

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

By Ron Boatwright

Marriage was the first institution, which God established in the beginning for all of mankind. Since God is its author, God has given the regulations to govern it. Concerning marriage, Jesus said in Matthew 19:5-6, "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." Marriage is a lifelong commitment. Marriage is one man, for one wife, for life.

A proper observance of the principle of "shall be one flesh" will solve most every problem in the marriage relationship. Each will treat their spouse, as they would treat their own flesh. When a man and woman marry the union is spoken of as "what God hath joined together." Marriage is a covenant made with both God and one's spouse.

When two people marry they are bound together by God for as long as the other shall live. As we read in 1 Corinthians 7:39, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." God placed strong protective laws around the home. Marriage is sacred and holy, because God instituted marriage, not man. In our permissive age, let us hold fast to the sacredness of marriage and the home. Our wedding vows must be "for better, for worse, till death us do part". The Bible clearly spells out exactly what our Lord expects of us in marriage. Man cannot put marriage asunder except at the risk of his own soul.

With the moral decay in our society, our children are growing up where respect for marriage is declining and the divorce rate has become an epidemic. In the United States today the divorce rate is about 53%. This means that for every couple who get married, they will more likely get a divorce than stay married. The divorce problem in our society has also crept into the church. This is a tragedy! It is impossible to get a divorce without sin being involved.

Divorce wrecks God's purpose in marriage. What does God think of divorce? In Malachi 2:13 God is telling Israel why He is not going to accept their worship. Their worship to God had become vain. Why? God says in Malachi 2:14, "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." Then God says in Malachi 2:16, "For the Lord God of Israel, saith that he hateth the putting away." God never intended for a married couple to divorce. The reason for divorce is selfishness.

In the above scripture we see, when two people get married, a covenant is made and God is witness to it. So when one gets a divorce, he breaks that covenant. But what does God's word say about covenant breakers? In Romans 1:31-32 we read, "Without understanding, **covenant breakers**, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." It is sinful to break the marriage covenant with a divorce. Those who break the marriage covenant will be subject to the judgment of God and be worthy of death, unless they repent.

Even if the two divorce, they continue to be bound to each other and the obligations God placed them under when they married. 1 Corinthians 7:39 says, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth". Marriage is a sacred and very serious undertaking. To vacate a marriage is to ignore what God says and flaunt our sacred responsibilities. Most divorces end up with either one or both spouses remarrying someone else and living in an adulterous marriage which will cause them to lose their souls in Hell. Let's not get ourselves into situations that will cause us to lose our souls in eternity.

A preacher was asked what his stand was on Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage. His reply was "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery." He was accused by his questioner of being a legalist. No, he was only quoting what our Lord said in Luke 16:18. "Whosoever" means everybody, not somebody. It is all-inclusive. "Whosoever" includes all people, both Christians and non-Christians. God's marriage law is binding on all married people. It is not possible that God would join two people in marriage through the act of adultery. Too long we in the Lord's church have tiptoed around the subject of the remarriage of divorced persons. People's souls are at stake!

The word "adultery" comes from "adulterate", which means "to pollute by adding a foreign substance." The verb tense of the Greek word "MOICHATAI" which is translated "commits adultery" is present tense and indicates an ongoing continuous state of sin. Anyone who divorces his spouse and marries another is living in a continuous state of adultery. Adultery is a sin

and one must repent of it if one expects to go to Heaven. To repent of an adulterous marriage, one must get out of the marriage to stop committing the adultery.

If one continues in his adultery, he will meet the wrath of God. As we read in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Do we really realize how serious the judgment will be? In Proverbs 6:32 we read, "But whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul."

Jesus said, "Whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). Why is the one marrying her also guilty of adultery? She is still bound to her first husband. In God's eyes he has taken another man's wife and is committing adultery with her. An example of a woman being bound to one husband but married to another is found in Mark 6:17-18. "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Herod and Herodias had an adulterous marriage. Herodias was still Philip's wife and bound to him even though she had married Herod.

In Ezra chapter 10 some of those who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity had married pagan wives and some had children by them. God had commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with pagan people. In Ezra 10:3 they were commanded "to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them". The children involved did not justify the Israelites keeping their pagan wives. Today, children that are involved do not justify continuing in a sinful adulterous marriage "for the children's sake". There are some, especially when children are involved, who say, "I don't believe God expects them to break up their marriage". They are correct when they say they "don't believe God". They don't believe what God's inspired word says in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, and Romans 7:2-3. In Romans 6:1-2 Paul asks the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" One is never justified in continuing in the sin of adultery or any other sin.

