

# Mark 10:1-12

## Jesus' Teaching On Divorce

### Introduction:

The problem of divorce in society is nothing new. The issue presented as many challenges in the first century as it does now in the twenty-first century. Today it seems that there are as many views concerning God's law of divorce as there are people worth asking. Within the religious world there are numerous views from no reason for divorce to any reason for divorce as long as there is repentance. The necessity of such a study should not be lost upon us since most people have either been involved in or affected by divorce. Therefore the teachings of Jesus concerning divorce are extremely relevant. In Mark 10 Jesus dealt with the question of divorce.

### First Dialogue (Mark 10:1-9)

#### The question- testing Jesus

Jesus is teaching in the land of Judea and the people are gathered to Him to hear His teaching, as was their custom. The Pharisees approach Jesus in order to test Him. This, of course, is nothing new for the Pharisees have been testing Jesus repeatedly concerning His teachings, looking for a flaw and a way to discredit Him. The Pharisees ask Jesus a question: *"is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* Before we go on in the reading, it is important what Jesus is addressing. Jesus is not giving a full discourse on marriage. Jesus is not giving laws regarding when someone is allowed to remarry. Jesus has been asked if it is lawful to put away a spouse. This is question He is answering: is divorce (putting away) lawful? Thus, the title of the lesson is *"Jesus' Teaching on Divorce"* and not on marriage or remarriage.

#### Jesus' response- law of Moses

Jesus responds to the question by pointing the Pharisees to God's law that was given through Moses. Jesus is not going out on a limb at this point and teaching His view of divorce. Jesus is not saying *"thus says I concerning divorce."* Jesus immediately directs the Pharisees to the scriptures. Let us reflect for a moment that this needs to be our answer concerning this topic or any other spiritual issue. The question is not what does someone say about divorce. The question must always be, *"what do the scriptures say concerning divorce?"* Jesus immediately responds that the people must look for God's authority to answer this question.

#### Pharisees' response- the wrong answer

The Pharisees respond to Jesus that Moses permitted one to write a certificate of divorce and to put her away (divorce) her. This is interesting because it seems that up to this point the Pharisees have now answered their own question. The Pharisees asked if it was lawful to put away. Jesus asked what Moses said and they respond that Moses said they could put away with the certificate of divorcement. With this being the case, I believe we need to consider why this is not the end of the story? Why does not Jesus walk away and say that your question is answered? I believe the answer to this question will help put us on the right track concerning God's law concerning divorce. I propose to you that the Pharisees have given the wrong answer and that is why the teaching of Jesus continues. Nowhere did Moses teach that one could divorce for any reason as long as a certificate of divorce was given.

## Deuteronomy 24:1-4

The only place in the law of Moses that we read about the giving of a certificate of divorcement is in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**. This is what the Pharisees are giving as their answer concerning what Moses' law taught. The Jews had understood **Deuteronomy 24** to be teaching that divorce was lawful for nearly every reason. Jesus is going to correct their understanding of Deuteronomy 24 to make it in harmony with God's law.

First, let us consider **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**. The first three verses are statements of the conditions that might come about and the fourth verse is the remedy when such conditions are met. Unfortunately most of the versions do not do a very good job in showing that these first three verses are conditions. The NIV and NRSV do well in showing this to be the case. Notice the "if" statements: "*if a man marries,*" "*and writes her a certificate of divorce,*" "*if after she leaves,*" "*and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce.*" **Verse 4** tells the people what to do, "*then her first husband is not allowed to marry her again.*"

**Deuteronomy 24** was contingency law. This means that the legislation was given in case such a circumstance came about. Now we would read this and it would seem pretty far-fetched that this would be a problem. But it was a problem and that is why the law was given. As Jesus says in **Mark 10:5**, "*because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this commandment.*" The people were putting away their wives, and after they had married another, they would put them away so that the first husband could have her back. God was putting a stop to this by giving this commandment in **Deuteronomy 24**. Recognize that the people were being hardhearted toward their wives, not hardhearted toward God. We will consider this more later.

Now many have come along and declared that since the woman was allowed to repeatedly remarry in Deuteronomy 24, that anyone who is divorced today is also allowed to remarry for any reason. But this is a horrible flaw in reasoning. There is no permission given in this passage at all. Moses is giving legislation as to what to do if in this situation, not condoning the situation. A similar situation concerning contingency law is found in **Deuteronomy 22:28-29**. "*If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.*" Was Moses teaching that it was okay to seize a woman who is a virgin and rape her as long as you paid fifty shekels of silver and married her later? Of course not! This is legislation given so as to know what to do if the situation arise, just like **Deuteronomy 24**. Moses was not teaching that it was okay for the woman to repeatedly get married. He was simply describing a possible situation.

This type of contingency law is also found in the New Testament. In **1 Corinthians 7:10-11** Paul says, "*Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.*" Is the Lord teaching that divorce is okay as long as you do not remarry? Of course not! The command is to not divorce. The Lord is simply telling us what we must do if we find ourselves in such a circumstance. He is not giving approval to the action. Many times we are doing what the Jews were doing to the law of Moses. The Jews read this passage and said that this means we can divorce and remarry as long as we give her a certificate of divorce. That is not what God was authorizing at all. The Jews understanding of the law concerning divorce needed to be corrected.

This is not the first time that Jesus had to correct the Jews concerning divorce. He had done it earlier in **Matthew 5:31-32**. Notice **verse 31**, "*Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'*" That is not what Moses said, but what the Jewish teachers said.

Jesus corrects their interpretation of **Deuteronomy 24** in verse **32** that divorce for any reason other than sexual immorality commits adultery.

## Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

Jesus is also correcting the Jews interpretation here in **Mark 10** as well. In **Mark 10:6** Jesus now straightens out the Jews concerning God's law on divorce. Jesus says that from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female and said that they were to leave their parents, be joined together, and become one flesh. In verses 8-9 Jesus drives home His point: the two people are no longer two, but are now one flesh. The two have been joined together by God, and what God has joined together, let no man separate. This is the law that was given from the beginning in **Genesis 2** and it is the law that was to be followed by all mankind from creation.

