

commandment. Of course it is better to choose the right mate the first time, but to break up a presently successful and happy marriage to go back to what was a mistake from the start is pure unscriptural confusion! The following illustration is of an actual case which first called my attention to the situation, but it is typical of many more I have seen since and demonstrates the real tragedy of the Pharisaical attitude of legalism described above.

Several years back, I counselled a young lady who phoned the church office in great distress. I shall give her the name of Sally, for that was not her real name. The balance of the following is true.

Sally had realized her need to return to Christ some time the week before her call. She had repented and asked Him for forgiveness. Then she determined to be baptized in His name in signification of the death and burial of her old nature and resurrection with Christ Jesus to a new life in Him. She was to have been baptized after the evening service on the Sunday she called the church office in the afternoon in great distress. She had come to Sunday School and church that morning, but in the few hours intervening, some "Christian Pharisee" got to her ear.

"You can't be a Christian! You're living in adultery," they told her. "You have two living husbands." The only way she could quit sinning was to return to her first husband, they insisted. Her mother's family were of the aforementioned denomination and they told her that she could not get right with God unless she stopped "living in perpetual adultery" with her present husband, divorced him and went back to her first and "only scriptural" husband, who was also remarried and had children. How absurd! How totally contrary to both Christ's words and intent!

Questioning her further, I learned Sally had been a Christian in her early teens, but had grown cold and in her later teens had become rebellious, ran away from home and married a twenty-one year old man we'll call Bill. They were married less than a year when he left her and began living as another woman's husband. Sally went home to Mama and obtained a divorce from Bill on grounds of his adultery. Some two years later, she met Ben (not his real name) and they were married. More than a year passed and Sally and Ben had become parents, when Sally began to want to get back in church and raise her child to love and serve the Lord. She began attending church, went to the altar and had a real conversion experience with the Lord. According to the Word of God, she had every right to expect God to forgive her. John 6:37 and 1 John 1:9 make this clear. Jesus certainly would have

CHAPTER NINE

MAY A DIVORCEE REMARRY?

THIS question does not arise in most of the world today. It is seldom asked outside of the most orthodox of religious faiths. Most moderately religious and those not particularly religious never pay any attention to this question or think nothing of it.

The advice given in this chapter is not given lightly. I recognize the responsibility that if I mislead someone I will surely have to face that person in the great day of judgement, and their sin laid to my charge. Nothing in this book is meant to be speed-read, but this chapter should be read even slower and more careful detail noted, especially if you are not yet married or are about to be divorced and expecting to remarry or already divorced and lonely. It would be better if you consider that the answer to this question is NO and read no further than to read, misunderstand, ruin your life and lose your soul by a hasty reading.

In certain church circles, it is insisted that so long as a former husband or wife lives, no matter what has happened, or how long they have been parted, the parties may never marry again without being thereafter living in perpetual sin and adultery. According to many who hold this idea, the remarried divorcee has TWO living mates, and is therefore living bigamously or adulterously. Then, if the first should happen to die anywhere in the world, the adultery ceases, whether the death is known or unknown.

There can be no question that everything works best when the manufacturer's directions are followed. Therefore, in the light of several teachings in the Bible (Matthew 19:9 and 5:31,32; Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18; 1Corinthians 7:10 to 13 and 15; and Deuteronomy 24.) it would be better if you would automatically consider that the answer to the question of remarriage after divorce is NO and do everything in your power to select your mate wisely in the first place, or to save your existing marriage if you have made a mistake. There are many instances in which what seemed like a real mistake was turned into a beautiful delight by first one and then both partners deciding to set the same overall goal and each to make the other happy.

As a believer, except in the case of adultery, you are forbidden by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10 to 13 to separate from your unbelieving mate, but verse 15 says, "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." Now there are two ways to

view the expression, “not under bondage in such cases.” In the one, it means merely that the believer doesn’t have to follow or pursue the departing unbeliever, but is still under obligation to the wedding vows. After all, the departed unbeliever is still living and the vow said “until death us do part.”

