



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume X
Issue 240

When the Vow Breaks ~ Divorce and Remarriage

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

For centuries Christendom has done great damage by its doctrines concerning divorce and remarriage. Broken marriages are a scar on the human heart, and Christendom's self-righteous hypocrisy has greatly compounded its suffering ... adding shame and rejection.



DIVORCE IS AN END OF A MARRIAGE

One thing is certain: regardless of what religionists assert to the contrary, divorce is *the end* of a marriage; otherwise it would be a separation, not a divorce. Noah Webster's original 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines divorce as "the ending of a marriage."

According to some spheres of Christendom there is no such thing as divorce; to them it is "once married, always married." They teach that you can only be married once in a lifetime. Others say that you may remarry only if your mate dies. Then there are those who teach that if you were divorced before you were a believer that it is alright, while others say that "you are living in adultery." Some say that you may divorce for "fornication" but that you cannot remarry. There are those who teach that in a divorce there is "no innocent party." Some even go so far as to require those who have remarried to divorce their current spouse and remarry their former spouse, or remain unmarried.

Many Christians would say, "Why, the Bible condemns divorce from Genesis to Revelation." Many have simply never taken the time to "prove all things" (I Thessalonians 5:21). What does the Bible really have to say about divorce? In this brief study we will seek to uncover what the Bible itself actually teaches regarding this important topic.

There are only two situations mentioned in the Bible in which a man *COULD NOT* divorce his wife, and they were both under the Law of Moses:

(see **DIVORCE**, page 2263)

What is not understood by religion is that there is a compassionate side of divorce. When a marriage becomes worse than divorce, it is a grace of God that provides for the release from a bondage that does not bring glory to God.

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume X, No. 240 – May 11, 2010

This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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DIVORCE (continued from page 2261)

1) If a man slandered his wife concerning her virginity (Deuteronomy 22:13-19) the right of divorce was lost.

2) If a man forced an unengaged virgin to lie with him, he was to marry her and *never* divorce (Deuteronomy 22:28-29).

These are indeed strange “penalties” if they already applied to everyone. These passages are totally meaningless if divorce was forbidden across the board – in all cases – as some religionists would have us believe.

Since some believe that the Bible condemns divorce from Genesis to Revelation, let’s look through the Bible to see what it really has to say concerning divorce.

Exodus

In the book of Exodus a neglected wife may leave her husband (21:11). One should take special notice about how divorce is regulated by the law while the practice was taken for granted. Would some then suggest to us that God is *regulating sin*? Certainly not.

Although this book is filled with rules and regulations, there is *nothing at all* prohibiting divorce and remarriage.

Leviticus

In the book of Leviticus the PRIEST WAS NOT TO MARRY a divorced woman. Much is often made of this passage but it should also be noted that they were **also** FORBIDDEN TO MARRY WIDOWS (21:7, 14). It is important to recognize that these rules applied *only* to the priests and *not* to everyone in Israel. The very fact that the priests had special rules regarding this makes it clear that those not in the priesthood didn’t.

There is *nothing at all* prohibiting divorce and remarriage in the book of Leviticus.

Numbers

Numbers 30:9 lists the divorced women right along with the widows (in the same class), and not with the outcast and abominable of Israel.

There is *nothing at all* in the book of Numbers prohibiting divorce and remarriage.

Deuteronomy

In Deuteronomy a man who divorces his wife was to “*Let her go ... and be another man’s wife*” (24:2). The reason for the divorce, according to the passage, is that there was “*no favor*” and “*some uncleanness*.” These could not have been supposed “*sexual impurities*” because these were dealt with by death, *not* divorce (adultery 22:22; fornication 22:13-21).

It should be noted that according to 24:1-4, God *recognized* divorce papers. In fact, God so recognizes the divorce and remarriage that *former* mates are *forbidden* to remarry (although that is actually what some counsel people to do: divorce their present mate and remarry their former). The simple fact is that they are *not*, as some would say, “Still married in God’s sight.”

There is nothing in Deuteronomy prohibiting divorce and remarriage.

Jeremiah

Although divorce may be a *result* of sin, divorce itself is not *sinful*. In Jeremiah 3:8 God divorced His wife (the sin here was on Israel’s part). That is indeed a strange thing for God to do if it was *forbidden* for one to put away his wife for *any cause*. Some folks would have a hard time recognizing the fact that God is a divorcee. Where does this leave the “no innocent party” doctrine?