I believe we speak in error when we say that there was a different law concerning divorce under the old covenant than now under the new covenant. While I do not have time to extensively prove this point fully, I want us to consider that the law concerning divorce has never changed. God's law is stated in **Genesis 2**. This is the same law that was in effect under Moses. The Jews had distorted what Moses had said in **Deuteronomy 24** and Jesus now clarifies that law. Jesus is not giving a new teaching here in **Mark 10**, in **Matthew 5** or in **Matthew 19**. Jesus is teaching the law of Moses concerning divorce. The Jews had given the wrong answer to Jesus' question, "*what did Moses command you?*" The Pharisees responded that they could divorce for any reason. Jesus now shows them what Moses commanded and it is the same thing that was commanded in the garden of Eden. There is a consistency in God's law. Paul in **1 Corinthians 7** taught the same thing that Jesus taught in **Matthew 19**, **Matthew 5**, and **Mark 10**, as Moses taught to the people of Israel, as God Himself spoke in **Genesis 2**. This is the same law. Shall we truly suggest and believe that divorce was okay under the old covenant but now is not? The Lord clearly declared through His prophet **Malachi**, "*I hate divorce!*" That has never changed.

Will we suggest and teach that God changed the law of Moses because the people were unwilling to accept God's teaching? Since they had hard hearts, for some reason God decided to be more lenient? That is not the nature of God! People today have hard hearts! Should we suggest that God will be more lenient because of our stubbornness and sinfulness? Of course not, for God does not change His laws because of human stubbornness. Moses gave **Deuteronomy 24** because of the way the men were treating their wives. The contingency law was given to curb their wife-swapping activities. Such actions were not permission to act that way toward their spouses. God's law concerning divorce has not changed and applies to all people under the new covenant, outside of the covenant, under the old covenant, and before the covenants. "*The two shall become one flesh.*" That is the implication of the statement. Yes, "*one flesh*" has a reference to the harmony and unity that must exist in a marriage. Yes, "*one flesh*" has a reference to a uniting in sexual relations. But the primary meaning, as taught to us by Jesus Himself, is that "one flesh" means no divorce. What God joins together, man is not to separate. This is what must be taught more strongly than ever: what God has joined together, we are not separate. It is time, brethren, that we quit talking about divorce and start talking about mending and reconciliation. It is time that we stop looking for loopholes to separate and start looking for ways to love our spouses that caused us to marry the person in the first place.

## Second Dialogue (Mark 10:10-12)

### Disciples' clarification

The disciples enter the house, and it is clear that this teaching shattered what the Jewish leaders had been teaching. The disciples ask Him again about the matter. Now Jesus will be very clear for us. Whoever divorces and marries another commits adultery. Friends, this teaching is as plain as I believe it

can possibly be. This is God's rule: if you divorce and marry someone else you have committed adultery. I believe we need to see that there are two sins that are described: divorce and marrying again. If you divorce and marry another, you have committed adultery. Now some want to ask, "what if I divorce and do not remarry?" Paul dealt with that in **1 Corinthians 7:10** "do not depart." Further, Jesus dealt with it right here, "what God has joined together, let not man separate." Divorce is not lawful and remarriage is not lawful.

### **Exception- Matthew 19:9**

Now you may be asking where the exception clauses are. Are there other rules governing divorce? Yes, there are other teachings, but before we consider them, let us be impressed with the permanency of marriage. Jesus does not speak of marriage as something that is to be taken lightly or consider easy to discard. When we are married, we are married and we are suppose to stay that way. Unfortunately, sin enters into the equation and because of sin and hard hearts, proper marriages and love are not always maintained.

One exception where divorce is allowed is found in Matthew's account of this incident. In **Matthew 19:9** we are told that the cause of sexual immorality is a reason for divorce. If one person has sexual relations with another other than their spouse, the spouse has the right to put the fornicator away for sexual immorality. This is not an exception to be taken lightly. God did not give this exception to create loopholes for hardhearted people to try to take advantage of. I have heard of scenarios where people, know this exception, have intentionally driven their spouse into the arms of another. I do not think this exception would apply those who use this exception in a premeditated fashion to free themselves. The exception is met to be straight forward and applied simply: if your spouse commits fornication, you have the option to put that spouse away.

### **Exception- 1 Corinthians 7:15**

There is one other situation where an exception is given concerning divorce, which is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15. Paul tells us in verse 12 of that chapter that he is dealing with a topic that Jesus did not speak upon. The circumstance is that of a believing spouse being married to an unbelieving spouse. The rule is given in **verses 12-13**, "let him not divorce her" and "let her not divorce him." This is the same law that we have seen from the beginning. Again, Paul, Jesus, Moses and God all agree on the law of divorce. Let there be no divorce for what God has joined together, let not man separate.

However, we are given contingency law again in **verse 15**. "If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases." What situation is Paul describing? It seems the problem in the marriage has arisen over the fact that one is a follower of Christ and the other is not. This has led to such problems that the unbeliever wants a divorce. What is the believer to do? Paul says that the believer can sign the papers and accept the divorce. The believer is, therefore by means of the putting away, no longer bound to the responsibilities of being a spouse to the one who has departed. Notice, the believer is not to depart. This is simply contingency law for if the unbelieving spouse departs.

### **Conclusion:**

Notice that we have not talked about the authority for remarriage. Do not assume too much that once divorced, one has the right to remarriage. Remarriage needs to have authority from God as much as divorce. In **1 Corinthians 7:15** there is not authority for remarriage. Though no longer bound to the duties as a spouse, Paul does not grant the right to remarriage. Verse 11 seems to be in effect: they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled.

In **Matthew 19:9** there is the inference that only the one who puts away the fornicator can remarry. No one else is given the exception. If anyone divorces and remarries it is adultery, except the one who divorces and remarriage because of sexual immorality.

The overriding law of God concerning divorce is that divorce is not to occur. It also should be noted that there are no other exceptions that I am aware of for divorce. Human emotions can be brought in about falling out of love, what a terrible person someone is, how they are an alcoholic, or any other scenario. Though we may think up lots of problems, we have seen the only two reasons given for divorce. This teaches us that we ought to think two or three times before we get married, because marriage is permanent. God has joined you together and that is all there is to it. Let us take marriage seriously and the sin of divorce seriously.

If you have found yourself in this situation, that you have been divorced and remarried not for the cause for sexual immorality, you may be living in an adulterous relationship. I encourage you to study these words of God and let me or another leader here know of your situation so that we can help you find the best way to get back into a right relationship with God.

Lesson adapted from sermon by Brent Kercheville

## **Not Under Bondage (1 Corinthians 7:15): Does the Believer, Whose Unbelieving Spouse Has Departed, Have the Authority to Remarry?**

### **Introduction:**

1. Concerning the issue of divorce and remarriage, **1 Corinthians 7:15** has been the center of disagreement. While there are a couple of things that can be dealt with in this section, the focus of our study is going to deal with this question: does the believer, whose unbelieving spouse has departed, have authority to remarry?

