MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND PERMANENCE

"His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

FOREVER WORD

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I. How God Views Marriage and Divorce

The design of marriage is that you become one flesh with someone of the opposite sex. Marriage was instituted at the beginning in the Garden of Eden. God loves the marriage covenant and its holiness, and He hates divorce; no one should break this bond. According to Jesus, divorce occurs due to a hard heart. Since you are one flesh, divorce is often likened to cutting off a limb. The pain can be so profound that some might say death is easier than living with an amputated limb.

> Genesis 2:24 = “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”
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> Malachi 2:11 = “Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.”
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> Malachi 2:16 = “For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce”
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> Matthew 19:4-6 = “And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made[a] them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”
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> Matthew 19:11 = “He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.
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> Mark 10:4-6 “And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.”

II. Where did Divorce Come From?

As we can see from 'I. How God Views Marriage and Divorce,' God hates divorce and did not desire it to occur. However, as Jesus states in Matthew 5:32 and Mark 10:4-6, it was Moses—notice, not God—who permitted divorce due to the hardness of people's hearts. God also confirms this in Jeremiah and does not take credit for the divorce law. This situation is similar to how polygamy was allowed for kings and other individuals recorded in the Old Testament; yet, it was still not right or in accordance with God’s desires.

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a) These verses explain “from the beginning” there was no divorce and “Moses” was the one to institute it.

Deuteronomy 24:1 = “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”

a) Here is the passage Jesus is referring to where Moses allowed divorce

Jeremiah 3:1 = “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.”

a) God references Deuteronomy 24:4 and doesn’t say He made this command but “they” referencing Moses, man.

III. The Standard Jesus Set Forth

The standard that Jesus established is that marriage is not dissolved by divorce or marital unfaithfulness; rather, it is a permanent covenant until death. The only thing that can break this covenant is death. Remarriage, therefore, is considered an ongoing state of adultery for either party involved in marrying a divorcee whose spouse is still living. Jesus teaches that there is no innocent party in a divorce situation.

Mark 10:11-12 = ”And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

Luke 6:18 = “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”

a) These verses state that neither the husband or the wife can divorce the other party and remarry. The standard for divorce is the same for both men and women.

b) They also show that anyone marrying someone that is divorced (even if they themselves were never married) will be in an adulterous relationship.

Matthew 19:6 = “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

a) Jesus says marriage is a permanent covenant and no man should break up the marriage.

Matthew 19:11 = “He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

a) Jesus states here marriage is until death do you part. Moses, rather than God, is blamed as the one that instituted an allowance to divorce.

b) In Jeremiah 3:1, God also refers to what Moses put forth in Deuteronomy 21:4 and says “they” when referring to rules on divorce.

Matthew 5:32 = “But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

a) This passage suggests that divorce alone leads to adultery, even without remarriage "whosoever shall put away his wife...causeth her to commit adultery". However, in Matthew 19:9, clarity is provided, indicating that remarriage is the cause of adultery. Additionally, in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Jesus speaks through Paul, explaining that while divorce is not ideal, it is permissible for the wife, as long as one remains single or seeks reconciliation with their covenant spouse. Therefore, we can conclude divorce alone does not constitute a state of adultery.

Matthew 19:9 = “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”

a) In both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 there is an exception “fornication” or as the Greek reads “porneía” which is addressed below in “What About the Exception in Matthew?”.

The following five points highlight and summarize key truths from the teachings of Jesus in the verses above, which are often overlooked or taught differently in many churches today:

1. The Greek word for adultery in these passages is moichaō, which is in the present tense. This can describe either a single act or an ongoing state of adultery within the new marriage. The Greek tense and immediate context alone do not conclusively determine which is intended. However, when we compare these passages with other Scriptures, such as Romans 7:3 and 1 Corinthians 7:39, it becomes clear that scripture teaches the adultery here is not merely a one-time act but a continuing state that persists until the marriage bond is dissolved through death:

   a) Romans 7:3

      Only death breaks the law and removes the adulteress designation:

      “So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

   b) 1 Corinthians 7:39

      Only death breaks the law:

      ”The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be

dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

2. Adultery occurs only when there is a remarriage, not simply due to the divorce itself.

3. These passages highlight two key points regarding a second marriage while the previous spouse is still living. First, this new marriage is considered a legitimate marriage in God's eyes as Romans 7:3 and John 4:18 clearly indicate, but it is also an adulterous one. Second, even if a divorce has occurred in the legal system, God still views the original marriage as active and not dissolved, placing the individual in a state of unfaithfulness or adultery against their first spouse. In summary, an earthly divorce in court does not dissolve the marriage in God's eyes.

4. There is no innocent party that is granted the right to remarry. Jesus states that "whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery", indicating that even the innocent party is guilty of adultery if they remarry. This reinforces the idea that the first marriage remains valid in God's eyes even if the courts of earth deem it dissolved.

5. It doesn't matter if you have never been married before; if you marry someone who is divorced while their previous spouse is still living, you will be in an adulterous marriage. As the verses above state, "whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery".

6. If Jesus states that a second marriage constitutes adultery, this implies that marital unfaithfulness or adultery does not dissolve the marriage bond, contrary to what many churches teach today. If it did, the second marriage would be considered holy and right in God's eyes once it was consummated. Romans 7:3 further clarifies that a second, adulterous marriage is deemed holy only through the death of the previous spouse, not through sexual relations in the new marriage.

IV. When Can You Get Divorced?

From what we have learned, Jesus teaches that the sin of an adulterous marriage occurs only when a divorced person remarries or when someone marries a person whom spouse is still living, unless they meet His exception. As discussed in this paper, I believe the exception applies solely to those who discover fornication before the betrothal period, which is not applicable to us today. The only other place this topic is addressed is by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. First, he mentions that this command comes from the Lord; second, he instructs that a wife should not divorce her husband. However, if she does choose to divorce, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. This guidance may be necessary in cases of abuse especially when children are involved. Jesus understands a wife may need to depart but the command is clear, she must not remarry.

In summary, the only time we should consider divorce is when it is necessary for protection from abuse or harm for the woman, and she should remain unmarried until her husband dies or until they can reunite.

