

Remarriage, for the Christian, will God Sanction It?

Remarriage, For The Christian, Will God Sanction It?

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Preface

In the minds of some believers today there is perplexity, confusion, and unresolved issues, where the subject of divorce and remarriage is discussed.

This paper deals with only a small part of the actions of divorce and remarriage. However, it will be helpful to those who are seeking what the mind and heart of God is according to Scripture on this difficult subject. Many Scriptures are used to benefit the reader from this study. Studing these passages will give the reader a wider understanding and depth of this subject.

Jesus said, that the truth will set us free. The truth is Jesus (John 14:6). Spiritual bondage or uncertainty should not be the Christian's dwelling place when dealing with this subject.

This booklet was written to help the honest seeker on this subject.

Married Once and For Life

In Holy Scripture it is written "God created Adam (man) in His own image, and after His likeness" (Genesis 1:26-27). In Genesis 2:18 God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a helpmeet for him." In verses 21-22 God took a rib from Adam's body, and He made a woman from the rib taken from Adam, and brought the woman unto the man. In verse 23, Adam spoke these words: "this is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." Verse 24 tells us that a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. Henceforth, marriage is instituted as God has established it for the first man and woman. In this creation of God there is no thought of another woman for the man, or another man for the woman. This is the only marriage that was ever made for eternity. Adam was to live forever on the earth; sin and death were not yet in his experience. This is the only marriage that we can be sure was God preordained, and made in heaven.

Then another world opened up to Adam and Eve through listening to and following the enticement of the serpent. Just as the serpent had said, in the day that they ate of it, their eyes were opened (Genesis 3:5). For Adam, life would now take on a whole different course and meaning. A 'new age' and dispensation had come into being in Adam and the whole earth. Now a sin tainted life would be a normal process of living and thinking for them, and those that would come out of their loins. As a result of Adam's sin a curse would be put on

the man, the woman, and the whole earth (Genesis 3:14-19). This curse would help to keep them from following their new "sin enlightened nature." The curse would also serve to make them dependent on each other, uninterrupted intimacy would no longer be their relationship with Jehovah. Their every act of life would now be decided by the nature acquired through following the serpent. The perfect divine marriage would now degenerate to the level of a sin tainted human marriage.

As men and women in the world we have inherited this so-called enlightened nature of Adam. When we marry, most of us have high aspirations and goals. However, these desires are built upon our human (Adamic) nature, so our goals are infiltrated with sin, falling short of God's purposes. In sharp contrast to God's original will for man and woman in marriage, we instead see "All fall short of God's glory" (Romans 3:23).

Marriage, to be successful even in human terms, needs to be a place of serving your mate. Also the government of God needs to be functioning in the marriage. When that is our goal, the desire and needs of both are fulfilled.

Concerning 'service,' Jesus said in Luke 17:10 these words: "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which are commanded, say, we are (I am) an unprofitable servant(s): we have done what was our duty to do." One of the many places our duty in marriage is taught to us is in Ephesians 5:21, 33. How many can say we have fulfilled these passages on marriage without failure or unprofitable-ness? Failure in any way is still

failure or unprofitable. Being unprofitable in marriage for the Christian can produce the same result as the people of the world mainly separation, divorce and death. For the Christian, who recognizes that he is unprofitable, yet continues to walk after the Spirit a different result will exist than the result according to the world's standard.

2. Separation, Divorce, Death

Marriage, some in the world have cynically declared is the leading cause of separation and divorce. However, Adam's nature within us is that which brings it to fulfillment (Romans 7:18-19; Galatians 5:17). Divorce is God's allowance for man in dealing with the evil (fallen state) within us, which causes the breakdown of our relationship in marriage. Galatians 5:16 teaches us to walk in the Spirit because that is where the power of God is found, and then that which is natural in us will not succeed.

For when Israel sinned, God stated that He divorced her (Jeremiah 3:8). The affections of Israel were not after their God, but other gods. Read the book of Hosea for more understanding. If Israel had continued as a faithful wife to Jehovah, he would not have put her away. To the church of Ephesus, Jesus warns them to return to Him as in their first love (Revelation 2:4-5). If they do not, the result will bear the fruit of Laodicea, which He will spue them out of his mouth (Revelation 3:16; 18:8). In other words He will divorce them. Few people marry with the idea of divorce; most have high hopes for their marriage. God took

Israel for His wife (Isaiah 54:5-6) and He had high hopes for her (Jeremiah 29:11; Deuteronomy 28:1). Alas, Adam's nature ruled Israel, and submission to Jehovah, as His wife, was not to be. It made no impact on Israel that God had in mind for Israel to have the highest place among all peoples on the earth (Deuteronomy 28:1). The similarity of this is that we have the same nature in us that the people of Israel had in them. That is, of having the nature to do evil as sons of Adam.