2. As we begin a study, I believe it is always useful to compare the translation to get a feel the possible meanings of a particular passage, especially one of controversy. Consider the translations of this verse by these major versions:

3. *“But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace”* (NKJV). *“But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace”* (NIV). *“And, if the unbelieving doth separate himself--let him separate himself: the brother or the sister is not under servitude in such cases, and in peace hath God called us;”* (YLT). *“But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace”* (ESV). *“But if the husband or wife who isn’t a Christian insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is not required to stay with them, for God wants his children to live in peace”* (NLT). *“But if those who are not believers decide to leave, let them leave. When this happens, the Christian man or woman is free. But God called us to live in peace”* (NCV).

4. As you can see from the translation comparisons, there are some notable differences concerning the translation of “*not under bondage*.” Many versions say, “*not under bondage*.” Some versions say “*is not bound*.” Notice that Young’s Literal Translation says, “*not under servitude*.” The ESV is even stronger saying, “*not enslaved*.” The NLT interprets this as “*not required to stay with them*.” But the NCV moves to the other side of the issue and says, “*is free*.” Do all of these versions mean the same thing? By a simple reading, these versions do not sound the same but instead reflect the various views concerning what the believer is allowed to do if the unbeliever departs. Some versions sound as if one is free to remarry, other versions sound like that remarriage is not even addressed.

## I. Necessary Premises

### A. Generally speaking, all have authority for marriage (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:2)

1. From the beginning God gave authority for all people to marry. **Genesis 2:24** says, “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh*.” In this passage and in Jesus’ words we see that marriage is a right given to all men and women from the very beginning of creation.

2. Paul also stated such words in **1 Corinthians 7:2**, “*Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband*.” Here again we see general authority for every person to be married. However, I would like us to consider by the wording of these passages that the authority is only granted once. This is not authority for marriage as many times as one likes.

3. In **Genesis 2:24** and **Matthew 19:4-6** the teaching is that the two become one flesh and that is for a lifetime. Jesus would say in **Matthew 19:6** that “*what God has joined together, let not man separate*.” Some are trying to teach that according to **Genesis 2:24** there was no prohibition for divorce, but according to Jesus’ teaching it is very clear that divorce was forbidden “*from the beginning*.” Thus, I believe we must establish another premise.

### B. Generally speaking, no one has authority for remarriage (Mark 10:11-12; Matthew 19:9)

1. Jesus said in **Mark 10:11-12** that whoever divorces and marries another commits adultery. The general rule is that there is no authority for remarriage according to the law of God.

2. Jesus also made the same point in the Matthew account, in **Matthew 19:9**. Here Jesus says, “*Whoever, therefore, divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery*.”

3. It should become very clear to us that God has not given us authority to remarry. Unless we are told otherwise by God, we must understand that there is no authority given for remarriage. Divorce and remarriage is declared to be adultery by God. God’s law is to have one spouse for life. These are important principles that we must agree upon before considering the rights to remarriage in any study of divorce and remarriage.

## II. Authority For Divorce?

### A. Contingency law

1. With these principles in mind, let us first consider if God has issued authority for divorce in **1 Corinthians 7:12-16**. Paul gives the command in these verses that a believer is not to depart from an unbeliever. The Christian is to remain with the non-Christian. No authority is given to say that if a believer is married to an unbeliever, that the believer has a right to go and get a divorce. Paul commands them not to divorce.

2. But in **verse 15** Paul is now giving contingency law. We dealt with contingency law in the lesson entitled "*Jesus' Teaching on Divorce*." By way of reminder, contingency law is given by God to tell us what to do to be pleasing to God if a certain situation arises. God is not approving of the situation or justifying the action, but is simply telling man what must be done if the circumstance arises. **Deuteronomy 22:28-29** is a good example of God's contingency law. In **Deuteronomy 22:28-29** we find out what a man is to do if he rapes a woman. God says he must pay 50 shekels of silver, marry the woman, and never separate. Was God saying that is was okay for people to rape as long as they pay the money and get married? Of course not! God was giving legislation for what one is to do if the sinful situation arises.

3. We must recognize that **1 Corinthians 7:15** is contingency law, otherwise Paul is contradicting himself. Paul says that a believer and unbeliever are not to divorce. But now Paul is telling the believer what to do if the unbeliever departs anyway. This is not the situation that God wants, but here is how to act if an unbeliever departs.

### B. "Let him depart"

1. Let us take a moment and realize that Paul is speaking about divorce and not simply a desertion or separation period. Some have understood this section to mean that the unbeliever simply deserts the house and never returns. But an analysis of the Greek will be sure to shed light on the matter.

2. The word Paul uses for "*depart*" is the Greek word *chorizo*. Of course that means nothing to us unless we are fluent in the first century Greek language. What helps us is that this is the same word that Jesus used in **Mark 10:9** and **Matthew 19:6** where Jesus says, "*What God has joined together, let not man separate.*" The word "*separate*" is the same word that Paul used here in **1 Corinthians 7:15**. Jesus of course was addressing the problem of divorce, as we noted in the lesson "*Jesus' Teaching on Divorce*." Paul is also dealing with divorce in this section and describes a situation where the unbeliever is unwilling to live with the believer.

3. Therefore, Paul lays out the condition that may occur: "*if the unbeliever departs*" The unbeliever is leaving the marriage and it is implied by using this Greek word, that the unbeliever is intending to get a divorce because he or she is no longer content to be married to the believer. Paul tells the believer what to do: "*let him depart.*" The divorce is allowed by God. Is God pleased with the divorce? No. Is the divorce what God wanted to happen? No. God desires that marriages stay together, for "*what God has joined together, let no man separate.*"

4. The question then arises in the Christian mind, why is the divorce allowed? Why is the unbeliever allowed to depart? The rest of **verse 15** is the answer to the question. The NKJV says, "*a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.*" This is the reason why the divorce is allowed between the believer and the unbeliever. Some say

that this passage teaches that the believer has the right to be remarried. This is the phrase that we will deal with for the rest of the lesson.

### III. Authority For Remarriage?

#### A. Analyzing the text

1. First, let us just simply read it as we see it in the English language before we consider the Greek implications. As you read this, does it seem that Paul is referring to the bond of marriage between a believer and an unbeliever? Is Paul saying that God allows the divorce to take place between a believer and an unbeliever because the believer and unbeliever were never in the bondage of marriage in these cases? Does this make any sense for Paul to be saying that God allows this divorce to happen because they were never in bondage to each other? Even in our English language this does not make sense. But the Greek is even stronger in what it is saying, which is lost in the English translation.

