

TOPIC XII

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

This may be one of the most controversial matters facing the believer today, let alone the churches. With the divorce rate at somewhere around 50%¹ in both the church and outside of it, and so many re-marriages, how do we reconcile these happenings with what scripture has to say? I will say that this is no easy study. Human feelings, thoughts, behavior, emotions, conflicts, difficult relationships in marriage and the scriptures themselves all impact how one thinks about this and what conclusions they draw about it and why they draw them.

The mainline Christian churches disagree on both the issue of divorce and remarriage. Some prohibit divorce totally², some allow it with specific exceptions and some allow it but prohibit re-marriage and others allow both depending on the circumstances. One social problem we have here in the United States is the deterioration of principles that marriages are based in. Prior to the latter half of the twentieth century divorce was much less practiced as couples understood that marriage was a life-long commitment. In addition, more of the people were in church and were taught the sanctity of marriage. Since the latter half of the twentieth century through today, the move toward personal independence, especially among women, and the general deterioration of spiritual values in favor of the attitude of self-interest and self-benefit being supreme - at any cost - has seen a meteoric rise in marital and family dissolution.

This last item, self-benefit at any cost has worked its way into the marriage and the home and has made marriage a "what's in it for me" matter rather than an "I love you" matter. This becomes weary to a spouse who is married to someone whose primary goal is to use their spouse for their own good and satisfaction at the expense of the other. This attitude flows down to the children who, already self-centered, exacerbate the problem until it's a wonder that anyone stays together anymore.

Then, the entire idea of faithfulness to one partner alone has become so diluted that this type of relationship is even difficult to find anymore. In fact, unfaithfulness, adultery, fornication, homosexuality and every sexual aberration is not only not frowned upon, but promoted and approved in the most of the popular media. Even

¹ According to general statistics. .

² Such as the Amish and Mennonites and several more.

child abuse, incest, sodomy or any perverse sexual behavior is now seen as a "so what" among our citizenry, and the penalties for sexual child abuse are minimal. Even Hillary Clinton proposed that girls from the age of 10 onward ought to be given sexual freedom.

This study will not reflect these growing attitudes. However we will address the complex situations we face and I know you will wish to immediately ask about one or more of these right now. But I would ask that you hold off until we lay some foundations before we get there. Be patient for a session or two or three, please.

There are only thirteen references to divorce in the entire Bible, Old Testament and New. Yet the scriptures are full of information about marriage both in the real lives of the characters involved and in the teaching itself. In our day, there is a great deal of diversity in both teaching and practice about this subject. For the believer, who wishes to be obedient to God, questions emerge. The subject is huge and the scriptures do not cover all circumstances relating to marriage questions and problems. The "What about this situation or that..." questions will be endless.

At the end of the day, each individual must decide for him or herself the path to choose and most importantly, why that path is chosen.³

To review a few foundational and basic Biblical statements regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage we have,

Genesis 1:26-28, 26: "Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28: God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Here we have the creation of "man", male and female in God's image as one, a union of two, then they are given dominion together over all creation and then told to procreate. So God created a family with dominion as a portrait of His own image.

³ For a discussion on the scriptural model of marriage See my article in the appendix entitled, "Marriage - Some Thoughts"

Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

God's goal is to unite in oneness and harmony, and Satan's is to divide in disharmony.

Jesus repeats these passages in response to a question about divorce in Matthew 19:3-6,

3: "Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" 4: And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5: and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Now Jesus spoke these words because divorce had become common place in Israel during His lifetime. It was generally the action of a husband who could divorce his wife for about any reason. The question of the Pharisees may reflect the disagreement about divorce between the two houses of Jewish theological teachings, namely that of Hillel and Shammai. For example, the House of Shammai held that a man may only divorce his wife for a serious transgression, but the House of Hillel allowed divorce for even trivial offenses, such as burning a meal. Between each house, various levels of strictness and bases for divorce existed and were often in conflict. But Jesus made it clear that marriage was a divine institution and that it was the responsibility of the man to assure its harmony. The word "man" is not generic here, but specific. In ancient Israel, divorce was only the prerogative of the man, not his wife. Jesus knew this and made it clear that the man was the one who had both the responsibility and the option whether to divorce his wife under the Law. He has more to say on the matter which we will look at in a moment.

Biblically, there is no law or command prohibiting divorce. Divorce could occur following the wedding night if the prospective husband finds that his wife was not a virgin. However this was rare in the custom of Israel because after the

consummation of the marriage, the bride's handmaidens gathered the bedclothes, which would have some blood on them, and gave them to her parents to prove her virginity at marriage. Odd you might think. But, Deuteronomy 22:13-19 speaks to the situation where a new husband might seek a divorce from his wife by claiming she was not a virgin at the wedding.