Along these lines, it is also interesting to note that Matthew 1:19 tells us that Joseph was minded to “*put away*” his wife Mary while at the same time being called a “*just man*.”



Malachi

The religious legalist will often quote from Malachi 2:16.

For the LORD, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.

What they fail to recognize is the CONTEXT of this statement. Israel had *forsaken* their wives and married daughters of strange gods. To quote this verse for *all* divorce, as many do, is just as much private Bible interpretation as quoting Deuteronomy 7:3 and Ezra 10:11 to prove that God is against *all* marriage. In Deuteronomy 7, God is against marriage because of the *kind* of marriage it was. In Malachi, God was against divorce because of the *kind* of divorce it was.

Matthew

Matthew is a Jewish book concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:3-12, Christ is (don't forget the rest of the Sermon on the Mount) establishing the "constitution" for Israel's Kingdom on earth (*i.e.*, the Millennial reign of Christ). These passages (as do their parallels in Mark 10 and Luke 16) are in view of the fact that God has actually *joined* couples together. Not ALL couples are joined by God. Adam and Eve were. Men and women will be during the Millennium. Today most men and women are *joined* together by "preachers," "priests" and "justices of the peace," but not *by* God as it were.

Romans

Romans chapter 7 is usually a key passage used by those who promote the religious doctrine of "once married, always married." This passage has *NOTHING* to do with divorce. There is *NO* divorce mentioned in the entire passage. In fact, that is *exactly* the problem! There had been no divorce papers given! The woman, *while married*, marries another.

If, as some teach, the woman was "divorced," and remarriage is adultery, why do you think that God would have given Moses authority to tell a woman it was permissible to become an adulteress?

It should be remembered that this passage is written to "*those who know the law*"! In other words, one can't really understand this passage unless they first understand what was taught in the Law of Moses. The whole idea of God giving a woman permission (in Deuteronomy 24) to commit adultery and recognizing her marriage as lawful is completely absurd. Some would accuse us of "explaining away the Bible," but a text out of context is a pretext.

I Corinthians 7

This is a chapter written by Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), by whose (Paul's) writings we will be measured (Romans 2:16). This chapter is dealing with marriage, divorce and remarriage. It reveals simple GRACE principles about marriage. Let us take a very brief view of the verses which pertain to the subject of this article.

- The widows and unmarried can marry (:8-9, 39; a divorced person is *unmarried* – see :11).
- Wives should not leave (separate from) their husbands (:10, 13).
- Wives who separate should await reconciliation (:11).
- Husbands should not put away (divorce) their wives (:11).
- There is no marital bond ("*bondage*"¹) for one whose unbelieving spouse leaves them (:15).
- The whole point of marriage is that "*God has called us to peace*" (:15) This is the *key* (Amos 3:3).
- Do not seek divorce (:27).²

(see **DIVORCE**, last page)

1. If one's partner leaves there is nothing that they can do but to let them go. Therefore the remaining partner is "*not under bondage*." "*Bondage*" is a reference to the marriage "*bond*" (see Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:27).
2. "*Loosed*" is a reference to divorce – *i.e.*, loosed from the marriage. There are only two things which can *loose* the *bonds* of marriage: death and divorce. The "*loose*" in this verse cannot mean "death;" for obviously one shouldn't try to kill their mate.

Fellowship in the Gospel

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now (Philippians 1:5).

The word for “fellowship” here is the Greek word *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*). It is translated in the *King James Version* as: fellowship, communion, contribution, distribution, communication. It actually means “partaking by sharing with.” Paul uses *κοινωνία* five times in connection with the stewardship of His gospel.

Stewardship has to do with the management of all that is placed into one’s trust. *Koinonia* is the giving of one’s self and one’s resources – fellowshipping – with those who proclaim the Good News (the evangel) – the Lord’s heralds. Thus, the *Concordant Literal Translation* has,

For your contribution to the evangel from the first day until now (Philippians 1:5).

The Meaning of the “Fellowship in the Gospel”

“Fellowship in the gospel” involves assisting in meeting the needs of God’s heralds, including communicating with them financially.

The Participation in the “Fellowship in the Gospel”

Paul begins his letter to the Philippians by emphasizing their continuation with him in “the fellowship in the gospel.” This is the setting of this letter. These saints recognized that it was their honor to contribute financially to Paul because he faithfully communicated the truth of the gospel. By so doing, they co-labored with him in the evangel.

