

From the Beginning It Was Not So

More Answers to Objections to the Permanence of Marriage

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I've written a series, and put on video, responses to many common objections to the doctrine that marriage is for life. Most churches will teach that marriage is for life in its overall purpose, but by nature it really can be broken, and then you really can take a new husband or wife. This is not what the Bible teaches, as it forbids tearing apart a marriage, and it calls remarriage adultery.

Having talked to many marriage liberals (and that's what I call them), including several pastors, I have come to this conclusion – to them it's not really about finding one or two possible exceptions in the Bible. They will try to find nearly any reasoning they can to justify divorce and remarriage, far beyond some alleged one or two exceptions. Not only do they multiply the exceptions greatly, but they allow people to have membership and to take teaching roles who have divorced and remarried for nearly any reason. Even those who fall outside of their alleged exceptions they refuse to treat as adulterers. That's because their ultimate goal is not to find what biblical truth is and live it, but their ultimate goal is to avoid offense, and keep people coming to their churches. I believe that is the main motivation, and not sincere biblical exegesis, and I judge that because of the way they multiply their exceptions, and allow liberalism in practice.

If a church that allows open and shameless fornication among its members is a liberal church, then one that allows open and shameless remarriage is a liberal church also. Having looked at how contemporary Christians truly practice liberalism with marriage, let me respond to a few objections I have not dealt with before, and also revisit one which I have from a new angle. I hope this helps you to be assured of the lifelong nature of marriage, and confidently defend it.

I Can Commit What Jesus Calls Adultery BECAUSE:

1: The Woman at the Well:

Some claim that the brief references to the woman by the well's "husbands" (John 4:16-18) means that a remarried person is legitimately married and can naturally remain that way. Sadly, this is nowhere in the text, which only spans three verses out of the longer dialogue. Jesus does not say what some demand He says here. Jesus is not teaching explicitly on the nature of marriage, or about divorce and remarriage. He is simply telling the woman about her life, and then pointing toward the coming New Covenant. It is a passage in which the Lord points to the spiritual newness which is coming soon for all who believe. It's not about marriage. If we want to know the truth about marriage, we should go to the explicit teachings on that subject.

One argument against marriage permanence rests on the fact that Jesus uses the word "husbands" here for her previous relationships. Since He uses this term, some conclude He is validating that a remarriage really involves a husband and a wife. So then the marriage itself must be valid. Right? This argument is quite specious.

Number one, we don't know that she has been divorced and remarried to begin with, as she could have been widowed multiple times, and is currently living in fornication. Each marriage was made without a previous living husband in that case, and would be recognized as valid in the New Covenant. The short text doesn't tell us either way. It never says she's been divorced. On top of that, the Greek word [*aner*], translated here as "husband," does not always mean husband, but can also mean male, especially when in distinction from female. Context often gives us a clear idea whether it should mean "husband" or simply "man," but there is no convincing indicator in this passage either way. She could have lived with five men.

Also, and this should be obvious, we commonly use terms like husband, wife, and marriage, even when a marriage is illegitimate. Millions of Christians use the term "marriage" today even when it is preceded by the word "gay." They might understand that the term is not the true usage of the word, but they use it anyway, because it's useful language sometimes. Society calls it marriage, so they do too. Jesus could simply be using the common societal term for a remarried partner – which in the case of a man, is a husband. Not everyone says "quote" husband when they think a person is an illegitimate husband. It is unreasonable to mandate that Jesus should have to always use scare quotes, if it were a remarriage.

In fact, Jesus himself seems to indicate that we CAN reference non-husbands with the title husband when He tells the woman, "go call your husband." (vs. 16) He subsequently agrees with her that she has NO husband, since she lives with one who is not her husband. (vs. 17-18) If you want some indication we can refer to partners as husbands at times, when it's not entirely accurate, Jesus himself gives it. He does so within the very SAME verses people try to use to claim He must mean husband in the legitimate sense when He refers to the woman having five of them. We can see that the remarriage crowd clearly has no case from these few verses in John 4. They are trying to read into them what they desire to see.