3. Remarriage is it Holy or is it Adultery?

Many people have questions about remarriage after divorce. For instance is marriage after divorce adultery? There are several places in the gospels that Jesus spoke to this issue (Mathew 5:31; 19:3; Mark 10:2; Luke 16:18). In some of these occurrences the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife. There are four main issues involved in His answer. The first of the four is found in Mathew 19:4. Here Jesus speaks to God's original purpose, which was to have one man, and one woman, become one flesh in marriage forever. Anything less than this was not going to fulfill His perfect will for the first man Adam. The second issue that is involved is what Jesus is questioned on divorce, specifically on the basis of the Law of Moses, Deuteronomy 21:14; 24:13. The third issue is hardness of heart. Jesus said this was the reason Moses allowed divorce. The fourth

issue is, even though the Law of Moses made provision for divorce, Jesus told those listening to Him that it was still adultery if a man (or woman, Mark 10:2) put away his spouse and married another. Also, the one put away commits adultery if that person remarries (Luke 16:18). These four issues constitute foundational actions of divorce and remarriage. We will look at each one of these four in their context.

The first of the four that Jesus gave answer to, was to give God's original intent in marriage. The intent, He said, was one man for one woman, which was to be for eternity on the earth since neither would ever die. This purpose of God was put into effect before the fall of man. Sin and death was not in the their experience. Adam and his wife were never intended to experience sin or the results of sin (death). Adam was made in the image and likeness of God. The image and likeness of God was to be expressed in every aspect of their life, especially their marriage. The fall of Adam totally changed his capacity to fulfill this purpose of God. The curse that was put on Adam and Eve was to curtail him and her from carrying out the desires of their new fallen nature in completeness. That nature was now natural but evil, see Luke 11:13 and Romans 7:17. The Pharisees attempted to trap the Lord Jesus by justifying divorce, because the Law of Moses allowed it. However, Jesus made it clear that the mind of God in the beginning was for a higher place than putting away (Matthew 19:3, 9).

The second issue to consider is the Law of Moses. Is it the standard to use for a Christian when dealing with divorce? The New Testament is perfectly clear when we ask this question. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes" (Romans 10:4). When we are wrestling with this divorce issue, the law is not the Christian's standard or rule of life as some say. The standard of a Christian is, Christ Jesus and Him crucified. To walk after the leading of the Holy Spirit is the Christian's pathway. For understanding on the subject of marriage, separation, divorce and remarriage, a Christian needs to study 1 Corinthians chapter 7. To discern between the law and the gospel, a Christian needs to understand this, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, but all Scripture does not apply to a Christian. For example, the truth and life of the Lord Jesus in the believer does not allow the bondage of the Law of Moses to be put on a Christian. Peter speaking in Acts 15:10, as to the Gentiles being put under the Law of Moses said this: "Now therefore why do you test God, by putting a yoke (The law of Moses) on the neck of the disciples (Gentile believers) which neither our father's nor we are able to bear?"

Some use principles as a ground of truth; this is many times just another way of inserting the law under a different name, rather than taking the pathway of faith to walk after the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2).

The third cause regarding divorce is that of hardness of heart. For the Christian, hardness of

heart should not be his pathway as it makes place for the works of the flesh, see Galatians 5:19. When there is hardness of heart a person generally will not listen to the Spirit of God, Christian friend, spiritual counsel, pastoral care, or any other sound counsel. Even having a foundational knowledge of Scripture may have little effect on that person. Hardness of heart encompasses the total condition of the person. This condition will not allow the headship of Christ Jesus to be over that person. Divorce is only one of the conditions of hardness of heart. One of the root causes of hardness of heart is unforgiveness. However, it could not be said that it is the only cause. Our nature is self indulgent, which alone is enough to produce a hardness of hearing to the Spirit of God, with the result of a hardened spirit and heart. Self will, stubbornness, broken marriages, disenfranchised children, pain, suffering, separation, estrangement, unhealthy relationships, remarriage, all of these things and many more are the results.

