

Divorce and Remarriage (part one of a three part study)

This study will not be comprehensive. Instead, it will target the specific issue of a divorce which occurred in an individual's unsaved past. What impact would this divorce have upon that same individual who is now a convert to Christ? Are there consequences which would carry over into their Christian life? Most of us would agree on the following. If there are ongoing legal and financial responsibilities to the previous spouse, they must continue to be fulfilled. If there are children from the previous marriage, becoming a Christian doesn't void your responsibilities as their parent.

However, the critical area of disagreement rests with the question of whether or not this individual, in becoming a Christian, now has the freedom to remarry with God's approval. Those who deny such freedom to remarry believe this too is a negative consequence which carries over and must be endured, in spite of one's conversion experience. One example presented to me in defense of this viewpoint is that of an alcoholic who develops cirrhosis of the liver from his many years of drinking. Coming to Christ for salvation doesn't necessarily guarantee healing from God for that condition.

In regard to a prior divorce, should this new Christian seek to be reconciled with their estranged spouse? The apostle Paul certainly seems to endorse such an option in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. But if that attempted reconciliation fails, for whatever reason, then what? If that divorce was a sin in God's sight (Malachi 2:16), then should it be viewed as an unpardonable sin? Would it make a marriage to a different spouse nothing more than an adulterous affair, based on the teaching of our Lord in Matthew 5:31-32?

After many years of considering the above perspective, held by a variety of sincere Christians, I beg to differ. The primary reason for the rejection of this view is based upon my understanding of the conversion experience. Our salvation brings forgiveness of all one's sins, without exception. Can certain consequences mentioned above carry over? Of course. However, faced with the choice of labelling divorce as the unpardonable sin, or allowing for the freedom to remarry as a result of becoming a Christian; the decision for me was an easy one. Two passages of New Testament Scripture have convinced me of the latter option. I will close with the one and begin part two with the other –

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)