13: "If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and *then* turns against her, 14: and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, 'I took this woman, *but* when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,' 15: then the girl's father and her mother shall take and bring out the *evidence* of the girl's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. 16: "The girl's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; 17: and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, "I did not find your daughter a virgin." But this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. 18: "So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, 19: and they shall fine him a hundred *shekels* of silver and give it to the girl's father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days."

So in fact, there are laws granting divorce in certain cases. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 reads,

1: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house, 2: and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's *wife*, 3: and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4: *then* her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."⁴

This rule does not prohibit the divorce for the above mentioned reason, nor does it prohibit the remarrying of the divorced woman to another, presumably the man with whom she had sex with in the first place, though that is not specified. She is,

⁴ This law will come back into play at the conclusion of this study.

however, prohibited from returning to the previous husband. The remarriage under this rule is not addressed in the New Testament.

Nevertheless, divorce is displeasing to the Lord. Malachi 2:13-16 reads,

13: "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand. 14: "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15: "But not one has done *so* who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16: "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Jesus, in the same tone, was clear about the hardness of heart of the men who divorced their wives. Again referencing Matthew 19:7-12,

7: They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY?" 8: He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

This was a shocking statement as event the disciples said to Jesus,

10: "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." 11: But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given. 12: "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*."

This must have been disconcerting for those of His disciples who were already married. The main point of Jesus' teachings focuses on the "hardness of one's

"heart" as the core cause of marital discord. The matter of the "heart" is crucial as we have discovered. This statement also shows how seriously Jesus viewed the marriage union.

Again, the exception to the divorce prohibition was "immorality or "unchastity" and this was to be determined at the consummation of the marriage. In Matthew 5:31-32 Jesus noted this,

31: "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'; 32: but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

In the ancient Israelite culture, engagement was a bond that was considered as binding as marriage. If a woman engaged in sexual activity prior to or during the engagement and it was discovered, the husband (to be) could file a certificate of, divorce even though the consummation of the marriage had not been completed. This is why in Matthew we read, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly." (1:18-19)

Mark 10:2-12 duplicates these statements of Jesus except there is another nuance. He adds in verses 11 and 12,

11: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; 12: and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

So there is latitude for divorce, even for the woman, but Jesus notes that remarriage after divorce is committing adultery. He also speaks of a matter outside of the Law itself, "remarriage." This is actually the more poignant issue and one we must examine thoroughly.

However, there is very little regarding remarriage in the Bible. The only specific permission for remarriage in the Old Testament is if the woman becomes a widow. She may remarry, but generally if possible to a blood relative to her husband so

children and heirs might be raised up in his family and name. Priests were not allowed to marry a divorced or widowed woman but only a virgin from Israel. There was to never be a marriage between an Israelite and one who had faith in another god or was of a different culture that worshipped idols, such as the Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines and so on. However, in the Book of Ruth, an Israelite man married a Moabite woman (Ruth) who converted to Judaism, recognizing and worshipping the true God. Her husband died and she ultimately remarried a kinsman of her deceased husband, Boaz, and they became the great-grandparents of King David.

David also married several wives, some unmarried previously, and he also married more than one widow, one of which he himself had caused the death of her husband. He had multiple wives. Was he committing adultery by having more than one wife? Nothing is said about this and it adds some confusion to the matter. David, while married to other wives, had Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, killed so he could "legally" have Bathsheba. The comment by God's prophet Nathan was that the sin was having Uriah killed. Nathan said nothing about the multiple wives, or taking Bathsheba as a wife and they had Solomon who the Lord loved and blessed.⁵

So with this foundational information so far, we move to the more confused and chaotic situation Paul faced as now the body of believers includes not just Jews of various opinions, but Roman Gentiles and all the debris they bring with them into the mix.

Now, the only specific teaching about marriage, divorce and remarriage in the New Testament outside of the Gospels is found in I Corinthians 7. Paul speaks, not from a legal or even Biblical mandated position, but rather from the place of the importance of reaching others for Christ of doing the Lord's work. Marriage can be a hindrance to accomplishing God's work and Paul may be considering this in light of the view that the time until Christ returns is short. However, he concedes that there are needs and necessities that can be only be properly fulfilled in the marriage union. He is also burdened with dealing with a Gentile culture where the marriage is not seen in the light of the Biblical model. He finds himself in a hornet's nest. Let's see what he says,

⁵ See page 231, P4 for my thought on this.

1: "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2: But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. 3: The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4: The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. 5: Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6: But this I say by way of concession, not of command."

The church at Corinth, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers had written Paul on these matters. Generally, the church at Corinth was a mess spiritually and morally as new converts brought with them their policies and practices from their own religious or non-religious backgrounds including marriage practices.

The "immoralities" Paul speaks of is improper sexual activity, including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, incest and so on. This was not uncommon in the Gentile society under the Roman pantheistic religious system, especially when the woman was often in a leadership role both politically and religiously. Obviously, the sexual drives are real and it is the responsibility of the husband and wife to see to it that both do not seek this fulfillment outside of marriage. This drive was not to be used as a manipulation either by withholding it for some reason or motive.

