

Marriage Sermon for the Reformed

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I would like to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ. Usually when people say those words, you assume they will tell you the Gospel, but I am speaking to those who already have heard the Gospel and presumably believe; I want them to know the Lord Jesus Christ. I want them to hear His Word. I want them to follow Him. I want them to make Him visible in this world.

I speak especially to a Reformed community and Reformed churches. That's not just because I share the same theology, but I also respect the care for sound biblical doctrine that the Reformed have, and the bulwark against Church collapse that they seek to be as a community.

I love my Reformed brethren, and Reformed teachers. I believe that God is free to choose His elect according to His will. He is God. He is perfectly free. We are not. We only come to follow Christ because of His power and election. I believe Reformed theology truly honors God, shows wonder at His doings, and respects the mystery of His great will. When I came to know Jesus years ago, it was an incredible act of God. It was not of my personality.

I also find the alternate teaching puts the focus heavily on man. It wraps God's working up in a nice little bow, makes the entire election a matter of superficial foreknowledge (in essence God's response to us), and shines the light on man, and this golden cow of freedom. It does not pass the sniff test because it suggests God does things pretty much how you or I would do things.

Yet He does not. He chooses from the mystery of His will and for his glory. We do not make a personal decision to come to God. No, God makes a supernatural decision to come to us.

Yet I want the Reformed to come to Jesus and show that they truly follow Jesus. For since Calvin this tradition has allowed into the Church excuses for the sin of adultery through remarriage. Calvin was not the only Reformation leader to start to make exceptions, but he, and the later writers of the Westminster Confession, turned their otherwise careful eye away from the Lord, and towards man's desire, which is to have freedom from his spouse. They left their commitment to God's authority, even momentarily, and made the commitment to man's comfort. For just as the alternate theologies to perfect sovereignty turn the focus from God's freedom to man's freedom, this terrible error by Reformed theologians turns the focus from obedience to God, to following man's desire. It is a compromise and shifts where are eyes should be.

Among the more prominent Reformed ministers today, we can still see this compromise. Not long ago a popular Reformed pastor counseled the daughter of another Reformed pastor to actually leave her husband. Permitting her to leave would have been nauseating enough. He actually counseled her to tear her marriage apart. The second Reformed pastor certainly has not shown he understands his daughter is sinning against the Lord, and as she has since remarried, we have heard no calls that his daughter end her sin. One almost imagines that pastor number two thanks pastor number one for making his daughter's life easier. Thanks him for making the Christian's life easier. Thanks him for taking away her sacrificial walk and replacing it with a simply utilitarian one. This is boldly unchristian and not the way the children of God live. The Lord calls remarriage adultery. Man can call it something else all day long, but it remains sin. Remember the irony here, that those who claim their theology uplifts God, can find it convenient to rename sin like this, and treat it as normal. This is the ultimate uplifting of man, over God. It makes a mockery of the authority that Reformed ministers claim Holy Scripture has as well.

Meanwhile, the most prominent Reformed minister finds multiple excuses for what Christ calls adultery, giving lip service to the lifelong nature of marriage out of one side of his mouth, and justifying destroying marriage out of the other. You would not have a hard time getting divorced in his church. Perhaps the next most prominent Reformed minister actually reads the Bible without his man-glasses on, and will preach there are no excuses for the sin of remarriage, but in complete reversal of course, will promise that once you are remarried, you can live freely in it. God will forgive you. Grace covers it. He makes excuses for this lifestyle that he would never make for sodomy or same-sex unions, and boldly contradicts the Bible, which calls for repentance from sin, and which promises hellfire for those who presume they can live in sin.

This is nothing but compromise, brethren. Moreover, Reformed, who care so much about consistent biblical exegesis, and who flaunt this over those who can't even pronounce exegesis, completely ignore good interpretation when it comes to New Testament teaching on marriage. They will run with the crowd to the claim that the phrase "except for fornication" allows for remarriage, using these three debatable words to overrule MANY clear New Testament teachings that condemn remarriage as sin. They will build a doctrine on three words, and ignore the plain, unambiguous teaching that marriage is for life, it is only ended by death, and that the separated marriage partners must either reconcile with each other or remain single. That is not good biblical exegesis. It is a terrible idea to take three debatable words and overrule fifty times more clear Scriptures. Rather, if we are thinking straight, we allow the clear Scriptures to define more clearly what those three debatable words must mean. You would never see Reformed doing this drunken kind of interpretation almost anywhere else in the Bible, but they do it here. They do it here, despite years of training, and some excellent educated minds. They do it because it is convenient, and they do it because they would lose out big if they interpreted it any other way. Their constituency makes this call for them. Few ministers will interpret it the right way, when they know they would lose half or more of their flock.

Similarly, when pastors approach 1 Corinthians 7 and claim that not “under bondage” means not married, they have to set aside reason and good interpretation, in order to make an easy out for remarriage. The word “under bondage” is not even the same word for married. It is a different word than the one used elsewhere, including in the same chapter. It refers to heavy servitude; just look up all its New Testament uses and you’ll see that. There is no teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 that you are no longer married if an unbeliever departs. The teaching is that you are not in bondage to them, and do not have to serve them. To claim it allows remarriage, which the New Testament calls adultery many times, is to pit the Bible against the Bible. It even forces the very same chapter to contradict itself, as the same chapter even tells us that we are free to remarry after the death of our spouse. No one would take that phrase and permit remarriage if there weren’t a wave of pressure pushing them to. It is men trying to make life easy for their flock.

