

Divorce



and



Remarriage

Larry Dishman

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Printed 2018 by

The Church of God, God's Acres
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055

www.GodsAcres.org
www.GospelTrumpeter.com

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1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

7 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.

8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

15 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.

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

17 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.

The Word Is Our Guide

In this study I will be touching on a number of very controversial subjects. However, it is not my intention to offend anyone unnecessarily, to ostracize anyone, or to single anyone out. There is no condemnation in my heart toward anyone. Honestly and truthfully, I am expressing to you what I believe the Bible teaches. My intention is to discern what the mind of God is with regard to these truths.

There comes a time when we have to set aside our individual circumstances and not allow them to dictate how we understand the Word of God. I am seeking to do that, and I just request that you do it also. Because of many false beliefs, people are breaking up two homes to try to put one home back together. They are breaking up families and leaving children without a father in the home. Statistics will show us that when that happens, it is not good for the family. Others have given up the thought of ever getting saved because they have been divorced. They think that there is no way they could ever live for God because the church would expect them to be single for the rest of their life. Because of this, many people in our religious world are held in a false bondage, but the truth will make them free.

Somebody may say, "I already know the truth on this subject." Well, I trust that you do. However, Proverbs 18:13 says, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Would you open up your heart and consider what the Word of God has to say?

I realize Jesus never encouraged divorce. I do not encourage divorce. Sin is involved when there is a

divorce—by one party or sometimes by both parties. Divorce is always the product of sin. It is obvious that Christians should strive to maintain their marriage commitment. Husbands and wives who imitate Christ in their personal lives and who adhere to biblical teachings will surely have successful marriages. However, men and women have often failed to be what they ought to be and live as they ought to live as Jesus has commanded. In spite of all of the teachings in the Word of God, all that Jesus and the Apostles had to say, people wrongly divorce and get remarried.

We live in a time in which the home is under attack as never before. However, the Church of God should set the standard for the world; the world does not set the standard for the church. Even so, the divorce rate continues to skyrocket, and I see that as a great tragedy. I believe the Lord does also. I realize that this is an unpleasant topic, but no doubt it touches all of us somewhere in our family.

My desire in studying the matter of divorce and remarriage is to be sensitive to those who have been affected by this terrible thing. Yet, at the same time, I am obligated to share the truth of God's Word as it has been revealed to me. So please consider what I have to say. Forget your preconceived notions, and allow the Word of God to speak directly to your heart.

Some have a zeal for tradition instead of truth. They say, "That is the way I've always been taught, and I'm not changing." However, I do not have an attitude like that; I have a zeal for truth. I want a love for the truth, even if it goes contrary to what I was taught when I was a little boy. I was taught lots of things. I was raised very strictly. In fact, my former pastor preached it so tight that even if a preacher's wife died, he still could not get remarried. That is how he understood the Scripture which speaks of "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2).

I have devoted much study and prayer to the matter of divorce and remarriage, because I really wanted to arrive at the truth. If you do not agree with all that I say, do not cut me off, do not disfellowship me. Keep loving me and praying for me, and the Lord will show me the truth if I do not have the truth. I challenge you to open up the Word of God. If you have the truth, it will stand the investigation. However, if you find that you have believed incorrectly about this matter, then I challenge you to get in line with the Word of God. As an honest individual, you should desire the truth. Throughout my lifetime, I have heard a lot of truth that was contrary to what I had been taught, and I had to line up with the Word of God. It is my desire to continue to do that.

I would like to share this poem with you entitled "How Readest Thou?"

*It is one thing to read the Bible through,
Another thing to read, to learn, and do.
Some read it as a duty once a week,
But no instruction from the Bible seek;
Some read to bring themselves into repute,
By showing others how they can dispute;
While others read because their neighbors do,
To see how long 'twill take to read it through.
Some read it for the wonders that are there,
How David killed a lion and a bear.
While others read it with uncommon care,
Hoping to find some contradiction there.
One reads with his father's specs upon his head
And sees the thing just as his father said.
Some read to prove a pre-adopted creed,
Hence understand but little that they read.
For every passage in the Book they bend,*

*To make it suit that all-important end.
Some people read, as I have often thought,
To teach the Bible instead of being taught.
And some there are who read it out of spite
I fear there are but few who read it right.
So many people in these latter days,
Have read the Bible in so many ways,
That few can tell which system is the best
For every part contradicts the rest.
But read it prayerfully, and you will see,
Although men contradict, God's words agree
For what the early Bible prophets wrote
We find that Christ and His Apostles quote.
So trust no creed that trembles to recall
What has been penned by one and verified by all.*

(Author Unknown)

Why are you reading the Word of God today? We should read the Bible because we want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Someone may say, "Yes, but you believe it differently from what D. S. Warner taught." I will have to say that I do believe it differently from what Brother D. S. Warner taught. I believe he was a great man of God, but even he wrote, "Brighter days are sweetly dawning," and "Purer light is coming fast." I believe that this message is clearer, purer than anything that I was taught as a boy.