Paul recognizes that as he proceeds to counsel in these matters he has no specific scriptural teachings to rely on.

Yet, in spite of this counsel, he counsels the celibate life, though he himself may have been married at one time.

7: "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. 8: But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9: But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*."

In Jesus' comments in Matthew 19:10-12⁶ to His disciples He made the comment

⁶ Quoted on page 221

that if sustaining a marriage is too much of a challenge then perhaps it is better to become a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He concluded, "He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*."

Well, most do not accept it. So they need to be attentive when marriage is considered or entered into so that the future with their spouse is not headed for disaster. This would go a long way in preventing much of the marital chaos we have in our society today such as a Christian not marrying a non-believer, for one. In the Jewish culture, this was generally assured by arranged marriages as both prospective spouses were "vetted" prior to engagement or even "dating" which was not a practice in those days either. But Paul is assaulted with all the pagan marital and relational chaos now entering the church.

Then Paul addresses the matter of discord within the marriage.

10: "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11: (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife."

This is in accordance with the teachings of the Lord and the Scriptures as Paul already knows and re-states. Divorce is undesirable, but should it occur, the divorced parties are not to be remarried. The reason for this is based in the initial reason for marriage at creation. The marriage union reflects the oneness of God and was created in His image. Siring children is also in His image. The parents are to picture God to their children and so are not to be in conflict, but in harmony. Divorce may separate the parents, but remarriage dismantles the single union and oneness God designed after Himself and smacks of idolatry as one seeks another other than his or her own spouse. But this was occurring anyway, and we will return to this in a while. The basic foundational instructions are done.

Paul now continues considering some new situations not addressed in the Jewish culture, traditions or even the Scriptures.

12: "But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13: And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away."

Now we have the situation where a believer has married a non-believer or where

one spouse has come to faith while the other has not. This has occurred throughout the history of Christianity and Paul seeks to address it. This would be a rare situation in the Jewish culture and religion, but now that there are Gentiles in the mix and intermarriages, or those who are coming to faith married to those who have not, Paul is wading into a muddy swamp.

But why, according to Paul should this mixed faith couple stay together? Here is what he says,

14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy."

The focus here is the spouse and the children being "sanctified" in a home where one spouse is a believer. "Sanctified" means "holy" or set apart for God's purpose and service. Now as Paul continues, he realizes many situations are possible and the matters becomes more complex. The Biblical principle of the solidarity of the family is reflected here. As the one of faith serves the Lord so the entire family, in its solidarity, is to go. There are only three Biblical unbreakable relationships God has instituted and they flow from God down. They are: God and Christ, Christ and the believer and the husband and wife. All others are breakable such as "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife." But the lineage is to be constant as well.

However, under the New Covenant things do change here from the physical lineage to spiritual. When this relationship is mixed in a marriage, Paul who knows this, attempts to manage his counsel and ends up by simply saying, "Just stay in the situation you are in if possible and serve the Lord" as we will see in a moment.

He has little more to add, but he also recognizes the reality of the human condition. Following on the idea of the unbelieving spouse being "sanctified" in the marriage to a believer, he concedes a real possibility and adds,

15: "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such *cases*, but God has called us to peace. 16: For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? 17: Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches."

We will return to this in a bit. The question comes in verse 15. Is Paul saying that in this case, the brother or sister is free to remarry? Or that the unbelieving spouse is free to leave? Does this "leaving" include divorce? We will discuss this shortly.

Paul now concludes his instructions to some of the situations he is dealing with, rather than continue to try and address all the complex problems marriages can present. Dealing with the problems in the church at Corinth alone is taxing as we see, for example, in 5:1-2 where he wrote,

"It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst."

Paul's counsel is to oust this man out of the assembly and Paul places him under Satan for "the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Returning to the text in view, Paul simply says to stop all of this and remain in whatever relationship you have resolving to serve the Lord in the present situation without any changes or further immoral conduct. He says this in an unusual way and causes some confusion by his illustrations getting off on a rabbit trail for a moment.

18: "Was any man called *when he was already* circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised." (Comment - I am not sure how you would un-circumcise anyone.) 19: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is* the keeping of the commandments of God."

I chuckled wondering how a man could become "uncircumcised" but the point is,

20: "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called."

For us, the grace of God does not invalidate God's commands, will or intent for the marriage union.

Yet Paul makes the following apparently contradictory statement,

21: "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that."

So what about remaining in the condition in which he is called? He explains his straying comment realizing that there are certain non-marital situations where the counsel to remain in the situation where one is called may not apply. So he says,

22: "For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. 23: You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men."

With this interlude, he restates his point,

24: "Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called."