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> Matthew 19:9 = “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”
>
> 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 = “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”

V. When Can You Get Remarried?

There are two scenarios in which remarriage is permitted. Based on our previous discussion, Jesus states that remarriage constitutes adultery when the previous spouse is still living. He emphasizes that the new marriage, which He describes as adulterous, does not dissolve the original marriage bond, resulting in a continual state of adultery. However, Jesus does provide one exception for remarriage, which we conclude in this paper is fornication, or sex before marriage.

So when can one remarry? The first scenario applies to a Jew who was betrothed to a spouse. In this case, if the marriage has not yet been consummated and the wife is found not to be a virgin, divorce is permissible. Since betrothal periods are not practiced in modern Gentile cultures, this clause no longer really applies to us today. Secondly, Paul parallels Jesus’s teachings and clearly articulates that the only way to remarry is if the original marriage bond is dissolved by death. While he uses a woman as an example, this principle also applies to men.

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> Romans 7:2-3 = “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”
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> 1 Corinthians 7:39 = “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”

VI. What About Under the Blood?

Some people argue that a pre-salvation marriage is 'under the blood' of Christ. So, when you become a Christian, does that mean your previous marriage is now covered by His sacrifice? If you are divorced when you come to Christ, are you free to remarry? Is it as if the first marriage never occurred in God's eyes?

1. First of all, there is no scripture to support this claim. The Bible does not differentiate between a non-believer's marriage and that of a believer. There is nothing that states a non-believer's marriage is a false covenant or a different covenant before Christ. Marriage is marriage, and adultery is adultery. God's law remains consistent before and after Christ.

2. Secondly, we actually have scripture that affirms a pre-Christ marriage as a valid union in God's eyes. In 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 and 17-20, Paul tells believers that once they come to Christ, they do not need to divorce their spouses. They can remain married, and their marriage, along with their children, will be considered holy, indicating that it is recognized as a legitimate marriage in God's sight. Paul encourages the Corinthians to stay in the situations where God has called them.

    a) Additionally, this is illustrated by Herod, a Gentile. John the Baptist held him to God's standard of marriage in Mark 6:18, declaring that his remarriage was not lawful. This indicates that Herod's marriage was indeed a legitimate marriage, even though he was not a believer.

If someone commits a crime and is in jail, can they say to the judge, 'Hey, I wasn't a Christian then, and my crime is under the blood; can I be released now?' Of course not. There are consequences for sin and our choices made before coming to Christ that will affect our lives afterward. Being an unbeliever prior to accepting Christ does not provide biblical justification for remarriage after that point, even if the divorce occurred before coming to Christ.

VII. What about the exception in Matthew 5 and 19?

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matthew 5:32

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9

Most of the evangelical church today teaches that Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 both include a clause for marital infidelity, which allows for divorce. This interpretation is understandable, as many modern translations used by teachers and pastors state 'sexual immorality' or 'unfaithfulness' in these verses, rather than 'fornication,' as found in the KJV and other translations (as quoted above). The Greek word used here is 'porneía,' which can refer narrowly to fornication or, in a broader sense, encompass all types of sexual sin, such as adultery, incest, bestiality, and essentially any form of sexual immorality. Historically, a man named Erasmus significantly influenced the Protestant interpretation of these scriptures during the Reformation period.

If you were a teacher or pastor prior to the 1900s, you would have read the text as 'fornication,' which carries a completely different and stricter definition. Merriam-Webster defines fornication as consensual sexual intercourse between two people who are unmarried (to each other or anyone else). All five of the older English translations—the

King James Version (KJV), the Douay-Rheims Bible (DRB), the Geneva Bible (GNV), the American Standard Version (ASV), and the Revised Version (RV), also known as the English Revised Version (ERV)—read 'fornication.'

We now face a conflict between the old and new translations; both cannot be correct. One is true, and one is false. Which is correct? I have gone back and forth on this, pondering which reading of the text is accurate: the older translations or the modern translations from the 1900s? However, for the reasons described below, I believe that the older translation versions provide the proper reading of the text.

1. Many proponents of the permanence view cite the usage of Greek words in Matthew as a primary reason for their position. I believe that the Bible serves as its own commentary, and throughout history, the average person has not had access to the original Greek texts. Therefore, while this first point is valuable, the subsequent points comparing scripture with scripture further solidify the permanence view.

   Merriam-Webster defines adultery as 'voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than that person's current spouse or partner.' In other words, someone must be married to commit adultery, whereas fornication refers to consensual sexual relations between two people who are unmarried to each other or anyone else. I believe most would agree that both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 address married individuals. The Greek word for adultery is moicháō (μ ο ι χ ά ω). If Jesus is providing a clause for divorce and remarriage specifically for married people, why does He not use this term? Instead, He uses the word porneía (π ο ρ ν ε ί α). Interestingly, just six words later in the same verse, Jesus does use moicháō (μ ο ι χ ά ω) when stating that if one remarries outside of His specified reason, they will be committing adultery.

   a) To make this clear I will show this visually as follows in the KJV English version with the Greek alongside it.

      i. How the Bible reads:

         “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication (porneía), and shall marry another, committeth adultery (moicháō):”

      ii. Why doesn’t it read like this?

         “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for adultery (moicháō), and shall marry another, committeth adultery (moicháō):”

   b) In Matthew 15:19, all translations, including modern ones, present both words—moicháō and porneía—side by side, clearly differentiating adultery from fornication (or sexual immorality) in English. Some have argued that distinguishing between these terms is inconsequential since both can imply infidelity (adultery). However, it is important to note that while both can refer to adultery, only porneía can specifically mean fornication."

   c) So, why did Jesus include this clause in Matthew? In Matthew 1:18 and Luke 2:4-5, we read that Joseph was betrothed to Mary, his wife (similar to David's relationship with Michal in 2 Samuel 3:14). During a Jewish betrothal period known as the “kiddushin,” a couple was considered married in all legal senses. To

break this period would require a divorce, as the couple was regarded as husband and wife. They did not live together or have marital relations until after the actual marriage ceremony, known as the “nissuin.” Matthew notes this in verse 18, stating "before they came together".