The Effects of the “Fellowship in the Gospel”

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again;

wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity. Now you know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no one communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (Philippians 4:10, 15-18).

In this passage Paul lists two specific effects of “the fellowship in the gospel.”

Fruit Abounding on Their Account

Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account (4:17).

According to Paul, the fruit of the gospel not only accrues to the account of the herald, but also to the account of those who contribute to the ministry of the one heralding. They become co-laborers in the evangel.

Paul was a celestial investment broker. It is the principle of ministering that he elsewhere calls “ministering seed to the sower:”

Now he who ministers seed to the sower both ministers bread for your food, and multiplies your seed sown, and increases the fruits of your righteousness (II Corinthians 9:10).

Many are making provision for future retirement, which is all well and good; but many miss the glorious investment that has real eternal value ►

– “the fellowship of the gospel.”

Fragrance Pleasing to God

I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (4:18).

God is well-pleased with sacrificial giving to His servants’ (bond-slaves’) needs. Paul even equated the fragrance of the Philippians’ sacrificial giving to Paul with Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary by using the same language He had used to describe the fragrance of the offering and sacrifice The Lord Jesus Christ made when He offered up Himself.

... Christ ... loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor (Ephesians 5:2).

The Lord alone is the supply of His servants’ needs, but He channels this provision through the sacrificial giving of His choice vessels. They are His conduit of material resources. While the herald looks to the Lord alone for His needs, the investor looks to Father for the opportunity to become His vessel of supply.

Imagine if we lived in Paul’s day. If we had been given place in God’s administration to have the heart and ability to “herald the word,” would we not have joined with Paul in heralding the glorious

evangel of the grace of God? Would we not have heralded with Paul? Would we not have done so to the same abandonment as Paul did – even to the neglect of earthly things?

What if our calling was not as a herald, would we not attach ourselves to Paul the herald – channeling every resource possible to him for the furtherance of the evangel? Would we have dared to miss out on the greatest opportunity of human history to herald the evangel?

Nearly two millennia later, this glorious Pauline ministry and opportunity continues! For how long, we do not know. Those of us with the call to herald must “do the work of an evangelist,” we must “fully discharge our ministry.” We must not be distracted from our enormous duty. Those of us who have not been so called, must not be distracted from “the contribution to the evangel.” We must attach ourselves to those who have been called, with wisdom and courage seizing the day with all that we have!

In the “ages to come,” when we look back at this life of opportunity, what will have been our “contribution to the evangel”? Will we have invested wisely as good stewards of Paul’s gospel, or will we have squandered our life and resources on that which was only temporary and passing?

Opening the Divine Storehouse

It is the supreme privilege and imperative duty of all who love God to become closely acquainted with His revelation, to support and promote every effort which seeks to make it manifest, and especially any undertaking which brings God’s Word direct to the common people ... The most precious treasure we can bring to anyone is that

which puts their hearts in close touch with the heart of God ... It is impossible to conceive of any better boon than to open the divine storehouse to everyone who has the heart to explore it.

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
Unsearchable Riches, 1919



I am 63 years old and still can have excitement in my mornings! (NO, it's not that.) Your studies that you send out are a reason for me to get up cheerfully! You have a way with words and God's Word that others do not. Your writings calm me in the midst of this confusing world. Your *Daily Email Goodies* help keep me focused. God may have started you out as clay, but refined you for us into a jewel! – **LA**

Thank you so much for teaching through the *BSN*. Enclosed is \$ – for whatever you need it for. – **PA**

The Father has blessed you, and blessed me in you, Brother Clyde! Thanks so much for the extra dose of AWESOME in your latest message! You break things down and build things up like no one else I know of living today. – **NY**

I have only known of this hidden, but plain to see truth, for 12 months and I am totally captivated. God is more awesome to me now and Jesus work more amazing. I can't read enough. I am in Australia and I only know another 3 people who know this truth. – **Australia**

Colossians 1:15-20 is my favorite Bible passage. Paul's universalism shines through in this ultimate expression of Christ's victory over ALL things. In 25 years of attending various churches, I've never heard a sermon on these powerful words. – **Email**

I have been recently receiving the *Daily Email Goodies* and really need them for daily spiritual food ... I print them and place them in a binder for future use and reference.

It seems as if my spiritual growth was at a standstill for several months as I was getting rather discouraged without fellowship or contact with other Christians. It seems when things look grim, then the Lord sent help when I most needed it. Your web site has been a blessing to me ...