So in repeating this counsel again his emphasis to remain as one finds himself when called now takes on the spiritual aura. One is to "remain with God" in the situation in which he was called. This suggests that the situation can change, but one's obedience to God must not (again, note verse 19).

In my opinion, I am sure Paul realizes that the attempt to deal with every situation a couple could raise would be an impossible task and he knows he is not equipped to deal with it (as if anyone really can).

So now he turns to a different marital question, but with a familiar theme.

25: "Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. 26: I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. 27: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife."

Now, a key point is the phrase, "in view of the present distress." Paul is referencing the current pressures, distresses, persecutions that are challenging the believers in those days. He uses language that reflects conditions prior to Christ's return. These conditions and vocabulary are used by Christ Himself.⁷ Paul is

⁷ See Luke 21:23-28

counseling that considering these conditions it is no time to involve another or make drastic changes to one's marital state. We see this as we continue.

On the other hand, he says,

28: "But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

Paul is not referring to "marital" problems as some assume. He is speaking about the problems believers are having in the present time of persecution and attacks on believers, especially from the Jewish community. Those who come to faith in Jesus are frequently "shunned", disinherited and disenfranchised from the Jewish family and community. There is also a growing persecution from the Gentile/Roman environment as well as we know from Claudius' banishment of Jews from Rome (including most all Jewish Christians) in 48 BCE. He rescinded this just prior to his death. Following Claudius came Nero, and though followed through with lifting the ban as a young ruler, came to persecute Christian and Jews later in his reign. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote,

29: "But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; 30: and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; 31: and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away."

In addition,

32: "But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; 33: but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 34: and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. 35: This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."

Paul's emphasis and purpose is clear. There is only time and energy enough, due to the distress of the age, to focus on the work of the Lord and bring as many into the

kingdom as possible while there is yet time.

Still, regarding a young woman of marriageable age who is still unmarried, he counsels,

36: "But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry."

"Acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter" simply refers to a father who has restricted his daughter from marriage due to indecision about a suitor, or other Reasons - such as his concern over the distress of the time - and is hurting her chances of being wed and having children. The power of a father over his daughter was supreme in this instance as is noted in the next two verses.

37: "But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin *daughter*, he will do well. 38: So then both he who gives his own virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better."

This, again, is due to the crisis of the times in which the church existed. The feelings of the daughter are secondary in this matter and neither the mother or the daughter has littler say at all, at least in the Jewish households. But not so in the Gentile households where the women often held equal or higher authority than the husband. We see that Paul counsels from his own perspective being raised in the strict Jewish culture and tradition. So Paul's counsel would cause considerable difficulties among the Roman Gentile members of the church as well as in today's culture,

Then Paul notes that a marriage is to be permanent with an exception or two.

39: A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 40: But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God."

This exception to the remarriage rule is the only one in scripture except for the "unchastity" matter. That exception held true in the case of Ruth and in the case of

Bathsheba, for example, even though David arranged to have Uriah, Bathsheba's husband killed in battle so he could "legally" have Uriah's wife.

In Paul's counsel a widow was allowed to remarry, only in the Lord, but generally speaking, older widows did not remarry. All other situations may exist, but in every case, re-marriage is prohibited. Both divorce and remarriage, therefore, are extremely serious steps, and both violate the divine principle of permanent union and faithfulness in marriage. One of the issues that may arise is the financial support for a widow and children that may exist. So she is free to remarry if necessary for this purpose, no question there.

But what about a divorced woman in those days? If she is prohibited in remarrying, especially if the husband was the one who divorced her, what was she to do? Well, under the rule in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 there seems to be some latitude for remarriage if one were to press the point. But Jesus denies this option as does Paul. What happened in a case like that in the Jewish culture was that she would return to her parent's home and the parents would support her and her children. In the early church, the congregation also stepped in to help. There was no governmental help at all and even today, in many countries, this is still the practice.

According to Jesus, however, it matters not whether it is the husband or the wife who gets the divorce, if they remarry, it is adultery. So what do we do in the case of so many more complex situations we find ourselves in? We will indeed address this in a short time. But let's recognize that complex situations and marital chaos is nothing new. This began pretty much right off the bat. Solving these after the fact is the problem.

Let's do a survey through the Bible and see, from the beginning both the teaching and the practice regarding marriage and how God dealt with it.

We are aware of the oneness displayed by the relationship between Adam and Eve prior to their disobedience and choosing the counsel of the serpent over that of God. The Hebrew is not unclear that this series of events is not just a historical happening, but typical of all peoples since the beginning of creation. Mankind has existed in a state of spiritual death at birth since then and his decisions are made without the help of God's counsel as it is not really desired by most people as you know. Therefore we have a giant mess to deal with.