In the same book of Matthew, chapter 1, verse 19 records that Joseph wanted to put her away or "divorce" her. The Greek word used here is "apolyō," which is the same term used for divorce in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

According to the law, if a woman was found not to be a virgin, she could face death (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). Therefore, Joseph intended to divorce Mary privately to protect her. I believe Jesus is referencing this situation; if Mary or another woman had lied or become pregnant by another man before the betrothal period, the evidence (a baby bump) might not appear until months after the couple was betrothed. This would constitute sex before marriage, specifically “fornication,” as stated in the older translations. Jesus is indicating that it would be acceptable to divorce for this reason; it would have been permissible for Joseph to put away Mary. The couple had not yet engaged in sexual relations; they were legally married but had not yet become one flesh physically. Thus, allowing for divorce in this context makes sense, as they were still holy and had not come together yet.

2. The following contradiction is perhaps my biggest reason for concern: In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul states that believers are not to get divorced or remarried. There is no clause except for the woman (which is necessary in cases of abuse, etc., as noted in 1 Peter 3:7 “the weaker vessel”). However, if she does depart (the Greek word here is chōrizō, meaning separation but in context Paul implies divorce as she is to “remain unmarried”), she still cannot remarry. If you believe that Jesus provides believers a clause for remarriage in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, then Paul and Jesus are placed in direct contradiction, since Paul states no such exception—such as an allowance for “sexual immorality.”

    a) Proponents of both a Pauline and Jesus clause for remarriage are stuck at odds again with a contradiction. Why? Jesus only states one reason for remarriage yet they teach there are two, one for adultery in Matthew (their Jesus clause) and one for a non-believer leaving or abandoning them in 1 Corinthians 7:15 (their Pauline clause) which we will address later.

    b) Furthermore, verse 10 says “yet not I but the Lord” so Paul is telling us this command is from Jesus. Then in the next verse we read “And a husband is not to divorce his wife.” So here we have harmony with the gospels of Mark and Luke with their direct prohibition on divorce and remarriage. Jesus again telling us through Paul that there is no reason a man can divorce his wife.

        i. The Corinthian church was well known for sexual sin, wouldn’t a clause for martial infidelity be most appropriate and needed here from Paul? But we do not have this.

3. During the time of the disciples, there were two schools of thought on divorce represented by the sages Hillel and Shammai. Hillel was very lenient and believed that divorce was permissible even for trivial reasons, such as burning a meal. In contrast, Shammai held a stricter view, asserting that divorce was only permissible in cases of adultery. The disciples' astonishment in Matthew 19:10 suggests that Jesus was not

simply aligning himself with either school of thought. They go so far as to say, “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry”. This implies that the teaching presented by Jesus was significantly different from what they had previously heard or been taught (whether from the Law of Moses or the differing schools of thought).

Therefore, even infidelity (adultery) was not considered a valid reason for divorce and remarriage. For if it was, then it would raise the question: if Jesus were siding with Shammai, why would the disciples express such astonishment?

a) Why would Jesus provide a clause to escape marriage if He never intended for this from the beginning (Matthew 19:8)? Why would He introduce such a clause when, throughout the gospels, He is raising the moral standard? The sin of adultery was previously defined as a physical act, but now Jesus teaches that it begins in the heart and occurs internally (Matthew 5:27-28). In Matthew 19:9, when Jesus says 'I say unto you,' He is not merely reiterating Moses's law but establishing a new standard, allowing for divorce only in the case of 'porneía,' which aligns with the betrothal period. Since Jesus states that it wasn't so from the beginning, why would He continue to permit divorce with a clause similar to those established by Moses and Shammai?

4. In Romans 7, it states that in a second marriage, while her previous husband is still living, a woman will be committing adultery. If you believe that adultery breaks the marriage covenant according to the clause in Matthew, then the covenant with her first husband should be considered broken once she has sexual relations with the new husband. However, this passage (along with those in the Gospels of Mark and Luke) does not support that interpretation, which creates a contradiction in the teaching that adultery breaks the marriage covenant. It is clear that adultery does not break the covenant; rather, death is the only thing that can do so.

5. In Romans 7, Paul compares the law of marriage to the law of the old covenant. The old covenant, or the law, was only broken in one way: through death. Paul asserts that this is analogous to how the law of marriage is broken. If you believe there are other clauses, aside from death, that can dissolve the marriage covenant, then Paul's parallel becomes quite weak. This would imply that there are possibilities for salvation outside of Jesus's death and shed blood.

6. The Gospel of Mark is the first of the four gospels to be written, which is an important consideration, especially since Matthew includes a clause regarding divorce and remarriage. In contrast, Mark allows for no exceptions for divorce or remarriage, meaning that listeners of Mark (or any other book outside of Matthew) would leave with the understanding that marriage is permanent. If God truly intended for there to be a divorce clause, it would be illogical for it not to be included in the first gospel written.

a) If there is an exception clause, why would it be omitted from the majority of the gospels that address this topic? Only 1 out of 3 gospels includes it, rather than 3 out of 3 or even 2 out of 3. Furthermore, among the five books that discuss marriage, only one contains this clause.

7. In Matthew 19, Jesus states that divorce is permitted due to the hardness of your hearts. If you believe this clause allows for divorce and remarriage, aren't you essentially

admitting that your heart remains hard and missing the core message Jesus is conveying? Isn't this something to avoid, opting instead to walk in the fear of God and uphold His original design for marriage established in the Garden?

8. As previously noted, there were five early translations available through which God preserved His word in the English language. The Geneva Bible, published in 1560, was in use the longest. This means that for multiple centuries—specifically the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th—readers encountered the term 'fornication.' If modern translations are correct, it would suggest that God did not preserve His word during these centuries, which we know is not true. Furthermore, why would God allow Christians to remain uninformed about divorce and remarriage for hundreds of years?

9. In Genesis and Matthew 19, both texts state that from the beginning, it was not so; this was not God's design. One could conclude that polygamy might also be acceptable since it was not part of God's original intention, yet He allowed it. Notably, figures like David and Solomon do not face any judgment from God for their polygamous relationships. Additionally, we see God affirming His provision to David in 2 Samuel 12:8, where He says He gave David his wives. Yet ultimately we know this is not the case with God, He is not ok with polygamy.