Where there is hardness of heart displayed to the Word of God in marriage among professed believers, and yet they do not dissolve their marriage, disorder rules. Some disorders are: Men who profess Christ yet refuse to obey His word to take headship in leading their family in the truths of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:4). Women who profess to be a Christian, but will not come under the headship of man or husband (1 Corinthians 11:5; Ephesians 5:23-24). The result of this resistance by the parent(s) toward God is, children of the marriage are robbed of

their spiritual inheritance. Children, who grow up in a home where this spiritual confusion exists, suffer the consequences of the hardness of the heart of the parent(s). Unbelief and lack of desire for the truth in Christ is quite common in the offspring, as they have not seen the life and reality of the words and profession of their parents. How to play the game of religion has not escaped their notice however.

In the churches, hardness of heart of professing believers produces:

- A clergy rather than an equal brotherhood of believers
- A hierarchy rather than a priesthood of saints
- A law church structure rather than a manifestation of the grace of God through the Holy Spirit
- An organization rather than a living organism
- Putting in place the rules and creeds of man, rather than the truths of the grace and government of God
- Compromising the clear teaching of Scripture with the religious philosophy of our present day
- Allowing women to preach, teach and take authoritative positions over men, rather than falling on our faces, and confessing our sin
- Seeing no evil among God's people, when division rules the day with denominations, independent movements, Romanism, Protestantism, etc. Whereas the Holy Spirit would lead us into what Jesus desired and prayed for "that they

may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:21). We should confess our part in the sin of separation in these fleshly movements. Also, the root of this sin, which is revealed in Independency, Individualism, self-justification and self-righteousness, rather than putting our hope in God's righteousness in Christ. of course, is only the tip of the iceberg in

This, of course, is only the tip of the iceberg in the churches, which could be expounded upon. This hardness of heart found in God's professed people is what led to the Son of God being put on the cross. Divorce is only one manifestation of a hardened heart toward the Spirit of God. It is a fruit of a much larger spiritual condition in man's nature and the professing church.

The fourth item spoken to is that of adultery. Jesus said if you divorce your spouse and marry another it is adultery. Did He say this because of the Law of Moses, or according to God's intentions in creation? It was because of creation, as there is no such thought conveyed in the law. If this is so, another question could be asked at this point concerning Jehovah's relationship with Israel. Was Israel the wife of Jehovah? Of course, the Scriptures tell us that they were, figuratively (Hosea 2:19; Isaiah 54:5-6; Jeremiah 3:14). Did Jehovah put her away because of her sin against Him? The Scriptures tell us that He did. (Jeremiah 3:8; Isaiah 50:1). Did Jehovah then take another wife? As Jehovah the Son, Jesus took another bride, that being the Church (Revelations 21:9; Ephesians 5:30-31). Does this then justify us, as His

people, to do the same? What it tells us is that we are evil and are not to be trusted if we do not walk after the Spirit of Christ. God's judgment and actions are founded upon His truth. Our actions are founded on our evil nature. God is a Spirit and His nature is love, we are a carnal and fleshly people. Only by being taught through the power of the Holy Spirit to believe the Scriptures can we be transformed into a new creation. For in the Scriptures are the power of God unto deliverance. "For I know, that in me (that is my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18). Judging others or ourselves according to the law, whether it is found in the gospels or in the Old Testament, will not get to the root of the problem, which is our heart (Jeremiah 17:9).

If the heart is man's problem, why did Jesus go back to creation to show what God intended for marriage? Because the Pharisees were using the law to justify divorce, Jesus was pointing out that creation before the fall of man was a higher standard than the law. Now neither the Law of Moses, nor creation is our standard of life, but Christ Jesus who is our life.

4. Vows and Questions

Does 1 Corinthians 6:9 teach that if a divorced person remarries he or she is living in a state of adultery? To answer this question let us look at what constitutes a marriage. Marriage, before God and man, is based on legal documents and wedding vows in almost any nation. Usually, the documents are a record for

man. The vows are to each other before God (because God ordained marriage) with man witnessing the event. The sexual union consummates the vows. However, in different countries customs may be different, but the marriage would be just as valid. A question would arise in view of this. If a person leaves their mate and marries someone else, will God honor the new wedding vows, or does God consider this marriage adultery? To answer this, let us look at an oath between God and man. In Deuteronomy 5:27; and 20:16-17, God gave clear instructions through Moses for Israel to destroy all the people of the land. Deuteronomy 29:12 tells us this was a covenant and an oath made with Israel. In Numbers 21:2 and Joshua 1:16 after hearing all the commands of the Lord, Israel vowed this "all that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go." Did Israel break this oath with God? Joshua. chapter 9, reveals to us that they broke this vow with God by taking another oath with the Gibeonites (they lived in the land) to not put them to death, but let them live. According to their first oath with God they were to destroy them. By human reasoning, one would think that an oath with God being first should supersede their oath with man. However, this was not the case. Later, when Saul was King, God brought a curse, in the form of a famine on Israel, because Saul in his zeal (zeal without knowledge of God's ways) went after the Gibeonites and slew them. Saul did this in order to fulfill the first vow that God made with Israel to destroy all the inhabitants of the land. The reason for the famine was found out when