Also, don't forget that the New Covenant has not come in yet. Jesus teaches the nature of marriage as being lifelong, and calls remarriage adultery, but He has not yet taken headship over the Church in an official sense. This means it is natural that the regular Mosaic law concerning divorce and remarriage is functioning. It is natural that society function according to the rabbinic interpretation as well. Jesus will soon become the risen Lord of the people of God, and at THAT time His teachings will be officially recognized by all the Church as binding. At the time He speaks in John 4, we are still building up to that moment. So officially we are under Moses, even though Jesus taught a new reality with marriage.

A second attempt to use this passage against marriage permanence is to point to the fact that Jesus did not condemn the woman for living in what they assume was remarriage. Somehow, this must mean that the remarried can stay remarried, even though Jesus calls it adultery elsewhere. He never condemned the Samaritan woman.

This line of argument fails for some of the same reasons, and for different ones. For example, no one can tell for certain if this woman is divorced and remarried. She may be widowed, and living in fornication. If we cannot be sure that remarriage is in view, then it's obviously wrong to read a justification of remarriage here. The argument also fails because it is just poor logic. For by the very same reasoning many use – that His lack of a rebuke proves it is acceptable -- it is then acceptable to stay in fornication, assuming her living situation was alternately one of fornication. Would that reasoning work? Was Jesus trying to tell us all we can live as fornicators? Did His lack of a rebuke prove that?

Thousands of ministers would tell you something about evangelism – you do not always point to a person's most visible sin, let them know it is evil, and then command them to repent the moment you meet them. Okay? It may happen sometimes, but it usually does not happen like that.

It does NOT mean that sin is okay. It does NOT mean that they are free to continue in sin. It ONLY means that you did not tell them to repent the first time you ever spoke to them. If you would allow that to be true for thousands of ministers today, you have to understand that is true for Jesus as well. He is under no obligation to immediately command someone to repent of their most visible sin. People who use this passage to justify remarriage are GREATLY misusing the text and reading into it what they desire to see.

Go to the explicit teachings on marriage to learn God's will for us. Go to the New Testament teachings. You will end up with falsehood if you ignore the plain teachings, and instead go to a conversation which isn't meant to teach marriage doctrine, and find marriage doctrine in the choice of this or that word. This is what marriage liberals do with a few words from a much longer dialogue with the Samaritan woman. It is a poor way to understand the Bible. That's especially true since this passage never details the woman's actual situation, and because we are still in the Mosaic Covenant. It is scrounging for ambiguities.

2: Looking with Lust is Called Adultery Too:

The attempt to minimize one's sin is universal to man. When we realize we are in trouble, and the squeeze is on, we try to shine a special light on our own sin to make it look very small, common place, ordinary. One such attempt to do that to the sin of remarriage is by calling upon Jesus' teaching that looking at a woman with lust is adultery in the heart. (Matthew 5:27-28) If this is so, goes the argument, then look at how many people look at women with lust. Billions of them! No one calls them adulterers. No one demands they repent. They are allowed to do what they do and are accepted as Christians. So why can't I stay in my remarriage which Scripture also calls adultery. It's just a common sin that everyone does all the time. Right?

Just at face value, and before getting to any Scriptures, we can see why this logic does not work out. That's because inner impurity is different from the actual act, and we regularly treat sins of the mind differently from the actual ones. That's why the police don't worry too much about people who have violent thoughts, but can immediately subdue and arrest a violent criminal. Likewise, schools don't do much about people who have had thoughts about molesting children, but refuse to hire those who actually have molested children. One reason for that practical distinction is that it is the act that makes the invisible thought manifest. That is why it's the act we respond to, not the thought. No one knows the heart of another person so we are not prepared to respond to it. Furthermore, we also recognize a depth of evil in the outward act, that we do not see in the inner thought. That's because the person did not only wickedly consider an act of evil. They wickedly stepped over the line and committed it, so we see the consequences of that act. The thought may be wrong. But the act is a crime. We also see the great harm done by the act, and all the people it hurts, whereas we do not see those public results with a mere thought.

