

“Stop Depriving One Another”

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“Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Cor 7:5)

Read 1 Cor 7:1-9

Paul has dealt with immorality in chapters 5 and 6. He now turns to the marriage covenant as the only legitimate expression of physical intimacy. This same thought is expressed in Hebrews 13:4. Its surrounding context is interesting.

Hebrews 13:3-5

Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU."

In verse 1, Paul notes how it is good to keep oneself morally pure. His contrasting connector introduces one of the reasons why marriage is to exist. But if one cannot be morally pure, then they should seek to be married (v.2). The language Paul employs strongly teaches that each member within the marriage covenant has a “right” to receive and is obligated to give physical expression and intimacy (v.3). Physical expression in the marriage covenant is to be cultivated and celebrated. Verse 4 gives the reason why verse 3 uses the language of right and obligation. Each one has authority over the other’s body to be used for the expression of physical intimacy.

Verse 5 provides the exhortation. “Stop depriving one another.” The statement suggests that within the marriage covenant couples were withholding this right and failing to fulfill their obligation. Paul does say there is a legitimate reason to separate for a time and that is by agreement for the purpose of spiritual enrichment through prayer. Paul warns that after a time of abstinence because of prayer, the couple is once more “to come together” in order that neither one be tempted by the devil toward immorality because of a lack of self-control (v.5).

Physical intimacy within the marriage covenant is an activity through which “God is glorified in the body” (6:20). Our culture through the media makes the physical union between two people as ordinary. Such action as physical intimacy is a beautiful expression between two people in the context of the marriage covenant, but such is not the case when exercised outside the context of the marriage covenant. It is the marriage covenant that elevates the act in such a way as to make it an expression of one’s worship of God. Like all other commands in the Scripture between the husband and the wife (Col. 3:18-4:1, Eph. 5:22-6:9) in the act “It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Col. 3:24).

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Physical intimacy in the context of the marriage covenant is not an area to be avoided, an obstacle to overcome, a tension to steer clear of, but a bridge between two people. God gave us the ability to express ourselves in such a way as a means of keeping each other morally pure and as a loving act of worship before Him by surrendering oneself to their spouse.

May we as a people celebrate the marriage covenant. May we see it as God's gift to His people in the protection of their purity. The offering of oneself to the other is a sweet smelling sacrifice before the Lord. May WBC be noted in her community as a place where the marriage covenant is celebrated and couples are protected and encouraged. May we build a hedge of protection around those who have chosen not to be married. May we never place before them exposure to a temptation that will give the devil an inroad. Let us continue to commit ourselves first and foremost to the Lord and then to one another as a fellowship of His followers.