10. The book of Matthew was written primarily for a Jewish audience, whereas the books of Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians were directed towards Gentiles. Only in the book addressed to the Jews do we find the clause regarding divorce. The absence of this clause in the writings for Gentiles may be attributed to their unfamiliarity with Jewish law in the Old Testament concerning betrothal.

11. Some have argued that the term “sexual immorality” in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 refers to the “uncleanness” mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:1, for which Moses allowed divorce. However, we know that this “uncleanness” cannot refer to adultery because the penalty for the serious offense of adultery was death by stoning (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22, 23-27). While the term “uncleanness” is not well defined in context and some have suggested possibilities such as perceived sexual immorality, we can conclude that it does not explicitly refer to sexual immorality or specifically to adultery.

12. I don't understand why Jesus would excuse the sin of infidelity while commanding us to forgive one another and love our enemies (Matthew 6:15, Mark 11:25-26). Colossians 3:13 states, “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do”. Christ forgave us for our adultery or fornication—whether physical or mental—and we are commanded to extend that same forgiveness to others. Forgiveness is not merely a choice; it is a command. I believe that teaching that two Christians can divorce contradicts the entire theme of the gospel, which emphasizes dying to oneself

13. In the Book of Hosea, God instructs Hosea to never leave Gomer, even though she is committing adultery with other men. God tells him to take her back, illustrating His heart and character toward Israel. This parallels the relationship between Christ and the church in the New Testament. Just as God and Jesus promise to never leave or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5), a husband is meant to represent Christ to his wife. Therefore, how does allowing for divorce align with the example set by God and Christ?

Extra thoughts for further consideration:

1. Why do so many pastors who believe in clauses for remarriage outside of death still conduct weddings where the vows state “until death do us part”? What is the purpose of these vows if they do not adhere to the permanent commitment implied by “'until death”? God does not take our words lightly; they are recorded, and we will be held accountable before Him (Matthew 12:36-37). The vows include 'for better or worse,' and 'worse' encompasses abandonment and leaving."

2. Marriage serves as a testimony to the world, reflecting the relationship between Christ and the church and His unfailing love. Believing in any exceptions outside of death distorts this picture. The modern church often focuses on individual happiness and fairness, but sin is neither fair nor tidy. Once we are saved, our lives should no longer center around ourselves; we are called to be living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Can you sacrifice sex, companionship, and children to maintain a lifelong relationship with Jesus? Or do you find Him insufficient, prioritizing your desires for these things over loving Him first and foremost?

3. *"The term "betrothal" in Jewish law must not be understood in its modern sense; that is, the agreement of a man and a woman to marry, by which the parties are not, however, definitely bound, but which may be broken or dissolved without formal divorce. Betrothal or engagement such as this is not known either to the Bible or to the Talmud, and only crept in among the medieval and modern Jews through the influence of the example of the Occidental nations among whom they dwelt, without securing a definite status in rabbinical law. Several Biblical passages refer to the negotiations requisite for the arranging of a marriage (Gen. xxiv.; Song of Songs viii. 8; Judges xiv. 2-7), which were conducted by members of the two families involved, or their deputies, and required usually the consent of the prospective bride (if of age); but when the agreement had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, except that of actual cohabitation."*

   Source:
   http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3229-betrothal

4. 1 Corinthians 6:6 states, “But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!” If I were to go to divorce court as a believer, I would struggle to reconcile this verse with my actions, especially in light of verse 7, which asks, “Why do you not rather accept wrong?” We should be willing to forgive and continue in the marriage, even if we are not at fault, as it is better to endure hardship than to settle matters before non-believers in court.

5. The core message of the Matthew 19 passage is Jesus's teaching on the permanence of marriage. He refers back to Genesis, stating that divorce was not part of God's original design. When the Pharisees question Him, He provides a clear response. This should settle the matter. However, when they follow up with a question about Moses, Jesus responds again. If He were offering a clause for divorce and remarriage in this second response, it would suggest that we have an unstable Messiah—someone who contradicts Himself by saying one thing and then allowing divorce for 'porneía.' He has already made His position clear in His initial reply.

6. It seems to suggest that sex is a factor that can break the marriage bond, rather than the promise or covenant made at the altar. However, sex does not create a marriage covenant, nor can it dissolve one.

7. *"The issue of remarriage after divorce is simplified by the question, "Did you vow, 'Till death do us part,' or 'Till divorce do us part'?"*

   Source:
   https://marriageisacovenant.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/spirit-of-revival-master.pdf

VIII. What About the Exception in 1 Corinthians 7?

"But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace." 1 Corinthians 7:15

The prevailing teaching in many evangelical churches today regarding this verse is that if you are married to a non-believer and they divorce you, then you are free to remarry. This conclusion—that "not under bondage" could mean the marriage is dissolved and you are now free from that covenant—seems understandable. However, it also makes significant assumptions based on a single sentence, while the broader context of the chapter suggests otherwise. Although Paul clearly teaches that we should not resist a divorce, stating "let him depart", he does not mention anything about remarriage until the end of the chapter, where he says, "if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will". As we examine the text more closely, it becomes increasingly unclear that Paul permits remarriage in this context. Here are the reasons why I don't believe Paul is teaching remarriage.

1. One of the most evident points is that in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, Jesus provides a single exception clause for remarriage. While there may be debate or differing opinions regarding the interpretation of this clause—whether it pertains to incest, betrothal, adultery, or any form of sexual immorality—we can agree that it is strictly one clause. This indicates that there are no other grounds for remarriage. Jesus' own words are "saving for the cause", referring to a singular case. If you believe that Paul introduces a second clause for remarriage in the case of a non-believer abandoning you, this creates a contradiction with the teachings of Jesus.

   a) Another perspective to consider is that since Jesus provided only one exception clause, it suggests that he overlooked this second clause that many in the church believe today. Did he 'forget' to inform the Jews about the possibility of a non-believing Jew departing? We can conclude, of course this is not the case.