We could really test that logic broadly and also see how truly ridiculous it is. Can a woman having an affair on her husband legitimately say to herself – I bet right now millions of Christians are lusting in their hearts, so I'm in good company. It's not such a serious wrong to have an affair anyway. I think I'll continue. Can a serial killer, say Jack the Ripper, reason – I bet millions of Christians are having hateful thoughts right now, so I'm in good company. It's not such a serious crime to slaughter prostitutes. Clearly, I can continue. Of course, we would see how ridiculous that logic is immediately. So too should we see how ridiculous it is to reason that way to excuse living in sin through remarriage. In short: The fact that people think bad thoughts does not make your evil ANY less bad. It does not make it any less in need of repentance.

Let's look at Jesus' words here in Matthew 5, just to get a look at what He's saying by calling the thoughts of man a sin:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not commit adultery.*’

“But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (vs. 27-28)

This is actually one of several teachings of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere that deal with INNER purity. The point has nothing to do with actual, physical sin being a minor thing. The point is that our hearts should be pure, and we can sin within our hearts. Here, He calls looking with lust the sin of adultery in the heart. Notice that last part, the adultery is “in his heart.” This is important, since not only do we know our heart is seen by God, including our impurities, but the heart also is the source of our action, and that impurity in the heart is what can eventually flow out and become the real act itself. Why does Jesus call it adultery in the heart, when two bodies do not actually unite? Probably because God knows that if given the chance we would follow through on that sinful thought, and that wherever people commit actual adultery, it came from that inner desire previously. It is likely also because the evil thought creates an inner darkness in the soul, similar to that darkness created by the real act. Man does not see that darkness, but God does. It is a spiritual turning away from the light of God. We hide it from man. We cannot hide it from God.

Jesus explains the general principle behind this, and similar teachings in Mark 7, when He teaches:

“What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

“thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

“All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

(vs. 20-23)

Now we are not only speaking of adultery in the heart, but fornication, murder, theft, and more. He presents inner desires as the SOURCE of the actions we do. Defilement does not start in the external, it starts in the internal. This is similar to Jesus’ teaching to clean the inside of the cup and dish, not merely the outside, which He gives in Matthew 23 and Luke 11. He’s not telling us that doing evil with our body is of little consequence or does not need to be repented of. He is only telling us about the source of that evil, which is our heart, which needs to be cleansed.

Regarding murder, we see the same basic principle given. In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches,

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.*’

“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. (vs. 21-22)

Here the Lord reminds us of the commandment against murder, but then warns us that judgment is also coming if we are angry with our brother without a cause. Is He telling us murder is not serious, or that murderers can continue murdering while calling themselves a Christian? Is He saying that murderers should be teaching Sunday School classes since everyone sins a little inside too? No, He is pointing to the fact that the wrong kind of anger brings judgment from God also, and we must not have it in our heart.

The apostle John is more explicit in this comparison. He says, **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** (1 John 3:5)

Here the one who hates is actually called a murderer. The person with hatred is shown to be outside of Christ, and without eternal life. Can we logically conclude that because hatred is akin to murder, no one has any business calling the murderer to repentance? Can we conclude that a pastor has no business excommunicating a murderer if his plans are to continue merrily in his life of killing? Or that a pastor must, out of Christian love and mercy, allow the unrepentant murderer to preach on Sunday, despite living life as a hit man? Of course not. The call to be pure in our hearts, and to be full of Christ’s love, does not mean murder is not serious, nor does it mean unrepentant murderers need acceptance in the churches. It means hatred is a sin, and it separates us from Christ. The murderer still needs to be called to repentance, and he cannot minimize his horrible sin.

Therefore, don’t let anyone minimize the sin of adultery to you, just because the Bible calls looking with lust adultery. Don’t let anyone minimize the sin of murder either, just because hatred also makes one a murderer. They are evil deeds that need to be confronted, and they must not be allowed in the Church.

