

Mandates to the Married

(1 Corinthians 7:12-14)

Tertullian of Carthage (d. AD 230)

- Heathen husbands...angry with believing wives because they wanted to kiss martyr's bonds, embrace Christians, visit cottages of the poor...
- Similar issues in Corinth? (1 Co.7)

**I. What to do about mixed marriage
with willing mate? (12-14)**

Setting...

- Couple gets married
- One later becomes a Christian
 - Unbelieving mate is resentful – *'this is not the person I married!'*
 - New Christian is doubtful
- 6:19-20 – God wants His pure child to maintain a relationship with an impure unbeliever??

Paul's reply (12)

- 'To the rest': the rest of their questions?
- 'I, not the Lord, say': (ct. v.10).
 - During His personal ministry, Lord did not specifically address mixed marriages.
 - He spoke to Jews – [Jewish husband and wife.]

12-13: what if the unbeliever consents to dwell with the believer??

- Both verses prohibit a separation / divorce.
 - Do not divorce an unbeliever (12-13).

[This agrees with the commands of 10-11]

14: don't worry that they / their marriage / children are defiled by unbelieving spouse

- Opposite is true: unbelieving spouse / children are sanctified by the believing spouse
 - Does NOT mean they are saved through the virtue of another. Ezk.18:20.
Mk.16:16. 2 Co.5:10.

14: “sanctify”

- Not salvation – spouse is still an unbeliever.
- Ex.19¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes.
 - V. 23: same word used of Mt. Sinai.
- 1 Tim.4⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.
 - Food is not morally holy, but lawful to eat

14: “sanctify”

- Though one is an unbeliever, God unites him to a Christian in this marriage.
- If we reject the mate, we must also reject the children of this union?
- 2 Tim. 1⁵ when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Two possible reasons for the question

1. Ezra 9-10; Neh.9:2; 13:23-28
 - OT forbade intermarriage with heathen
2. 1 Co.5:9-11, avoid association with sinners.
 - Two sinners had married; one later obeys gospel. Their marriage is 'sanctified.'

Believer may influence unbeliever
by word, deed, and prayer
to obey gospel (sanctify). 1 Pt.3

These passages refute two false doctrines

1. 12-13: God's marriage laws are not limited to saints.

– Mt.5:32, *whoever* – cf. 16:25; 19:9

– Mt.19:4-6, 9, based on Gn.1-2.

- In general terms that embrace all mankind, God gave rules for marriage.

– 1 Co.6:9-11, even before they were Christians, they were accountable to God's laws.

These passages refute two false doctrines

2. 12-13: Christian found herself married to an unholy unbeliever (but cannot divorce him)

– She could not put him away for ‘mental adultery’ (Mt.5:28).

- Adultery begins in the heart. Mt.15:19; 2 Pt.2:14.

- Jews often limited sins to overt acts. Lk.18:11...

– Lord stops it in the heart before it can act.

I. What to do about mixed marriage
with willing mate? (12-14)

II. What is wrong with the
'mental adultery' position?

1. Incompatible with context

- 12-13: married to sinner, characterized by worldly lusts. 1 Th.4:4. Gal.5:24
 - Christian has a 'changed' mind, Ro.12:2
 - Paul NEVER authorizes divorce for 'mental adultery.'
 - Lust is not a legitimate reason for divorce and remarriage.

2. Inconsistent with itself

- “Baptism” has a figurative use (Mk.10:38; Lk.12:50).
 - Can we determine how it is used in any given passage?
- 1 Jn.3:15, hatred – murder.
 - Actual sin is hatred – act of the mind.
 - Does this authorize capital punishment? (Calvin . . . Bossuet)

2. Inconsistent with itself

- Actual sin in Mt.5:28: lust.
 - Does it authorize literal divorce?
 - Confuses Lord's figurative description of mental act with non-figurative prescription for bodily act . . . a literal putting away for a figurative adultery
- Is Mt.5:29-30 also literal?
- Does Col.3:5 endorse suicide?
- 1 Co.10:6, lust; 8, fornication.

3. Impossible to determine

- Jn.7:24, appearance
- Ac.1:24, hearts
- 1 Co.2:11, spirit
- May a man divorce his wife and remarry because he suspects her of adultery?
 - 1 Tim.6:4, *evil suspicions?*

4. Invites confusion

- Prov.6:25, do not lust...
 - Stop at point of lust; defeat it here.
- Prov.6:26, prey upon his precious life...
 - As ox goes to the slaughter, 22
 - Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death, 27
 - Lust is sin, but it does not permit divorce

Conclusion

1. Mixed marriages are not ideal, but they are true marriages.
2. No passage encourages Christians to marry an unbeliever. 1 Co.9:5