After the Garden disaster, it all goes to pieces. Cain marries and his great, great, grandson, Lamech, (son of Methuselah) is the first mentioned to take two wives (Genesis 4:19). Multiple wives, concubines, intercourse with maid servants all became common place and children from all of these and more were produced. In Genesis 6:1-5 we read,

1: "Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, 2: that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. 3: Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." 4: The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown. 5: Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

The Lord's discontent is in the context of all this sexual misconduct that could well have been a part of the "evil" pointed to in men's hearts. If so, then this conduct, or perhaps the multiple wives and so on was displeasing to the Lord. But if so, it isn't mentioned again and didn't deter Abraham from cohabitating with his wife's handmaiden Hagar, nor Jacob or Esau from having multiple wives and children from handmaidens. In fact Jacob (Israel) had Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah, Rachel's maid, and Gad and Asher by Zilpah, Leah's maid. All four are counted among the twelve tribes of Israel. We won't mention that Reuben also lay with his stepmother Bilhah, his father's concubine and Rachel's maid. In his blessing of his sons at his death, Jacob removed the birthright from Reuben saying,

"Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled *it*-he went up to my couch." (Genesis 40:3-4)

Joseph married an Egyptian and has two sons by her, Manasseh and Ephraim.⁸ Both were counted among the heirs of Jacob and received portions in the land hundreds of years later.

⁸ Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. (Genesis 41:50) "On" was a city in ancient Egypt later called "Heliopolis." It was near the upper East delta region and its principal god was Ra, the Sun god. "Heliopolis" means "city of the sun.". At that time Thebes was the capital.

During the time of the sojourn in Egypt and the later captivity, many if not most of the descendants of Israel (Jacob) became saturated with the Egyptian culture, dress, traditions, and even religion including intermarriage with Egyptians. By the time of the Exodus, other than some residue of Israelite tradition and family identity, the Israelites had only a small sense of their identity. Most had lost touch with their spiritual foundations and their God. Not all of course, but even Moses had little information as to who he really was beyond the fact that he was of Hebrew ancestry. He was also ignorant of the identity of God Himself.

Joshua was the son of Nun, a man with the name of an Egyptian water-viper god. It's quite possible that there was intermarriage with Egyptians or sexual affairs throughout the several hundred years Israel was in Egypt. After the conquest of Canaan, intermarriage and multiple wives still occurred even though Israel had the Law of God by that time. Idolatry was a problem as well and cultural interaction and immorality was rampant depending on the leadership of the nation. National policy under the kings regarding all things religious and moral became the rule for the people as well because people tended to desire and seek that which they want rather than what was God's desire and will for them.

Interestingly, God has little to say about all the multiple wives and marital indulgences during the time of the kings as reviewed earlier. Not sure why, except that His plan of redemption in bringing Jesus into the world involved some latitude in these matters it would seem. Man is free to do as he wishes and the Lord both gave us that freedom, did not prohibit the exercise of free will in most cases and, based in His foreknowledge and sovereignty brought it to pass. Otherwise, I have no idea why little or nothing is said or done regarding these marital and moral violations during this period.

After the destruction, dispersion and exile of both Israel and Judah, and the return of a segment of Israelites to the homeland, there was a concerted effort to recapture the purity of both the religious and cultural standards intended by the Lord. Teachers and schools sprang up to instill in the youth the codes of conduct once held in esteem by the nation.

And that brings us to the time of Christ and the early church. Debates still raged over many spiritual, moral, and marital issues, but the goal was to retain the sanctity of marriage and if that was dissolved, it was still to be held pure in terms of restricting re-marriage.

In over 2000 years and the spread of the gospel to the world and the incursion of so many different cultural practices, divorce and remarriage still presents itself as a real challenge to Christians who are caught between national and cultural permitted practices and what God has laid down in Scripture. For example, we knew a couple who attended Calvary and professed faith. The wife however, either wanted to have an "open marriage" or to divorce her husband and the leadership of Calvary would not give her permission for either so she said she was going to look for a church that would give permission. I have no idea if she found one, but I am sure something out there exists.

Many believers, like the ancient Israelites look to the governing authorities for permission in these matters. I know of many believers who claim that their own sexual practices are just fine because not only are they not prohibited by the government but are actually encouraged as normal or proper by the government. So they go with that. Add to that the hardness of heart, the lack of any kind of guidance as one comes of age, the general "I am looking at what's best for me" attitude and the unending and often unknown abuses and irresponsibility's that come into a relationship and one can understand the ancient practices involving investigation and control by the parents to avoid disasters as much as possible.

Many of us who have been guided by the flesh and pure ignorance in our youth and all, now find ourselves in violation of the foundational and Biblical teachings. Then there are those who have become believers while spouses have not and conflict arises. The situations have become so numerous, complex and involved that what are we to think and do? And so, here we are.

To review the foundations, there was to be no divorce, period. But it wasn't prohibited either. And should it occur, there was to be no remarriage, period. From the article by: Christian Answers.net" It reads. "Jesus said,

'Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.' ([Luke 16:18](#)).

