

SUNDAY MORNING

Announcements
Jon Barry

Song Leader
Jack Calvert

Lord's Supper
Daniel Allgor, Mark Davis,
Cole Meador

Prayers
Bill Rinehart, Rodney Ellis

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Announcements
Rodney Ellis

Song Leader
Clay Morris

Prayers
Mike Davis, Cole Meador

Invitation
Willie Standokes

ABOUT US

Elders
Jack Calvert Rodney Ellis

Deacons
Jon Barry Mike Davis
Clay Morris

Evangelist
Bryan Garlock

SERVICE TIMES

Sunday
Bible Study9:30 A.M.
Worship10:15 A.M.

Monday (Zoom)
Bible Study7:00 P.M

Wednesday
Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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Volume XXVII

July 10, 2022

Issue 28

The Plain Truth About Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage
Donnie V. Rader

There is a trend towards softening the gospel message. As society and the religious world moves in a more liberal direction, we too are affected. In that effort to be more tolerant, some have made the gospel message more palatable by "smoothing it out" in various ways.

What the Bible says about marriage, divorce and remarriage has not been exempt from this approach. A softened or smoother version of what the Lord taught on this subject would obviously be more acceptable to the masses. This is not to say that those who teach some of the ideas discussed below have that as their motive.

What Does The Word Say?

1. The text. Jesus said, "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" (Matt. 19:9). Though other passages address the subject, this one well summarizes what the Bible teaches on divorce and remarriage.

2. What does the text say about divorce? When Jesus was asked whether a man could divorce his

wife for any reason (Matt. 19:3), he answered no. Though he didn't give a "yes" or "no" reply, the reasons he cited point to that conclusion (vv. 4-6). The only reason for divorce given by the Lord is "fornication" (v. 9; cf. Matt. 5:32). Divorce for any other cause is without biblical authority.

3. What does the text say about remarriage? Jesus said that the man who puts away his wife (for a cause other than fornication) and marries another commits adultery. In that same text Jesus said that a man who puts away his wife (for fornication) and marries another does not commit adultery. In the second clause of our text Jesus said that the one who is put away commits adultery when he remarries.

4. What does that demand? If we teach what Jesus taught in Matt. 19:9, our message will not always be "smooth" to the ears of our listeners. Those who divorce for causes other than fornication will be pricked by what Jesus said. Those who remarry contrary to what Jesus authorized will be disturbed. Those living in adultery must cease their sin of adultery (separate from an unlawful mate) to conform to what Jesus said (cf. Mark 6:17-18). That would

not married to each other. Third, one mate could be bound and unmarried, while the other mate is free to remarry. What if, while still married, Bob committed adultery? Ethel can then put him away for immorality and remarry (Matt. 19:9). One has been released from the obligations of marriage but the other (Bob) is still obligated to God and His law. Finally, one could be bound to a first mate while unscripturally married to another. Bob is put away for adultery by Ethel, but then he finds a new wife. Is he bound to this new wife? Certainly not. God does not have anything to do with that relationship for it is sinful. It is a marriage, but it is not a right marriage and so God does not obligate Bob in it. Bob is obligated to Ethel. He is married to someone else, but his obligation (the marriage bond) is to Ethel. This is the precise situation of Romans 7 and Mark 6.

Romans 7 answers many marriage and divorce questions for us. All we have to do is track the bonds. Who is bound to whom? What does God require? Whom has He obligated? That makes this a powerful text in our search for answers and truth in divorce questions. "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives."

be anything but easy (cf. Ezra 10:9-10, 44). The Lord's message is not a soft and smooth gospel.

How Are Men Speaking Smooth Things About Divorce And Remarriage?

1. Not teaching on divorce and remarriage at all. Those who just avoid the subject, whether it be because they think it to be too controversial or because they are afraid of the consequences, have softened the gospel message by leaving that part out. Some men, because their position differs from many in the congregation, will agree not to teach on divorce and remarriage. While they may not be teaching error, they are not teaching the truth. The whole counsel is not being preached (Acts 20:27). At least part of the word is not being preached (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Those who sit at the feet of such men may never hear the truth about divorce and remarriage.

2. Encouraging divorce for any cause. The permanence of marriage that the Bible teaches is not popular. When some brother encourages divorce (teaches that it is scriptural) for causes other than fornication (as long as one does not remarry), he makes the message more acceptable to those who do not respect the fact that marriage is for life. That is a smoother message for the couple that fuss and fight all the time and want out of their marriage. God's law does not authorize it.

3. Teaching that the guilty party can remarry. The Lord's instructions (Matt. 19:9) allow one to put his mate away for fornication and remarry. Some brethren teach that the one who has been put away for fornication ("guilty party") can also scripturally remarry. That is a smooth message to the ears for the guilty party, because Jesus never authorized it. In fact, Jesus said, "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9b).

