

1 Corinthians 7:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

Analysis

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed—the verb dedesai (δέδεσαι, "are you bound") uses marriage-bond language (v. 39; Romans 7:2). Paul's command mē zētei lysin (μὴ ζήτει λύσιν, "do not seek release") forbids pursuing divorce. Despite singleness's advantages (vv. 26, 32-35), married believers must not seek to end marriages for spiritual reasons.

Conversely, **Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife**. The term lelysai (λέλυσαι, "are you freed") describes single status—never married, widowed, or legitimately divorced. Paul advises singles not to pursue marriage given present circumstances, though he will clarify marriage is not sinful (v. 28). This is prudential counsel, not prohibition.

Paul's balanced instruction protects marriage's permanence while acknowledging singleness's advantages. Married believers should not divorce; single believers need not rush into marriage. This counters both ascetic pressure to abandon marriages and cultural pressure for universal marriage. Each calling has validity; believers should be content where God has placed them.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture strongly emphasized marriage and procreation as civic duties. Paul's counsel that singles need not marry was countercultural. Conversely,

his prohibition against married believers seeking divorce for ascetic reasons protected marriages from Corinthian dualism.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why would Paul advise singles not to seek marriage if marriage is good and honorable?
2. How does this verse balance contentment in one's calling with natural desires for marriage?
3. What circumstances today might make Paul's counsel to remain single particularly relevant?

Interlinear Text

δέδεσαι	γυναῖκα	μὴ	ζήτει	λύσιν·	λέλυσαι	ἀπὸ
Art thou bound	a wife	not	seek	Art thou loosed	to be loosed	from
G1210	G1135	G3361	G2212	G3080	G3089	G575
γυναῖκα	μὴ	ζήτει	γυναῖκα			
a wife	not	seek	a wife			
G1135	G3361	G2212	G1135			

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:20 (Parallel theme): Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