"If there is any doubt, this also applies to wives. '...and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.' ([Mark 10:12](#)). "Paul concurs with this."

Addressing this entire issue, another example can be drawn from "Christian Answers.net.

"Since the Lord would not contradict Himself, we should conclude that, while there may be some situations in which extramarital sex would create such problems in a marriage that divorce would be better than continuing in an unhealthy or even dangerous relationship, in general it would be better to forgive earlier indiscretions (if accompanied by repentance and present faithfulness) rather than to break up what might otherwise still be a good marriage."⁹

"In both cases, however, Christ warned that remarriage after divorce amounts to adultery, a sin which is explicitly forbidden by God's seventh Commandment. Both divorce and remarriage, therefore, are extremely serious steps, and both violate the divine principle of permanent union and faithfulness in marriage."¹⁰

At this point it is incumbent to point out that Jesus taught under the law, applied The tenants of the law not to just the physical conduct but to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The New Covenant had not yet been instituted.

So, as believers under the New Covenant there are some matters that also affect the matters at hand. We move here into some conclusions we trust are proper under the New Covenant, but these are not intended as an excuse to play fast and loose with our freedom in Christ.

A. Though we are not under the Law, but under grace, sin is not an issue and thus any violation of the foundational principles or the sin of adultery due to remarriage are not counted against us in terms of condemnation, judgment, or loss of salvation or any of that. Jesus taught under the Law and applied the Law strictly to the situation citing God's intent from the beginning and the harness of men's hearts.

Understanding that, believers now under the New Covenant and God's gracious kindness top those of faith in His dear Son are not condemned for their situation as it now stands if indeed a divorce and remarriage has occurred and the previous spouse still lives.

However, to deliberately violate God's law because of this fact is also not permitted. Paul is clear in Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

⁹ <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-f004.html>

¹⁰ See footnote 100.

B. However, on the other hand, the Lord knows our weaknesses and our needs. And here is where it could get sticky, depending on the true heart attitude and motive of any individual believer. Yes, as Psalm 103:8 says, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. And, Psalm 103:13-14, "Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust."

But does this give an excuse for indulgences that are based in the desires of the flesh? The issue is always the heart before God. There is no way anyone can know what this is except God, the person themselves (and that may be difficult) and perhaps someone in whom counsel and advice is sought.

The Lord's grace and loving kindness is often seen given in response to those of a repentant and contrite heart, not in some off handed manner to all comers.

C. There is no divine proclamation that marriage is to be happy and fulfilling. Certainly the Lord does not wish us to be miserable either. But the choice is ours and specifically and Biblically, it is the responsibility of the husband to see to it that the marriage is harmonious and satisfactory. There is, of course, a role in this for the wife, but Biblically, the husband is the head of the house to begin with. It is with the leader that responsibility lies. It is with the leader that service and love to the family begins. It is the leader's role to set aside his own desires and self-centeredness and take on the role God has set clearly before him. This is not taught much by either the church and especially not society. Biblically, the leader, as time progresses should set aside any role of authority (often defined in worldly terms, not in Jesus' terms) in time as he elevates his wife and family to the oneness and harmony described so often in the scripture as the goal of relationships in Christ. This is what Jesus did for us and does for us (Philippians 2:1-7). Jesus also made it clear that, even as Lord, He came to serve and not to be served and told His disciples,

25: But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. 26: "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27: and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; 28: just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28)

Historically, rulers have seen their role as one who "lords" it over others and who

is to be served by others. This attitude has saturated the cultures and religions of our time. It has permeated our churches and homes. Churches teach that the husband is the head of the wife and that the wife must submit to their husbands and so on. Yet the model Jesus set and taught and one Paul understands is that this role is one in which service is exercised on behalf of wife, family and others and not just to please oneself. The husband, like Christ, ought to set aside his "authority and position" and humble himself in service and sacrifice. He needs to bring his wife and family into a oneness and harmony with each other and with God, where the "chain of command" fades and unity is achieved. This was how it was in the beginning and what the true intent of God was and is for the marriage union.

A husband must be understanding, a good listener, compassionate and gracious to his wife. Peter said,

"You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." (I Peter 3:7)

John Peterson wrote the song,

"No one understands like Jesus, He's a friend beyond compare; Meet Him at the throne of mercy, He is waiting for you there."

No one understands like Jesus, Every woe He sees and feels; Tenderly He whispers comfort, And the broken heart he heals."

No one understands like Jesus, When the foes of life assail; You should never be discouraged, Jesus cares and will not fail."

No one understands like Jesus, when you falter on the way; Though you fail Him, sadly fail Him, He will pardon you today."

Chorus:

No one understands like Jesus, when the days are dark and grim. No one is so near, so dear as Jesus, Cast your every care on Him."

