



CALLED TO CONTENTMENT

OPENING COMMENT

The Corinthian church was struggling to understand how the gospel impacted their day to day lives. Should they reverse the cultural, religious, and ethnic signs of circumcision? Should those who were not circumcised take the plunge? Does the gospel effect how slaves and free see their social status? Even though circumcision and ancient near eastern slavery are not eminently practical issues today, the underlying teaching is currently pertinent. It is important because it informs how we think about our cultural influences and current economic circumstances from a Godly perspective.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

¹⁷ Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. ¹⁹ For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) ²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. ²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.



UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. The theme of this section of Paul's letter is outlined in verse 17 and repeated in verse 20 and again in verse 24. What is the directive?
2. How widespread is the application of this directive in Paul's mind? (vs. 17b)
3. In verse 18 Paul talks about the physical reality of circumcision, but he is using it as an example of a larger reality. What is the larger issue Paul is addressing? (hint - circumcision was a cultural way to indicate identity)
4. Instead of cultural, ethnic, religious, or historical affiliation, Paul indicates a different priority. What is that? (vs. 19)
5. Verse 18 and 19 talk about ethnic and cultural realities. In verse 21-23 Paul turns to a different category of identity. What is the theme?
6. What is Paul's command to the Corinthians in regards to the economic position? (vs. 21)
7. When Paul is saying that the church has been taught with a "price" what is he referring to?
8. Paul juxtaposes this purchased reality with being slaves to men, what is Paul warning against? (vs. 23)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. In verse 17 Paul defines our position in life as both an assigned position and one that we are called to. How do these two descriptors inform the way we should think about where we are currently situated?
2. Verse 19 places obedience to God's commands above cultural and ethnic tradition. How might this impact our engagement in the culture around us?
3. It is important to realize that Paul is advocating for containment toward our current circumstances not apathy. How might this prospective change our attitudes towards our career aspirations? How might that impact our work lives?
4. How do we become slaves ("bondservants") to men in our cultural, ethnic, and economic situations? How might being bought with a price change that?
5. How does obedience to Paul's directive work as a doorway to gospel conversations with our neighbours, friends, and co-workers?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 37, 39-42 - Case study on what it looks like to put Paul's teaching into action.



2. Jeremiah 29:1-9 - Israel commanded to stay in Babylon and pray for the city because this where God has them.
3. James 4:13-17 - understanding business through the filter of "if God wills"
4. 1 Peter 2:13-25 - Christians should live in submission to those who God has placed in authority.

CONCLUSION

Paul instructs the Corinthian church to understand their current position, whether economic or cultural, from a spiritual reality. This means our current situation is God ordained ("the Lord has assigned") and is where we should faithfully be ("God has called"). This is not a prison sentence to the current life circumstances, but a contented disposition towards faithful representation of the gospel by obedience to Jesus. Our call is not to be concerned with "ladder climbing" or social jockeying, but to be content in the promises and realities of being adopted children of God. We can only do this by reminding ourselves of the price paid to purchase our spiritual freedom and to lean heavily on the reality that God is with us in all our circumstances.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

