

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XV: Properly Handling Marriage And Divorce Issues

(1 Corinthians 7:10-16)

I. Introduction

- A. With the effects of the 1960s sexual revolution, even many professing Christians have modified their past views to become morally lax with involvement in suggestive clothing, pornography, divorce and remarriage.
- B. After directing believers to avoid immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, Paul taught how to handle problems in marriage and divorce issues in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, and we view that passage for our insight and edification:

II. Properly Handling Marriage And Divorce Issues, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

- A. Paul wrote that God commanded married believers not to initiate divorce, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.
- B. However, if they **did** get a divorce, they were to remain single or be reconciled to their spouse, 1 Cor. 7:11a, and Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV and NIV qualifies that such a reconciliation can occur only if there has not been another marital union since the first divorce with a partner other than the original spouse!
- C. [Some teach that Jesus allowed for divorce in cases of immorality, and cite His Matthew 19:9 "except for fornication" clause as proof. However, Matthew was written for Jews and Mark for Gentiles (Ryrie Study Bible, 1978, p. 1337, 1397), and the Mark 10:1-12 record of this Matthew 19 account forbids divorce and remarriage, omitting the "exception" clause altogether, meaning the "exception" clause applies only to Jews in Jesus' era: the Jews required divorce for (1) marriage of a Jew to a Gentile under the dispensation of the Law (Ezra 10), (2) immorality during a betrothal period (Matthew 1:18-19) and (3) marriage in violation of the Levitical degrees (the union of cousins), Howard G. Hendricks, Christian Counseling for Contemporary Problems, 1968, p. 112-113. Thus, the "exception" clause does not apply to the Church era today!]
- D. If a believer is married to an unbeliever, and the unbeliever wants to remain married, the believer must not divorce the unbeliever, 1 Cor. 7:12-13. "The presence of a believer in the home sets the home apart and gives it a Christian influence it would not otherwise have," 1 Corinthians 7:14; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, ftn. to 1 Cor. 7:14.
- E. However, we interpret 1 Corinthians 7:15-16 to mean that if an unbeliever wants a divorce, the believing spouse is not bound to that union by God, but he is to let the unbeliever leave him to keep his rapport with the unbelieving spouse good for an eventual evangelization of the lost and marital reconciliation, 1 Cor. 7:15-16. However, others see the "not under bondage" clause in v. 15 to mean the believer is free to remarry a third party after the unsaved partner divorces him, for he does not know if he can lead the unbelieving spouse to the Lord, the alleged meaning of verse 16. Yet, the Greek text supports the interpretation we take (as follows):
 1. Both appearances of "whether" (KJV) in v. 16 translate the conditional particle *ei*, otherwise rendered "if," and the verb rendered "save", *sozo* that follows *ei* in both cases is in the indicative mood (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 592; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 396; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 217-219).
 2. As such, *ei* written before the verb in the **indicative** mood indicates the assumption of the reality of the premise (Dana and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, 1957, p. 289).
 3. In other words, Paul was assuming that the believing spouse would likely lead the unsaved partner to Christ, that a reconciliation marriage would then follow in accord with the 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 order.
 4. Had Paul's questions stated the less probable future condition, meaning it was unlikely that the unsaved spouse would be saved, those questions would have grammatically **had** to contain the conditional particle *ei* with the optative mood of the verb in the protasis, the "if" clause, followed by the apodosis, the "then" clause, that would contain the particle *an* with the optative mood of the verb (*Ibid.*, p. 290). However, this arrangement does **not** occur in the Greek text at 1 Corinthians 7:16! (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.)
 5. Paul thus did **not** advocate remarriage to a third party believer after an unbelieving spouse divorced the believer! Rather, he taught that the believer is not bound to resist the unbeliever from initiating divorce against him in hope that the rapport might be saved so as eventually to evangelize the lost and save the marriage! This interpretation smoothly agrees with Paul's commands in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11!

Lesson: *Be it Jesus' words or Paul's words, Scripture consistently teaches that God does not allow for divorce and remarriage in the Church era. The sole exception is the case where an unsaved spouse initiates divorce, and the believer is to let the unsaved depart in hope of evangelizing him and thus eventually salvaging the initial marriage.*

Application: *(1) May we remain loyal to our spouses in Christian marriage. (2) If we are married to an unbeliever, may we seek to preserve the marriage long-term while also leading the unbelieving spouse to Christ.*