

Marriage And Divorce



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Marriage

God created man and provided for his physical needs by placing him in the Garden of Eden. Then he created a companion ¹ for “it was not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib that He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Adam was given a companion “man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast, be joined together, to his wife and they shall be **one flesh** (marriage). Marriage is a covenant of unity, and faithfulness each putting self aside while seeking what is best for the other.

“For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined (cleave, KJV) [bound, glued, together become one] to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:22-25 NASU)

Marriage among the Hebrews, as among most Orientals, was more a legal contract than the result of love or affection (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia). While divorce was the legal dissolution of a marriage (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary).

The Jews, after the Captivity, were required to dismiss the foreign women they had married contrary to the law. (Ezra 10:11-19) (Easton's Bible Dictionary)

"If he takes to himself another woman [as his wife], he may not reduce her [the other wife] ^a food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. "If he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money. (Exodus 21:10-11 NASU)

“For she (Tamar) saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, ‘Come, let me come into you,’ for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.” ... “She conceived by him. Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.” (Genesis 38:14-16; 18-19 ESV) Jacob thought she was a prostitute, a harlot, not a wife.

“You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ² (Mal 2:13-15 ESV) He has broken his covenant with his wife.

As time passed while under the Covenant ² God made through Moses various situations existed between the father as head of the household and his control/authority over his wife and children.

- a. When a woman marries she leaves the control of her father.
- b. Husband had total control over wife - Law of the husband.
- c. Sexual relations outside marriage is fornication.
- d. Husband can send (put away) his wife away without a bill of divorcement thereby not fulfilling his marital responsibilities.

¹ Man's helper – `ezer – Strong's OT# 5828 (help meet – KJV; his counterpart – YLT)

^a Comments in parentheses, within brackets are the authors.

² Covenant OT *beriyth* - 2) a covenant - divine ordinance with signs or pledges. (Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon)

- e. Husband can divorce his wife by giving her a “bill of divorcement”.
- f. A bill of divorcement breaks the marriage covenant, thus they are no longer married.
- g. Wife has little if any rights – she cannot divorce her husband.
- h. A put away wife without a bill of divorcement is still legally married
- i. A divorced wife can marry another without being an adulteress
- j. Marriage is dissolved at death and ends the law of the husband
- k. Widows are free to enter into a new marriage covenant.

Reason for marriage ³

- Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 addresses the unmarried in verse 1 "It is good for a man not to touch ⁴ a woman" and in verse 2 “But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband” (RSV).
- “In view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound ⁵ to a wife? Do not seek to be free.
- Are you free ⁶ (loosed ASV, KJV) [no longer in a married state] from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned” (1 Corinthians 7:26-28a ESV).
- “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:1-2 KJV).
- “To the unmarried ⁶ and the widows ⁷ I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control (over their sexual passions), they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” (1 Corinthians 7:8-9 ESV).
- “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral (fornicators - NASU) and adulterous” ⁸ (Hebrews 13:4-5 ESV).
 - God by design in the creation process stated that it was not good for man to be alone and that he needed a suitable companion, his counterpart, his helper, a wife. Thus He united the male and female together by the covenant relationship we call marriage to satisfy their fleshly desires of companionship and sexual passion. Therefore marriage is honorable and not a sin.
 - It is a sin to pursue one’s sexual desire outside of marriage by having sexual relations (fornication) of any kind.
 - There is no requirement to marry if sexual desires can be controlled; e.g., Paul.
 - The never-married, divorced and widowed have sexual desires. They are advised to marry if they are not able to exercise control over their sexual desires.

Marriage Covenant ²

Malachi stated she is your wife by covenant” (2:14).

- A covenant is a binding agreement based upon faith and trust in each other and honoring each other. Actions contrary to the terms of the covenant breaks it by destroying faith and trust.
- God entered into several covenants with man which required man to be faithful to Him [not worship other gods]. They constantly broke these covenants with Him, but He always forgave them when they repented and returned to Him – they made a u-turn in their life.
- God hates the sin of divorce, covenant breaking, which is adultery.

