

1 Corinthians 7:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Analysis

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called—Paul repeats the principle of verse 17, using *klésis* (κλήσις, "calling") twice. The verb *menétō* (μενέτω, "let him remain") commands contentment with one's circumstances at conversion. This does not forbid all change but warns against believing spiritual status requires external transformation.

The term *klésis* can mean both God's effectual calling to salvation and the circumstances/station in which that calling occurs. Paul uses it in both senses here: remain in the life-situation where God called you to salvation. This principle addresses restless Corinthians who thought conversion required changing marriage status, ethnicity, or social position.

Paul's teaching promotes social stability and counters revolutionary impulses that might accompany the gospel's radical message of equality in Christ (Galatians 3:28). While the gospel relativizes social distinctions, it does not require immediate social revolution. Believers serve God faithfully within existing structures while the gospel gradually transforms culture.

Historical Context

New converts sometimes felt their old life was wholly invalid and sought dramatic changes—divorcing spouses, abandoning trades, rejecting cultural identity. Paul's

emphasis on "remain as called" provided stability for early Christian communities while affirming that spiritual transformation transcends external circumstances.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's call to "remain" balance contentment with legitimate desires for improvement or change?
2. In what ways might new believers today wrongly think they must change external circumstances to serve God?
3. How does "remain as called" relate to the gospel's message of radical spiritual transformation?

Interlinear Text

ἐκαστος	ἐν	τῇ	κλήσει	ῇ	ἐκλήθη	ἐν	ταύτῃ	μενέτω
every man	in	G3588	calling	G3739	he was called	in	G3778	Let
G1538	G1722		G2821		G2564	G1722		G3306

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:17 (Parallel theme): 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.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 (Parallel theme): And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

Proverbs 27:8 (Parallel theme): As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 (Parallel theme): Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

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