2. The phrase “*not under bondage*” is in the perfect passive indicative tense of the Greek language. This, of course, does not mean a lot to us. But the perfect passive indicative is a tense which states that something “*is not, was not, and never has been.*” This is important knowledge to understanding this text. Paul is saying, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage, was not under bondage, and never has been under bondage in such cases.

3. Can Paul be referring to the bond of marriage? Can Paul be saying that a believer and an unbeliever is not in the bond of marriage, was not in the bond of marriage, and never has been in the bond of marriage in these cases? Such an understanding would violate **1 Corinthians 7:12-13** that the believer is not to depart from the unbeliever because they are married. A believer and unbeliever are clearly united in the bond of marriage. It is impossible for Paul to be saying these two have never been together in the bond of marriage.

4. To further prove that “*not under bondage*” is not referring to the marriage bond, it is also important for us to know that Paul does not use the word for marriage bond here as he did in **Romans 7**. In **Romans 7:2** we read, “*For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives.*” The word Paul used for “*bound*” is the Greek word *deo*, which means “*to bind, tie, fasten.*” In **Romans 7** it is very clear that Paul is referring to the marriage bond, which Paul argues is in effect until a spouse dies. Please notice in **Romans 7:3** that the marriage bond exists even though someone may divorce and marry another. The person who does such is an adulteress for he or she is still bound to the husband.

5. Paul did not use the Greek word *deo* referring to the marriage bond in **1 Corinthians 7:15**. Instead, Paul used the Greek word *douloo* which means “*to make a slave of.*” Therefore, the ESV is the most literal and most correct when it reads, “*In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved.*” When we read this text we need to see that Paul is saying to let the unbeliever depart because the believer is not, was not, and never has been enslaved. This should open our eyes again, for where in the scriptures does God describe marriage as slavery? Enslaved is the word that is used in **1 Corinthians 7:15** and is clearly not speaking about the bond of marriage.

6. So we must ask, what is Paul referring to in regards to the believer not being, was not, and never has been enslaved, so that the divorce is accepted by God? I believe that there is only one logical conclusion. In **verses 13-14** Paul has told the believer that God’s laws demand that he or she stay married to the unbeliever. The marriage is not to be put asunder. Everything is to be done to keep the marriage intact and for the unbeliever to not depart (for who knows whether



in time you will be able to save your spouse—verse 16). However, the believing spouse is not obligated to renounce their faith, sacrifice their convictions in Christ, and continue to keep the obligations of marriage who demands such. Therefore a believer is not, was not, and never has been enslaved to any laws that would demand a believer to give up or sacrifice their faith in God.

7. As we can see, Paul is not speaking about remarriage at all. Paul is not referring to the marriage bond at all. Further, if Paul were giving a right to the believer to remarry, what does it mean that “*God has called us to peace?*” Being called to peace has nothing to do with remarriage. Instead, Christians are called to peace in that a Christian is to remain with a non-Christian. However, if the non-Christian will not stay, you cannot try to make them stay by sacrificing God. To be at peace with God and men, the believer is to keep their faith in Christ and let the discontent unbeliever leave.

8. This is the basis for why we must understand that Paul is not teaching that “*not under bondage*” means that there is a right to remarry. Paul is not discussing remarriage. Paul is explaining why the unbeliever is allowed to have the divorce from the believer. There are more reasons, though I believe this explanation is the most important, why “*not under bondage*” is not referring to the right to remarriage.

## **B. Authority for remarriage is not implicitly nor explicitly stated**

1. Nowhere in this text does Paul speak about anyone going and getting remarried. Paul does not say that there is a right for anyone in this situation to be remarried. To say that remarriage is authorized is to read something into the text that is not stated nor implied. Someone must come to this passage desiring to prove something to suggest that this teaches remarriage.

2. Understanding this, we must go back to our original premises established by God. Our second point was that no one has authority for remarriage. This is the general rule given by God, unless an exception is stated otherwise. We must accept this as the rule, and Paul gives no exceptions here. If Paul had given an exception, he would have been in conflict with the teaching of Christ. Paul would have authorized remarriage where Jesus had not. From the beginning, God teaching on marriage and divorce has been the same (see the lesson Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce). Moses, Jesus, and Paul all taught the same thing and there is no conflict between them in regards to divorce and remarriage.

## **C. Accepting that Paul gave right to remarriage means that there are different marriage laws**

1. This is, of course, what many teach and want us to believe. There are those who teach that unbelievers are not under the same marriage laws as believers. To argue against this position is not the scope of our lesson, but we will deal with this argument in a future lesson. What we must recognize as fact is if remarriage is authorized here, then there are different marriage laws for believers and unbelievers. I do not believe this to be the truth and will prove so in future lessons.

2. Second, to accept that Paul gave the right of remarriage to the believer is to say that there are different marriage laws to different believers. If two believers are married, no one can divorce with the right to remarry unless sexual immorality is committed. However, if a believer marries an unbeliever, not only can the believer divorce and remarry for sexual immorality, but the believer can remarry if the unbeliever gets a divorce. Will we accept that there are

different marriage laws for some believers than others? This cannot be so, for God does not show partiality (**Acts 10:34**). The rights to marriage, divorce, and remarriage must be the same for all believers.

#### **D. Accepting that Paul gave right to remarriage means he contradicted himself**

1. In **1 Corinthians 7:10-11** Paul taught that a wife is not depart from her husband and a husband is not to depart from his wife. If divorce does happen, Paul says that they must remain unmarried or be reconciled. Did Paul contradict himself four verses later? But now Paul is saying that it is possible to remarry as long as you married an unbeliever?

2. Again these things do not make sense and would demand for us to recognize that there are different marriage laws, which the scriptures do not uphold. I will have to ask for your patience that I prove these things in the future, but let me set the proposition out there for you.

3. Will we accept that Paul gives no rights to remarriage to those who marry other Christians, but for some reason if a Christian marries a non-Christian, the Christian suddenly has a right of remarriage? Where is the logic in such a position? Why would God penalize two believers who are married? Why would God be lax if marrying unbelievers? The wise thing for Christians would be to marry unbelievers so if it did not work out, no Christian would be stuck. Christians could remarry all they wanted if they were put away. Why would this be an acceptable conclusion? Why would God encourage the marriage between believers and unbelievers?