1 Corinthians 6:18-19 teaches, **Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.**

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

This passage alone reminds us that sins of the body carry a heavy weight. We need to view them seriously as a crime against God’s temple. Scripture does not say the same thing about sins of the mind, which we examined earlier, but it does say this about sins of the body. Immorality brings great impurity, as well as much physical and emotional destruction in life.

Just in case you still want some evidence that adultery is serious, and has no part in the Christian life, let's look at some of what Scripture teaches about adultery, and other acts of sexual immorality.

A wide variety of passages in Proverbs speak of the evil of immorality. It speaks of the dangers of the immoral woman, and the harm caused to the man who follows after her:

Proverbs 6:32 **Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He *who* does so destroys his own soul.**

Proverbs 7:27 **Her house is the way to hell, Descending to the chambers of death.**

Proverbs 5:22-23 **His own iniquities entrap the wicked *man*, And he is caught in the cords of his sin.**

He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Proverbs 6:26 **For by means of a harlot A *man* is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.**

This sin is not merely being highlighted as grave, but is over and over again connected to death. It is death to the soul, as well as to the body. If you think of the numbers of people who have been damned through adultery, or who have been murdered because of adultery, or who have committed suicide because of adultery, or who had one of their parents abandon them because of adultery, it's not hard to understand why this evil is connected so many times to death.

For those who still lack a sense of seriousness of the evil of immorality, remember that sins of the body are cause for excommunication from the Church, as taught in 1 Corinthians 5 **deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus . . . purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.** (vs.5, 7)

The very next chapter also teaches that adultery is a sin which keeps us out of the kingdom of God, warning: **Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,**

nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Do not think to fool yourself by pretending your sin is no big deal. Jesus calls taking another husband or wife adultery. Paul teaches that a woman is an adulteress if she marries another man while her husband still lives. The fact that there are inner sins as well does not change the

condemnation given to adulterers, or the seriousness and deadliness of sins in the body. The adulterer can no more excuse himself through Jesus' teaching on adultery in the heart than the murderer can excuse himself through John's teaching on hatred in the heart. We have to face the cold light of day, and if you are living in what Jesus calls adultery, you must flee from it as from any sin.

3: God Divorced Israel:

Looking for reasons to divorce and remarry can get people well into typology. Since God's relationship with his covenant people is likened to a man and his wife, can we discern marriage doctrine by looking at patterns in God's relationship with Israel? Many who excuse remarriage point to the fact that God is said to "divorce" Israel at one point, and then conclude that means we can divorce our spouse, and subsequently remarry. But does this discernment from typology really hold water?

First, let me say, I don't think we come to doctrine first through typology. We understand doctrine most clearly through the didactic passages, those passages that teach about a doctrine. That's because teaching passages have a purpose in clearly communicating doctrine, while typology, does not. We find them in Matthew 19, Mark 10, Luke 16, Romans 7, and 1 Corinthians 7. Typology may help to gain insight and help to understand more deeply, but we don't give the heaviest weight to typology. One reason is that understanding typological patterns is quite subjective, compared to most teaching passages. So one person may say one thing, and others say another thing. It's kind of loopy goopy. Like poetry interpretation. So I don't advise giving typology a heavy weight in knowing the New Covenant truth about divorce and remarriage. It's like the comparison made between marriage and the nature of the Trinity. It's real and its meaningful, but please don't discern marriage doctrine straight from what goes on within the Trinity, or discern Trinitarian doctrine through what goes on in marriage. Like other types, metaphors, or comparisons, there is a link, but it's not meant to be the primary means of teaching us doctrine.

That said, it's a common argument that since God "divorces" Israel, then we can divorce our spouse and remarry. Some will go so far as to say God divorces Israel and remarries with the Church. People making this argument may point to passages like Jeremiah 3, or like Isaiah 50, which explicitly speak of God's divorcing His people. Yet did God really divorce Israel in the sense people mean it? In a full and permanent way? I think if we look a few verses down the road, we will have the answer, and put this argument to rest completely.