³ Married, *gä-mos* (of either sex); Unmarried *ä'-gämos* – not - *ä'*

⁴ *Háptesthai* –intercourse, cohabit, (*Thayer's*) marry – NIV, ISV; attach one’s self to –Strong's)

⁵ Bound, *deoo* – to bind, fasten, [e.g., by a marriage covenant relationship –rd]

⁶ Free or loosed, *lúsin* – divorced *Thayer's*; loosed ASV, KJV

⁷ Unmarried (*ä'gämos*) (i.e., never married or divorced) and widows appears to be all inclusive - any adult without a wife or husband.

⁸ Sexually immoral and adulterous are not equivalent terms [sexual immoral, *pornos* – immorality; harlotry, idolatry; unchastity; fornication; any illicit sexual intercourse] [adulterous, *moichos* – Breaking of a covenant by [intercourse with someone other than their spouse or other means; e.g., not fulfilling marriage responsibilities.

- Anytime man breaks or dissolves one of his covenants it is sin. Therefore, breaking a marriage covenant is sin.

There are seventeen references to adultery in Jeremiah, Hoses and Ezekiel fourteen of which relate to Israel and Judah breaking their covenant with God in the spiritual life. Adultery is the breaking of a covenant probably most as resulting from sexual intercourse with someone not your spouse in the physical life. breaks the marriage covenant. Therefore, a covenant is broken by adultery.

Law of the husband

- “Don't you realize, brothers—for I am speaking to people who know the Law—that the Law can press its claims [is binding – ESV; has dominion-ASV; legal contract] over a person only as long as he is alive? For a married woman is bound by the Law to her husband while he is living, but if her husband dies, she is released from the Law concerning her husband” (Romans 7:1, 2 - ISV).
- The *NASB* reads -- "-- released from the law concerning the husband." More literally, the Greek text states -- "-- from the law of the man/husband." Again, one detects the nature of the absolute authority and lordship the man was given over the woman by such laws and customs. It was law that, quite frankly, favored the *man* rather than the *woman*. Such were the inequities often evident in ancient, more primitive, cultures. This "law of the husband" thus allowed male dominance and "lordship" in almost all areas of the marital relationship.

“It is important for us to understand Paul's point of emphasis in this passage. Paul is *not* "laying down law" with regard to marriage, divorce, and remarriage; rather, he is pointing out, to people well aware of their own legal customs, that under the prevailing legal climate a man had a type of "legal lordship" over his wife. The woman was under the "law of the husband" -- she was *bound* to him, and could *not* of her own doing secure a legal or socially acceptable release. If her husband was unwilling to release her, then her only legal recourse was to await his death.”⁹

- Neither Roman nor Jewish law applies today. However, it is still a sin to break covenants. Broken marriage covenants can be restored by repentance and forgiveness.

Divorce or Putting Away

- “But you O priest -- 8 have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the Lord Almighty. -- 11 Judah has broken faith ¹⁰ a detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the Lord loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god ¹¹ -- 13 Another thing you do: You flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith ¹⁰ (dealt treacherously – YLT) with her, though she is your partner [companion (ASV, ESV), the wife of your marriage covenant. -- 16 For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce ¹² (Malachi 2:8, 11, 13-14, 16 NIV).
- Malachi is first discussing the breaking of the covenant between God and Israel which he called a detestable thing. The covenant was broken because the men of Israel married foreign idol-worshipping women which God strictly forbid by their covenant with Israel.

⁹ REFLECTIONS by Al Maxey Issue #106

¹⁰ Broken faith, [have been faithless – ESV, RSV; dealt treacherously – NKJ, YLT] -*bagad* – faithless, to act covertly, pillage, deal deceitfully, unfaithful (Thayer); dealt treacherously, deceitfully in the marriage relation, in matters of property or right, in covenants, in word and in general conduct. (Brown-Driver-Briggs)

¹¹ Marrying daughters of foreign gods was against their covenant with God therefore spiritual adultery (breaking a covenant with God).

