

"Say I, Not The Lord"

"But to the rest say I, not the Lord; If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. And the woman that hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother; else wee your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:12-14).

In vs. 10 of this chapter Paul wrote, *"But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord;"* in vs. 12 he wrote, *"To the rest say I, not the Lord."* Just what did the apostle mean when he wrote, *"To the rest say I, not the Lord;"* does he mean that what he was about to write was his opinion, that he had not received inspiration regarding what he was about to say? Although some so conclude, such is not the apostle's thought. Whatever Paul wrote, he wrote both by inspiration and with the authority of an apostle. Later in this same epistle he wrote, *"If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord"* (1 Cor. 14:37). Assuredly, the preceding statement applies directly to the things of that immediate context, the regulation of spiritual gifts; but in the "long haul," it applied to all his writings. Well, then, if Paul does not deny he was inspired when he wrote, *"To the rest, say I, not the Lord,"* what did he mean?

Paul was about to give instructions concerning a subject which Jesus, in His personal ministry, had not discussed. Jesus preached to Jews, and while He occasionally ministered to Samaritans and Gentiles (He preached to Samaritans in John 4, healed a Samaritan leper in Luke 17:16, healed the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman in Matthew 15:27-28). He said, *"I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Mt. 15:24). Jesus taught on marriage and divorce and what he taught was what Paul instructed husbands and wives about (vss. 10-11). But Jesus did not instruct believers who were married to unbelievers what they were to do; Paul was "plowing new ground," but he was inspired in the instructions he gave! It was inevitable that when the gospel was preached that there would be some who would obey the gospel but their wife or husband would not. That would be true among the Jews, even more so among the Gentiles. Jesus had warned that we must love Him above all: *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me"* (Mt. 16:24). He commanded, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* (Mt. 10:37). He warned, *"Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a*

man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Mt. 10:34-36). Yet, while the implication is there in Jesus' words that a mate might become a foe because of the gospel, He does not specifically set it out in that way. Paul did. So, he could say, "To the rest say I, not the Lord."

Most likely these "mixed marriages" in Corinth came about when Paul preached to Gentile unbelievers, some believed and obeyed and their mate did not. It was needful that they understand that if that unbelieving mate was content to dwell with them, they were bound by the teaching of Christ to remain in a marital state with that unbeliever. The unbeliever was said to be "*sanctified*" in the believing mate; not at all meaning that the unbeliever was sanctified from the guilt of his sin (no one can "obey" for another); but the unbeliever was sanctified in the believer -- their marriage was holy and their children were "*clean*;" the issue of a holy marriage. And, whether a believer marries an unbeliever, or an unbeliever becomes a believer while his mate does not, the command is still the same: "*If the unbelieving mate is content to dwell with the believer; the believer is not to depart from that mate.*"

Jim McDonald