I liked the article of comparing the circus to the religions – it is so true. Only when one cuts the puppet strings of false religion can one truly learn the new steps of the song and dance to the joy and freedom of truth. The spiritual journey is lonely when one feels they are traveling alone and without support ... I am thankful to God that He has led me to your web site. – **WA**

I want to say how much I enjoyed Clyde's book, *The Outsiders: God's Called-Out Ones*. It has usually been an awkward position when I would come across a so-called Christian and the first thing they ask you is, "Where do you go to church?" ... These people have to have a building of sorts to relate to or it means nothing to them ...

I also enjoy your studies through your *Bible Student's Notebook*. The cloudy water around this subject has been cleared for me. My answer to their question of where I go to church? I go to the church of Jesus Christ. Where is that located? It's anywhere and everywhere you find true Christians gathered to study the real meat, the real truth of God's Word. I am very confident with this, and I thank you for the hard work you put into the *BSN*. – **IL**

I have been a Christian for over 20 years and the last two years have been a huge turn around. It took a while for me to find my way but God gave me a revelation of universal reconciliation. It has changed my walk. It's not a different gospel as such. The sacrifice of Christ is still the answer and our salvation. But I have discovered a Father Who has all the power, Who cannot fail, Who is sovereign and Who loves us all. I can truly say that finally I know perfect peace. I found your site yesterday and it's wonderful. May the Lord bless others through this site. Yours in Christ. – **Blog**

Thanks for the "Identity" series. I have translated all parts and put them online on my website. This series is a jewel in the crown! – **Netherlands**

Thank you for your enthusiasm for God. Your Scripture studies really lift me up in the midst of a hectic day. I'm looking forward to meeting you someday. – **WA**

I Timothy

According to I Timothy 4:1-3 “*forbidding to marry*” is a doctrine, not of Paul, but of devils.

God said that it was not good that man should be ALONE (Genesis 2:18). Now suppose, if you would, just for a moment, that Eve had left Adam for some other man. Could some “evil” that Eve did change that which was “good” for Adam? Does God have a system whereby the divorced must live in “celibacy?” That is a religious doctrine, *not* a doctrine of God!

NOTES OF INTEREST

- Did you know that a woman could be a widow and her husband still be alive? (c.f. II Samuel 14:5; 20:3; Isaiah 54:4-5.)
- It doesn’t take a *literal* death to end a marriage (I Timothy 5:6).
- Did you know that it was possible for a man to have a wife and *not be married*? (See Deuteronomy 24:1; Matthew 1:20; I Corinthians 7:36; Isaiah 54:1.)

David had Bathsheba’s husband killed and married her. God forgave him and continued to use him. Could God forgive a man for marrying a divorced woman (if it were a sin) if he does not kill her former husband? When God forgives, He forgives fully. Some treat those who have been divorced as “second-class,” but there are NO second-class believers before God. If a believer has a good

marriage, that is nothing about which to boast. All of the believer’s life is about the grace of God, which is not of works lest any man should boast! If God could do this for David “under the law,” surely He could do no less “*under grace.*”

CONCLUSION

This article is not intended to promote divorce, but to steer the believer away from the influence of religion’s view regarding marriage as a sacrament. A couple should do *all* within their power to stay together. Let them *not* depart. Divorce is *never* pleasant. Divorce is *painful*. Paul even warns the Corinthians,

Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

The key to a successful marriage is laid forth in Ephesians 5:22-33. A man is to love his wife “**even as Christ loved the church**” (II Timothy 2:13), and the wife is to submit to the God given headship of her husband.

May each reader who has the blessing of a godly and supportive spouse give true thanksgiving unto God. May we each work to make our marital relationship bring honor and glory to our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! May we also show forth God’s wonderful *grace* to those who have not been so blessed with our lot. If their journey leads to divorce and remarriage, let us say with Paul,

But and if you marry, you have not sinned (I Corinthians 7:28). ■

Depositing Wealth in the Divine Treasury

Those who are rich ... are exhorted not to place their dependence on their possessions, which may desert them at any moment, but to rely on God, Who alone can make their enjoyment possible. Their most profitable course lies in the employment of their wealth for the benefit of others. This brings them present happiness (for it is blessed to

give), and at the same time deposits their wealth in the divine treasury where it will appear to their account in that day. In this way they will assure for themselves real life, both now and for the eons.

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
Concordant Commentary, page 322