Can Two Christians Get a Divorce?

Let us turn our attention to the Word of God and allow this Book to guide us in understanding the matter of divorce and remarriage. The Church of God at Corinth had written a letter to the Apostle Paul, asking some questions about marriage. We learn this by reading 1 Corinthians 7:1, which says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." The Apostle Paul was answering that letter. Although we do not have their letter, we do have Paul's letter. We can figure out what the questions were by the answers Paul gave.

Evidently, one of the questions asked was, "Can two Christians get a divorce?" The Apostle Paul answered that question in verses 10-11 of our text, which read: "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." The first command is: "Let not the wife depart from her husband." The second command is: "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried." In other words, if Christians break the first command, then there is a second command. They must not depart, but if they do, they must remain unmarried or be reconciled.

Verses 10-11 of our text are not discussing divorce because of unfaithfulness. Instead, Paul was dealing with separation where there is no Bible grounds for a divorce. Furthermore, verses 10-11 deal with marriage where both companions are believers. Paul was addressing Christians who might have been experiencing a strain in their marriage. That happens today, and Christians may think, "I believe we ought to just get a divorce." However, they do not have Bible grounds to get a divorce just because they are not getting along and some problems have come into their marriage. If they both are saved, they ought to be able to work out their differences and work through difficult times by the grace of God.

Very little in the Word of God is written to sinners, because most sinners do not care what the Bible says. If a man is being unfaithful to his wife, you could go over to his house and say, "Listen here, sir, the Bible says that this is sin." But he does not care if it is sin or not; He has his own agenda. That is why the Bible

says in Romans 8:7 that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

God's Word says simply to the Christians: do not get a divorce. Some may feel that this is a tough stand, but it is the clear Word from God. In fact, Jesus said the same thing. Mark 10:2-12 tells us: "And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 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. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder, And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. 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." In Luke 16:18 Jesus also said, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

Perhaps a little understanding of the social conditions in Paul's day will be helpful in understanding his position. History tells us that in Corinth, and in the culture as a whole, divorce was running rampant. It was not uncommon for people to have been married fifteen or twenty times during the course of their lives. Paul was simply telling the Corinthian saints that God had a higher standard than the world did. Today, the divorce and remarriage rates are not anywhere near what prevailed in Paul's day, but there is still a serious problem in our society regarding this matter.

The rule from the Bible is this: when two people are in a marriage relationship, they become one. I believe in the rule. Genesis 2:24 states, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." They also become a living illustration of the relationship between Christ and His people. Ephesians 5:22-23 says: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." When that union is severed by divorce, ones bring disgrace upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some may ask, "Doesn't the Bible allow for divorce?" The answer is yes, and we will get to that further on. Right now we need to understand that God's perfect will is that husbands and wives stay together until death separates them. That is why our Savior said in Mark 10:9, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Having stated the rule, I do not believe that the Lord would have a woman to continue to live in a situation where her life is threatened. Neither do I believe that she should keep her children in such an environment. There are situations where the physical and emotional abuse is so strong that a couple cannot continue to live under the same roof. According to our text, separation is a possibility.

Please note that most divorces today stem from what is termed "irreconcilable differences." Between Christians, there should be no such thing as irreconcilable conditions. We have the same Father, we have the same Holy Spirit, and we are serving the same Lord; so we ought to be able to work things out. The Bible strictly forbids remarriage in the cases we have mentioned. If a divorce was obtained and granted, then the separated or divorced people have one of two options available: be reconciled or remain unmarried. That is the Lord's mind in the matter. Someone may say, "That is narrow-minded; it is strict." But it is the Word of God and not the opinion of this preacher.

What if ones remarry anyway? Then, according to the Word of God, according to Jesus in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18, they are guilty before the Lord of adultery. It would be impossible to exhaust every possible situation in this matter. We can always produce another, "What if?" The Apostle Paul was simply laying down a biblical principle for life that can either be accepted or rejected. To accept it will bring

blessings; to reject it will bring the judgment of God.

Can anyone argue the plain truth that God forbids divorce among His people? There are some important statements that need to be remembered. God never intended for two Christians to get a divorce. No sin is too great to be conquered if both partners are walking in love one to another. Divorce should be eliminated from the Christian's vocabulary; it is never an option for two Christians. A Christian brother or sister should never use the threat, "I'll divorce you."

Divorce is never commanded in any situation. An unbiblical divorce and remarriage is sin. However, it is not a greater sin than any other sin, and it can be forgiven by the Lord. Those who have been through divorce are not second-class Christians or second-class citizens; so they should never be treated as such. We should have a compassionate attitude toward those who have experienced the trauma of divorce. Did you ever notice how Christ graciously dealt with the Samaritan woman who had five husbands (John, Chapter 4)? We should treat people who have been divorced and remarried with love; we should not act like they have the plague or they are an unclean person. If God forgives, then certainly the people of God can forgive as well.

