

Divorce and Remarriage

I. Not Sanctioned by God

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. Matthew 19:3-11

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

- The Pharisees were questioning the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1. Jesus clearly states here, “no divorce.” He showed them that the clause in Deuteronomy was to make protective provision for the mishandled wife of a man who would divorce her regardless of what was right. The “exception clause” can easily be interpreted to be speaking of the betrothal period before the Jewish wedding or an illicit relationship as described in Leviticus 17-18. The exception clause should not be used as a tool to allow divorce. The very clear teaching of “what God hath joined together let not man put asunder” need not be challenged by this less clear exception. Jesus did not use the word adultery but rather fornication. These words are different in the Greek and shed light on the whole issue.

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

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. Luke 16:18

- In these non-Jewish gospels, Jesus clearly teaches no divorce and no exception is mentioned.

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

- Here Paul declares what Jesus taught concerning divorce and remarriage and he mentions no exception clause. Only two options are provided - be reconciled or remain unmarried.

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. I Corinthians 7:12-15

- Even here, where Paul gives “his” insight, he is in favor of no divorce even in the situation of a believer and unbeliever being married. Being “not under bondage” need not be interpreted “go get a divorce.” The context could well call for an exhortation to the believer to not feel indebted or guilty toward God, because if they have tried to keep their lost spouse and failed God would not hold them responsible, yet no provision is made to remarry.

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

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. Malachi 2:14-16

- Where is the exception here? There is none. God hates divorce.

II. Forgiveness Promised by God

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:7

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9

- Though a person may have been divorced and remarried, they can be forgiven by God if they confess their sin to the Lord. They should not be divorced from their present partner, and there are certain areas of ministry they cannot be involved in, but they can certainly be used of God.