¹² *Shalach* (Hebrew #7971 translated as divorce – RSV, ESV, NIV - to send away - ASV, KJV, YLT) cast out, forsake, leave, let depart, loose (Strong's). However, *keriythuwth* OT:3748 is the Hebrew word for divorcement (Brown, Driver, Biggs). One can send away his wife without a bill of divorcement, dealing treacherously, Malachi.

- Then he wrote about husbands not fulfilling their responsibilities under the marriage covenant by sending his wife away.¹³ It appears he sent her away **without** giving her a certificate of divorcement as Malachi used the Hebrew word *Shalach* (send away) rather than *kriythuwth* (certificate of divorcement). Thus he is considered as having dealt treacherously with her by leaving her no means of physical support or satisfying her sexual desires by not being able to legally marry. Verse 16 states he hates her and conceals his cruelty and injustice. Therefore, he forced her to cohabit (live) with a man with whom she was not married thereby violating her marriage covenant of the husband who sent her away in order to have food, clothing and shelter even if sexual intimacy was not involved which would be doubtful.
- “You have heard that it was said (*a phrase indicating a rabbi’s teaching rather than scripture*), ‘You must not commit adultery (*moicheúseis* – “denotes one “who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another”).’ But I say to you, anyone who stares at a woman with lust (*epithumeésai* - *covet or desire for sexual relationship*) for her has already committed adultery (*e-moicheusen*) in his heart.” (Matt. 5:27-8 ISV). Both actions are an act of unfaithfulness to his marriage covenant.-----
- Whosoever shall put away (*apolúsee*)¹⁷ his (*faithful*) wife, let him give her a certificate of divorcement (*apolúseeon* - *a document that she was not unfaithful*): But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away (*apolúoon* - without a certificate of divorcement) his wife, saving for the cause of fornication (*porneías-illicit sexual intercourse*), causeth¹⁴ her (puts her in a situation to survive) to commit adultery (*moicheúseis* – to have sexual relations with someone other than her husband to whom she is still married). (Matt. 5 31-32)
- Jesus implies strongly in Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9 that men were putting away their wives for reasons other than *moicheúsei*, (sexual relations with someone other than their husband) simply out of the hardness of their hearts, for largely carnal reasons. But in order to cover up their carnality and hard-to-please attitude, they did not issue the certificate of divorcement (without a certificate implies unfaithfulness or an adulteress) causing the woman and her new husband to commit adultery (as she was still married to the husband who did not issue the certificate of divorcement). The woman was merely “put away” not divorced. In this time period in Jewish history, the Torah did not recognize a woman’s right to initiate divorce. Hence, the women of this evil time were being left in legal limbo, i.e. out of house and home, but not free to marry another man as she was still in a legal contract of marriage.¹⁵
- The putting away of a fornicating wife without a bill of divorcement cannot “cause” her to be an adulteress because she is already an adulteress as she broke the marriage covenant by having sexual relations with someone not her husband.
- One deals treacherously¹⁰ by putting away a faithful wife without the certificate of divorcement leaving her destitute without food or shelter and legally unable to marry which causes her to commit adultery by cohabiting since she is still married.
- There are two words translated as “send away or put away” a wife with or without a certificate of divorcement.¹⁴ Without a certificate of divorcement, the sent-away wife was still married with no marital benefits such as food, clothing, shelter or conjugal rights. Her means of survival were limited to prostitution or cohabiting both are considered fornication. The man committed adultery by breaking his marriage contract with his faithful wife. Women in New Testament times did not have a legal standing to initiate such action although they could abandon their husbands.

¹³ “If he takes another woman for himself, he may not withhold from the first her food, her clothing, or her marital rights” Exodus 21:10-11).