Divorce Between a Believer and an Unbeliever

I believe another question that the Church of God at Corinth wrote to the Apostle Paul was, "Can a believer get remarried when the unbelieving companion deserted them?" Our text teaches us that divorce is permitted but not required on the ground of desertion by the unbelieving spouse. Verses 12-16 tell us: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 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. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

In verse 12 the Apostle Paul started out saying, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." Those who believe there are absolutely no grounds for divorce and remarriage use this passage of Scripture to say, "Well, the Lord didn't say this; it was just something that Paul thought at the time, so we cannot go by it." However, when Paul wrote this, we must not believe that what he was going to say was not worth the paper that it was written on. Paul did not mean that his words had no authority. He was saying that he was not quoting the Lord. In Mark, Chapter 10, Jesus did not deal with this type of problem. So, in other words, Paul was saying, "I am giving you advice."

Farther on in the chapter, we see that the Apostle Paul's advice was coming from the Lord. Then in verse 40 he said, "But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Paul was giving them his judgment on certain things that Christ did not mention. That does not mean that it was not of God.

Do not try to tell me that the devil stuck in a verse right there by saying that God did not have anything to do with it. The Bible says in Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God is pure." If *some* things were not true in the Bible, then it would not *all* be pure. The Bible also says in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Paul wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; he was not being led by the flesh when he made that statement. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [even 1 Corinthians, Chapter 7]"

Paul turned his attention from Christian couples to couples where one is a believer and the other is not. Apparently, these relationships came about when one spouse or the other was saved after they had been

married. Sometimes, though, this situation arises when a saved person steps outside the will of God and marries an unbeliever.

Did you know if you are a Christian and you marry an unbeliever, you are going contrary to what the Bible says? That is sin, and it needs to be repented of. There are literally hundreds of Scriptures that will back that up. A Christian should never marry an unbeliever—under no circumstances. Second Corinthians 6:14 states, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

I want to share my personal conviction. If you disagree with me, that is fine. My personal conviction is this: I will not marry a believer and an unbeliever; I will not perform the ceremony. If I did, I would be doing exactly what God said not to do. Somebody may say, "Well, somebody is going to do it." That is right, but the somebody is not going to be me. I would feel guilty before God if I had anything to do with joining two people together who should not be "unequally yoked together."

Christian friend, if you have already disobeyed God and married somebody who was not a Christian, you do not have the privilege of divorcing them. You have to ask God to forgive you for what you have done, and pray that He will have mercy on you. Christians marrying unbelievers is not the subject, but it needs to be dealt with. Let us get the mind of God. If Christians would marry Christians, we would not have so many divorces. We need to instill this in the young people: do not marry an unbeliever. Someone could say, "Well, I know somebody who did, and it all worked out; they have a happy marriage." However, I can show you a much longer list of people who went outside the will of God and married an unbeliever and have had torment in their homes ever since.

In verses 12-13 Paul's statement is clear. He tells us that if the unsaved partner is willing to live with the saved partner, the saved man or woman is not to seek a divorce. In other words, if your unsaved companion says, "Honey, you can go to church; I'm not into it right now, but I am not going to fight you if that's what you want to do; God bless you," then stay with your companion.

Paul's reasoning becomes clear in verse 14. We see that the saved partner has the opportunity to lead his or her spouse to the Lord. Also, because one of the partners is serving the Lord, the blessings of God are upon the home to some degree. Whereas, if neither one is saved, that blessing will be missing.

Christians do not have to sacrifice their Christian principles to keep an unbeliever in the marriage. Never compromise God or any of His Word to save your marriage. It is not worth it. If you ever start compromising to save your marriage, there will be no end to the compromise. If you give in a little, you will have to give in a lot before it is over. It is wrong to try to keep a marriage together that way. I have said many times, when you compromise to win, you have already been won.

Not Being Under Bondage

If the unbelieving partner wishes to dissolve the marriage, then the saint of God has no choice in the matter. The Christian should be peaceful about the situation and not stand in the unbeliever's way. Verse 15 lets us know that the Christian is not "under bondage" in such cases. If they are not in bondage, does that mean they can get remarried? Absolutely. A brother or sister is not bound to live unmarried after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried. In such cases, the deserted person is free to marry again on the authority of God's Word. When an unbelieving person deserts a Christian and divorces them, it is as much a dissolution of the marriage covenant as death itself.

Again, verse 15b tells us, "A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." What is the opposite of bondage? It is liberty. Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." If the unsaved spouse deserts the Christian because they do not want to be married to them, because they want to live their life and marry someone else, then the Christian is at liberty. God does not leave them in a situation where they have to live by themselves

because of what someone else did. They did not have anything to do with the sin that was committed; thus, they are no longer bound.

Concerning "not under bondage," *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says, "to loose any person, tied or fastened; to loose one bound; it is to unbind, release from bonds, set free." It includes the idea of being divorced—the divorce being instigated by the unbelieving mate. I am telling you what the Bible says. "If the unbelieving depart," the Christian is not bound anymore. He or she has been released from the bonds of marriage and, according to these Greek words, is now set free. Being released is synonymous with not being bound.