Jeremiah 3:8 says:

“Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

That sounds pretty convincing doesn't it? I guess we've got to put our hands in the air and give up. But what does the prophet go on to tell us? Let's look at verses 12 to 14:

**‘Return, backsliding Israel,’ says the LORD;
‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you.
For I *am* merciful,’ says the LORD;
‘I will not remain angry forever.**

**Only acknowledge your iniquity,
That you have transgressed against the LORD your God,
And have scattered your charms
To alien deities under every green tree,
And you have not obeyed My voice,’ says the LORD.**

“Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

This is very strong, brothers. Not only does God call Israel to return and promise His mercy, but He even says that He is “married” to her. Therefore, we can see that despite the divorce mentioned by the prophet, this is a mere pause or distancing in their relationship. God still has an ongoing marriage. Not only that, but He subsequently promises to restore Israel, as He does many times through the prophets:

“And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

“Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days,” says the LORD, “that they will say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit *it*, nor shall it be made anymore.

“At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.

(vs. 15-17)

Much the same is true of the passage in Isaiah, from chapter 50 verse 1:

Thus says the LORD:

“Where *is* the certificate of your mother’s divorce,

**Whom I have put away?
Or which of My creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you?
For your iniquities you have sold yourselves,
And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.**

This passage also speaks of Israel as being “put away” or divorced because of her sins.

Yet at the start of the next chapter, God promises Israel comfort and restoration:

**For the LORD will comfort Zion,
He will comfort all her waste places;
He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness will be found in it,
Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.**

He goes on to speak of the redemption of Israel, as compared to the deliverance from Egypt:

***Are You not the One* who dried up the sea,
The waters of the great deep;
That made the depths of the sea a road
For the redeemed to cross over?**

**So the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness;
Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**

Seeing this, brethren, can we really take seriously the claim that God “divorced” Israel, so we can divorce our spouse and remarry? Really? The divorce spoken of in Scripture is neither complete, nor final. God remains in relationship with His covenant people, and promises mercy and redemption.

Finally, and this gets into some other doctrines, seeking to utilize God’s relationship with Israel to guide us on marriage is a bit more complicated than marriage itself. That’s because we know that there is a true spiritual Israel within Israel who are the seed, and also that Israel of the flesh have never been true Israel. This deep characteristic doesn’t carry over very well to marriage, does it? Yet if we want to see if God has abandoned Israel, that understanding is crucial.

What we know from the true seed of Israel is this: that 2,000 years ago God did not end His relationship with Israel only to start a new one with the Church. God CONTINUED His relationship with Israel through the seed of Israel (Messiah) and the Jewish disciples who followed Him. That was Israel continuing, and then the nations of the world were grafted into

that covenant people. So the true Israel DID continue and was never even distanced by this theistic divorce at all.

Maybe a reminder of Romans 9 is in order:

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel,

nor *are* they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “*In Isaac your seed shall be called.*”

That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. (vs. 6-8)

Romans 11 opens similarly, showing that God continues to keep covenant with Israel through that remnant like Paul who followed Messiah:

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin.

God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,

“LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”?

But what does the divine response say to him? “*I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.*”

Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

(vs. 1-5)

If God continues to keep covenant with Israel through Messiah, the remnant, and the Church, then if we view this as a parallel to marriage, we know that we also continue to keep covenant with our spouse. If we do end up separating, we also know that separation is not final, but restoration should be the goal, and we do not abandon our special covenant people. We look for the future with mercy, and think of times with great joy when we will be restored. That is a TRUE comparison between marriage and God’s relationship with Israel, which follows God’s eternal faithfulness with His people. That faithfulness should be in our marriages. There may be a separation, but it does not end until death.

Finally, let me remind you that even Israel of the flesh, who fell away from the covenant 2,000 years ago are promised restoration as well. Not only is it the remnant which continues. For if we read further through Romans 11, we see that Israel of the flesh is blinded to Messiah only temporarily. The opportunity to come back into the covenant remains, and then they will return when the current time is fulfilled.

Paul writes:

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles.

Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! (vs. 11-12)

Finally, he culminates with this teaching, showing God's final purpose with His covenant people, not the remnant only, but all of Israel:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

***“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;***

***For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”***

(vs. 25-27)

Let's put to rest this idea that God divorced Israel permanently, and took a new wife. Let's bury and forget the idea that God's taking the Church as a people means that we can take a second wife or husband. Not only do the plain teaching passages of the New Testament show this is an impossibility, but even the typology of God and Israel does not support it. Rather, this relationship powerfully supports the permanence view. God does not abandon His special people. Ever. And neither should we.

4: I am a New Creation:

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Some people claim that the verse about being a “new creation,” and “old things” passing away, must somehow justify staying in a remarriage, OR must somehow mean their previous marriage was not valid, since it was a part of the “old creation.” Their previous marriage must have “passed away” when they became a Christian is the logic. Yet this is not what the words in verse 17 actually say, and the ideas behind the argument are both illogical, and conflict with the entire context of the new-creation passage.

This verse is speaking about how Christ makes us new, in putting the old man to death, and giving the new man life. It is in the context also of a discussion of the mortal body versus the immortal body. It is in the context of living our lives for Christ in righteousness. In fact, it warns men strongly against sin. Let’s just look at the opening context of the chapter:

For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (vs. 1-11)

There is nothing at all in the context in this opening portion to suggest what liberals claim – that the Christian, being a NEW creation, can live in sin; or that the Christian, being a new creation, does not have to honor any covenants, contracts, or other obligations he previously had. Interestingly, the context earlier includes a warning of judgment, and calls on men to avoid “the terror of the Lord” which may come upon him for sin. So this newness of life has to do with both immortality, the new body, and living in righteousness, so that we are not judged by Christ.

What some claim -- and I have heard even pastors pull this single verse out of context to defend living in sin -- is about the OPPOSITE of what Paul is teaching here. This is an encouragement to live faithfully in the new life. It is an encouragement to both overcome suffering and sin. I am currently reading through the book of 2 Corinthians with my wife, and to see the verse in its full context, I'd advise you to go back and read both chapters 4 and 5 straight through. I believe the main gist of it begins with chapter 4:7. You will see easily how that one short statement fits into what is being discussed, and how it naturally agrees with other NT teachings about the old man and the new man. Righteousness is in view. Not living in sin. Not a cancellation of our responsibilities to others.

If you honestly believe that verse 17 alone gives the Christian the right to annul past relationships and responsibilities, then does the new convert need to keep paying back his loan? Does he need to keep paying his rent? Does he need to keep contractual obligations (assuming they are ethical)? Does the born-again father have no responsibility to feed his children? He's a new creation so that responsibility is gone? I think you'll see not only is what liberals say nowhere in the surrounding context, it really does not make any sense when you apply it to other matters. The “new creation” argument is a convenient way that Christians try to get away with living as they please.

Of course, as to whether God's grace covers a professed Christian living in sin, we have this refutation of the idea which specifically addresses it:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Romans 6:1-7

There are too many passages to count in the New Testament teaching that we live in righteousness, and need to repent of sin. So too there are abundant warnings of judgment for those who return to their filth. Sin is a part of our past. Our new nature abhors sin. So sadly and deceptively the disobedient Christian actually tries to turn the teaching of being a new creation around and use it as an excuse to follow the lusts of his heart. The new man does not do that. This born-again soul longs for the goodness of God, and pleads for Him to remove any speck of sin from his life. He works with dedication and faithfulness to the Lord. He knows that the Lord is holy, and that sinners should fear His judgment. We are a new creation in order to live for Christ. If we don't want to live for righteousness, maybe we have never died with Christ, and been freed from our sin.

5: You Should Not Be Loosed:

Marriage liberals also misuse a passage from 1 Corinthians 7 to suggest that those living in adultery should stay in that adultery. Oddly, that would demand that 1 Corinthians 7 (and the rest of the NT) contradicts itself, since the same chapter teaches that if we depart from a spouse we must remain single or be reconciled (vs 10-11), and it also teaches that we are at liberty to remarry only after the death of our partner. (vs 39)

The first thing to notice is that this is part of a section beginning with a discussion of "virgins" (vs. 25) two verses prior. A person "bound" as a virgin is not bound in marriage, but in a betrothal, which would have been the custom. The already married are not likely being spoken of as "virgins" here. Paul is encouraging the betrothed or the not betrothed to remain as they are. (vs. 26)

Marriage liberals could ask a similar question though: if a woman is betrothed to a DIVORCED man, isn't she being told to remain as she is, and naturally continue on to marry him later? It is essentially the same objection, whether viewed as betrothal or marriage. How should we respond to that, seeing that single verse 27 is packaged between the teachings that specify marriage is for life and is only broken by death?

