
(Ecclesiastes 12:13).

IS THE “GUILTY PARTY” IN A DIVORCE FREE TO REMARRY?

God’s law concerning divorce and remarriage is stated in Matthew 19:9, *“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”* (see also Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3). In a divorce according to Matthew 19:9, there is what we would call an “innocent party” and a “guilty party.” The innocent party did not commit fornication whereas the guilty party did. The Lord allows the innocent party to divorce (put away) the guilty party because of their fornication. The innocent party is then free to marry another without being guilty of adultery (providing they marry someone who also has a right to marry). Some contend that since the innocent party is free to remarry then the guilty party must also be free. However, such a conclusion is not warranted nor authorized by the scriptures.

The “guilty party” that was “put away” because of their fornication has forfeited his/her right to form another marriage union. There are some sins that, once committed, carry with them continuing consequences. For example, one may get drunk and commit murder. That person can certainly obtain forgiveness of the sin of drunkenness and taking another’s life, but nothing he can do will bring back the person he killed. He must live the rest of his life with the consequences of his actions. One can so violate God’s marriage law that God

withholds from that individual the right to form another marriage and he/she, therefore, must remain unmarried the rest of his/her life. The principle of having to bear the consequences of one’s action is seen regarding Esau in Hebrews 12:16-17. Once he sold his birthright there was no way to get it back. He had forfeited his right to it.

The Lord speaks of those who must remain celibate because of an unscriptural divorce in Matthew 19:10-12. There are those who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. That is, some remain unmarried out of necessity because they desire to obey God and be able to enjoy heaven when this life is over. Absolutely nothing in this life is worth losing your soul in hell for all eternity----not even marriage. *“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul”* (Matthew 16:26). God’s law is sure!

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Matthew 19:9

What Does The Bible Teach About Divorce & Remarriage?



Mike Hughes

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WHY IS FORNICATION THE ONLY EXCEPTION FOR A DIVORCE?

The best reason I can think of why fornication is the **only** reason one can divorce his marriage partner and be free to marry again is that **JESUS SAID IT!** That settles it! Neither you, I, nor any other human being has any part in listing reasons why married couples can get a divorce. "...*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6).

God joins in marriage for life. "*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).

Luke 16:18 states the principle in divorce and remarriage: "*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.*" That is plain enough that even a child can understand! However, Jesus gives "one exception" to this timeless principle: Matthew 19:9. "*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.*"

Fornication is defined as "illicit sexual inter-

course in general." If, therefore, one of the marriage partners commits fornication, the innocent partner has been given the right by God to divorce the guilty partner. The innocent partner is thus free to marry again, provided he/she marries someone who is free to marry. That is, he/she could not marry someone who has been put away because of his/her fornication. If so, then both would be living in adultery because the Lord said, "*whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*"

Except means except. Search as you may from cover to cover in the Bible and you will not find another exception! The Lord never gave desertion, drunkenness, physical abuse, or a host of other excuses. He said, "except for fornication." God made the rules, not man.

Does Forgiveness Take Away An Unscriptural Divorce So One Is Free To Remarry?

When one truly **believes in Christ** (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), **repents of sins** (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38), **confesses faith in Christ** (Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37) and is **baptized (immersed) in water** (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16), he is forgiven of all his sins and becomes a child of God. Acts 2:41 says, "*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*" Some who were converted

at Corinth had been living in fornication, adultery and homosexuality. They had been thieves, drunkards and idolaters. "...*But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Corinthians 6:11). They obtained forgiveness of all their sins.

When sins are forgiven, it does not give one a license to go back and commit that sin again. If I am forgiven of stealing, I am not allowed to steal again. If I am forgiven of drinking, I am not allowed to drink again. If I am forgiven of idolatry, I am not allowed to continue bowing down to idols. If I am forgiven of homosexuality, I cannot get involved in another homosexual relationship. Likewise, if I am forgiven of adultery, I cannot contract another adulterous union or remain in the one I am currently in. Yes, I can be forgiven of whatever sin I have committed but I cannot return to that sin again.

Jesus gave his law regarding divorce and remarriage in Matthew 19:9, "...*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.*" The only way you can marry again after a divorce is if you put away (divorce) your spouse because of their fornication. If you did, you are free to form another marriage union (providing you marry someone who also has a right to marry). If you did not, you are not free to form another marriage union and must therefore remain single (Matthew 19:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Marriage is a privilege allowed by God. "*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4). When God's law is violated concerning divorce, he no longer allows one to form another marriage. The first and foremost priority is to obey God and seek first his kingdom. (Matthew 6:33). Solomon wrote, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*"