Ones who disagree can hardly stand verse 15. They almost grit their teeth when you quote it. However, one statement does not cover all marriage situations. The most compelling evidence comes by comparing what Paul said to these two separate groups. In verses 10-11 the Christians were told if they departed, they were to "remain unmarried." Then Paul changed the subject from two Christians to a believer and an unbeliever. He gave a different command to the second group. He did not tell them to "remain unmarried." Instead, he said in verse 15 that they could marry again when he said that they were "not under bondage in such cases." That was the reason why Paul divided these two groups. To believe otherwise would necessitate an explanation of the contradiction.

Some argue that marriage is not bondage. That is true in a sense. My marriage is not bondage. However, you are bound together when you are married according to the Word of God. I will tell you what bondage is. It is to be a Christian and have your unsaved companion divorce you and marry another person and start another family. You are hurt, lonely, suffering from rejection, and suffering financially. Then to put salt on the wound, your pastor says that you can never get married again. That is bondage. False preachers tell ones, who have God-given desires for a mate, that because of their companion's sin, they will never be able to get married again. When I read that or hear that, I think, what a heavy burden they have put on the innocent party! I am reminded of what Jesus said about the Pharisees. He said in Matthew 23:4, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." If we are not careful, we can become like the Pharisees, picking at people and judging people without mercy.

It is binding a heavy burden on a young man or a young lady to say, "You can never, ever get married until your first companion passes away." That is not fair. God is a just God, and He is a reasonable God. Romans 12:1 talks about "your reasonable service." It is unreasonable to think that a young person has to live single the rest of his or her life because of what some unsaved companion did to them.

Matthew 5:7 tells us, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Then Luke 6:36 says, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." If we are guilty of not being merciful, it will cause God to judge us without mercy. One time in Athens, Tennessee, I sat in a restaurant with a pastor whose wife had left him and taken their children. He sat there, tears were flowing down his face, a grown man in a restaurant weeping to me. He was talking about the pain that he was going through and the situation that he was in. He said, "Death couldn't have been any worse."

If you have never experienced this, you have no idea what it would be like to walk in someone else's shoes. A person needs to consider: "What if this was me? What if I was in this situation? What if it was my son? What if it was my daughter?" I like the following song entitled "Men With Broken Hearts."

*You'll meet many just like me upon life's busy street,
With shoulders stooped and heads bowed low
And eyes that stare in defeat.
Or souls that live within the past
Where sorrow plays all parts
Where a living death is all that's left
For men with broken hearts.*

*You have no right to be the judge, to criticize and condemn
 Just think, but for the grace of God,
 It would be you instead of him
 One careless step, one thoughtless deed,
 And then the misery starts
 And to those who weep, death comes cheap
 These men with broken hearts
 Oh, so humble you should be when they come passing by
 For it's written that the greatest men never get too big to cry
 Some lose faith in love and life when sorrow shoots her darts
 And with hope all gone, they walk alone
 These men with broken hearts.
 You've never walked in that man's shoes
 Or saw things through his eyes
 Or stood and watched with helpless hands
 While the heart inside you dies.
 Some were paupers, some were kings,
 And some were masters of the arts,
 But in their shame, they're all the same
 These men with broken hearts.
 Life sometimes can be so cruel that a heart will pray for death God, why must these living dead know
 pain with every breath?
 So help your brother along the road, no matter where he starts
 For the God that made you made them too
 These men with broken hearts*

Let us see what the Bible and the people who have experienced desertion tell us about what bondage is. Let us see how *bondage* is used in the Word of God and even in our text. Verse 15b says, "A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." Remember, if you are not in bondage, you are loosed. Romans 7:2 tells us, "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." First Corinthians 7:27 says, "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife." Then verse 39 states, "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." Likewise, if your unbelieving companion has deserted you, you are at liberty to be married to whomsoever you will, but only in the Lord. To go outside this text and try to change Paul's meaning for the word "*bondage*" would be to handle the Word of God deceitfully. You cannot be bound and not be in bondage at the same time. That would be a contradiction of terms.

A God-Given Desire

To desire a companion is a God-given desire. It did not come from the devil. For every God-given desire, there is a biblical way we can fulfill that desire. Someone might say, "Well, I have a desire for tobacco," but that is not a God-given desire. Many years ago, I read an article in a paper that I had received in the mail, and the subject of divorce and remarriage was in there. It was so far from the Word of God, because it said, in so many words: "It is just like an alcoholic. When an alcoholic gets saved, he has to fight those desires to drink again. In the same way, if you are divorced, you have to fight those desires to ever get married

again."

I thought: "How false! How ridiculous!" Alcohol is not a God-given desire. God never gave you that desire or the desire to smoke cigarettes or the desire to get on drugs. You went against your flesh, and even when it made you dizzy, you kept smoking; and even when you would get drunk, you kept drinking; and you kept messing around with drugs until you became addicted. It is altogether different when we are talking about someone who has a natural desire for a companion, and they are told that they cannot have one.