I always challenge the husbands to replace Jesus' name with their own and see how they fare. Most are shamed. Peter also said,

"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;

Paul wrote,

"Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Philippians 2:1-8)

One would hope that though this was written to the church at Philippi, that it would apply to a marriage and family as well.

Paul also wrote,

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body." (Ephesians 5:25-30)

Not bad for a strict Jewish Rabbi from an Old Covenant patriarchal culture where wives were little more than chattel. Add Jesus words about the leader/servant role and many other passages and one may begin to see where it all begins to go wrong.

In pre-marital counseling, all this ought to be stressed. Yet though it may be so, the intense self-centeredness and self-absorption of our culture is paramount and getting past that is very difficult. Jesus nailed it when he pointed to the hardness of heart. This means that there is no room for anyone else in someone's life except himself or herself.

Now, even in the case of unfaithfulness, divorce is not prescribed. It is an option depending on whether the offending party displays true contrition and repentance and the heart of the spouse can ring itself to forgiveness. If the marriage can be saved then that is the best solution.

D. As noted, divorce is not prohibited, but certainly not approved by God either. He would much rather see a husband and wife adopt His view on the role of each in the marriage and be obedient in fulfilling it. Plus, there is the matter of vows and the breaking thereof. The prohibition against marrying a non-believer is also inviolable, but broken all the time.

E. Still, the real sticky wicket is re-marriage. The exceptions are the previous mention of a non-virgin wife. Well good luck with that today. Another exception is if a person becomes a widow or widower.

Then there is the debatable passage in I Corinthians 7:12-15. It regards being married to a non-believer.

12: But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13: And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

15: "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such *cases*, but God has called us to peace. 16: For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? 17: Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches."

Many commentators and churches take this to mean that the believing spouse is free to remarry, only in the Lord. Others disagree. If an unbelieving spouse insists that the believing spouse denies their faith then that would be cause for separation. We are one with Christ and nothing is to undermine that. But does the phrase "the

brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases" permit remarriage?

This is where it comes down to the heart. For example, Jesus said that to be remarried after divorce is adultery. But He also said that to lust after a woman is also adultery in one's heart. I expect the same is true of a woman's lust after a man. Few, if any, are exempt from this in one's lifetime I would surmise.

But generally that is a momentary adultery and not living in adultery. Jesus used this illustration to point out the corruption of the heart in spite of physical adultery not actual occurring. In all fairness, He also was speaking under and about the intent of the Law, not the grace and forgiveness under the New. But, as always, it is a heart issue.

So, under the New Covenant we are not under the law. And, Paul's counsel is largely a matter of his opinion and thoughts on the matter as he himself says, because he has little information from the scriptures that would apply to the "already in place" Gentile marital practices or to ours.

Now, we must step outside of Biblical instructions and move into extrapolations and inferences, if not conjecture.

The article in "ChristianAnswers.net" says this about I Corinthians 7:12-15,

"This obviously means that the Christian husband or wife is then at liberty to remarry. In fact, if there are children involved, and if a caring Christian spouse can be found, it would be good to remarry, for children need the love and guidance of both a father and mother, provided, of course, that the stepmother or stepfather is "in the Lord" ([I Corinthians 7:39](#)) and desires to assume such a responsibility."

I do not believe that Paul's comment about a brother or sister not being in bondage is obvious that remarriage is permitted. On the other hand, I cannot say absolutely that he did not include this possibility in the comment. Continuing...

"By extension, these principles could be applied to other situations that the [Scriptures](#) do not cover explicitly. As noted above, God is able and willing to [forgive all sins](#), including even the [sin](#) of getting a [divorce](#) for trivial reasons. He has called us to peace, not legal bondage, and He can make a good [marriage](#) and a happy home no matter what the previous history of the people involved

may have been, provided that true repentance, proper restitution, and genuine saving faith and sincere desire to serve the Lord now exist in their lives."

The Catholic Church has adopted a view similar to this as well. Paul may concede the point if the remarriage would further the proclamation of the gospel and the work of the Lord and not just be for convenience sake or for personal self-interest.

My own opinion¹¹ is that if a spouse is either an unbeliever, or denies Christ or commits adultery and departs, he or she has nullified the marriage covenant and the vows.

And, remembering Deuteronomy 24:1-4, returning to the initial spouse is an abomination. If the offense is serious enough and other factors are in play and the innocent party has been faithful, and no reconciliation is possible, then if a divorce occurs and one's heart before God is genuine, a re-marriage may possibly be permitted. "May be permitted" in my opinion and the circumstances are limited and restricted in my opinion as well.

But, again, this is my opinion and not necessarily to be taken as counsel of the Lord. I must add that I am not totally comfortable with this viewpoint at all. But given the circumstances of our social and national situation I do not know what else to propose in cases where the resolution of the problems are impossible due to an objectionable and abusive spouse and a reconciliation is impossible.

