paul shows pastoral care for the Corinthian believers. He hoped to decrease their stress in life when considering whether or not to get married. Whatever path they chose, he desired that they would be fully devoted to serving the Lord. Continue to read **verses 32 to 35**. Paul gives a practical comparison between single and married life. A single person can devote more time and energy to ministry. A married person, on the other hand, needs to give time and attention to the spouse. Neither is better than the other—they are just different. We know from Paul’s other letters that he deeply values marriage and family. He gives instructions on relationships and parenting because he cares about those needs. After all, the family reflects God’s love and it is a basic unit of society. Again, Paul makes it clear: he is not forcing anyone to choose one path over the other. But for those who are called to be single like him, it can be a great option. It provides more freedom

and flexibility in serving God. At the same time, choosing marriage is also honorable. Some of the Corinthian believers were under the compulsion to remain single due to a secular idea we mentioned before. Some people encouraged others not to get married so that they could stay pure and be more spiritual. To Paul, it was to achieve a noble goal but in a wrong way. The practice of the Catholic church is along the same line of thoughts. It requires men and women who aspire full-time ministries to stay single the rest of their life. The problem is that not everyone who wants to serve God has the calling to be single. Sadly, scandals of immoral behavior in the Catholic church are not something new. Some people even suggest a radical change and allow Catholic clergy to get married and enjoy a healthy relationship in marriage. On the other side, some churches today may unintentionally undervalue single ministers. There is a perception that unmarried pastors are less effective because they lack family experience. That reminds me of a pastor in my former church. He was sent by the seminary to a church as an intern. He was approached by a couple considering divorce. This future pastor told us that he felt unprepared for the situation because he had yet to even hold the hand of a girl! Therefore, he shared some general biblical guidance and encouraged the couple to pray. By God's grace, they chose to stay together. It became a valuable learning experience for the brother. The truth is, no amount of training can prepare someone for every real-life situation. In any profession, growth comes with time and experience. Pastors become more effective as they walk through different seasons of life and ministry. The same applies to all believers. Whether single or married, we can all serve the Lord faithfully. Single people often have more flexible schedules and can respond quickly to needs. Married people, especially those with young children, may have limited time. And that is perfectly fine. They should not feel guilty for focusing on their families. In fact, neglecting responsibilities at home would not be right either. When children grow older, many couples find they have more time to serve. Good communication between spouses is key before committing to demanding ministries. And while married people may face certain limitations, they also bring unique strengths. They can mentor younger couples, offer wisdom on marriage, and guide others in parenting. In every stage of life, God can use us. Whether single or married, each situation brings different opportunities to bless His church.

3. 決定狀況 Decision on Status

Paul wraps up this discussion by giving advice about decision on changing status. He brings up two scenarios: (1) an engaged lady deciding whether or not to marry, and (2) widows seeking remarriage. In both cases, Paul gives his guidance, but ultimately allows people to choose the path that fits their situation and calling. Let us look at **verses 36 to the end**. There are two main ways to understand the first situation. Some Bible translations—like the Chinese Union Version and a few English versions—interpret it as referring to fathers who had daughters engaged to be married. In that culture, much like in traditional Chinese society, fathers often made marriage decisions for their children. But there is another interpretation that fits the context better. It sees the men in the passage as the fiancés. In other words, the question is whether these men should go ahead

and marry their fiancées or remain unmarried. According to Paul, if a man feels he cannot control his passion, it is better to go ahead with the marriage. That is not a sin. But if he is able to remain as he is, staying engaged without marrying is also a good option. It allows both persons to serve the Lord with greater freedom and fewer distractions. The second situation involves Christian widows. Here, Paul stays consistent with everything he has said so far. Marriage is a covenant, and both husband and wife are meant to remain faithful to each other for life. However, when a husband dies, the wife is no longer bound by that marriage. She is, in a sense, single again. Because of that, she is free to remarry. However, Paul adds one important condition: she should marry a fellow believer. Still, in Paul's view, it may be better for her to remain single, for the sake of undivided devotion to the Lord. So in both cases—engaged individuals and widows—Paul gives the same basic guidance. Remaining single can offer greater freedom to serve God, but choosing marriage is not wrong. It is about what is wise and fitting for each person. With that, Paul brings the whole discussion to a full circle. Marriage is not just a personal preference. It is a lifelong commitment. There should be no separation between a couple unless due to death.

