

1 Corinthians 7:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Analysis

But as God hath distributed to every man—the verb *emerisen* (ἐμέρισεν, "has apportioned") introduces a governing principle: remain in your calling. Paul shifts from marriage to broader life circumstances. The phrase **as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk** uses *keklēken* (κέκληκεν, "has called") for divine calling and *peripateitō* (περιπατεῖτω, "let him walk") for daily conduct.

Paul's principle: God's calling comes to people in specific circumstances—marriage/singleness, circumcision/uncircumcision, slavery/freedom. Rather than requiring external changes, believers should serve God where He has placed them. This "remain as called" theme will dominate verses 17-24, applied to ethnic identity (vv. 18-19), slavery (vv. 21-23), and again to singleness/marriage (vv. 24-40).

Paul adds **And so ordain I in all churches**, indicating this is not situational advice for Corinth but universal apostolic teaching. This reveals Paul's concern about Corinthians seeking dramatic life changes after conversion—divorcing spouses, removing circumcision, abandoning social stations. Paul calls for stability and contentment in one's calling.

Historical Context

Early converts sometimes felt pressure to radically alter circumstances—Jewish Christians might seek to reverse circumcision to appear Greek, slaves might demand freedom, singles might marry or marrieds might divorce. Paul's teaching emphasized that external circumstances don't determine spiritual status; transformation occurs through Christ, not circumstantial changes.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's principle of "remain as called" challenge the impulse to change external circumstances for spiritual reasons?
2. In what ways might Christians today wrongly seek to alter circumstances thinking it will improve their spiritual life?
3. How does this verse encourage contentment without promoting passivity toward injustice or needed change?

Interlinear Text

Εἰ	μὴ	ἕκαστον	ὥς	ἐμέρισεν	ὁ	θεός	ἕκαστον	ὥς
G1487	G3361	every one	as	hath distributed	G3588	God	every one	as
		G1538	G5613	G3307		G2316	G1538	G5613

κέκληκεν	ὁ	κύριος	οὕτως	περιπατεῖτω	καὶ	οὕτως	ἐν
hath called	G3588	the Lord	so	let him walk	And	so	in
G2564		G2962	G3779	G4043	G2532	G3779	G1722

ταῖς	ἐκκλησίαις	πάσαις	διατάσσομαι
G3588	churches	all	ordain I
	G1577	G3956	G1299

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 4:17 (References Lord): For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

1 Corinthians 7:24 (References God): Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

2 Corinthians 8:18 (Parallel theme): And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

1 Corinthians 7:18 (Parallel theme): Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

2 Corinthians 11:28 (Parallel theme): Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (References God): For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

1 Corinthians 7:7 (References God): For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Matthew 19:12 (Parallel theme): For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.