2. In verses 10-11, we see that the breaking of marriage bonds through divorce does not indicate an allowance for remarriage; Paul instructs, "let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband". He clearly tells the woman not to separate, and if she does, she is not free to remarry. Paul reiterates this point at the end of the chapter in verse 39, where he states that death is the only condition under which remarriage can occur. Thus, within the context of chapter 7, we have two passages where Paul provides clear guidance on remarriage. However, in verses 15 and 16, Paul does not provide any grounds for remarriage; he addresses neither. Therefore, if you believe that Paul permits remarriage in these verses, it is based on an assumption rather than clear

scriptural direction, as he provides in verses 10-11 and verse 39.

a) It is important to recognize that the context here seems to imply that a divorce has occurred. Paul states, “remain unmarried”, which indicates that she is no longer married in a legal sense, even though, in God’s eyes, she is still considered married. This is why Paul advises her to either be reconciled to her husband or remain unmarried, so she does not risk falling into adultery.

b) Another point to consider is that in verses 10-11, Paul states that if someone divorces, they should either remain single or reconcile. Why would a believer be bound to their marriage in this context, yet suddenly have an exception in verse 15 if their spouse is a non-believer, allowing them to remarry? How is that fair to the believer who may want to remarry? They would be “trapped” in a marriage, while another person would be free just because their spouse isn’t a believer. Also, if you believe or teach this, you effectively eliminate the possibility of reconciliation for the previous marriage, which Paul clearly addresses we should strive for in verses 10-11.

c) In verse 11, we observe that a man is not permitted to divorce under any circumstances. Unlike a woman, there is no provision for him to leave. The most significant point to consider in this context is that the man symbolizes Christ, who remains steadfast and never leaves or forsakes us, regardless of our circumstances. Furthermore, many marriage scriptures primarily address women (Romans 7:3, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 and 1 Corinthians 7:39). I believe the Lord has a larger purpose in mind for the man, particularly in his role as a representation of Jesus.

3. I believe the words “God hath called us to peace” in verse 15 that Paul uses are key to understand what “not under bondage” means in the same verse. The word in the Greek used for the believer and non-believer situation is "douloo" and it means "to make a slave of, reduce to bondage, give myself wholly to one's needs and service". This does not mean the marriage bond or the covenant is broken it simply means you aren't forced to uphold your marriage or relational duties. You aren't obligated to hold the marriage together just let it end peacefully. We are to live at peace with everyone and a non-believer doesn't care about the bonds of marriage like a believer does so let them go peacefully.

a) When Paul speaks of the marriage bond not being broken except by the death of a spouse, the Greek word he uses is "deo" in Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. It is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:27, where he refers to being "bound" to a wife. Only in 1 Corinthians 7:15 does he use the word "douloo."

b) To clarify the nuances between "Deo" and "Douloo": In a marriage, one might be "deo" to their spouse through the marital covenant in God’s eyes, a bond that remains in effect until death. However, if a divorce occurs in the courts of the earth, it could fulfill the implications of "douloo," suggesting freedom from the obligations or servitude associated with that relationship.

In this sense:

i. "Deo": The covenant of marriage. It reflects the initial binding commitment between spouses, which remains in effect as long as the marriage is intact,

lasting until the death of one spouse.

ii. "Douloo": The service or servitude of the marriage. It suggests that if the marriage ends through legal divorce (especially in cases where one partner chooses to leave or is unfaithful), the individual is no longer bound by the relational obligations or servitude of the marriage.

Thus, while the covenant or binding nature of the marriage ("deo") can still be acknowledged in God's eyes until the death of the spouse, the act of divorce can practically liberate someone from that binding relationship, fulfilling the concept of “not under bondage” ("douloo").

4. It does not permit reconciliation, as Paul states in verse 11, 'be reconciled to her husband.' If a Christian has a non-believing spouse who abandons them and is taught that they can remarry, what happens if they do so and then their former spouse comes to faith? For instance, imagine the non-believing spouse pursues a master's degree and focuses on their career. Two years later, while at school, they find Christ. In this scenario, reconciliation and the restoration of their marriage become impossible. Additionally, remaining single might encourage you to pray for their well-being and spiritual journey more earnestly than if you were to enter into a new relationship

5. In Mark 10:11-12 and throughout all the Gospels, when an individual puts away their spouse, that spouse is often left divorced against their own desire. Some may refer to them as the "innocent party," believing this grants them the right to remarry. However, Jesus clearly states that if the divorce occurs for any reason other than fornication (porneía) and they remarry, they will be committing adultery.

   In 1 Corinthians 7:15, we encounter a similar situation where a non-believer may wish to divorce and leave for any number of reasons. This would leave the believer as the "innocent party." However, if one assumes that the believer can remarry simply because they were abandoned, it contradicts Jesus' teachings. He provided only one reason for the possibility of remarriage in cases of divorce. This means that the phrase “not under bondage” cannot imply that one is free from the marriage covenant, equating it with how death severs the marriage bond.

6. 1 Corinthians 7:39 = “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”

   a) Paul sums up the entire chapter and says a woman is bound “as long as her husband liveth” he doesn’t say “as long as her husband liveth or if he commits adultery” or “if he is a non believer and leaves her” he only gives one situation here, one way for remarriage to occur.

In summary, what can we conclude about Paul’s meaning in verse 15? This is one of the only instances in Paul’s letters where he explicitly states that he is writing from his own perspective rather than conveying a message from God, as seen in 1 Corinthians 7:15 and verse 25. I believe he is offering his personal wisdom on how to navigate the complex situation within the Corinthian church, where some individuals were coming to faith while their spouses were not.

Some may argue that the Holy Spirit is speaking through Paul, thereby equating his words

with commands from the Lord. However, in verse 25, he essentially encourages people not to marry or have children. We know this view does not necessarily reflect God's will, as He values marriage and considers children a gift. Therefore, it is clear that this advice represents Paul's personal opinion on how to better serve God.

Consequently, I conclude that his guidance regarding the messy situation where a non-believer seeks a divorce is similarly rooted in his personal wisdom rather than a new divine command on remarriage.

Consider the scenario where a Corinthian becomes a Christian, but their spouse does not. Oh no, they are unequally yoked! Paul responds by saying, "Relax, it's okay; your children are still holy, and you should remain married" (verses 12-14). He then acknowledges that it may not always be possible for a non-believer to live with a Christian, as they might choose to leave. However, he advises against fighting to make them stay, questioning the benefit of such conflict since they may never accept faith anyway (verse 16).