Matthew 19:10-12 reads: "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 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." Jesus said that all men cannot receive that saying. Some men need a wife; some women need a husband.

The Apostle Paul picked up on what Jesus said in our text. Verses 5-9 say: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. 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. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

What if a Christian has been divorced by an unbeliever, and he does not have the gift of singleness? What is he supposed to do? According to the Scriptures, Christians who are married are not even allowed to fast, to the extent of defrauding, without their companion's permission. Then they are to come together again that Satan tempt them not. Yet false teachers tell ones, "You have to live the rest of your life without a companion." Their teaching is, it is better to burn than to marry. But our text says that "it is better to marry than to burn" (verse 9).

Paul acknowledged that all are not able to live as eunuchs. That means some people will truly struggle with the temptation of fornication. To those people, Paul clearly said that they should marry instead of burn with passion. God designed marriage as a prevention for sexual impurity. Verse 2 of our text says, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." That includes the divorced person.

Many years ago, when I was pastoring in Athens, Tennessee, Brother Wayne Covington and I went to visit a man who used to pastor a church. He had been taught that if your wife leaves you, you can never get remarried under any circumstances. God being my witness, he told this story—I heard it straight from his lips. He said that he was in the ministry, and his wife left him, married someone else, and started a family. So he fasted and prayed. He would fast for days, praying that his wife would come back to him. But he said, "I had such strong desires for a companion, that I did not know what else to do." So in his own house, he made himself a eunuch, and he almost bled to death. His congregation came and found him in an unconscious condition. That is so sad, because he put himself through all that pain and all that misery because of a false doctrine, a false teaching. The truth is, he could have gotten remarried because his wife had committed adultery.

False teachers argue that because of the nature of the sin of divorce, ones have forever lost the right to enjoy the benefits of marriage. They say that those ones do not deserve to be married because they messed up the first time. They contend that God has placed the demand of eternal celibacy on them, even on the innocent ones who had been faithful.

Do you mean to tell me that David, a man after God's own heart, and Solomon were allowed to have many wives at the same time; yet if your companion commits adultery, you can never get remarried? There is something wrong with this teaching. Again, verse 9 of our text says, "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

Notice that you read about virgins, widows, the married, and the unmarried in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 7. We know that virgins are those who have never been married, widows are those who have lost their companion through death, and the married are married. So, the unmarried people are the divorced people. In verse 8 Paul contrasted "the unmarried and widows." Then in verse 34 he said: "There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

The word *unmarried* is from a Greek word that is the negative of being married; it is a reference to people who are divorced. Paul made no qualifications about which divorced people were allowed to marry. Apparently, if they were truly unmarried, meaning that they were no longer tied to another, they were free to marry without sin. Verses 27-28 say: "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you."

Divorce Is Not the Unpardonable Sin

What about divorce prior to salvation? Can people be saved who were divorced and remarried in sin, when they did not have Bible grounds for the divorce? Absolutely! Christ forgives all sin. There is no sin too big or too terrible for the blood of Jesus Christ. John 8:10-11 tells us: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

We are living in a day and time when many are involved in marriage and divorce and remarriage prior to salvation. Many new Christians, due to a lack of understanding and bad counsel from professing Christians, end up doing foolish things in an attempt to do the right thing before God. Some leave their current husband or wife with the false notion that God did not recognize their divorce, because they were led to believe that they were living in adultery.

I want to say again, I have no ill will in my heart toward anyone who disagrees with me, but I believe this subject needs to be clarified in our minds. God does recognize a divorce, and though it is sin to divorce without a biblical reason, it is not the unpardonable sin. I do not care how many times you have been divorced and remarried, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. If God forgives a person for murder, for rape, and for all of these other ungodly sins, He can forgive you for marrying the wrong person and getting your life messed up.

Within some religious circles, divorce and remarriage is pretty much an unpardonable sin. They teach that God does not recognize but one marriage. However, in John, Chapter 4, Jesus recognized that the woman at the well had been married five times. He said in verse 18, "For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Christ had some living water for that woman. Some think if you ever get divorced and remarried, you cannot be effective for God, but she was. The Bible says in verse 39 that many believed on Jesus because of "the saying of the woman." In verse 29 she told them, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Many precious souls are cut off from fellowship or are shunned because of a divorce that they went through, even if it was prior to salvation. I have seen it happen to Christians who had been divorced; they even had biblical reasons to be divorced. They were remarried and had a little baby. People refused to come to their baby shower or to give a gift because the parents had been divorced before. What does that have to do with the little child?

False teachers teach that if a person is remarried, even if that one has a large family now, that person must divorce his wife or her husband at conversion. If the person is a wife, she would try to take the children

with her; but if the person is a husband, he would probably lose the children. Both of them are to try to find their first companion, tearing their home into a million pieces. They have no Bible to teach such a thing. There is no example like that in the Word of God. I believe what we preach and teach ought to be based on the Word of God, not on what we think. We ought to be able to prove what we believe by the Bible.