The other view is that the believer is no longer bound to the marriage vows since the unbeliever has already broken them, and is therefore a single person again and free to remarry in Christ. In contract law, if one party breaks a contract, the other may either sue to enforce the terms of the contract or simply declare the contract null and void. Clearly, if the unbeliever takes up adulterous cohabitation with another person, the believer is scripturally free of guilt both in the parting and in divorcing (terminating) the marriage relationship. (Refer again to Matthew 19:9 and 5:31,32; Mark 10:11,12 and Luke 16:18.) Jesus also said that one spouse was not to divorce the other because of some petty act that displeased him (or her). But He did excuse the mate of an adulterer from bondage, and, if attention is given to the situation in which Christ made His statement, He was being specific, because for many years, Israel had been following a rather liberal interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and a man might divorce his wife if she burned the toast or let the dirty laundry pile up, to use a modern comparison. Thus for Him to say, “save for the cause of adultery,” that a man or woman was guilty of adultery if he (or she) remarried, still left room for remarriage by the innocent party. Here He was talking to a bunch of people who were grossly violating the intent of God’s law, who were just looking for a chance to twist whatever He said to their own purposes and who could be expected to turn even this to legalize questionable cases. People who would like to divorce one mate because another was already on the string (much as today). In every reference made by Christ or Paul to the subject of divorce and remarriage, a time element can correctly be read into their statement. They were not saying that a man or woman had committed an unpardonable sin in marrying the wrong person and must now pay for that error for the rest of their lives, yet this is the very thing many religionists teach and insist upon today. (One thing I want to make crystal clear right now is: I DO NOT believe in nor advocate easy divorce and remarriage, which cheapens the sanctity of marriage and is definitely and clearly opposed to the teachings of Christ, Paul, Moses, and indeed, the whole Bible.)

I dwell on the subject of divorcees remarrying rather at length

because I have seen the damage that can be done to lives by a legalistic view of this question. I have seen good Sunday School teachers that love the Lord, barred from teaching for the rest of their lives, preachers barred from the pulpit and lay members disfellowshipped because they had made the mistake of marrying the wrong person as a youth and later, after that unfortunate union was ended (regardless of whose fault it was), found the single life too grievous a burden to bear. Men and women with a real gift from God to minister to the spiritual needs of others and a desire to do so and with a real zeal for God, but whose talents and calling are thrown into the garbage by the “Judaizers” or modern-day Pharisees who are themselves “too busy” to get out and witness or to study the Word and pray so they can teach or preach.

Often it is claimed that this is done in the interest of Holiness ? that the person who has divorced and remarried can no longer be trusted to live holy and be the kind of example to others that he (or she) should be. “A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife...” (1 Timothy 3:2) often is used to say that a minister who has the calling of God on his life, but through no present fault of his own is divorced, must not have any wife or be disqualified from the ministry. But this is **NOT** what the verse says. In its proper context, based on the conditions of the day and time, a time when the Gentiles commonly practiced polygamy, Paul was saying, “Timothy, a bishop must not be living polygamously with more than one wife, nor in adultery.” **Many who came into the church at that time had been polygamous, but now they must choose and live with only one wife!** A man whose wife has divorced him to live with another man has **no wife at all**. Think of the souls that will never be blessed through his ministry — many unreached by the Gospel at all — unless he is willing to live celibate for the rest of his life.

Usually, I avoid naming church denominations, but there is one that has a teaching particularly disastrous to many people touched by it. A church which takes part of its name from a prediction by its founder that Jesus Christ would return to a mountain in North Carolina in 1914 has a teaching that a divorced and remarried person who wants to be saved must divorce their second or subsequent mate and be reunited to their first spouse or live alone. This teaching directly contradicts the **ONLY** thing the Bible says about a divorcee remarrying any prior spouse. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 specifically **PROHIBITS** such a reunion, and nothing in the New Testament ever rescinds or contradicts that

unproductive and useless lives, often bringing reproach on themselves, their church and their community by the outwardly visible display of their bitter home life. In Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus says it is better to sever a part of your body and cast it from you than to be cast into hell fire yourself. This is balanced by 1 Corinthians 7:9. Thus, an unfaithful mate, being less attached to you than your hand, foot or eye is better parted company with. If, after a time of seeking only Jesus Christ, you are unable to control your passion, it is better to marry than to burn. But bear this in mind ? if your real motive is not pure toward God, the same selfishness that wrecked your first marriage and brought unhappiness will repeat itself ? perhaps to a greater or lesser extent ? but it WILL repeat!

No other person in the world can determine for YOU what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of God for your life. Only as you PRAY and STUDY your Bible, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him (Christ) and He shall direct thy paths." (*Proverbs 3:6*).

– UWP

forgiven her and told her to be a good wife to her real husband, the only husband she has. We know Jesus was realistic in all His words, commandments and actions. He would not be blind to the fact that the only husband she had was the one she now lived with. No one in his right mind would say that the man who at one time lived with her as her legal husband, but left and now lived with another woman was still Sally's husband ? not since their divorce, at any rate.