As Christians, we are called to emulate Jesus and live in peace with others: "live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14). So, if you have an unbelieving spouse who divorces you, what can you do? Nothing except pray for them; you cannot change their heart. As Paul states in verse 16, "or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" You must let them go their way.

That's it! I don't believe Paul is saying you can get remarried. For if he did, he would be completely contradicting the teachings of Jesus and what he just stated in verses 10-11.

IX. Did God Divorce Israel?

"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also" Jeremiah 3:8

At first glance, Jeremiah 3:8 may suggest that God divorced Israel. However, when we read Jeremiah in context and cross-reference it with Isaiah and several other Old Testament passages, it becomes clear that this language reflects God's harsh and desperate plea toward His people.

First off, a closer examination of Jeremiah 3 reveals that the subsequent verses urge His people to return to Him and that He is still married to them:

> Jeremiah 3:1 = "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord."
>
> Jeremiah 3:7 = "And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it."
>
> Jeremiah 3:14 = "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:"

a) These verse comes after His bill of divorcement yet He says He is married to them and again calls them to turn.

Secondly, in Isaiah 50, we see that God did not divorce Israel. He questions the existence of a certificate of divorce, essentially indicating that there isn't one. Instead, He explains that Israel sold themselves and distanced themselves from Him. God never divorced Israel, as He never leaves or forsakes His people, as affirmed in scriptures such as Deuteronomy 4:31, Deuteronomy 31:6-8, 1 Chronicles 28:20, Joshua 1:5, 1 Kings 8:57, and Psalm 94:14. If God had divorced Israel, it would imply that He is a liar, which we know is not true. God's covenant with Israel is an unbreakable bond rooted in His faithfulness and is not conditional upon Israel's obedience.

> Isaiah 50:2 = "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away."

a) Here is a great quote regarding this verse:

> *"The people of Israel in exile are likening themselves to a divorced wife, forgotten and forsaken of God. The Lord interrupts this kind of thinking, and breaks into it with a challenge to His people, saying: 'Where is the bill of divorcement? Produce it. Produce the bill and show me where I divorced you.' But Israel cannot do it. Of course she cannot find it, because He has never given it to her. God cannot divorce those whom He has taken into covenant relationship with Himself."* (Redpath)
>
> Source: http://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide_Isa/Isa_50.cfm?a=729001

Lastly, when one party breaks a covenant, this does not absolve the covenant in its entirety for both parties. In Jeremiah 31:31–32, we read that Israel broke the covenant with God, while He remained a faithful husband to them:

> Jeremiahs 31:31–33 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:"

As we read further, we see that God still upholds His side of the covenant. Adultery or unfaithfulness does not nullify His faithfulness. He uses language that signifies the permanence of the covenant. For example, in Jeremiah 33, He compares the covenant's enduring nature to the fixed order of the sun, moon, and stars: breaking the covenant on His end would only occur if the natural order of creation itself were disrupted, something that will never happen.

> Jeremiah 33:20–21 "If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time,then also my covenant... may be broken."

Jeremiah 31:35–36 “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night...‘If this fixed order departs from before me,’ declares the LORD,‘then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.’”

X. How was Marriage and Divorce Viewed Historically?

1. Today in 2024, my mother explained to me that when she grew up even non-believers would disapprove of others that were divorced and remarried. Outside the church divorce was very taboo years ago and people were even shunned for being divorced. Here we are today and we have churches teaching divorce and remarriage is fine. People’s morals have changed but God’s word does not change.

2. In 2015, the NY Times has an opinion article stating that the church used to not agree with divorce and remarriage but now it does. The scary thing is God’s word didn't change, the church did:

   "A generation ago, many Christian churches followed these biblical admonitions and would not sanction what they viewed as “adulterous” second marriages"

   Source:
   http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/26/opinion/sunday/its-not-gay-marriage-vs-the-church-anymore.html

3. In Massachusetts, according to the Body of Liberties adopted in 1641, both the adulterer and adulteress were to be put to death if convicted of adultery with a married person. While this is not Biblical today it shows the strict view people at this time had towards adultery.

4. *"In the first five centuries (among Christians) all Greek writers and all Latin writers except one agree that remarriage following divorce for any reason is adulterous. The marriage bond was seen to unite both parties until the death of one of them."*

   The evidence for this is compiled in Heth and Wenham, Jesus and Divorce, pp. 19-44. The quote is taken from p. 22. Some of the writers in view are Hermas, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origin, Tertullian, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, etc. The one exception was Ambrosiaster.

   Source:
   http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-statement-on-divorce-remarriage-in-the-life-of-bethlehem-baptist-church

5. The Matthew and Pauline exception clause put forth by Erasums is what majority of evangelical church believes today but the early church didn't for 5 centuries (As discussed under the “What about the exception in Matthew?”):

   Source:

https://web.archive.org/web/20160308103731/http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/25/25-3/25-3-pp263-272_JETS.pdf

6. *"One of the earliest writings (and a book regarded by many in the early church as almost on a par with the NT writings), The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 140), deals with whether a husband sins if he continues to live with an adulterous wife. Hermas gives no option: he must divorce her. At the same time, "for the sake of her repentance," a second marriage was forbidden. Should an erring wife repent, her spouse must take her back in wedlock. Remarriage, other than to the repentant former wife, was regarded as adultery (Book 2, Comm. 4:4-8).[2]"*

   Source:
   http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/article_divorce_snuth.html#2

7. *"Recent studies by Greek and Hebrew scholars indicate that the early church fathers were nearly unanimous in their opinion that Christ taught that remarriage after a divorce (for whatever reason) is adulterous. With one exception, all the Greek and Latin writers of the first five centuries agreed that the marriage bond unites both parties until the death of one of them. The Western Church held the view of the early church fathers, until the 16th century, when the classical humanist Erasmus suggested a different approach. Erasmus was a Roman Catholic priest and a contemporary of Martin Luther. For a short time he joined Luther's reformed movement. Eventually, however, he broke with Luther over justification by faith, was denounced by Luther as a heretic, and returned to the Roman church. During his brief stay in the reformed camp, Erasmus suggested that remarriage after divorce ought to be permitted, thus giving the church greater opportunity to minister to divorced and remarried people. For some reason, Luther agreed with Erasmus and adopted what has become the popular, traditional Protestant view—the only view which allows remarriage after divorce. This view has been accepted without question by many evangelicals, in spite of its scholarly problems and shaky historical foundations."*