First Corinthians 7:17 states: "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." Where were you when the Lord called you? That verse said to "so let him walk." Where were you when the Lord saved you? That is where you are to stay.

The Bible says in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." That is the rule concerning marriage, and there are many Scriptures in the Bible that deal with the rule. I believe in the rule. However, there is also a rule that tells us not to commit sin. Romans 6:1-2 says: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Verse 7 goes on to say, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Verses 12-15 continue: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Verse 18 continues, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Then verse 23 tells us, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Hebrews 10:26 also tells us, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." James 1:15 states, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." First John 3:6-9 says: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

We could go on and read Scriptures that condemn sin, but God also made a provision in case we do fall into sin. God knew some of us would need a provision, thank God! First John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." First John 2:1-2 continues: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Jesus Established a Clear Principle Regarding Divorce and Remarriage

If all we had was the Scriptures that dealt with the rule, what would we tell a person who fell into sin? By only reading Hebrews, Chapter 10, it sounds to me if you happen to sin wilfully, then there is no more sacrifice for sin. We need to understand that there is an exception to the rule. Then we ought to be able to understand the Scriptures that definitely teach that marriage is to be for the rest of our life. That is the perfect will of God: "till death do us part." However, God also made an exception to that rule in the Bible in case your companion divorces you or commits adultery.

I want to clarify a passage of Scripture. Matthew 5:31-32 says: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 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." The only acceptable grounds for divorcing a wife that Jesus gave is

sexual immorality. If a man divorces his wife without those grounds, he would be wrong, and wronging her, because there were no grounds for the divorce. Unfortunately, the expression "causeth her to commit adultery" has been greatly misunderstood. The actions of one violating the Scripture does not charge another (especially an innocent party) with sin. According to *The Pulpit Commentary*, the right reading of the Greek connotes being sinned against rather than sinning.

Matthew 19:3-9 tells us: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 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. 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."

Notice the phrase "marry another" in verse 9. It is in the very same clause with "put away his wife, except it be for fornication." Some believe that there can be no divorce or remarriage under any circumstances, but that is not true. To be granted a biblical divorce means that you are no longer bound to anyone; thus, you are free to remarry.

No one in Jesus' audience was thinking that remarriage would not be an option. If Jesus wanted to teach that remarriage after every divorce was unacceptable, He would have made that new teaching clear. However, that teaching is not found in the Bible. Instead, Jesus established a clear principle concerning divorce and remarriage that must be followed if we are to be right with the Lord.

In verse 3 we see a challenge from the Pharisees. That question was one of much debate in their day. In the Old Testament, a man was permitted to divorce his wife if she burned his breakfast, if she spoke to another man on the street, if she developed a wrinkle, or if he simply saw another woman that he thought was prettier than she was. He could write her a bill of divorcement and send her out of his home. That was the prevailing view in Jesus' day; that is what was running rampant.

In verse 7 the Pharisees were referring to Deuteronomy, Chapter 24. Verses 1-4 tell us: "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 [and this does not mean sexual uncleanness]: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 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."

Ones argue, "Well, God did not have anything to do with this; Moses said that, but God never wanted it to begin with." That is not what the Scriptures say. Second Peter 1:21 states, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." When Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written, a man of God was moved by the Holy Ghost. The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ." (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Israelites were not permitted to remarry their former wives. That is the very thing false teachers insist ones do: go back and get your first wife. However, that was forbidden in the Old Testament. The primary purpose of the divorce procedure was to close the way forever for the man to remarry his former wife once she had been remarried. If her second husband divorced her, or even if he died, she could not return to her first husband. To do so would be an abomination before the Lord. The reason was, if a husband

could easily remarry the same woman, divorce would have become a legal way of committing adultery.

Later prophetic writings confirmed the truth set forth by Moses. For example, Jeremiah 3:1 says, "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?" I have asked people from time to time: "Where is the command? Where is the example in the Word of God showing you are supposed to go back and hunt up the first companion when you get saved?" There is no command or example which supports that in the Word of God.

In situations where divorce was permissible in the Old Testament, remarriage was also permissible. That was not what Jesus was dealing with in Matthew, Chapter 19. However, He did say, in so many words: "You are no longer going to be able to divorce your wife for any cause. I am going to give you one reason you can divorce your wife and get remarried, and that is for the cause of fornication." Under the Law of Moses, they were allowed to divorce clean wives, chaste wives. Jesus was letting them know that was over. Under Moses' Law, they could not put away their wives for adultery or fornication, because their wives were stoned for that.

When the woman was caught in the act of adultery, what did they say to Christ? John 8:4-5 reads: "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" The people who were divorced and remarried in Moses' day were never referred to as "living in a double marriage." Even though they had a divorce for ridiculous reasons, they still were never referred to as "living in adultery" when they got remarried. So today, we certainly should not refer to someone who has had Bible grounds for a divorce as "living in adultery" when that one remarries.

