

Let Every Man Abide in the Same Calling

In First Corinthians 7:17-20, Paul says to the Corinthian church, "as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling where- in he was called."

There are those who have tried to twist Paul's statement to say that one becoming a Christian who is living in adultery or fornication should be allowed to continue in that same state. But such interpretation is far fetched, and absolutely beyond anything the apostle had in mind. If one is going to apply such an interpretation why not allow it to go to its logical consequences? Why not tell the drug user, and the alcoholic, and the homosexual to continue in that state? Such is nonsense!

In the first place, the apostle had in mind the social rank and secular position which characterized the individual when he became a Christian. Notice the illustration given in the text. Some of those becoming Christians were Jews and some were Gentiles. The Gentiles did not need to be circumcised (as some Jews taught) in order to be a Christian. He could stay in the state of uncircumcision and still be all that God required of Christians.

In the second place, some who became Christians were slaves and some were freemen. It has always been interesting to me that Christ and the inspired men did not try to cause civil revolution by force to do away with slavery, but rather worked within the existing system and gave laws that would prevent abuse, and that would do away with slavery. So, if a slave became a Christian (cf. Onesimus), he was to remain in that calling.

In the third place, it is obvious from the passage that there is no exception from obeying the commandments of God. It is stated that, whereas circumcision is nothing, the keeping of the commandments of God is something that is binding. Therefore, we are obligated to change our lives and become obedient to God's Word. However, this change does not extend to one's social ranks, and the secular condition in which one might find himself in relation to others.

It seems crystal clear that this passage gives no encouragement to the fornicator, or adulterer, or any other sinner, to continue in that sin. From the teaching of many passages,

the sinner must repent and that means, in a practical sense, giving up sin to follow and obey the pure teaching of God.