¹⁴ The Hebrew and Greek words for without a certificate of divorcement are *shalach* (Hebrew- Strong’s OT# 7971) and *apoluo* (Greek- Strong’s NT# 630) meaning send away or put away.

- There are also two words one Hebrew and one Greek meaning certificate of divorcement.¹⁵ With a certificate of divorcement, the put-away wife was legally free to marry another as she was no longer married to her former husband.
- “And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce¹⁷ one's wife for any cause?’ -- He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce¹⁷ your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces¹⁷ his wife, except for sexual immorality,¹⁶ and marries another, [**he**] commits adultery’” (Matthew 19:3; 8, 9 - ESV).
- “Whoever divorces¹⁷ his wife and marries another¹⁷ commits adultery against her, and if she divorces¹⁷ her husband¹⁸ and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:11-12 – ESV).
- “Everyone who divorces¹⁷ his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced¹⁷ from her husband commits adultery” (Luke 16:18 - ESV).
- “Or do you not know, brothers — for I am speaking to those who know the law that the law is binding [marriage was a legal contract] on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law,¹⁹ and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.” (Romans 7:1-3 ESV).
 - The test the religious scholars were attempting to accomplish was to get Jesus to choose between two interpretations; a) divorce (put away) for any reason of one’s choosing, b) prohibit divorce for any reason. But these were not the only available options so Jesus reminded them that in marriage they were united as one. In response to Moses allowing the giving of bill of divorcement, Jesus states it was their hardness of heart, dealing treacherously. While still married to him as no bill or certificate of divorcement, the man sent her away without providing food, clothing, shelter or her marital rights as required by Exodus 21:10-11. His treacherous actions left her destitute causing her to prostitute herself or cohabit to survive. Therefore, God allowed Moses to command, enjoin, permit or require a bill of divorcement to be given when putting away a wife.

Unmarried

- To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. (1 Corinthians 7:8-9 ESV)
- “Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry (touch KJV).²⁰ But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty¹⁴ to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so

¹⁵ The Hebrew and Greek words for divorce with a certificate of divorcement are *keriythuwth* (Hebrew – Strong's OT#3748) and *apostasion* (Greek NT Strong's # 647).

¹⁶ Those involved in sexual relationship with another’s spouse were to be put to death Leviticus 20:10

¹⁷ This appears to mean one divorces in order to marry someone more pleasing

¹⁸ Greek and Roman wives could put away their husbands but not so for Jews, (Vines)

¹⁹ Law - law of Moses and possibly Roman civil law

²⁰ Touch - sexual relations- ESV; touch-NKJV & YLT (Greek *haptoo* – to attach oneself to)

that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that” (1 Corinthians 7:1- 7 NIV).

- Withholding of marriage covenant duties appears to be not satisfying sexual passions. Neither can he withhold his other marital responsibilities (food, clothing, shelter and intimate companionship) without violating the marriage covenant.

Widows

- To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. ... A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God. (1 Cor 7:8-9; 39-40 ESV)
 - Christian widows and widowers are to marry other Christians to help them live righteously pleasing to God.

Those Separated

- “To the married [in Christ] I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate²¹ from her husband, and the husband should not divorce²² his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:10-11 ESV).
 - Women could not divorce, but she as well as her husband could leave or abandon. When this departing occurred Christian wives and husbands were to remain unmarried or be reconciled.

Unbelieving Spouse

- “To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce²³ her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce²⁵ him” (1 Corinthians 7:12-13 ESV).

Betrothed

- “Now concerning the betrothed (virgins ASV), I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound²⁴ to a wife? Do not seek to be free.²⁵ Are you free²⁶ from a wife²⁷? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed (in a covenant of marriage but not married) woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:25-31 ESV)

Betroth comment: In the Jewish culture one is betroth after the groom gave the bride or her family a dowery indicating he was able to provide for her. A marriage contract was prepared, they were now considered as husband and wife but not living together. The husband begins preparing a place for them to live. When completed he goes to bring his wife to a marriage ceremony after which they live together.