Some may wonder, "Why does Matthew, Chapter 19, include the exception clause when Mark, Chapter 10, does not?" Ones have argued that Matthew's Gospel is not talking about sex during marriage but sex before marriage. That is how they try to get around this truth. In the first century, a Judaism betrothal was legally binding. That is why Joseph was going to divorce Mary after he found out that she was with child. They were only engaged at the time, but breaking off an engagement required a divorce. Therefore, ones claim Matthew recorded those words so it would be clear that Joseph was not doing anything wrong when he planned to divorce Mary for what seemed to be fornication. However, the question from the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3 revolved around Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which is dealing with husbands and wives, not betrothals. Follow that chapter through and tell me where Matthew changed to betrothals. He did not change; he was on the subject of marriage. The Greek word "*fornication*" in Matthew 19:9 is a broad word that includes all kinds of sexual sin, unchastity, and marital unfaithfulness. It is not just referring to sex before marriage while engaged. Besides, Matthew, Chapter 1, never uses the Greek word for fornication to describe Mary's supposed sin. We do not find it in Mark or Luke either.

Remember, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are describing the same events; they are parallel accounts. Some say that Matthew added something that should not have been added. If that is true, what else is added in the Bible? Is it not easier to assume that Mark and Luke left something out? It is not unusual for one of the Gospel writers to leave something out that the other had mentioned. However, I think the basic reason the exception was left out was because everybody already knew that truth.

Some make a big deal about the words *adultery* and *fornication*. They say that adultery always refers to married couples and fornication always refers to single individuals, but that is a false statement. Matthew 5:28 tells us, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." That goes for "whosoever," whether you are married, single, or divorced.

The words *adultery* and *fornication* are used interchangeably in the Word of God. Revelation 2:20-22 says: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things

sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."

What did Jesus mean by "except it be for fornication" (Matthew 19:9)? Well, the only valid place for sexual expression is found within the marriage relationship. Anything of sexual nature that happens outside the marital union constitutes fornication, and it could be grounds for divorce. It is the only legitimate exception to the "no divorce" rule. According to Jesus, marriages are intended to be life-long, ending only by the death of one spouse. There should be one husband and one wife for one lifetime. God Himself expressed feelings concerning this. Malachi 2:16 states, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away; for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously." God said that He hates divorce.

If Possible, Avoid Divorce

Let us clarify another Scripture by the help of God. Romans 7:1-4 says: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 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. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Verse 1 tells us that Paul was speaking "to them that know the law." If you do not know the law, you do not know what he was talking about. You have to look to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 before you are able to understand this passage of Scripture. Ones are trying to interpret these verses who have no idea what the Law says. Paul was not talking about someone who had been granted a legal divorce, and he was not talking about someone who had been deserted by their unbelieving companion. Verse 2 lets us know that he was talking about a "woman which hath an husband." According to the Law, when a woman got a divorce, she did not have a husband anymore. Paul was dealing with people who were still married.

Do Christians have to divorce their companions because of unfaithfulness? No, they do not have to. If one partner falls into sin and then repents and seeks forgiveness and reconciliation, I believe that a divorce can be avoided. I also believe that when you can avoid a divorce, you are better off, because divorce brings in so many problems. It brings in stepmothers, stepfathers, and battles with visitation rights.

Many years ago I was laying carpet for a man who told me, "If your wife dies, you can finally start putting it behind you and go on with your life; but with a divorce when there are children involved, you cannot put it behind you, because every week you have to deal with your ex-wife." He was saying that you have to take the children to her, and then you have to meet the children somewhere. All the while, she is telling the children things about you; and if she has more money, she is trying to buy the kids; and on and on. So, if you can avoid it, avoid it.

If you have biblical grounds for divorce, just consider what glory it might bring God if you can patiently work through it and be reconciled. Do you know what? I have messed up since I have been saved. I have not committed adultery or ran around on my wife, but I have failed God. And God did not throw me away when I made a mistake; He was there to lift me up.

Both marriage partners are under an obligation to do everything in their power to ensure the success of their marriage. I know you cannot force people. It is really a lot to ask the innocent party to try to work through the sin of fornication, because it is a hard thing when you have been cheated on. However, marriage is an illustration of the Lord's love for us, and thank God, He does not throw us away when we fail. The

person who refuses any attempt for reconciliation and who refuses to practice forgiveness is also guilty of sin. You have to come to the place, sooner or later, that you forgive him or her if you want to be right with God.

The principle is, when the Bible allows for divorce, it also allows for remarriage. However, that does not mean you have to get a divorce. For many people, the divorce is not their fault. We live in a day where divorce can be forced upon ones without their consent.

We can read in the Old Testament that the Lord divorced His people. Jeremiah 3:8 says, "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." God's people were spiritual adulterers, and the Lord put up with it for generations. Finally, He had enough and divorced them. But the love story is that God still wooed His wayward bride back to Himself and welcomed her home when she turned and repented. So if the Lord can divorce His adulterous spouse, then divorce is not always wrong. Think about this: God not only divorced Israel, but He also got remarried to spiritual Israel.