Yet with our eyes on the Lord as we read Scripture, and with a view of theology that magnifies God and His Word, we should know that is paltry, and completely cowardly. Really, it is a sin. To compromise God’s Word is sin. I would challenge anyone that holds Reformed theology to actually live that theology, take the High View of God, and put obedience before the comfort of the flock. If we take the High View of God, and of the Holy Scriptures, we know that we teach the truth even if our own flock walks out, we walk forward, even if few follow. Christ did not make things easy for men, and seemed to intentionally give difficult teachings, just to let the false followers leave. He never commanded we maximize popularity, nor did Paul in his teachings to the Church after Pentecost. We are not called to be popular. We are called to *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.”* (2 Timothy 4:2) Regarding church discipline, we are called to cast out the unrepentant sinner, *“to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh,”* (1 Corinthians 5:5)

And I know these are some of the exact same words that Reformed ministers would say to other pastors who have fallen into compromise. Some are the same passages they would review in correcting a church that had accepted sodomy. Yet they follow the same compromise themselves if they permit their flock to live in adultery, and if they put the traditions of Calvin or the divines over the Word of the living God, uplifting tradition in a way similar to the false teachers of Jesus’ day. They need to listen to some of their own advice, and take it sometimes. Take your own advice men.

It is a hard calling to be faithful to marriage for life, when your spouse is wicked to you, or leaves you. Yet Jesus knew it was a hard calling when he gave the teaching, and even instructed that some would be called to celibacy. Yet Christ did not teach us anything too hard for us, and we know there is no temptation God will permit to happen which is beyond what we can bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13) We are able to do this, not by personal willing, but by the power of God, We did not come to faith by a personal decision, and we are not walking in faith by a personal decision. We have been given a new soul and given the Holy Spirit of God within us. We have a new nature. That new nature will long for the things of God, it will hate sin, and it will have the

strength to be faithful. Faithfulness, to the Reformed believer, is not just a “should do.” It’s a “will do.”

In 1 John 3, we are taught *Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. (vs. 6-8)

This isn't telling us the new Christian will try hard and some will succeed and some will fail. Far from it. It is teaching that the children of God do not continue in sin. Those who continue in sin are a different kind of people – they are of the devil. The children of God share the righteous nature of Christ. The children of the devil do not. Our righteousness or our sin simply manifest whether we are of the nature of Christ or of Satan.

Then the apostle goes on to teach:

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.
(vs. 8-9)

Our Lord Jesus came to destroy the devil's work. He did not just destroy it by making a payment at Calvary, He destroys it by cleansing our souls of sin, and giving us a pure nature, even letting us draw from His holy and pure and righteous nature. Christ came to destroy sin. When we are born of God, and share a nature with Christ, we do not continue on in sin, in fact we CANNOT continue on in sin, because we are by nature a child of God.

This is one of the great strengths of Reformed theology. It does not try to mute, or water down, or smuggle out of town, passages like this. It recognizes, powerfully, that the new-born saint will persevere in righteousness because we are a new creation. We don't just have a new teacher. We don't just have some new rules. NO! We are a new creation and a child of God.

How dare we then, think we should make things comfortable for the flock? How dare we think we can accept their nice offerings every Sunday while appeasing their desire to live in sin, while allowing them the predictable philosophy of – I do good stuff for God so my adultery is okay. God forbid. How pathetic. The Reformed minister should know any sincere believer within his flock is not being given a ridiculous command when taught to stay married for life, nor is he being given a task beyond his capacities when he is told to remain celibate if his spouse departs. The Reformed minister knows that the child of God shares in the pure, righteous, holy nature of Christ and can abide in Him. Don't give the teachings of the Pharisees, to the sheep of Jesus, please.

The Lord Jesus taught in a similar passage in John 10, *“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.*

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

(vs. 26-28)

Again we see two kinds of people here, and no shades of gray. There are those such as the false teachers who are not His sheep. Because they are not His sheep they do not hear his voice. Then there is the other kind: His sheep. Since they are His sheep, they hear Him, and they follow Him, and He gives them eternal life.

These are two groups of people with two different kinds of natures. Those who belong to Jesus will actually follow Jesus. They will hear his teachings, and follow them. That is what this passage teaches. In case you thought they might just stop following Him at some point, that sinful temptations might become too great for them, He adds that they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of His hand.

This is the Word of the Lord. You know this kind of teaching does not leave you thinking that that second kind of person, the sheep of our Lord Jesus, need to hear entertaining teaching, or easy teaching, or be treated as if they just don't hear at all. It is simple enough: they hear Christ's voice and they follow Him. For a Reformed minister, who takes passages like this at face value, who doesn't import tons of other passages just to hop around the uncomfortable truths here, for that minister to then proceed to give the sheep something OTHER than Jesus' words is satanic. For them to assume those sheep really are kind of dumb and they WON'T hear and follow Jesus, is satanic. The Bible says they will hear Him and follow Him, and no one will snatch them out of the Savior's hand. Give the hard teachings, ministers. It's what Jesus did. In fact they were so hard, the disciples said – man, if that's true, who on earth would want to ever get married!?! And Jesus knew it was hard.

The Reformed world, if it wants to be what it claims to be, needs to repent, and stop permitting remarriage. It is a terrible sin. It harms the Church and it harms society. They need to acknowledge the falsehood they have taught regarding marriage, and start expecting their flocks entrusted to them by the Lord to live faithfully. That means to live in one marriage, not two or three. That means to repent of remarriages, because it doesn't stop being sin after the first time. That should be obvious. However, the movement cannot speak of sound doctrine, and it cannot speak for the authority and sovereignty of God, all the while mocking Him, and calling a sin by another name. It's abysmally foolish, and God knows what you are doing. He will punish you. If

you want to see the Church restored, and the right honor given to the sovereign God, restore marriage, and lead your flocks to repentance, because when you lead people to Jesus, you lead them to his perfect, holy, and righteous character forever.

God be with you.