- You can avoid stress in the coming persecution, by not marrying.

²¹ Separate (*chooristheénai* –Strong's NT#5563) -to leave, depart, forsake, abandon.

²² *Afiénai* Strong's NT#:863 - to bid go away or depart: send away YLT

²³ *aphiemi* – Strong's # 863 -send away; not the Greek word for divorce

²⁴ Under a covenant relationship -married

²⁵ To unbind, release, undo, dissolve - *Thayer* (divorce - rd)

²⁶ Free or loosed, *lúsin* – divorced *Thayer's* [no longer bound by marriage covenant]

²⁷ Free from a wife – widowed or divorced [one never married has no wife].

- “I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better” (1 Corinthians 7:32-38).
 - The point is that under certain situations love and concern of family increases the temptation to yield to the pressures of persecution rather than remain faithful to their covenant with God. But sexual passions could be greater if so, it is not a sin to marry.

Summary

Matthew

Jesus reiterated that breaking the marriage covenant by not fulfilling their covenant obligations and by giving a certificate of divorce is a sin unless a spouse broke their marriage covenant by being sexually unfaithful. The putting away of a faithful spouse without a bill of divorcement is a sin as the marriage covenant has been broken but still legally married.

The Pharisees in Matthew 19 were attempting to trap or test Jesus into choosing between two teachings, (put away or divorcing a wife for any reason or prohibiting divorce, putting away, for any reason). Jesus stated that originally, and it still applies today, man and woman were and are united by covenant into one flesh and that relationship was and is intended to last until death. But man is capable of sinning and he does so by breaking his marriage covenant by abandoning or sending her away. Due to man’s treacherous dealing by not giving a bill of divorcement to his defenseless wife, God approved the written document of divorce as recognition of a dissolved marriage. The woman was then able to marry legally without being considered an adulteress since the covenant of marriage had been dissolved by divorce.

Therefore, she was not cohabiting, not living in adultery, but married. Without the divorce document, she could only cohabit, not legally marry. Since a divorce certificate acknowledges by law the marriage is dissolved. They are no longer in a marriage relationship, thus free or loosed from a spouse. The divorce certificate does not negate the sin of divorcing a faithful spouse (also recorded in Mark 10 and Luke 16). The sin of divorcing can be forgiven just as the sin of fornication or any other sin. In Chapter 5 Jesus explains that it is the inner man can lust and thereby commit adultery.

1 Corinthians

To the unmarried (never married, widowed and divorced):

- Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (as stated in the beginning it is not good for man to be alone).
- Men and women should marry to avoid sexual immorality.
- It is better to marry than burn with passion. Those divorced have the same or perhaps even greater sexual desires than those who never married. Therefore, their sexual desires may be more difficult to control than those who have never married.

To the married:

- Do not send away without a divorce certificate or divorce with a certificate a faithful wife as both break a marriage covenant.
- Do not withhold fulfilling a spouse’s sexual desires

- c. A husband and wife may separate by mutual consent from each other for purposes of prayer and fasting. The separation period must be of sufficient brevity so as to avoid the temptation for sexual immorality.
- d. Refusal to reconcile following a separation from a faithful spouse breaks the marriage covenant.
- e. Christians are to remain in their marriage relationship to an unbelieving spouse who consents to do so.
- f. A Christian is not bound to their marriage covenant if an unbelieving spouse deserts or abandons their wife or husband. The marriage covenant is broken and by choice, the covenant obligations are not being fulfilled.