#### **Conclusion:**

1. These are the reasons why Paul did not give a right to remarriage when an unbeliever leaves a believer. First, the subject matter does not concern remarriage. Second, the bondage that is being spoken of is something where the believer is not, was not, and never has been enslaved, which cannot refer to the bond of marriage. Third, Paul used a different word for bondage than the marriage bond in **Romans 7:2** suggesting that Paul was speaking about something else. Fourth, remarriage is never explicitly stated nor implied. Fifth, to accept such a position means that there are not only different marriage laws for Christians and non-Christians, but that there are also different marriage laws for Christians. Sixth, to accept such a position means that God acts more favorably toward those who marry unbelievers by giving them rights to remarriage that other believers do not have.

2. These are the strong reasons why Paul could not have been giving authorization for remarriage to believers whose unbelieving spouse has left. I encourage you to open your heart and study these things to see whether they are so.

Lesson adapted from sermon given by Brent Kercheville

## **Are Unbelievers Under Christ's Marriage Laws?**

### **Introduction:**

There are many positions concerning God's legislation on divorce and remarriage. One of the popular positions today that continues to gain more followers is that the law of Christ on marriage, given in **Matthew 19:9**, only applies to two Christians. The position further states that the law of Christ concerning marriage does not apply to mixed marriages (a believer who marries an unbeliever) nor does

the law apply between two non-Christians. The fancy statement of this position is that non-Christians are not amenable or responsible to the law of Christ. Since **Matthew 19** and **1 Corinthians 7** do not apply to non-Christians, the position contends that an unbeliever can divorce and remarry repeatedly without committing adultery. Further, when that unbeliever comes to Christ, it is at that time that the unbeliever, who is now a believer, becomes amenable to Christ's marriage laws and therefore can keep their current spouse (regardless of past marriages or circumstances) once they are a Christian. From then point on, they are not allowed to divorce and remarry except for sexual immorality. This position has been made popular by E.C. Fuqua, James Bales, and Homer Hailey.

Allow me a moment to explain the logic behind this position. In the days of the Old Testament we see in the scriptures that there were two laws given. The obvious law that we know of is the law of Moses. The law of Moses was only given to the Jews (**Deuteronomy 5:1-3**). The Gentiles were also under law but not under the law of Moses. We know that there was law to the Gentiles because without law there is no sin (**Romans 5:13**). It is clear from Romans 1 that they had transgressed law because they are condemned in sin by Paul, showing their need for a Savior from their sins. This law has been called various things throughout time. Some have called this law to the Gentiles the "Adamic law" (**Romans 5:14**). From **Romans 8:2** this law to the Gentiles has also been called "the law of sin and death." In most cases, this law to the Gentiles has been called "universal moral law." Up to this point, there is no reason for argument, for we must accept that Gentiles are under law (whatever name one chooses to call it) and the Jews were under the law of Moses.

The question comes down to this: When Christ came and brought His new covenant, did Christ's covenant remove both the law of Moses and the law of sin and death, or only the law of Moses? If Christ's law only removed the law of Moses, then the universal moral law is still in place against those who are unbelievers. If Christ removed both laws, then both believers and unbelievers are amenable to the law of Christ, and therefore must obey Christ's marriage laws. This is the issue presented before us.

As we go into this study, I want to be honest with you and tell you that I am not sure which scenario is correct. There are extremely good arguments on both sides as to whether unbelievers are under the law of Christ or not. But I do want to positively declare to you that the answer is not needed to know what law unbelievers are under concerning marriage. I have argued before that the laws of marriage have always been the same since Genesis 2 and have not changed to this very day. I intend to prove this by showing that the unbeliever is under the same marriage law whether under Christ's law or under the law of sin and death.

## Unbelievers Are Under the Law of Christ

### Christ's teaching on marriage

In **Matthew 19:9** it is very clearly taught by Christ that there is only one lawful reason for a divorce and remarriage, and that is for the cause of fornication. All other acts of divorce and remarriage are condemned as adultery. Therefore, if we can prove that unbelievers are under the law of Christ, then it is easy to show that unbelievers can only divorce and remarry for the cause of fornication. The following points are arguments presented to show that unbelievers are under the law of Christ.

### Amenable to one part of the law is amenability to all the law

This is probably one of the strongest arguments in proving that unbelievers are under the law of Christ. In **Galatians 5:3** Paul says, "*I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*" James argues the same point in **James 2:10**, "*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.*" What can be understood by

these passages is that if you are obligated to keep one law, then you are obligated to keep all the laws. What law can we show that unbelievers are to keep that is of the law of Christ? The most obvious law is the command to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. This is a law that was issued by Christ and it is under His covenant that this salvation is offered. Therefore, if unbelievers are accountable to this law given by Christ, they are also accountable for all the other laws given by Christ. Therefore, if baptism is to be obeyed by unbelievers, the marriage laws as well as the laws against murder, stealing, and drunkenness are also to be observed by unbelievers. Unbelievers are obligated to keep the whole law of Christ.

## Jesus applied His law to everyone, not to Christians

Furthering the power of this argument, let us turn our attention to **Matthew 19:9**. Was Jesus speaking to Christians when He gave these laws of marriage? No, Jesus was speaking to Jews, those under the old covenant. Therefore, we cannot simply say that the laws of Jesus were only given to Christians, because these laws were actually a clarification of Moses' law concerning marriage. Be that as it may, in **Matthew 19:9**, who does Jesus apply this law to? Notice how the command begins, "whoever." Jesus brought in everyone under this law. If you are a "whoever," then this law applies to you. "*Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.*" This is a law given to Christians, to Jews, to Gentiles, to all people. Therefore, many argue that not only the law of Moses, but also the law of sin and death, were taken away at the cross and the law of Christ is to rule all people. Since the law of Christ rules all people, then all people are under His marriage laws and **Matthew 19:9** applies to all.

## Law of Sin and Death (Universal Moral Law) Contains Marriage Laws

### Considering the alternative

However, let us consider the possibility that the law of sin and death is still in effect against those who are unbelievers. Homer Hailey for the first three-quarters of his book makes very persuasive arguments to show that the law of sin and death is still in effect to unbelievers. I will let you spend your own time in studying whether the law of sin and death is still in effect. But allow me to show you a couple of passages which seem to suggest such. In **Romans 8:2** we read, "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*" This seems to teach that one is under the curse and condemnation of the law of sin and death. But when one becomes obedient to Christ, they are made free from that law and are now under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. **Verse 3** of this passage continues that it is this law that condemns us, but it is the law of Christ that gives us life and frees us. **Romans 5** also argues such a point. In **Romans 5:19** we see that we are all under the same condemnation of law because we have all disobeyed the law of sin and death just as Adam did. While not trying to necessarily prove this to be the truth, I want us to recognize that the option is very viable, logical, and scriptural and it is not an argument from left field.