結論 CONCLUSION

Whether to get married or to remain single will have lasting impacts. That is why we need to put God first in such an important decision. Unfortunately, many people today choose not to get married for self-centered reasons. They just want to stay “free”—free from responsibility and accountability. They want to spend money however they like, go out whenever they want, travel without checking in with anyone, and live as if no one is waiting for them at home. Of course, being single does not mean they avoid relationships. In fact, many prefer dating without commitment. Since marriage is not part of the picture, they feel no obligation to stay with one person. And they do not expect their partner to stay either. It becomes a kind of “level playing field”—both sides have the right to pursue happiness. Therefore, some people get together when they fall in love, and they walk away when those feelings fade. Relationships can become as disposable as changing clothes. This mindset is often reinforced by movies and culture. One-night stands are portrayed as romantic. Living together is seen as a “trial run” to protect both people from making a mistake. Fortunately, that is not how God loves us. His love is steady and committed. He promises to love us with an everlasting love. He determines to love us regardless of how we respond to Him. And that is the kind of love we are called to reflect: a love that gives, provides and protects. Only in Christ can we find enduring satisfaction whether we are single or married. Single people may spend a lot of time alone, but they do not have to be lonely. Moreover, marriage does not solve every problem. In fact, it can bring new challenges of its own. Therefore, whether we are single or married, the real answer is the same: Christ is the one who fills our deepest needs. Only He can truly satisfy the longings of our hearts.

引言 INTRODUCTION

距離我們上一次查考哥林多前書已經有一個月了，因此讓我們稍為回顧一下保羅在第七章上半段的教導。在這一段中，保羅談到幾個很實際的主題，包括婚姻、親密關係、分居以及離婚。他的整體建議可以用四個字來總結：「保持現狀。」換句話說，除非主清楚地帶領你改變，否則不要因為壓力而改變自己的處境。例如，保羅鼓勵哥林多已婚的信徒，不論配偶是否基督徒，都應當維持婚姻關係。他提醒他們，婚姻是神所賜的禮物，也是防止淫亂的一種健康的方式。同時，保羅也分享自己從神領受的特別呼召，就是保持單身。在本章的後半段，他進一步解釋為什麼在某些情況下，單身可能是更好的選擇。不過，保羅再次強調，結婚並不是壞事；事實上，這是神為大多數人所預備的計畫。因此，在保羅看來，結婚與單身之間的差別，不是對與錯，而是「好」與「更好」的選擇，這取決於神的呼召以及個人的處境。他並不是要求每個人都要效法他不結婚的做法。明白這段經文的一個關鍵，是正確理解「童身」（或「處女」）這個字，這個字在這一章出現了五次。它的希臘原文可以指從未結婚的男士或女士。有些聖經學者認為，保羅在這裡指的是已經訂婚的年輕女性。保羅藉此討論一位已訂婚的女孩子應該完成婚事，還是應該解除婚約。接著，保羅把同樣的原則應用在單身的男士身上。保羅的整體教訓是：無論選擇結婚或保持單身，都會產生深遠的影響。在任何情況下，我們都需要神的智慧。那些把神放在生命首位的人，必定會蒙福。

EXPLANATION

1. 減少壓力 Decrease in Stress

保羅提出三個理由，說明為什麼保持單身可能是一個好的選擇。第一個原因是：可以減少壓力。讓我們來看**第 25 到 31 節**。保羅一開始就指出，他是以一个神忠心僕人的立場分享個人的建議，而不是傳遞主直接的命令。因此，讀者不應該覺得必須照著他不結婚的決定去做。從這一點，我們可以得到一個簡單的應用。聖經在許多事情上給我們永恆不變的真理，但是在這些原則之外，神對每個人也有獨特的旨意。因此，我們在做決定時，需要尋求神的智慧。在交往與婚姻方面，信徒應該選擇敬虔的基督徒作為對象。根據這個基本原則，你可能會遇到一些看起來很合適的人。你可能列出一些條件：外表、個性、家庭