When one enters into an exclusive covenant relationship all other similar relationships must be excluded, such as:

- a. marriage to a spouse in the physical
- b. being the bride of Christ in the spiritual

Not fulfilling the covenant requirements or being unfaithful to a covenant is adultery, such as:

1. In the marriage relationship
 - a. sexual intercourse with someone other than one's spouse
 - b. refusal to reconcile following separation
 - c. not fulfilling one's marital obligations and /or refusing to participate in the sexual and companion relationship
 - d. abandonment
2. In the spiritual relationship
 - a. rejecting God by worshiping, having a spiritual relationship with, false gods (e.g., idols, icons, money, pleasures)
 - b. refusal to participate in a covenant relationship with God fulfilling God's spiritual desires of evangelizing, edifying, and doing good deeds while being faithful and growing into the nature of God.
 - c. refusal to repent and reconcile following separation

Forgiveness of the sin of covenant breaking, adultery, requires:

- a. recognition of sin
- b. ceasing the practice of any sinful activity
- c. repentance²⁸ by changing from a sinful life
- d. desire to be forgiven
- e. seeking forgiveness

There is no doubt that God hates the breaking of covenants including the marriage covenant – unfaithfulness. Faithfulness is a part of the very nature of God. In the Law of Moses, marriage was recognized following a divorce. Also, Christ recognized that a marriage was dissolved by divorce and no longer in a marriage relationship and that one having married again following a divorce was in a married state.

Conclusion

Christians can sin as evidenced by

- a) Simon (Acts 2),

²⁸ Not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being" (*The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 18, p. 66 quoted in REFLECTIONS #515 Al Maxey, January 3, 2012)

- b) The Corinthian brother (1 Corinthians 2);
- c) The Ephesians who were told to put away lying (Ephesians 4:20)
- d) The breaking of covenants by divorcing.

Adultery, the breaking of one's marriage covenant includes:

- a) Sexual relation with someone other than their spouse;
- b) Coveting or lusting for someone;
- c) Refusing to fulfill physical or sexual relations within a marriage;
- d) Abandoning, sending away or divorcing a faithful spouse

Whenever divorce occurs sin is present - a marriage covenant has been broken (1 Corinthians 7:10-14; Matthew 5:31; Matthew 19:8, 9). Christian brothers and sisters, not just the leaders, should counsel those in the process of divorcing or already divorced "patiently, tolerantly and kindly" (Romans 2:4) and encourage them to recognize the nature of their sinful acts.

There appears to be no basis in the scripture for the concept of "**living in sin**" as a result of remarriage following the issuance of a certificate of divorce. The Bible does not appear to suggest the breaking of the marriage covenant is a **continuing state** of sin that can only be remedied by committing the sin of divorce (breaking a covenant is something God hates – Malachi 2:14) and remarrying the original spouse (strictly forbidden in the Old Testament if the original spouse had remarried - Deut. 24:1-4). The Bible seems to make no distinction between the **state** of being unscripturally divorced or the **state** of remarriage. Therefore, the **act** of divorce or subsequent remarriage is adultery, not the **state** of divorce or remarriage. For purposes of scriptural purity of the Body of Christ, God's children cannot treat sexual sins differently from others.²⁹

If one who has broken the covenant relationship of marriage fails to acknowledge their sin and their spiritual consciousness cannot be raised to the point of repentance, the only remaining option is to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5 NASU). Should this action become necessary, Christians are not to associate ³⁰ with them as if they approve of their sinful actions. The same is true with regard to sins of greed, idolatry (anything more important than God), slander, drunkenness or cheating, as it is with sexual sins (1 Corinthians 5:11). Sinning with the intent to seek forgiveness after sinning is an attitude close to, if not, the unpardonable sin

On the other hand, if they have repented of the sin of divorce, returned to God and resolved the matter with Him, they should be welcomed into full fellowship just as any other wayward Christian who committed any other sin and who had returned to God. They are back as a forgiven servant in a right relationship with God. Since they have reconciled their relationship with God, then we as the Body of Christ must forgive and not continue condemning them by our actions. All Christians should rejoice for the one who was lost has returned and is again in fellowship with God and all who are in Christ.

