

Redwater Restorer

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)

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Adultery and Repentance

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Church of Christ

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In our last article we presented what God's word teaches concerning honorable marriage. The marriage institution is under attack in our nation at a phenomenal rate. Current statistics show that 70% of marriages in America end in divorce. This should cause concern as to what the scriptures teach concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage and the consequential adulterous relationships in which many find themselves. What does repentance demand? Is your soul at stake?

Simplified, what does the Bible teach about marriage, divorce and remarriage? First, God instituted the home or marriage shortly after creation (Genesis 2:18-25). Clearly, God intended marriage to consist of one man and one woman for life. However, mankind later introduced polygamy and divorce (Genesis 4:19; Deuteronomy 24:1).

Second, not every marriage historically has been acceptable to God (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). God through his prophets commanded divorce in such cases, even when children were involved (Ezra 10:2-5, 9-12, 44).

Third, though God through Moses "suffered" divorce, Jesus restored the divinely given institution of marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9). Whereas in the beginning marriage was universal among men, Jesus restored marriage to its original status among all mankind. The Gospel according to Mark was written to Romans and included the restoration of marriage to its original state (Mark 10:11-12). God's marriage laws apply to Christians as well as non-Christians (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

The New Testament only reveals two rea-

sons for which any person may enter into a subsequent marriage. First, remarriage is permitted by God if one's marriage partner has died and the widowed mate opts to marry a biblically qualified candidate (Romans 7:1-3). Second, Jesus in Matthew 19:9 permitted the innocent party of a divorce for adultery to marry another biblically eligible candidate.

John the Baptist told a king that he had no right to his brother's wife (Matthew 14:3-4; Mark 6:15-20). The message was not popular, so much so that consequently John was executed because of it (Matthew 14:5-12). Any other message, condoning Herod's adultery, would have brought upon John a worse consequence than death (Matthew 10:28).

One of the most tragic and consequential sins in which man can engage is adultery. It destroys families, lives and destroys within some people the hope of heaven. Because we live in a time when adultery and divorce are so prevalent, it becomes incumbent upon us to state the truth contained in God's Word about this sin and its consequences.

Let us suppose that a person divorces and remarries without the scriptural grounds of fornication (Matthew 19:9). Let's suppose that this person begins a new life with his new wife. They build a wonderful relationship, are happy and have three children. As time progresses, they desire to become Christians or return to faithfulness if they already were baptized. **Question:** Does their baptism or their prayer allow them to pick up where they are and continue together in a sexual relationship? Has their prior adulterous relationship suddenly become a sanctified and holy relationship? In response to these questions some

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today are eager and vocal in answering in the affirmative. However, let us examine several points.

First of all, there is no question that baptism or prayer will wash away one's sins (providing one repents of his sins). But repentance demands a resolve to cease from a sinful activity. A couple in an adulterous relationship must resolve to cease from the sinful sexual activity in which they engage if they desire the forgiveness that comes through repentance.

Some suggest that baptism washes away their former adulterous relationship and allows them to continue together after baptism. However, does baptism or prayer for that matter, sanction as holy that which prior to baptism or prayer was unholy? Can you name one thing that is sinful before baptism, but which after baptism is not sinful? What was sinful before baptism is still sinful after baptism. Baptism or prayer is not some kind of magic that performs marriage ceremonies for adulterers.

Some suggest that man is not under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) until he becomes a Christian. When Peter spoke to those outside of Christ about their sin what was the first thing he commanded them to do? Repent (Acts 2:38) ! Repent of what? Repent of sin ! And sin is what? Sin is transgression of the **law** (1 John 3:4). How then can some suggest that man is not under the law of Christ prior to baptism? Such is absurd!

Some suggest that though a person is under the law of Christ, they are not amenable if they were ignorant of the law at the time they became married. Since when has ignorance of God's law, or any other for that fact, been an excuse to transgress the law. Paul says that the Lord will come in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Ignorance is no excuse!

Some have suggested that such a position on adultery makes the Gospel "bad news" rather than "good news"

to a great and growing number of divorced and remarried people. However, to suggest that the Gospel would not be good news to a couple living in adultery is very short sighted. The message of salvation is always good news! At times, it might require some very difficult decisions to be made, but it is still good news. Could one not also argue that the Gospel would be "bad news" to the drunkard, homosexual and liar? Would it be considered bad news for a doctor to tell a concerned patient that with a few weeks of radiation (which will have some painful side effects) he can be totally cured?

Some will also claim that God could not possibly ask a man and a woman to break up their relationship if children were involved. While I would never attempt to minimize the difficulty of such situations, the hardship cannot be allowed to determine what is right or wrong. One must remember that the hardship was not brought on by God, but by man's disobedience to God's warning. In the past, God has demanded such separations (Ezra 10:11, 44).

Sad to say, many in the world today find themselves in marital situations which are not pleasing to God. Most religious bodies including some local churches of Christ do not teach God's will concerning this matter. Why would anyone want to be part of a religious group or a congregation of the churches of Christ which does not uphold its responsibility of being the pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Lord's true church will teach the will of God without hesitation (Matthew 28:19,20), no matter what the cost. Are you part of the Lord's true church?

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