If this be the case, the proponents of this position believe they have us on the matter of divorce and remarriage. If the law of sin and death is still in effect for the unbelievers, the proponents of this position show the necessity of realizing that unbelievers are not under the law of Christ concerning marriage. Instead, unbelievers are under the law of sin and death concerning marriage. Proponents further teach that there is no condemnation of adultery in the law of sin and death. The question we must ask ourselves is this: does the law of sin and death, or universal moral law, contain laws concerning marriage? I believe that the law of sin and death contains the same marriage laws and I will spend the rest of this lessons proving this point.

## Laws condemning violating marriage covenant

There are many places in the scriptures where we learn about the Gentiles violating law. Since the Gentiles were violating law and they were not under the law of Moses, we must assume they violated the law of sin and death. If we know the violations of the law, then we can know what were commands contained in that body of law.

In **Romans 1:20-32** Paul describes the violations of the Gentiles. In **verse 25** we see that idolatry was forbidden under universal moral law. In **verses 26-28** we learn that homosexuality was forbidden. Consider all of the other laws that were given by God to the Gentiles as revealed in **verses 29-32**. The Gentiles were commanded to not covet, not be malicious, not envy, not murder, not be deceitful, not to be backbiters, not to be proud or violent, not to be disobedient, and to be trusting, loving, forgiving, and merciful. Do these laws sound similar to the law of Christ? I hope we see that these are the same laws. Further, **Romans 1:29** identifies sexual immorality as a sin of the Gentiles. The word Greek work for sexual immorality is *porneia*, which means unlawful sexual relations, including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality. All sexual laws are covered in this word “sexual immorality.” From this we can see that the law of sin and death, or universal moral law, contained the same marriage laws because the same condemnation of adultery and fornication is given.

This point is more clearly seen in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. Paul says that fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, and so on will not inherit the kingdom of God. Notice carefully **verse 11**, “*and such were some of you.*” How could the Gentiles of Corinth have previously been adulterers if there was no law against adultery given to them? How could they be fornicators if there was no law in the universal moral law calling this a sin? It is clear that these were laws against the Gentiles and therefore contained in universal moral law so that the Corinthians needed to be washed, sanctified, and justified (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). The same laws for violating the marriage covenant were given to the Gentiles.

## From the beginning, marriage law has been given to all

This point is also the thrust of Jesus’ words in **Matthew 19**. In Matthew 19 what law does Jesus refer to as the marriage law to all men? Jesus does not teach the law of Moses so that it could be argued that this law was only to the Jews. Instead, Jesus goes to the marriage law given at the beginning in **Genesis 2** and shows that Moses’ law is the same as the law given in the beginning. Moses’ law, Christ’s law, and even the things taught by Paul in **1 Corinthians 7** all fit together as the same law given by God in Genesis 2. This is one marriage covenant that has never changed.

The laws of marriage were given in the very beginning and have not be altered or amended. Jesus teaches that marriage is from the beginning. Were Adam and Eve Jews? No, the promise of the nation did not come until Abraham. Were Adam and Eve Christians? No, since Christ had not come yet. In a very general sense, Adam and Eve were Gentiles. Adam and Eve stand before the law of Moses and before the law of Christ. Jesus teaches that the marriage law given to them is universal in nature and applies to everyone. Marriage is not Jewish law or Christian law, but divine law given to all mankind, regardless of the covenant relationship they are in.

God’s law in **Genesis 2**, though not explicitly stated, had the same effects as the explicit teaching of Christ. When God said He made them male and female and the two become one flesh, He implicitly prohibited divorce, adultery, homosexuality, and polygamy. Jesus explicitly taught this in Matthew 19 as well as Paul in **1 Corinthians 7**. God’s marriage law of Genesis 2 applies to all men, in the covenant and outside the covenants of God.

## John the Baptist condemnation of Herod based upon the law of sin and death

I would like us to make another consideration concerning what was contained in the law of sin and death, or the universal moral law. In **Mark 6:17-18** we find that Herod had married Philip's wife, Herodias. John the Baptist preached against this to Herod, "*it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.*" Herod was clearly a Gentile, in fact the lineage of the Herods came from Idumea, which were Edomites. With Herod being a Gentile, not being under the law of Moses and Christ's law not being established yet since Christ had not died, what law was Herod under? It seems clear by now that Herod was under the law of sin and death, or universal moral law. How could John say to Herod that it was not lawful for Herod to have his brother's wife?

The only answer is that the law Herod was under, the law of sin and death, contained marriage laws that prohibited the actions he took. Once we admit that there are marriage laws governing the Gentiles, it takes but a moment to realize that the marriage law they are under is the same as the marriage laws given by Christ that believers are under. Why couldn't Herod have Herodias as a wife? Herod could not have Herodias because Herodias was still the wife of Philip and was still bound to him.

The point that I hope we are all realizing is that simply because one is an unbeliever does not mean that one can divorce and remarry without committing adultery. To suggest that unbelievers are not under marriage laws or that unbelievers cannot commit adultery is to completely ignore the scriptures. The scriptures repeatedly condemn the Gentiles for adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and other sexual sins. Therefore they are also under the marriage laws of God and have violated those laws.

Let us also consider a logical point as well. If the laws of marriage were not given to the Gentiles, are not contained in the law of sin and death, and do not apply to unbelievers, then unbelievers have no authority for marriage. If unbelievers are not under God's marriage laws, then they have no authority for marriage and therefore sin when they do marry. To act without authority is sin, as John tells us that sin is lawlessness (**1 John 3:4**). Lawlessness is to act where there is no law or authority. How do we know that unbelievers have the right to marriage? They have the right to marriage because all people are given the right to marriage in **Genesis 2**, and therefore all people are under God's marriage law. Therefore, all men and women are commanded and expected to obey God's marriage law.

## Conclusion:

The point I want to us to realize is whether unbelievers are under the law of Christ or under the law of sin and death is really of no consequence in regards to the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In either case, unbelievers are under the same marriage laws as believers. Unbelievers are either under the law of Christ, in which it clear that they are to obey Christ's marriage laws, or unbelievers are under the law of sin and death, which we have shown also contains the same marriage laws. Therefore, unbelievers can commit adultery and violate God's marriage laws. When that is done, they are to repent of those sins along with their other sins when they come to Christ. An unbeliever is not allowed to remain in a sinful situation by keeping a spouse that is not lawful to have according to the law of God. Unbelievers cannot divorce and remarry as much as they choose and then come to Christ and keep their latest spouse. They have violated the marriage covenant and Jesus and Paul said that if one divorces and remarries other than for the cause of sexual immorality, they commit adultery. They are not to be married because it is not lawful for them to be joined. If a spouse divorces for any reason other than sexual immorality, that spouse must remain unmarried or be reconciled (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**).