   Source:
   https://marriageisacovenant.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/spirit-of-revival-master.pdf

XI. Should an Adulterous Marriage be Broken Off?

This book has outlined what the Bible teaches regarding divorce and remarriage. The only other relevant passage in scripture is found in Ezra 10. While these were not necessarily adulterous marriages, they were indeed sinful unions—specifically marriages to foreign women who often led the Jews away from God. God forbade marrying foreign women, even labeling it an abomination in Malachi 2:11. Thus, we see an instance in the Bible where a marriage was dissolved due to its sinful nature. Some of these marriages also involved children.

Additionally, it is important to note that those who believe Matthew or 1 Corinthians advocate for a divorce clause would also be supporting the dissolution of an active marriage, potentially affecting children as well.

> Ezra 10:2-3 = “And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.”
>
> Ezra 10:44 = ”All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.”

So, should one dissolve a marriage, particularly one involving children? The Bible teaches us that we do not need a human teacher, as stated in 1 John 2:27. Each believer has the Holy Spirit, who guides their life, as Romans 8:14 explains. Therefore, a believer should seek the Lord in prayer regarding their specific situation, and He will provide guidance on what steps to take.

When Jesus teaches marriage to His disciples they respond in Matthew 19:10 saying "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

This teaching aims to present the scriptures without providing pastoral commands or advice on how to navigate divorce or remarriage situations. However, let’s take a moment to discuss this. If marriage is intended to be permanent until death and a second marriage must be abandoned, how does this play out in practical terms? What about children, the house, or a spouse who lacks employment? These considerations can seem quite complicated and may lead one to wonder about God's forgiveness. Yet, we understand that true repentance involves leaving and forsaking sin. Consider the example of two fornicators living together. They acquire a house, have two children, and then one partner comes to faith in Christ while the other does not. The non-believing partner may respond with, 'Forget Jesus, or I'm leaving you.' If the new believer chooses to follow Christ, they must separate from the relationship to avoid continuing in fornication. They might resolve the situation by getting married, but if the other partner refuses, it results in a broken home where children are involved due to fornication. This scenario raises an important question: what is the difference in terms of messiness and pain between this situation and that of an adulterous marriage? Ultimately, there is no difference.
The view of permanence in marriage may be difficult for some to accept, as it implies that there are times when a marriage must be forsaken—such as in the case of a second (adulterous) marriage while the previous spouse is still living. This belief can make one appear to be a destroyer of families, adhering to what some might label a 'religious spirit' devoid of grace. However, if someone does not believe in the permanence of marriage, they face the same challenge. They too risk becoming a destroyer of families and a separator of children from their parents because they hold that there is a possible clause for divorce.

So, both views can be equally 'destructive' to the family dynamic. These situations are rooted in sin, it is messy, and children are inevitably affected at times. The Old Testament illustrates how the sins of parents can create difficulties in the lives of their children (see Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9; Ezra 10:2-3, 44)

XII. Can You Remarry a Spouse You Were Divorced From?

In the Old Testament, Moses prohibited certain actions according to the law he established. However, in the New Testament, as discussed in Section II, 'Where Did Divorce Come From?', Jesus attributes the creation of divorce and these laws to Moses. God Himself does not adhere to Moses's law in this regard. Ultimately, both Jesus and Paul suggest—by defining a new marriage as adulterous—that individuals should seek reconciliation with their original spouse.

Deuteronomy 24:4 = “Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

a) The following verse is used by some to say you cannot remarry your old spouse that you were divorced from.

Jeremiah 3:1 = “They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.”

a) Here God speaks and references Deuteronomy 24:4 above and says “They say”. He doesn’t take credit for this law and secondly He breaks it.

Matthew 5:32, Matthew 19:9, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 6:18

a) For the sake of brevity, only the references to what Jesus commanded are provided, as discussed in Section III, 'The Standard Jesus Set Forth.' These verses indicate that a new marriage constitutes adultery if the previous spouse is still living. If Deuteronomy 24:4 were still to be upheld, there would be no possibility of being in a continual state of adultery in a new marriage while the former spouse remains alive.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 = “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”

a) The first point to note is the phrase “yet not I, but the Lord”; this command comes directly from God. Here, we see that a woman is instructed not to divorce, but if she does, her only option is to be reconciled with her previous spouse. There is no indication that he must not have remarried; rather, she is encouraged to return to him.

Romans 7:2-3 = “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

a) If you believe these teachings apply only to those who have not remarried, consider what Paul teaches here. He clearly states that even if “she be married to another man”, her original marriage remains intact in God’s eyes. This new marriage does not break or dissolve the old covenant. While earthly courts

may declare a marriage dissolved, in God's view, it remains active until death, "though she be married to another man". Therefore, God indicates that you can and should seek reconciliation with a previous spouse, regardless of whether you or they have remarried.

XIII. What if this Teaching is Not Correct?

If this teaching is incorrect, the worst-case scenario is that someone would miss out on companionship and must remain single until your previous spouse dies. Paul even advises married individuals to live as though they are not married in 1 Corinthians 7:29. He goes on to explain that those who weep, rejoice, or buy things should do so as if they are not engaged in these activities. In other words, our focus should be on eternal matters (2 Corinthians 4:18) and on the Lord above all else. This life is fleeting and will soon pass. As Paul also states in 1 Corinthians 7:29-33, you will have more time to serve the Lord, allowing you to store up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21; Revelation 22:12).

But what if this teaching is correct? In that case, someone would be living in a state of active sin. Choosing to remarry while their previous spouse is still alive would place a person in a continual state of adultery. This sin could lead to chastisement, which in some instances may result in physical death (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Those in this situation may not even recognize that their earthly struggles, or worse, the loss of rewards in heaven, are connected to their choices in these matters.