David inquired of the Lord. God told David the famine was because Saul did not honor the second oath over the first oath. The famine was stayed when the Gibeonites were given seven of Saul's sons to be put to death by hanging (2 Samuel 21:9). In reading Joshua chapter 9, it is clear the Gibeonites tricked Israel by deceiving them into agreeing to the second oath, however, God still honored the second oath over the first.

Are there consequences to broken vows? Broken vows in marriage are very serious and bring chastisement of the Lord to the Christian who will not confess a sin or fault. Also to the one who will not forgive a sin or fault (Matthew 6:14; 1 John 3:14-16).

This is a very heavy matter. David said this when God was dealing with him: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Psalms 34:3-4).

To go back to the first question in 1 Corinthians 6:9, we learn this as we read on. 1 Corinthians 6:11 tells us this "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." This verse tells us that every Christian is washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Has any Christian accomplished this by his works or refraining from sin? The answer is NO! Every Christian is washed, sanctified and justified by the blood of Christ through their faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, the assembly of God's people meeting at Corinth are addressed, as

sanctified saints. In the next 16 chapters, as we read and look at what these saints were doing, we would by human reasoning come to the conclusion they would not inherit the kingdom of God, and were probably not believers at all. However, we know that all of Scripture is true as we read this; "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). It was also true of the Corinthian saints.

When we read the conversation that Jesus had with the woman at the well in the fourth chapter of the gospel of John, we see that Jesus told her she had had five husbands and the man she was living with now was not her husband. In other words, Jesus acknowledged five marriages and noted the difference by pointing out that she was living with someone now out of marriage. Jesus did not say you had one marriage and 'five live-ins'. Jesus acknowledged each marriage as such.

2 Samuel chapter 12 relates to us an event in the life of David. (We find here David, committing adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah who was one of his most loyal subjects). To cover his sin, David then had his trusting friend and most honorable subject Uriah, murdered. David then attempted to hide his deeds. God who sees all things then sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan pointed out to David, that God had given him many wives and would have given him more if David had wanted. Nathan tells David what God had decreed as a penalty on David for this sin (2 Samuel 12:8). David's penalty would not

include taking away any of his wives, including his new wife Bathsheba. But his own household would rise up against him and Bathsheba's son from David would die. In verse 13 David said; "I have sinned." Nathan said to David, God has

put away your sin.

How did God deal with David over this sin? God dealt with David's sin on the basis of pure grace according to David's faith, verse 13. How would the Law of Moses punish this sin? According to Leviticus 20:10, and Deuteronomy 22:22 death both to David and Bathsheba without mercy, was the penalty of the Law of God through Moses. What about before the Law of Moses? It was the same as the penalty in the Garden of Eden, a spiritual death. David lived under the Law of Moses, why was he not judged by it? The answer to this is found in Psalms 32:1-2, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." It is like this; what God forgives, the man of faith cannot condemn. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

If men deal with a man fallen to a sin or fault, and deal with the fallen according to their own fleshly religious ideas, 'woe be to the fallen.' When given a choice between the judgment on him from men or God, David said that he would take the judgment of God "His mercies are great, but let me not fall into the hand of man" (2 Samuel 24:14).

Is there any purpose in this life higher than marriage? In the government, and intuitions of

men, God has made marriage the highest of all. There is in its oneness, something that exceeds all of man's human relationships.

For the Christian who is attempting to walk in faith, grace and truth of Christ, marriage is second. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ must be first. "But this I say brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as thought they had none"

(1 Corinthians 7:29). For the man, the higher place is after the things of Christ; his wife, if a Christian, is to give her influence in the faith over the household and family in like manner (I Peter 3:1-6;1 Timothy 2:9-15). In this place of faith she gives much power to her family to believe the Holy Scriptures.