背景等等。但事實是：你永遠找不到一個「完美的人」。遲早你必須取捨優缺點而做出決定。而當你全心跟隨神時，你相信祂會引導你。雖然大多數人會選擇結婚，但也有人像保羅一樣選擇單身。他說這樣可以減少壓力。他指的是什麼壓力呢？他把那些壓力形容為「現今的艱難」（26節）和「苦難」（28節）。此外，他在29節說：「時候減少了」，在31節又補充說：「這世界的樣子將要過去了。」整體來說，保羅是在提醒我們：這個世界是暫時的。他也預期對基督徒的逼迫會越來越嚴重，跟隨耶穌將變得更加困難、代價更高。保羅並不是悲觀，而是很現實。例如，如果教會領袖被逮捕，他們會受苦；如果他們有家庭，配偶和孩子也會受到影響。從這個角度來看，保羅建議已經訂婚的人可以考慮不結婚——不過他也強調，如果選擇結婚，並不是犯罪。在這一段的最後，保羅列出一些人生的事情：有妻子的、哀哭的、快樂的、購買東西的，以及使用世上事物的。他的意思是：我們應該不要受這些事情或關係限制。保羅並不是要我們忽略生活，而是不要被這些事過度約束。因為最終，這世界的一切都會過去，我們現在擁有的沒有一樣東西是永恆的。這也與耶穌在馬太福音6:21所說的一致：「因為你的財寶在哪裡，你的心也在那裡。」價值觀會影響我們的決定。基督徒應該以屬天的眼光來過今生的生活。在選擇配偶時，我們的目標不是要找到一個外表好看的人，為了讓別人羨慕，也不是為了得到一張長期飯票或是一個全能的女傭。我們乃是應該問自己：「這個人是否與我有同樣服事主的心志？」婚姻應該成為兩人一同活出信仰、見證信仰的平台。同樣地，在購買和使用物品時，我們的焦點也不應該是吸引別人的注意，而是反映出神的價值觀。當我們在做決定時把神放在第一位，就不會受到別人期待的壓力影響。你不需要活得像其他人一樣，反而會有一種真正的自由。我們的目標也會從取悅自己、或迎合世界的標準，轉變為單單討神的喜悅。

2. 忠心服事 Devotion to Services

保羅對哥林多的信徒顯示出牧者般的關懷。當他們在考慮是否要結婚時，他盼望能減少他們的壓力。無論他們選擇哪一條路，他都希望他們能忠心地服事主。讓我們繼續看第32到35節。保羅在這裡做了一個實際的比較：單身與已婚的生活。單身的人可以把更多時間和心思投入在事奉上；而已婚的人則需要照顧配偶。兩者沒有誰比較好，只是不同而已。從保羅其他書信中，我們知道他非常重視婚姻與家庭。他也教導人如何建立關係、如何養育兒女，因為他關心這些需要。畢竟，家庭反映出神的愛，也是社會最基本的單元。保羅再次強調，他並沒有強迫任何人選擇某一條路。但對那些像他一樣蒙召過單身生活的人來說，這是一個很好的選擇，因為可以在服事神上有更多的自由和彈性。同時，選擇進入婚姻也是一件榮耀的事。有些哥林多信徒之所以被迫傾向單身，是受到當時一種世俗觀念的影響。我們之前提過，有些人鼓勵別人不要結婚，

認為這樣可以保持聖潔、更加屬靈。在保羅看來，這是用錯誤的方式去追求一個崇高的目標。天主教會的一些做法與這種想法類似，例如要求有志於全時間事奉的人終身不可以結婚。問題在於，並不是每一個想服事神的人都領受了單身的呼召。可惜的是，天主教會中關於道德敗壞的醜聞並不少見。因此，也有人提出應該作出改變，讓神職人員可以結婚，並在婚姻中享受健康的關係。另一方面，有些基督教會認為單身的傳道人有不足的地方。有人覺得，未婚的牧者因為缺乏家庭經驗，所以在牧會上比較不夠全面。這讓我想起我以前教會的一位傳道人。他被神學院派到一間教會實習。有一對夫妻因為考慮離婚而來找他輔導。這位未來的牧者後來分享說，他當時感到不知所措，因為他連女生的手都還沒牽過！於是，他只好提供一些基本的聖經原則，並鼓勵他們回去禱告。感謝神的恩典，那對夫妻最後決定繼續維持婚姻。這對那位弟兄來說，也成為一次寶貴的學習經驗。事實是，再多的訓練也無法預備一個人面對所有實際生活中的情況。在任何行業中，成長都需要時間和經驗。牧者也是一樣，當他們經歷不同的人生階段和服事歷程時，會變得更加成熟與有效。這個原則同樣適用於所有信徒。無論是單身還是已婚，我們都可以忠心地服事主。單身的人通常時間比較有彈性，可以更快回應各樣需要；而已婚的人，特別是有年幼孩子的，時間可能比較有限。但這是完全可以理解的，他們不應該因為專注於家庭而有罪疚感。事實上，忽略家庭責任反而是不合宜的。當孩子漸漸長大，許多夫妻會便有更多時間參與服事。在承擔較重要的事工之前，夫妻之間必須要有良好的溝通。雖然已婚的人在某些方面會受到限制，但他們也有一些優勢。例如，他們可以輔導年輕的夫妻，分享婚姻的智慧，也可以在教養兒女方面提供寶貴的意見。在人生的每一個階段，神都可以使用我們。無論是單身還是已婚，每一種處境都帶來不同的機會，讓我們去祝福教會。