When that chapter teaches in verse 27 not to be loosed from a betrothal, it is not teaching to remain in what God calls adultery, nor to continue on into adultery. It is speaking of not being

loosed from real legitimate unions. It is speaking within the realm of what is ethical. You simply cannot import relationships that God prohibits into those instructions.

Does it mean that if you are in a betrothal to a 6-year old you should remain in it? Or that if you are in a betrothal with your sister you should remain in it? Sinful relationships are not included in that teaching not to be loosed. That should be obvious.

The Bible DOES speak on adultery, and on living in sin in general. Those practices are something that we must be separated from. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 teaches that the adulterer, along with the sodomite and idolater, will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Those sins are now a part of our PAST life in Christ, so we no longer live in them. Galatians 5:19-21 teaches precisely the same thing. Therefore, no one living in adultery through remarriage ought to assume that they know the Lord unless they repent. If you think you can live in adultery, then by the same logic, you can live in sodomy and idolatry as well. Does that work?

The plain teachings on marriage in the New Testament, are obviously hard teachings. That is why Jesus recommended celibacy for those who found them unbearable. (Matthew 19:10-12) God will give you the grace to do what He commands, which is to either stay in your marriage for life, or remain single. He will give His children what they ask for in prayer. (Matthew 7:7-11) Ask God for that grace. He will put it in you.

For those hypocrites who live in lawlessness, or backslide into sin, Jesus warns them He will cast them into the fire to be burned. (John 15:6) He teaches that He never really knew them at all. (Matthew 7:21-23) He tells them – Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Therefore, you cannot remain in a relationship that God calls sin. There's something you must be loosed from.

6: The “loosed” may remarry:

Similar to the other attempt to justify remarriage in these few verses of 1 Corinthians 7, some will claim because the subsequent statement says that the loosed do not sin if they marry (vs. 28), then even if singlehood is instructed, remarriage is not sin. The “loosed” may remarry, right? That means the “divorced” may remarry, right? However, like the above, it assumes that the apostle would contradict himself multiple times in this same chapter. This is impossible, and is also a poor reading of the text.

Considering the introductory statement three verses earlier, it would be odd to read this as a previously married and divorced person being given permission to remarry. We are still in a discussion of virgins. The virgin is being told he does not sin to become betrothed, and subsequently enter a full marriage.

The argument also assumes that the word “loosed” means to be divorced (or otherwise separated), when in fact this word – *lyo* in Greek -- sometimes simply refers to a single man who

has never married. My Outline of Biblical Usage says the word means: to loose a person tied, including “of a single man, whether he has already had a wife or has not yet married” Seeing that it can refer to a single person, never having been joined, we do not need to assume this person has broken off an engagement, much less a marriage.

Recognizing this section speaks of virgins, we can read each teaching consistently, and with no contradictions in this chapter or elsewhere. Paul is telling the single virgins that they may get betrothed and marry, even if singlehood is recommended. He is not telling the divorced they may marry again. That would be sin. You will find some marriage liberals don’t even bother to bring up this section of Scripture, because of the context of dealing with virgins. Usually if they do, they are either very misled about this section, or desperate to throw out anything that might make sin sound acceptable. I think you’ll find your own reading of the section on virgins does not allow what liberals try to slip in. It is a teaching for specific situations, and only refers to being bound into licit and moral relationships.