# "Remain In The Calling You Were Called" ( Are Adulterous Marriages Sanctified Through Baptism?)

## Introduction:

1. Tied very closely to the last lesson "*Are Unbelievers Under Christ's Marriage Laws?*" is this next question: are adulterous marriages sanctified through baptism? If we accept that when the unbeliever divorces and remarriage for any reason except sexual immorality (which we must accept based upon the last lesson), then some argue that when the unbeliever is baptized the sin of adultery is washed away and the marriage can now remain intact.
2. In this lesson we will consider the arguments for this position. Does baptism wash away the sins of adultery so that a once adulterous relationship is now sanctified and acceptable to God? Let us first consider the arguments.

## The Arguments:

1. Baptism washes away sins (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). The first argument that is usually presented is that all sins, regardless of the nature or severity of the sins, are washed away at baptism. To further illustrate this point, Paul's words in **2 Corinthians 5:17** are quoted, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" Therefore, since all things have been created new, this would also include a new believer's marriage. Even if it was sinful beforehand, God has now made it new in baptism and the marriage is sanctified by God.
2. Remain in the calling (**1 Corinthians 7:17-24**). Further, the position goes on to argue that in **1 Corinthians 7:17-24**, in a chapter talking about marriage, Paul says in **verse 20** and **verse 24** to "*remain in the calling in which one was called.*" Therefore, in whatever condition you find yourself in when you come to Christ, one is to remain in the condition. The point being that if you came to Christ with an unlawful spouse at the time, when baptized Paul now says to remain in the calling, meaning to keep your current spouse and not to put them away.
3. No evidence of Christians being taught to put away spouses. The position further argues that we never read of any situation where Jesus or the apostles preached for people to put away their adulterous marriages. They tell us to consider all the immoral situations that these people would find themselves in, like in Corinth where sexual immorality ran rampant. They argue, if God wanted Christians to put away their spouses, don't you think there would be a command to do so or an example in the New Testament of Christians doing such? Since there is no such instance, the position argues that we are wrong for telling those who would come to Christ that their marriages are adulterous and they must separate them. This position states that God accepts the marriages because they have been cleansed through baptism. Let us spend the remainder of our time showing why these arguments are false.

## I. "Baptism Washes Away Sins" Argument

### A. Can we continue in sin? (Romans 6:1-2)

1. I agree that baptism washes away all sins, no matter how vile in nature or how severe the sin may be. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven by God. Jesus' sacrifice removed all sins from us when we were buried with Him in baptism (Romans 6:4). When someone who currently has an adulterous marriage is baptized for the forgiveness of sins and submits one's life to God, I believe that the sin of adultery is washed away.

2. However, if that baptized person then goes back home and continues to be in a marriage that God has said is unlawful and is adultery according to **Matthew 19:9**, then the person is committing adultery again. Yes, he or she may have been forgiven for the past sins of adultery, but if the person continues to violate God's law, they have new sins they have placed upon themselves.
3. This is the very point that Paul made in **Romans 6:1-2**. Paul said, "*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*" Paul says that simply because we have had our sins forgiven does not mean that we are allowed to continue sinning. In fact, we are to be dead to sin and alive to God (**Romans 6:11**).

## B. Repentance, which is necessary for salvation, is the ceasing of sin

1. We must understand what it means to repent from our sins. We usually give a simple definition of turning our back to sin or changing our mind and purpose against committing those sins again. This is the very basic understanding of what repentance is all about. Repentance is about changing one's life to serve God and follow His laws. How can one go on living in the sin of adultery and expect their to be forgiveness of sins?
2. Now what the proponents of this view want us to believe is that adultery was in the act of divorce and remarriage alone. Therefore, one can repent of breaking the marriage covenant and dedicate their mind and purpose to never divorce and remarry again. But this is not and never has been the pure meaning of the word "*adultery*." Jesus commanded in **Matthew 5:28**, "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" Did Jesus mean that the person is lusting for a divorce or for sexual relations? Of course Jesus is speaking about unlawful sexual relations.
3. When Jesus says that adultery is committed when someone divorces and remarries for any reason except for fornication, He is not only referring to the breaking of the marriage covenant, but also what is entailed in the remarriage, which is sexual relations. To make adultery mean only covenant breaking is to redefine the meaning of adultery. Adultery means unlawful sexual relations with someone other than your spouse. To repent from this, one should not only change their mind against divorcing and remarrying unlawfully, but must also cease the unlawful marriage union.
4. Someone who is married to someone else unlawfully is committing adultery. Repentance is not in saying that I will never divorce and remarry again. That is nice, but the person is still committing adultery by remaining married unlawfully. To say that repentance is possible without the putting away of the adulterous marriage is to redefine adultery or not know the meaning of repentance. Adultery can only be stopped by the ending of the unlawful sexual relations and the ending of the unlawful marriage. Otherwise, Jesus' words in **Matthew 19:9** are void and have no effect.

## C. Baptism never makes unlawful actions lawful

1. Where can we go in the scriptures to show that an unlawful, sinful activity becomes righteous before God after baptism? Where can one go to prove that something condemned against the unbeliever is sanctified if the believer performs the same act?
2. How can a marriage, which is defined by Jesus as adulterous in **Matthew 19:9**, no longer be adulterous because of baptism? Baptism never takes a sinful activity and makes it non-sinful or sanctified. That which is sin before coming to Christ is still sin after coming to Christ. Where did God change His laws on what is sinful and what is not sinful? Suppose you believe that the unbeliever is under different law, the universal moral law, God's definitions for what is sin and what is not sin are still the same. If you do not think



so, read **Romans 1:20-32** and **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. God's laws for what is sinful and what is not sinful is the same to the believer as it is to the unbeliever. There is no scriptural authority to teach or believe otherwise.

3. Consider **Romans 7:1-3**. When was the woman no longer called an adulteress? Was it when someone was baptized? Paul does not say so. Adultery only stops when the one who the person is bound to by marriage dies. Other than that action, adultery continues. By the way, this is a place where we see someone described in a continual condition of adultery. As long as the woman remained with the unlawful man, she was to be called an adulterous. The only way that could be stopped would be for her to no longer be married to the unlawful spouse or for the one who she was bound to pass away. Otherwise she remains an adulterous and baptism does not change that condition.