In John, Chapter 4, Jesus did not tell the woman at the well to return to her first husband. Neither did Jesus nor any of the Apostles declare that one in an unscriptural or adulterous marriage needed to end it in order to be saved. First Corinthians 6:9-11 simply tells us: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Before they were saved, these Christians had been guilty of fornication and adultery. Surely some had violated Jesus' command against marrying again, but Paul gave no command for them to get a divorce and live single.

False teachers today require ones desiring to be saved to leave their companion, break up more marriages, and remarry their first companion. I believe that this is a damnable teaching, because I personally am acquainted with people who have been taught this, and their companion has left them and married someone else. They feel like, "There is no way I can live single the rest of my life, so I must be bound for hell." Others think, "There is no use for me to get saved, because I will have to divorce my current spouse and try to go back to the first one." Would you be willing to do that? Preachers and teachers who hold that false doctrine over people will have to give an account on Judgment Day. Possibly, they will have blood on their hands because they have made up rules that are contrary to the Word of God. If the Apostles did not require that, and if Jesus Himself did not require it, who are we to require some individual to do such a thing?

Brother Emerson Wilson told a story about holding a revival. He was preaching in a place where the people did not believe in divorce and remarriage. There was a young man with his wife and large family coming every night. During the invitation, that man would tremble under conviction, with tears going down his face, night after night. So one night at the back door, Brother Wilson asked the young man, "Why don't you lay that load down?"

He said, "I can't."

"Why can't you?"

He said: "Well, according to the pastor here, if I get saved, I have to divorce my wife, leave my children, and get back with my first wife, and I just can't bear the thought of that. I love my wife, and I love my children."

Brother Wilson went back to the study with a broken heart. He prayed and wept before God, and God laid a message on his heart. However, Brother Wilson believed in ministerial ethics. So he went to the pastor and said: "I haven't been able to sleep all night. God has laid it on my heart to preach on divorce and remarriage, and I know you do not believe it like I do. If you don't want me to preach this, I am going home right now, because I can't stand there and watch that man cry another night."

The pastor said, "Go ahead and preach it." So he did, and guess who was the first one to move to the altar? That man came down and was gloriously saved. False bondage was the only thing keeping that man from getting right with God. When Brother Wilson finished the message and turned it over to the pastor, the pastor said, "You go ahead and dismiss; you've been running things around here tonight." If Jesus wanted to teach that remarriage after every divorce was unacceptable, He would have made that clear in the Word of God.

Let us take a look at what John the Baptist said. Mark 6:18 tells us, "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Why was it not lawful? Herod took Herodias, the wife of his brother Phillip, for his wife. Such was clearly a violation to the Law of Moses, and that was the one reason John said that it was not lawful. That Law says in Leviticus 18:16, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it is thy brother's nakedness." Also, Leviticus 20:21 states, "And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."

There Is Grace and Mercy for All

If you happen to disagree with people who have been divorced and remarried, be careful how you treat them. Be careful lest you offend them. Matthew 18:6 tells us, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

To the married, I encourage you to make your marriage a focus of prayer; work at making it better. Instead of fretting about what God allows and what He does not allow, try to make your marriage successful. A happy marriage is not a myth, but a very real possibility. By God's grace, you can have a happy marriage. If you are separated, and you should not be, can you find hope in your heart that God might reconcile you and your spouse? God is a God of resurrection; He can bring life to dead relationships. I believe it would be a great trophy to God's grace if you allowed Him to bring you back together.

To those who have sinfully divorced, to those whose sin caused the divorce, or to those who are now remarried when they should not be, run to the Cross. It is not a light thing to tear asunder what God has put together. It is not a small mistake to pursue an adulterous marriage. However, I want to say again, divorce is not the unpardonable sin. There is mercy yet for you, but the contrition must be real, the admission of guilt must be honest, and the repentance must be earnest. A broken heart and a contrite spirit, the Lord will never deny. Run to God, plead with God, and know His adopting love.

To those who have been divorced, please know that the Lord loves you. If you will ask Him, He will save you if you repent and believe on Him. If He has forgiven you of your sins, you are not a second-class Christian. You do not have to take a back seat. Neither I nor the Lord above condemns you for your past if it is under the blood. Your duty is to submit yourself to the Lord and do His will. If you will do that, and if you will serve Him, you can travel through this life with peace and joy down in your soul.

I have agonized over this message for many years. I was not taught this as a child; so I reached my position not because of what some friend or preacher has taught. I am not trying to fit in with a group of men. However, I do believe this is what the Bible clearly says. So, I hope we have more understanding on the subject of divorce and remarriage. If you feel differently, please do not cut me off. Pray for me, and study God's Word. I feel we can disagree on this and still have sweet fellowship.

No matter where you are coming from, how deep you have been in sin, or how many times you have been married, there is one thing that I do know: *"There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, And sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains."* Is that not wonderful? By repenting and by faith, if you will plunge beneath that fountain, you can lose all your guilty stains, no matter what they are.