3. 決定狀況 Decision on Status

保羅在結束這段討論之前，再給出一些建議，幫助讀者們決定他們的狀況，到底是改變還是保持現狀。他提出了兩種情況：(1) 已訂婚的女子是否應該結婚，以及 (2) 寡婦可否再婚。在這兩種情況中，保羅都給予他的看法，但最終仍讓人按照自己的處境與呼召來做決定。讓我們來看第 36 節到最後一節。對於第一種情況，有兩種方式理解經文。有些聖經翻譯，例如和合本以及一些英文版本認為這段經文是指父親是否應該讓已訂婚的女兒結婚。在當時的文化中，就像傳統的中國社會一樣，父親會為子女決定婚姻大事。不過，還有另一種更符合上下文的理解，認為這裡指的是那些已訂婚的男子。換句話說，問題在於這些男子是否應該迎娶他們的未婚妻，還是選擇保持未婚。按照保羅的說法，如果一個人覺得自己無法控制情慾，那麼結婚是更好的安排，而且這並不是犯罪。但如果他能夠保持現狀，不結婚也是一個好的選擇。這樣可以讓雙方有更多的自

由服事主，較少受到牽掛。第二種情況是關於基督徒寡婦。在這裡，保羅的教導與他前面所說的一致。婚姻是一種盟約，夫妻雙方都應當一生彼此忠誠。然而，當丈夫去世之後，妻子就不再受這段婚姻的約束，某種意義上她已恢復為單身。因此，她有自由可以再婚。不過，保羅加上一個重要的條件：她應當嫁給主內的弟兄。儘管如此，在保羅看來，為了能專心事奉主，保持單身或許是更好的選擇。所以，在這兩種情況——已訂婚的人與寡婦——保羅給出的原則是一致的：單身可以帶來更多服事神的自由，但選擇結婚並不是錯的。關鍵在於怎麼做對個人是合適且有智慧的。在這裡，保羅將整個討論帶回到一個完整的結論：婚姻不僅僅是個人的選擇，更是一生的承諾。除非因為死亡，夫妻之間不應分離。

結論 CONCLUSION

無論選擇結婚或保持單身，都會產生深遠的影響。因此，在這樣重要的決定上，我們需要把神放在首位。可惜的是，現今許多人選擇不結婚，往往是出於自我中心的原因。他們只是想保持「自由」，不受責任約束，也不需要向任何人交代。他們想怎麼花錢就怎麼花，想什麼時候出門就什麼時候出門，可以隨意旅行，反正沒有人等在等他們回家。當然，單身並不代表他們不談戀愛。事實上，很多人情願交朋友但不作出任何承諾。既然婚姻不在考慮之中，他們就不覺得需要對一個人保持忠誠，也不期待對方會留下來。這變成一種「公平的遊戲」——雙方都有權追求自己的快樂。於是，有些人相愛就在一起，感情淡了就分開。關係變得像換衣服一樣隨意。這種觀念在電影和流行文化中都可以看到。一夜情被描繪成浪漫，同居則被看作是一種「試用期」，避免雙方做出錯誤的決定。但感謝神，祂對我們的愛並不是這樣。神的愛是穩固而且堅定的。祂應許以永遠的愛來愛我們，不是根據我們的回應，而是出於祂的本性。這也正是我們應該效法的愛——一種願意付出、供應並保護的愛。無論是單身還是已婚，唯有在基督裡，我們才能找到持久的滿足。單身的人也許常常獨自一人，但不需要感到孤單。而婚姻也不能解決所有問題，事實上，它可能會帶來新的挑戰。因此，無論我們目前的狀態是單身還是已婚，真正的答案都是一樣的：唯有基督能填滿我們內心最深的需要，唯有祂能真正滿足我們心中的渴望。