But what if one does divorce and remarry? Romans 7:2-3 says, "For the woman which has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, **while her husband lives, she marries another man,**

she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man." Notice the adultery begins when one divorces and marries another and continues all the "while her husband lives". According to God's inspired word, the only way she is free to remarry and not be an adulteress is "if her husband be dead". Those who remarry are living in adultery because they are still bound to their first spouse. That which is sacred and holy in marriage is immoral and sinful outside of a scriptural marriage.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:32 "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery." One who puts his wife away, not for fornication, is co-responsible for her committing adultery. Why? Most divorced people will remarry, and if she does remarry she commits adultery since she is still bound to her first husband. Her first husband who put her away shares in her guilt and sin since he helped to put her in that situation.

The Bible says those living in "adultery...shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). There will be no adulterers in Heaven. Our number one priority in this life must be to go to Heaven. The eternal destinies of souls are involved. As long as a person is living in adultery, this removes all hope of his going to Heaven. We cannot help but have compassion for adulterers in their lost and sinful state, but in our compassion we dare not change clear Biblical teaching lest we also lose our own souls.

There are those who falsely teach that baptism sanctifies an adulterous marriage. Baptism does not make the sin of adultery or any other sin into a virtue. One is required to repent before he is baptized if he is to receive forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38) and be saved. One will not receive forgiveness of his sins if he will not repent. Jesus says, "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

There are those who try to justify adulterous marriages by redefining adultery as "covenant breaking" and say that it is only "point of action". They say one can divorce his spouse for any trivial reason, pledge not to do it again, and then enter into a new marriage. This false theory contends the adultery is "point of action" and happens only when the divorce is granted. Then all one has to do is repent of "covenant breaking" and he is free to remarry. How convenient! But Jesus says, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). According to Jesus the adultery also requires a remarriage. We should never redefine words to teach a new doctrine. When we redefine words we can teach anything we want.

All of these perversions of God's word are lies of Satan designed to cause people to be lost in their adulterous marriages. Many brethren have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Romans 1:25). The Bible says they, "wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

Those who teach that people can remain in an adulterous marriage should ask themselves if they think they can be saved while teaching other people to remain in a condition that will cause them to lose their souls in the burning fires of Hell. We dare not teach anything other than God's truth, His whole truth, and nothing but His truth. We are not to add to or take away from God's word (Revelation 22:18-19), lest we also lose our own souls.

What does God think of adultery? In Genesis chapter 20 Abraham had journeyed to Gerar. Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah as a wife, because Abraham had said that she was his sister. In Genesis 20:3 we read, "But God came to Abimilech in a dream by night, and said to him, '**Behold thou art but a dead man**, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife'." Even though Abimilech had innocently taken Sarah, not knowing that she was Abraham's wife, God was about to strike him dead. God told Abimilech, "thou art but a dead man". Here we see God's wrath being stirred up because Abimilech was about to commit adultery. In every adulterous marriage, one has taken the spouse of another. One who does this is also "a dead man", since "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), which is spiritual death.

Can an adulterer go to heaven? In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 we read, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, **nor adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind....shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you." This is a great price for an adulterer to pay by being lost in the burning fires of eternal Hell. An adulterer can repent. Notice again verse 11, "And such were some of you". Some of the Corinthians Christians were at one time adulterers before they became Christians, but they apparently had repented. They had given up their adulterous relationships and were forgiven.

There are those who will not teach what Jesus says about marriage, divorce, and remarriage or they try to change what Jesus says in order to justify the guilty. Elders who "watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17) will be terrified when they stand before the Lord in Judgment if they did nothing to teach, warn, and rescue the lost of their congregation. Preachers and teachers will also all give account for their

teaching or lack of teaching (James 3:1). Paul told the Ephesian elders, "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). If we shun to declare all the counsel of God, we become guilty of the blood of the lost.

Many people are ashamed to teach all of what the Lord says. Jesus says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). If he is ashamed of us we will be lost. We need to help people recognize their sins so they can repent. We must not help them deny their sins and pervert the teaching of the Bible in a futile effort to try to justify them in their adulterous marriages or any other sin.