In this case, he was committing adultery when he went to the other woman and left Sally in the lurch. So certainly, after two years of loneliness, Sally had a right to marry. See 1 Corinthians 7:8,9 and Deuteronomy 24:2 and 4, bearing in mind not only these verses but also the setting or context in which they were written. What happened to Sally? Well, she had been brought up to disbelieve in divorce and remarriage, so despite the fact she had done what she believed was right, she was easily persuaded that she was living in "perpetual sin" and because she was happy in her marriage with Ben and felt she should stay with him and make a home for their child, she could not get out of the "perpetual sin" situation. This she was not about to do, since she loved her present husband and could not see how God would want her to break up two successful families and return to an unpleasant situation in which the children would inescapably be deeply hurt and scarred. So, in marrying Ben, she had been made to feel that she had effectively committed an unpardonable sin. Though I counselled her and reminded her of God's promise that "... him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," and, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Unfortunately, her mother's friends, the modern day Pharisees, with misquoted and out-of-context scriptures were more persuasive than I and she simply gave up hope of ever being saved and living for God. Persons not at peace with God live a miserable existence, especially when they have had a real conversion experience. Please read the Deuteronomy 24:1-4 passage carefully and balance it against the passages used to teach the abominable doctrine I just denounced, understanding all passages strictly in the context in which they were written. had done the job well. A still young life with a genuine desire to serve Christ was consigned to Satan and eternal doom. A spiritual child excluded from the kingdom of heaven through the words and philosophy of some self-righteous hypocrite. Here Matthew 18:6 -7 applies to this Pharisee and verses 8 and 9 to anyone oppressed by situations. Let not that person who caused this young wife and

mother to lose hope think he has done a good thing, for Christ will pour out wrath upon him. It was this type of person who most quickly incurred His wrath when He walked the shores of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem. He referred to them as "... whited sepulchres... full of dead men's bones," lashed out at their doctrines as binding on grievous burdens and doing nothing to help the one so burdened. (*See Matthew 23:4 and Luke 11:46.*) "You made your bed, now you've got to lie in it," they insist, but it's amazing how quick they are to discard their old bed and get a new one the instant their springs begin to sag!!

The first mistake most of these pseudo-Bible teachers make is their failure to recognize that Jesus DID recognize divorce for the cause of fornication, and the divorce was the end of the marriage, period.

They also, by the same token refuse to acknowledge that the divorcee is as much a widow or widower as if the former mate was actually deceased. (In fact, if the Old Testament law was strictly enforced, the adulterer or fornicator would have been stoned to death, and divorce would not have been needed! Divorce allowed the sinner to go on living.) Their view no doubt comes from a well-intentioned desire to be extra-safe and run no risk of offending an austere God who (in their view) is looking forward to punishing all who break His laws with no mercy or grace. How they ever expect to make it to heaven if God has no mercy, I'll never know, for "...All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (*Ezekiel 18:20, Numbers 15:31*). "The wages of sin is death..." (*Romans 6:23*). I am not worried about giving the context here, for these modern versions of the Pharisaical lawyers of whom Christ said, "...ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers," do not worry about worry when they lay on their burdens. (*Luke 11:46*).

The fact is that a widow or widower who has loved his mate will surely carry loving memories of the precious intimate moments of the previous marriage into the next, whereas a divorced widow or widower will usually, for reason of the bitterness of the previous marriage, have blocked out memories of that unfortunate affair. This "forgetter" is a God-given instinct, and is a very useful trait, for if we remember all the bad things that happen to us, we tend to become bitter. It is also significant that the child of God whose life is truly hid in Christ is a great deal more likely to forget bad things that have happened to him than one who is living for self.

Amazingly, the "Pharisee" Christians seem to remember more of the bad than anyone else! (This would make it seem that the "Pharisee" Christians are not real Christians at all, but cheap phonies!)

Consider the following: Adultery and fornication were forbidden for several reasons. Disease, unwanted pregnancies and bastard children were the most apparent, and the mental and heart condition of the offender were not so clearly brought out until Christ revealed them to be the conditions of a sinful heart, and that the actual commission of the act was not necessary to commit the sin. Here He revealed yet another of the reasons for a previously married person not to jump quickly into a new marriage, and thus be comparing one mate with another sexually.

Bearing in mind that what applies to the definition of a good wife balances with the definition of a good husband, it seems clear that there are many marriages that are little more than legalized sex and an often unpleasant sharing of room and board. Anyone should be able to see that the license alone does not make a marriage. Neither does sex, nor living in the same house or apartment. Nor does reproduction or parenthood mean that "they twain" have become "one flesh", for a man may just as easily reproduce by his neighbor's wife as his own or by a streetwalker, for that matter. Who would say that having a child by your neighbor makes you married? Nor can we blame God when two totally unsuited persons decide to "give it a whirl" and try marriage. All of the above situations are bad and sinful, and persons guilty of these sins are in danger of judgement if they do not correct their wrongdoing. If you are living with or having an adulterous affair with someone who is not one with you, you must correct that wrong. The best way is for both of you to Repent and forsake the sin and give your life to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Then let Him work out your differences and join you together in truth.

Unfortunately, this may not always happen because God gave us the freedom to choose to do right or wrong, and just because YOU want to do right, that does not necessarily mean your mate will.

Who can rightly say that two unlike persons with widely divergent goals in life, no loyalty to each other, and who each constantly try to wreck the life of the other, are married?

There are many talented persons who could, should and would have used their talents to better humanity and to realize at least a reasonable amount of happiness who have instead lived unhappy,