Then considering that children may be involved and/or support denied, to leave a woman without support, the children without Christian male guidance, or help seems a worse option.

However, for the young people considering marriage, thoroughly examining the character of a future first spouse before involvement is a far better way to begin a relationship. Wouldn't this be great if this was emphasized to young people as well in the church as well as in the home.

¹¹ This is not a counsel of the will of God because there is nothing to address this issue in Scripture. This opinion and two dollars will get you a donut and a cup of coffee. That's all it is worth. Yet, I feel some flexibility is warranted under certain circumstances for the innocent and injured party.

Bottom line.

A. Divorce.

1. Whatever situation you are in stay put and work on enhancing your role in the marriage you now have according to God's instructions.
2. The scripture does not address problems in marriage that can lead to divorce such as: Physical or verbal abuse, drug use, financial irresponsibility, incompatibility, educational or career choices and conflicts, moves to another place due to these and other factors, medical and mental disorders, anger and temper issues, repeated infidelities, problems with or addictions to drugs, pornography, alcohol, tobacco, child issues, adoptions, mixed families, the difference between civil law and scriptural principles, and many more. All of this is left to us to figure out in terms of considering divorce.
3. If you are widowed, it is your option freely without restriction. However murdering your spouse so you can legally remarry without constraint is frowned upon.

B. Remarriage.

1. If you are divorced and feel re-marriage is desirable, search your heart to see if this is something the Lord would condone or bless. There is much to think about and consider in this, the most controversial subject. The reasons, motives, and true "heart" leadings are involved and this is not an easy decision either way. Note my opinion above.
2. We are not to be under condemnation, even if we sin. Sin is not counted against us. But at the same time we are not to abuse the grace of God sinning in a cavalier manner because we are covered in a greater grace.

That's the best I can do.

Questions?

1. "I have been divorced and have remarried. Am I committing adultery now?"

Answer:¹²

No, in Christ that sin and condemnation has been washed away as have all the past violations of God's law just as it has been done, by His grace, for many other offenses not related to marriage.

2. "Am I now to divorce this husband and return to my first husband?"

Answer:

No, this is explicitly forbidden in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In addition, the past indiscretions and sins are no longer on your "account" by god according to His own word. It is as if they never occurred. The primary mater is what you do now in response to His instructions regarding marriage and all that this is supposed to involve from His word.

3. "I am recently divorced. My husband was unfaithful, departed from me and my small children. I was faithful to him and have not been with a man since. But am I now prohibited from ever being married again?"

Answer:

Under the Law, yes you are prohibited. But the Law (Old Covenant), as well as Jesus, spoke primarily of the physical union and situation between the husband and wife. Under the New Covenant, the focus is on the spiritual realities.

In your situation, you must be focused, not on just the desire God has for a union physically, but on the spiritual foundations upon which you now stand in Christ under the New Covenant.

This now becomes a matter of your own relationship with God, the sensitivity of your heart to His Spirit, your own motives and desires of the heart and not just a fleshly response to your own self-centered needs or ideas. This is how it should be in the first place. Yes, the past is washed away and we are clean. The intent is to do nothing that will bring "uncleanness" back into your life. Thus this becomes a personal matter for you as no one else can read your heart or know God's will for you in this matter.

¹² All answers are given to the best of my understanding and ability as a Christian under the New Covenant.

4. "After this study, I have feelings of guilt about my conduct, divorce and remarriage. What should I do?"

First, get a clear recognition that in Christ you are forgiven and cleansed. The magnitude of Christ's sacrifice and the fact that according to His own words we can trust in the finished work of Christ being actually finished for us all, past present and future, there is no condemnation or guilt registered toward you.¹³

Second, your emotions here however, are an indication of your care for and sensitivity toward God and His word. This is common in true believers but needs to be counterbalanced with the blessing of the truth of God's grace and love in Christ.

Third, Paul was quite aware that the past was gone. He said, "Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

This is good counsel.

Finally, there is no place in the New Testament where it says, "Now that you are new creations in Christ, walking in newness of life, you are now to spend as much time as you can remembering and focusing on your sins so you can constantly be in a place of confession, repentance and forgiveness in order to keep the books clean before God?"

This type of teaching makes me want to vomit but it has infected the church like a virus and the antidote is truth about Christ's finished work on the cross. Not only that, it is to be found nowhere in the New Testament. In fact, the New Testament says exactly the opposite.

Here is what it says,

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the

¹³ This (what the "finished work of Christ really entails) is seldom, if ever understood by the church today. We will address this vital and important truth in a later study.

things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3)

And,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." (Philippians 4:6-8)

Guilt over actions in the past? Not only unnecessary, but debilitating as well.

My position is, "Physical works will never accomplish spiritual results. Spiritual 'works' will have both physical and spiritual results." Generally, this is not understood, even by those who teach the grace of God because they do not know what "spiritual works" are and generally define them by physical action.