There appears to be no Biblical gradations of fellowship or participation, there is not one group who can serve God and another group who is not allowed to serve. For the Christian community or their leaders to prohibit one from serving God runs counter to Christ's teachings that all His children are servants and priests to serve Him. Christians and/or their leaders sin when they demand someone violate God's law of servanthood. All Christians are servants with various functions to perform. They are either in Christ **or** out of Christ, either forgiven **or** not forgiven or either in light **or** in darkness. We are all forgiven sinners. All who are in Christ are in fellowship with God and His children which man cannot withhold. They are in that relationship by the grace of God because they have come full face with their own sin

²⁹ Adapted from Position on Remarriage by Larry W. Bridgesmith 1/2/1990

³⁰ Refer to God's Will chapter 14 Disciplining, R. Dunn, Nov. 2014, The BibleWay Online

and have been cleansed by Christ's blood. **We must also forgive. God forgives and if we do not forgive, we sin** (1 John 3:21-24).³²

Forgiveness

All men and women are encouraged to marry in order to avoid sexual immorality. Therefore, marriage is not a sin. God hates divorce as a covenant is broken. It is a sin. So, what action must be taken by a Christian guilty of the sin of divorce?

First, all sins are forgivable except for those who refuse to seek forgiveness or for the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31-32 NKJV). Whenever Christians become aware, they have sinned they must correct their situation, and repent, to get back into a right relationship with God. Therefore, there must be some instruction in the New Testament regarding what a Christian must do to be forgiven of the sins he commits.

In the spiritual marriage relationship, God is always willing to forgive and restore but not on any conditional basis. Sinners must return unconditionally by changing their life and seeking a restored relationship. Likewise in one's physical marriage relationship every effort should be made to restore the marriage relationship but not on some conditional basis.

Luke, recording an attitude and possibly greed problem of Simon, states in Acts 8:20-23 "But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.'" This Christian's heart was evil, full of sin and in need of forgiveness.

Paul, without giving many details, wrote in 1 Corinthians about a Christian involved in fornication. He strongly condemned both the fornicator and Christians tolerating his fornicating as they did not take any action to bring the sinning brother back into the right relationship with God. Apparently, they did not regard the act of fornication as sinful and alienating them from God. They needed to repent from their lack of love for this brother in his sinful condition.

In 2 Corinthians 2:10 Paul states that he forgave the fornicating brother. The Corinthian brother ceased his fornicating and changed his attitude, for the Christians in the Corinthian church were told in verse 7 to "comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow." Obviously, a Christian brother had sinned, later repented and was forgiven as Paul told the other Christians to comfort him.

It is incumbent upon Christian brothers and sisters to provide a Bible answer to the question, what must I do to be saved or to be forgiven. It is clear they must stop sinning, repent' i.e., make a complete change in lifestyle. The Ephesian Christians were told "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:25-28 NKJV). It appears that they had a practice of lying, stealing and holding grudges. Therefore, to be forgiven the practice of sinning must cease.

Does the cessation of the practice of sin bring forgiveness? No, for in 1 John 1:8-9 John writing to Christians states "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It should be clear that a Christian must be aware of his or her sin(s) for if one is not aware, how can they cease, confess,³¹ repent and change.

To be free from the bonds of iniquity, one's attitude (the inner man, heart, mind, center of emotion or intellect) must desire to be pleasing to God by ceasing their sinning and altering their lifestyle toward righteous living. One must also confess, or acknowledge their sin to God and to the one sinned against. Prayer is the avenue for Christians to confess to God their unfaithfulness and their desire to return to His fellowship.

This applies to all those in Christ who are engaged in the **practice of sinning** including — fornication, stealing, lying, rage, murder, rape, slander, blasphemy, envy, lust, child abuse, divorce, drunkenness or any other sin. For “therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, **but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.**”

³¹ Confession is more than saying “I am sorry.” The expression whether verbal or from one's inner being must be from a contrite heart recognizing one's sinful situation. It must result in a change in life, repentance,²⁷ and a desire to restore the relationship destroyed by sin. (Adapted from the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia) The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:7-32 is a good example of this.