

The Lord has spoken Divorce is not part of God's original intent for mankind. From the beginning it was not so. God hates divorce, Malachi 2:14-16. As is His way, the Lord states this is the underlying principle for us to honor. Then He, in his grace and mercy, states an exception "save for the cause of fornication." The bond is broken by the sinning partner but even then reconciliation is encouraged. Infidelity is not an unforgivable sin. So efforts should be made toward reconciliation, ideally until it is made impossible by the remarriage of one party. (Even then, reconciliation as brother and sister in Christ should be sought and achieved. The liberty of the Spirit in their personal lives and in the local assembly is hampered by lack of confession or lack of forgiveness on the part of any in fellowship.)

How long one should wait for reconciliation is not given by the Lord or the apostle. In many cases both partners have contributed to the break up. One should have genuinely confessed (admission is not confession) offences and sins and sought reconciliation for some time before giving up the wait. Then it is a matter of honestly determining God's will whether a marriage with some one else should be considered. In the writer's opinion there should be genuine deep sorrow in finally forsaking one once loved, (perhaps still loved) and looking about for another. Later in the chapter Paul exhorts that any marriage is to be "in the Lord" and any remarriage of a widow is to also be "in the Lord".

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

He generally exhorts us all not to seek to change, for the sake of change, our current calling or status in the world.

20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

On the other hand he also encourages marriage, thereby avoiding temptations.

2 Nevertheless, [to avoid] fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

He here cites one example of a **mixed marriage of a believer and unbeliever**. Not that grace permits marriage between believers and unbelievers.

2Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:

But one spouse may become a believer while married. Once one spouse is saved an uncomfortable situation may arise. Paul answers a question that would arise in any believer seeking now, in good conscience, to honor his Lord and Savior. According to the scriptures they had available they might naturally think they should put away or leave their unsaved spouse and children, as decreed in the Old Testament. The Old Testament Law of Moses commands Israelites to not marry Gentiles. Period! When they did and were discovered they were forced to put away their Gentile wives. See Ezra 9 & 10; and Nehemiah 13:23 - 30. That was Law. Not in this age! Things are different now. This is grace! (Let those who take offence at the idea of dispensations take note of this example of the difference). The unbelieving spouse and the children are said to be "sanctified." This doesn't mean they are automatically saved by their connection to their believing spouse or parent. But they are accepted graciously into a blessed place in the home, and literally arms, of a believer, a saint. One who will show them Christ by their life and open the way for the Holy Spirit to convict and win their lost soul.

1Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, [be] in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation [coupled] with fear.

What a blessing for all.

But there is no guarantee of salvation for the spouse or even of the children. Don't be lured into a relationship that might lead to such a "missionary marriage." Actually the unsaved spouse might decide to leave. Paul says this might occur. He instructs the abandoned believing spouse to accept this as from the Lord and declares him or her not to be under bondage to the departed spouse. There has been much discussion about whether this statement allows remarriage or simply means they are not required to fight a divorce.

One might comment here that divorce and remarriage is not without significant effects on any children. I only cite the Lord's words regarding children...**His little ones**.

Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Another waiting situation can arise if one spouse simply disappears without a trace. Local laws usually have some provision to free an abandoned partner to remarry after a suitable period, often on the order of seven years.

Perhaps these are not the only exceptions to the

Lord's decrees about marriage and divorce. But they give the flavor of the application of grace to our lives without any idea of compromise or looseness in holding the institution of marriage in honor. God in this age has graciously restored marriage amongst believers to its original place of honor, respect and order which had been abandoned soon after sin entered the world. Elsewhere, Paul points out other signs of a restoration to natural order amongst the believers, some right here to the Corinthians. See 1Corintians 11:1-16; 14:37. Note 11:10. The angels are witnessing the remarkable return to the original order which Satan wrested away from mankind by his deception in the garden. Let us be aware that the roles we have as created human beings living in this age of grace reflect the redeeming, restoring power of the cross of Christ. We honor the Eternal God even in the down-to-earth, nitty gritty of marriage, only to discover the lofty vision of Christ and His Church given us in Ephesians 5. We are to be a living parable displaying Him and His Bride in the full sanctity and love, of marriage in the Lord. So marriage is not simply mating as animals, or a means of sensual pleasure God invented to ensure procreation, as evolutionists hold. Marriage and family is one of the richest blessings of the Creator God upon Adam's descendants with a wonderful spiritual component looking forward to glorious fulfillment in what it typifies.

Now Paul moves into a discussion of the **general principles** underlying the issues about marriage they were concerned with. We all need to understand our place in the world God has left us in. Indeed the Lord has sent us into it just as He was sent by the Father, John 17:14-18. We are sent also to disciple, Matthew 28:19-20. He does not immediately whisk us out of here and home to glory, the moment we believe. No, He not only leaves us here but sends us here, as from elsewhere, as not being really part of it's system anymore. Therefore Paul, in verses 17-24, presents some examples of what this means in our lives. **T h e general principle is to remain where we are and what we are humanly speaking.**

17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

No matter how we got there, we are normally to continue where God has put us, (unless we are in a truly evil occupation, or associated with evil in some way). Included are: Birth place, parentage, birth heritage, nationality, social status, bond or free,

married or unmarried, Jew or Gentile, etc.

In general we are to "bloom where planted." Yet this does not mean we are totally stuck where we are. We can make wise, godly changes as the Lord move us. **He, from time to time in His wisdom and according to His purposes, presents us opportunities and opens doors for us.** We are to be prayerfully open and alert for these and ready to respond and act "in the Lord" as Paul says in this chapter. The two examples given in this chapter are marriage and slavery (or long term employment). We've already talked some about marriage. One in slavery is to be content and serve faithfully as to the Lord, Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; 1Peter 2:18; etc. But if an opportunity arises to become free, we are encouraged to take advantage of it. Paul does not endorse slavery but he does not condemn it either. It is simply not the time for changing the world. He does not advocate social reforms. He does recognize obtaining personal freedom from slavery as desirable, if possible righteously. Yet set free only to serve the Lord, as we all are to. This includes the independently wealthy and retirees as well.

But we are to be content, not continually anxiously casting about for some change. Do you think this sounds boring? Do you feel caged up? We tend to be either stressed out or bored. Clearly in the very instructions and situations given in this chapter we see the life God has for us is both challenging and meaningful. Be content to wait but be ready to go when He calls. Basically what we are, where we are, and what we do in this scene are secondary to God's overall purpose for us here. When we get taken up with the things of this world more than necessary to cover basic needs and expenses (as opposed to wants and desires) we become less effective for the Lord. **The time is short. We should not waste it occupied with seeking and cherishing mere temporal things.** In one sense even the institution of marriage and family is secondary to our focus for the Lord. We will have more on this in what follows. Other scriptures tell us we are pilgrims and aliens here, citizens of heaven, ambassadors on a mission for the risen and ascended Lord of glory. Keep things in God's perspective in the Spirit and we will do best.

By Ron Canner, March 26, 2003