#### D. What is true for adulterers is also true for other sexual sins

1. Consider this point with me and we will make it many times in this study. If someone who is baptized is allowed to keep their unlawful spouse because it is somehow sanctified, why can't the homosexual keep their partner or spouse? Let that question sink into your minds for a moment because the implications are very important.
2. If someone can remain in an adulterous marriage, why can't someone remain in a homosexual relationship? You may say that it is different, but how? Adultery is unlawful and so is homosexuality. If one becomes lawful at baptism, why doesn't the other? If we can accept adulterous marriages, then we must accept homosexual relationship once they are baptized! Are you ready to accept that? If you accept adulterers, you must also accept those who practice homosexuality, bestiality, lesbianism, and polygamy. If one is sanctified, they are all sanctified at baptism. I hope that we can see that these things are unlawful to the unbeliever and to the believer. No one is allowed to continue in these sins or in any other sin.

## II. "Remain In Your Calling" Argument

### A. Paul speaks of lawful situations

1. In answering this argument we must realize that Paul is describing lawful situations and circumstances. For example, in **verses 18-19** Paul describes circumcision and uncircumcision. Both of these conditions are lawful to God. In **verse 21** Paul describes those in the condition of being slaves and those who are free. Both of these conditions are lawful to God. Paul is describing things that are lawful, or "*in the Lord.*"
2. Can we apply these words to adultery? Is being in an adulterous marriage or in a non-adulterous marriage both lawful to God? Are these conditions that do not matter to God? If so, why did Jesus and the apostles repeatedly condemn adultery? Adultery is not a lawful condition to be in with God.
3. Paul is not teaching here that whatever sinful situation you find yourself in to remain in that calling. Can we apply this to the murderer, whose calling it is to kill the innocent? Shall we say to them to remain in the calling in which they were called? Of course not. We would not apply these words to any sinful activity, for one to remain in such a calling. To do so violates what acts of repentance are all about. However, some want to apply these words to all marriages. But it cannot be for not all marriages are lawful to God.

## **B. Specifically, this is proof that believer is to remain with unbeliever**

1. Further, consider the context careful in **1 Corinthians 7**. What is the last situation Paul has described? In **verses 12-16** we see that Paul is speaking to believers who are married to unbelievers. What has Paul commanded in those verses? Paul has commanded neither spouse is to depart from one another.
2. **Verses 17-24** are simply a continuation of that argument. There is nothing in the passage that shows that he is arguing a different point or a different condition. To remain in the calling is proof for the believer to remain with the unbeliever. There is nothing more that Paul is proving with this argument. Many make far too much out of these words, applying them to all marriages, when Paul did not apply them to all marriages.

## **C. What is true for the adulterers is also true for other sexual sins**

1. Again, let us also consider that what applies to the adulterers also applies to others who commit sexual sins. If those who are living in adultery can continue with their spouses, why cannot those who are practicing in homosexual relationships continue with their partners and spouses? Why can't they *"remain in the calling in which they were called?"*
2. You see, Paul said those words to those in lawful relationships, not those who were in unlawful relationships. To apply these words to those who continue to practice sin does violence to the rest of the scriptures. Applying these words to unlawful relationships removes the need for repentance and says that anyone can remain in their sins if that is "their calling." The scriptures simply do not teach this and this position misapplies Paul's words.

## **III. "No Evidence of Christians Being Told to Put Away Spouses" Argument**

### **A. Does silence make things lawful?**

1. Since when does silence give authority for action? Silence authorizes nothing. Silence is just that...silence. If silence gives authority, then we can have rock and roll bands, give away prizes, hold raffles, play bingo, throw Super Bowl parties and have other such acts as worship.
2. The question cannot be if we see Christians putting away spouses or not. If we look for this kind of authority, then we must also look for an example of a fornicator who quits fornicating, a thief who quits stealing, an idolater who stops worshipping other gods and so on before we would know to not practice such things. How do we know not to do these things? Because they are declared by God to be unlawful. The question must be: Is the action lawful or unlawful? The answer to this will tell us what to do. If an act is unlawful, whatever act it may be, it must stop.

### **B. What is true for the adulterers is also true for other sexual sins**

1. Let me use this argument one more time: where do we see the homosexual told to end their homosexual relationships with their partners or spouses? Since we do not see such, does this mean that homosexual relationships are lawful? No, we know that is not the

case. Why not? Because God condemned homosexuality in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. This is in the very same passage Paul also condemned adultery.

2. What is made lawful for one sexual sin is made lawful for all sexual sins. Can the polygamist keep their multitudes of spouses? Can a person keep a relationship with animals? If the adulterer can, so can these. We must see that all these are condemned by God. Though we do not see examples of people ending these relationships, since these actions are condemned by God, we must understand that to be right with God is to end sinful activities.

### **C. Herod's unlawful wife (Mark 6:17-18)**

1. In **Mark 6:17-18** we see John the Baptist preach that it was not lawful for Herod to have Herodias as a wife. The reason why is that she was still Philip's wife. Would this incestuous, adulterous marriage have been lawful if Herod had been baptized and become a Christian? Who would believe such a thing? Do you think John told Herod that if he would be baptized that the marriage would then be okay?
2. The only thing Herod was supposed to do was to not have Herodias as a wife. It was not lawful. To end the unlawful marriage, Herod and Herodias were to separate. There is no other alternative.

### **D. The example of the people of Israel (Ezra 9-10)**

1. Finally, the people of Israel in the days of Ezra are an excellent example for what one is to do in an unlawful marriage. In **Ezra 9**, Ezra has lamented and preached to the people that God had forbidden that they marry foreign wives. The people had done so anyway. Ezra is praying on behalf of the people for their grievous sins.
2. In **chapter 10** of Ezra, when the people realize that their marriages were unlawful, what did they decide to do? They put away those foreign wives, even though they had children in those marriages. The people understood that if the marriage was unlawful, they had no right to remain in the marriage.
3. Why can we not see this same principle today? If a marriage is unlawful, we have no right to remain in it. It is unlawful regardless of feelings and emotions that we may have. It is unlawful regardless of families and children. What is sin is sin and we cannot continue in sinful things. Therefore the people put away their unlawful spouses.

### **Conclusion:**

1. What is sin before baptism is still sin after baptism. We have been called to be new creatures and to no longer live in sin. *"How can we who died to sin still live in it?"* (**Romans 6:2**). It does not matter what sin we are talking about, all sin must be stopped to be a true disciple of Christ.
2. While these words may be hard for us to accept, we must put above our emotions the need to serve God. That is our primary focus. We can put ourselves in a lot of bad circumstances and situations. We must obey God to untangle ourselves from the web of sin and become servants of God.

Lesson adapted from sermon by Brent Kercheville