



**1 Cor. 7:17-24**

***Serving the Lord in Your Vocation***

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.

22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

Many, many, years ago, I worked in the advertising trade, and there I learned, long before I learned it in the bible, of the power of discontent. It is perhaps the greatest tool the ad man has. All he need do is convince you that your current situation just isn't right, and he can get you to buy anything. Even things you don't need. I can remember as a child, that so many of my classmates had braces and glasses that I used to actually curse my poor luck in being born with straight teeth and good eyesight. Everyone else had them, and I was discontent, because without them, I couldn't fit in. I mean to us, especially to those of us who know about the pain of either having your braces tightened or receiving the bill from the orthodontist, we know that that is just crazy. But that is the power of discontent. Convince someone that everyone has to have one of something, and if they don't have them, they think they are a nobody. Discontentment can make you break the piggy bank, ruin your family, or continuously live in a state of flux flying from the one thing that you need to be happy to the next "one thing I need to be happy" whether it be a car, a change of location, the right mate, the right house, the right job, or whatever.

But its not just the adman who knows the power of discontentment, Satan knew it too, in fact discontentment with his own station was what caused him to fall, and in the absence even of sin in our first parents he was able to build up discontentment to the point that our first parents chose sin and death over obedience and life:

***Gen. 3:1 "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"***

***2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;***

***3 "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "***

***4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.***

*5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

*6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Yeah, you're right, I need that fruit, I desire that fruit, I gotta have that fruit or I'll never be happy!

If there is a sin that Satan can't lead us into, through discontent, I don't know what it is.

Now in Paul's day the same was true in the church and in society, people figured if they didn't have the right set of external circumstances, they could never be happy

Paul therefore writes to tell them that a change of their external circumstances, the stuff on the outside, even a radical change isn't what is necessary. In fact, he is calling them to contentment in the Lord's provision for them, and more than that to see how it just might be that living in their present circumstances might be better.

This was especially important because some might mistake Christianity as a gospel of social change  
A new Sparticism – Slave revolt perhaps?

**-- Outline Only From Here --**

Today there are many who treat gospel that way

Liberal Christianity – focus on external circumstances

Remove oppression – be happy. Liberation Theology – problem is that you are poor

Not too different from Pharasaim – problem is the ROMANS!

Paul was ordaining practicing in all the churches, verse 17 plenary inspiration

Some in society wanted to become circumcised –

Cutting of the flesh a work that would make them better Christians

Some wanted to become uncircumcised – conceal Jewish Identity – advance in the Gymnasium, Greek Culture

For instance some wanted to change their status in order to advance – either socially or religiously

Doesn't matter who we are externally

We are who we are inwardly in the heart

Pharisees never realized this

God looks upon the heart

Christianity is about a radical, but inward change, that really changes things forever

Society utterly motivated by external circumstances

They are about quick changes that make no eternal difference

I need to be pretty or powerful, or rich, or famous, or popular

No matter where you go there you are

We are who we are inwardly

In God's eyes, that is who we are he is no respecter of persons

Example of David's brothers

1 Sam. 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

You are who you are in Christ

If we know this secret it means that we can be content in *any circumstance, even rejoice in it*

Even in slavery or suffering or dhimmitude

Most of Roman society!

***Phil 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:***

***12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.***

***13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

Because if we were free in society Christ first buys us from our old master, sin, and then sets us free

Bob Dylan – Serve somebody

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?

17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Who are we:

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Gal.3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal. 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

1) Learn that once you have embraced Christ any situation is endurable, rejoiceable:

Joni Erickson Tada

Paralyzed in 1967 at the age of 18, she has been a quadriplegic for longer than I have been alive

***Healing is an earthly fix... I'm looking for the long term benefits which hardship will gain me in heaven for "those who suffer with him, we shall reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). I want what God wants; if it's living in a wheelchair, fine; if it's being healed, that's fine too. I've learned to be content in plenty or in want."***

2 Cor. 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2) Learn to serve Christ – WHERE YOU ARE! Any lawful VOCATION. Sure if you are called as a thief, or a harlot you are going to have to change. But most of us weren't and there is this – I have to be a full time Christian X – missionary

*Once Luther was asked*

*by a shoe maker, "Dr. Luther...I am but a humble cobbler but I am grateful to God for Christ's justifying work on my behalf...what should I do in light of Christ's great redemptive work?"*

*Luther response, "Make a better shoe."*

You can be a whatever to the glory of God, and if you can't then understand, merely changing your vocation to pastor, missionary, evangelist whatever will not help you.