4. Allowing some put away people to remarry. Some argue that the one who has been put away (for a cause other than fornication) can remarry if their former mate remarries first. Others argue that if one is put away by a mate who has committed

fornication, he can remarry. Neither of these are authorized by the Lord. In contrast, Jesus said, "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9b; 5:32b; Luke 16:18).

5. Telling the alien sinner he is not amenable to the law of Christ. Even though the gospel (the law of Christ) is for all nations (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15) and Jesus applied his teaching to "whosoever" (Matt. 19:9), we are told by some brethren that Christ's law on marriage only applies to Christians who are married. Thus, non-Christians are neither governed nor judged by what Jesus taught. If one divorces (for whatever cause) and remarries he can continue with the mate he has when he obeys the gospel. He becomes amenable to the law of Christ when he is a Christian. That is a far more convenient message than what the Lord presented in Matt. 19:9.

6. Redefining adultery. When men are allowed to redefine adultery to mean "covenant breaking" (the unscriptural divorce and remarriage) and not the unlawful sexual activity with the second mate, the message of Christ is so much smoother to the ears of those in second or third marriages. That means that if they repent of breaking the covenant with their first mates and determine not to do it again, they can stay together. No lexicon or passage justifies this arbitrary definition of adultery (cf. the use of the term in Matt. 5:28; John 8:4).

7. Speaking of the ambiguity of Matt. 19:9. Some have spoken of the ambiguity of Matt. 19:9. I understand their point to be that they are unsure if this text is even authorizing remarriage when divorce is for the cause of fornication. They are quick to suggest that their point is even more "conservative" than what I and others teach on Matt. 19:9. However, my concern about such discussion is that if we convince our hearers that there is ambiguity with Matt. 19:9, they may conclude that we cannot be certain that one who puts away his mate (for some cause other than fornication) and remarries commits adultery. Since we can't be certain what Jesus was really saying, we would need to tolerate a diversity of doctrines on divorce and remarriage. Let us be content with what Jesus taught. Let us preach it as it is revealed.

The Marriage Bond of Romans 7 Mark Roberts

So much false doctrine and sin comes from a basic failure to deal with what Romans 7 teaches us about marriage and divorce. While understanding that Paul is using marriage as an illustration here, the illustration is valid, truthful and we can learn from it. Let us begin with the text:

"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married " (Romans 7:2-3).

The key point Paul is making is the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives. Now, how does that help our understanding of what is right and wrong in divorce and remarriage?

First, it becomes apparent there is a very real difference in being married and being bound. A person can be married to one person while being bound to another - that is exactly what the text describes. "Being bound" here just refers to the obligation between a husband, his wife and God. It is the responsibilities and restraints that go with being married, as set forth by God's law. This helps us understand why a person who is bound (under obligation) cannot scripturally marry again. That person is under obligation to his/her first spouse.

Second, Romans 7 helps us understand that in the Bible marriage is marriage, and divorce is divorce. Some want to play word games, arguing some marriages are not "real" or are not recognized by God. We hear "married in the eyes of men" or "not married in God's eyes" tossed about from time to time. Yet Romans 7:3 says she is married to another. God does not approve of this, but He recognizes that marriage as real. It actually happened. She is

married, just as Herodias and Herod were really, actually married (see Mark 6:17-18). Let us dispense with complicating terminology like "married in God's eyes." Married is married, whether God approves or not.

Third, one can live in adultery. Some try to argue that adultery is a one time act, or just covenant breaking, or something else that is not an ongoing, continuing sin. Yet Romans 7 shows that one is under obligation to his/her spouse as long as that spouse lives. Thus, one who is married to another unlawfully continues in adultery because they are still under obligation (bound) to another. In simple terms, God wants that person to go back home and fulfill the obligations of marriage with their original spouse as they originally pledged when they married. To do otherwise is to continue in sin.

Fourth, God gets to decide who is loosed from this marriage bond. As best as I can find in scripture, God ends the marriage obligation (bond) upon death (this text) or when an innocent person puts away a mate guilty of sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9). To say the least, if one wishes to marry again, he or she needs to be certain that God does not hold them under obligation to a prior spouse lest they sin!

Let us finish this discussion of Romans 7's implications by noting the situations any person might be in. First, one can be bound and married. Ethel and Bob have never been married before. They marry. This is two people doing right, bound and married to each other. Second, one can be bound and unmarried. Ethel and Bob obtain a divorce, but no immorality has occurred. What is their status? Are they married? No. Clearly they are not married. Let us not try to pretend otherwise. But what is their obligation to each other and God? It has not ended, has it? They are still under obligation to each other, and still restrained regarding remarriage (see 1 Cor. 7:10-11). Bob and Ethel are bound to each other, but