Is Deuteronomy 24:1-4 for the Christian to follow today? If a person is a Jew, attempting to live under the Law of Moses, it is for him. Because Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is a part of the Law of Moses. If a person is a Christian, the New Testament is the ground of truth concerning this matter. It speaks thus concerning the Law of Moses "the law is not of faith" (Galatians 3:12). Again, it is written, "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Galatians 3:10). The Christian who wants to live by some points of the Law of Moses and not other parts, should again study the book of Galatians or read James 2:10. The Christian either places himself under the Law of Moses, which puts him under the law of sin and death, or he lives by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, and is free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). One thing is for sure; we cannot

mix the two. Scripture, or the Spirit of Christ revealing the grace of God, cannot be used to bring the believer back under the Law of Moses. Condemnation and death is the only result we can count on for sure, if we live by the Law of Moses. Deadness in our own souls and in the assemblies of God's people will be the result.

"But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you" (Hebrews 6:9 JND).

5. Culture or Christ

Sadly, divorce has become a part of the culture in which we live. It is also happening with large number of people in churches today. It would be a rare gathering of believers in our western society untouched by the sins that lead to divorce. It has become an occurrence in the churches, (one leading Christian ministry in marriage counseling has stated that there are more divorces among people in churches than among people not in churches) in our families, in the lives of our friends, in people that we know in everyday life. The question that arises among the saints is, how are we to deal with this among God's people? Is it to be with culture or with Christ?

Culture is a part of the society in which we live. Being human there is a tendency in our nature to equate with whatever cultural or traditions in which we were raised, or in the religious culture of our present circumstances. Our points of understanding many times reflects this view of life and of course, even our understanding of Scripture. This is natural and

not wrong, until we attempt to bring this cultural or human viewpoint into our life of faith, or an assembly of gathered saints. And attempt to pass it off as truth of Scripture without the Scripture. This is done by many of us in small things, but we are not aware of anything we are doing wrong or with bad intentions. Human traditions, culture, dogma, creeds, unwritten creeds, rules, philosophy, psychology, etc., may have their place, but they cannot be used when the plain word of God directs us to faith or action. There is no bigger violation of this than the religious nature of men. That is why the Pharisees could oppose the Christ, and then totally give themselves over to their own religious righteousness to put Him to death. Later they did the same with His followers. Saul, later the Apostle Paul was a good example.

Self-will and religious culture are strongly tied together no matter where one goes. It is a comfortable place for the natural man or the Adamic nature within us.

What is God's answer to this for the Christian? First of all, to agree with the Scripture as to what we are. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit David wrote this: "... Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psalms 39:5). Could this be said of a Christian? Overwhelmingly, Yes, because Adam's nature will always be our human nature while we are still in this human body.

In Romans, chapter 5, starting in verse 6, through 21 two men are presented, both Adams, also in 1Corinthian 15:45. The first Adam has brought only death. The second Adam has

brought only life. Each is the federal head of a race of men. What we are in the first Adam will never change. What we become in the second Adam will change everything. This is not something we can orchestrate; it is a work of God by believing the truth in Christ. We, in our natural man, will always be sinners. We, in Christ will always be without sin. Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 11:13; "If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children..." Jesus was speaking to those whom He loved (John 13:1). Because He loved these sinners, who were His disciples, it did not change what they were in the first Adam. Only the Holy Spirit of God living in the believer could effect this change. In other words, only God Himself could make any of His own righteous. We contribute nothing to this righteousness. Romans 4:6 tells us that any who have the righteousness of God in them possess it by God imputing it to them, without works on their part. In other words, it is a gift of God received by faith alone, without works (Titus 3:5).

What we are in Christ is purely a gift of the grace of God. Beware of any who think they contribute something to their standing before God. Because if lack of sin made us righteous the Pharisees, by their own standard of keeping the law of Moses would surely have been the first ones that were fit for the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul said this of himself as a Pharisee: "concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Philippians 3:6).

For the Christian, Christ and Him alone is our righteousness. We should have a great fear and trembling to think otherwise.

When dealing with this subject of divorce and remarriage our prospective needs light. If we do not deal with this subject with the truth of Scripture, and knowledge of the Lord Jesus in the grace of God, man's religious nature will spring forth to manifest itself. Because of Adam's nature in us, we have no trouble attaching the name of God to our own human righteousness, thoughts and ways.

We have one thing to bring to God, and one thing alone, and that is our sin. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10; Psalms 14:1, 3).

"And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

To sum up these thoughts then, we should understand that there are two pathways to follow. One pathway is culture; the other is faith to the truth taught in Scripture. Culture is for the religious man and the unbelieving world. The truth found in Christ is for the Christian. May the God of all grace give discernment to His own to know the difference. Grace, to all the Lord's own.

D. Neely 1-10-04 revisited 11-22-06

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