XIV. Summary

This teaching may seem 'unfair' to some. They may feel it seems unjust that my husband left me, and now they are alone and unable to remarry. I would encourage someone in this situation to reflect on the following: If one finds their situation unfair, consider whether it is fair that some are born with disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, autism, or without sight or hearing. Life is not fair for many people, but it is fleeting. The Bible tells us that we are but a vapor. We are here one moment and gone the next. Therefore, seek and focus on eternal matters rather than the temporal. Fear God and fully surrender to Him and His will, for we are called to be living sacrifices. Our own desires should be sacrificed daily as we take up our cross and follow Him. Remember, it's not about us; at salvation, we are called to give up our lives, wants, and desires in order to accept Christ's will for us. Embracing this truth will bring much joy.

The most important thing to meditate on is that Christian marriage is intended to exemplify the relationship between Christ and the Church. If someone is considering divorce or remarriage after a divorce, I believe they should remember that their actions reflect Christ to their friends and family. They may inadvertently portray Christ as someone who abandons you when you make mistakes or hurt Him. However, the biblical truth is that Christ never leaves His Church (Hebrews 13:5). He died for her (Romans 4:25), purchased her with His blood (1 Corinthians 6:20), and preserves her (Jude 1:24). In the Old Testament, God demonstrated the same unwavering commitment to Israel (see the Book of Hosea, Jeremiah 3:1, Jeremiah 3:14).

This interpretation may not be popular, but I believe Jesus teaches that there is no divorce once a Christian is married. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 clarifies this, indicating

that for two married Christians, there is no allowance for divorce—especially for the man, as stated in 1 Corinthians 7:11. In this passage, we see that a Christian woman may divorce (though this is not optimal and may only be necessary in cases of abuse), but she is instructed not to remarry; instead, she should either remain single (unmarried) or be reconciled to her husband.

In cases where one spouse is a non-believer, there is a clause for divorce, but it can only be initiated by the non-believing partner. The believer must remain married; however, if the non-believer chooses to depart, the believer is free to let them go, as they cannot control or hold them to biblical standards that they do not follow.

Regarding remarriage, I do not believe there is any allowance for it outside of the death of the spouse. The man is commanded not to divorce at all, making remarriage out of the question for him. The woman in 1 Corinthians 7:11 is also instructed not to remarry.

XV. In Invitation

This book was written for those in the church, but I understand it may be read by anyone — perhaps even someone who isn't sure about their eternal future. If this is you, I encourage you to read on and discover how you can receive the free gift of eternal life.

1. The Possibility

The reality for every person is that we all have a one-in-one chance of dying. But the Bible tells us that death doesn't have to be the end:

> "this mortal must put on immortality." — 1 Corinthians 15:53a.

In John 11:25-26, Jesus promised:

> "though he die, yet shall he live". So if immortality is possible, how do we get it?

2. Our Mortality

1. Our first problem is the following:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" — Romans 3:23.

Everyone has sinned at least once. Sin is doing wrong and missing the standard set by God or by rightful authorities on earth. Just one sin separates you from God and, in turn, heaven (Isaiah 59:2; James 2:10). If you're unsure whether you've sinned, compare yourself to God's law in Exodus 20:1–17 and ask: Have I ever done even one of these, just once?

- Lied
- Used God's name in vain
- Lusted (Matthew 5:28)
- Hated someone (1 John 3:15)
- Coveted

- Stolen
- Disobeyed parents or the law

Sin isn't only doing wrong, it's also failing to do the good we should. The Bible says:

> "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." — James 4:17.

At this point, no one can honestly say they have never sinned. We are all guilty before God for breaking His law. We are not perfect like Him and need to be saved.

2. Our second problem is that the payment, or consequence, for sin is death.

> "For the wages of sin is death..." —Romans 6:23a.

Sin makes us mortal. This death ends in eternal separation from God and everything He is: love, joy, peace, and much more. Jesus warned about this death and separation in hell:

> "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." — Matthew 10:28

3. What Can We Do?

You may have been taught, or simply believe, that if you are "good enough" you can go to heaven. Maybe you think, "I'm not really that bad. I'm nice to my family and friends, and I've never killed anyone." Or perhaps you hope your good deeds will outweigh your bad ones. That's normal when we compare ourselves to other people. But when we compare ourselves to God's law, we see the real picture, we all fall short. The Bible says we can't earn or do enough good to deserve heaven, immortality and be saved from hell:

> "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." — Ephesians 2:8-9

If God is a fair and just Judge, He can't simply forgive or ignore us breaking His laws. On earth, no judge would let a criminal go free just because they had done good things in the past, and no judge could simply forgive a criminal just because they were sorry. A crime requires payment, whether a fine, prison, or even death. The good a person did before the crime does not erase their guilt. In fact, we ourselves demand justice when people commit terrible crimes. Even one small sin, like a lie, is serious in God's eyes. In short: nothing we do can save us.

4. The Solution

So how do we get our sins forgiven, receive this free gift of eternal life and become immortal if we can't earn it or be good enough? We read:

> “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” — Romans 5:8.

God doesn’t want us to pay for our sins and be separated from Him forever in hell. He loves us deeply and He made a way to fix our mess.

But here’s the thing: God is just, and breaking His law still has consequences. To satisfy that justice, He sent His Son, Jesus, to take our place. Jesus paid for our sins by receiving the punishment, and death we deserved. He lived the perfect life we all failed to live, died in our place and rose again. Now God offers His perfect life applied to our account as a free gift no matter what sins we have done, no sin is too big. Even murder is forgiven.

> ”For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16.

> ”And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” — Acts 16:30-31

Believe means to think and accept it as true, to personally agree with it. If you see your sins and believe Jesus died for them and rose again, then His perfect life is applied to you and you are saved forever. Eternal life isn’t earned, it’s a free gift. If you believe, after you die you will be made immortal and live with God in heaven. Do you believe?

5. Now What?

1. Seek God in prayer, as you would talk to a friend.
2. Daily read the Bible, starting with John.
3. Enjoy the peace knowing eternal life awaits you :)

May the Lord guide us into all truth.

Forever Word