7: Context in Matthew 19 is only super-liberal divorce:

A common attempt to write off the power of Jesus’ words in Matthew 19 is to claim the context somehow limits him to speaking against liberal divorce. That is because in the opening question, the Pharisees ask Him if it is acceptable to divorce for “*just any reason.*” (vs. 3) Yet the fact they phrase it this way does nothing to alter the substance of Jesus’ response. If all Jesus had wanted to do was teach against super-liberal divorce, He could have taught – “what God has joined together, let not man put asunder for just any cause.” And He could have skipped entirely calling remarriage adultery.

Yet this is what Jesus did instead: He taught that Moses’ permission to divorce was merely a concession to Israel’s sin, He contrasted that doctrine with God’s actual will at creation. Then He gave a teaching harshly contrasting to what the Pharisees, or His disciples would have liked to hear – that man may not tear apart a marriage, and that apart from fornication, to take another wife is adultery. I see nothing in the opening context to cause me to read those words in any other way. Nor do those words say what this liberal approach says they do, which is to critique liberal divorce. There is no critique of liberal divorce here, but a reestablishing of God’s will at creation.

Moreover, as I point out elsewhere in responding to objections, if all that Jesus was doing was saying – “you can’t divorce for any reason you desire” -- the ending of the passage comes off as absurd, and does not fit in at all. The disciples would not have any reason to say – “**If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.**” (vs. 10) And Jesus would not have any cause to respond with a recommendation of celibacy for those who cannot follow such a

marriage doctrine. Those are not words that fit into hearing merely a less liberal teaching on marriage. They are words that fit into hearing a very hard teaching, such as the plain meaning of His words indicate.

If that's not enough for you, remember Mark 10 contains nearly the exact same teaching, but the question the Pharisees ask is not about divorce "for any cause," but just about divorce in general. So Jesus teaches the same way apart from that unique facet of the context here. The other powerful marriage teachings, which are in harmony with this one, likewise occur apart from any question about extremely liberal divorce. Therefore, that aspect of Matthew 19 changes nothing in how we should understand Jesus' doctrine of marriage. It prohibits divorce, and does not permit taking a new spouse.

8: Jesus taught the same as Moses on divorce, so He could not have prohibited it:

The claim that Jesus could not have taught any differently from Moses, and logically could not have prohibited divorce and remarriage because Moses didn't, is one argument I find strange, and I don't encounter all the time. It should be noted that some marriage permanence teachers ALSO claim that Jesus only "commented" on Moses, and didn't really teach differently, and they use that claim to their own aims in defending their doctrine. I think it is a very weak claim either way, but I am specifically addressing it in response to the marriage liberals who use it.

The claim that Jesus just COULD NOT have taught differently from Moses – who clearly allowed divorce – is underpinned by another claim: Jesus taught while the Mosaic Covenant was in force, and would never have taught differently from Moses until the cross happened and the New Covenant came in. Didn't Jesus teach – not one jot or tittle will disappear from the law until all is fulfilled? (Matthew 5:18) He must not have introduced different teachings then.

But this reasoning is wrong on multiple counts. The main error is that it simply ignores Jesus' actual words, which clearly are different from Moses. Jesus himself CONTRASTS His teaching from Moses' teaching, saying "**Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so,**" and then gives points that never are found in the commandments – the marriage is God joined, that man may not tear apart a marriage, that this is God's will at creation, that to divorce a wife and take another is to commit adultery. These teachings He gives more than once, and the same truths are affirmed and applied in the Epistles.

If Jesus taught the same as Moses, then why did He contrast His teaching, explaining that Moses' statute was only a concession to Israel's sin? Why did He then go to Genesis 2 to explain God's will? If Jesus taught the same as Moses why can you find His teaching NOWHERE among the commandments? Clearly, the New Covenant law regarding marriage is different from the Old

Covenant law. Remember those words as the Lord confronts Moses' teaching: From the beginning it was not so.

How is this possible, since Jesus taught BEFORE the cross and resurrection, and while Mosaic Law was in effect? That's natural to ask since presumably a Jewish teacher could not teach differently from Moses. However, it is possible, because the New Covenant was being laid down in stages, the teachings of John the Baptist and Jesus being the first stage. Scripture is explicit in this when it teaches that the law was "until John" and after that the kingdom has been proclaimed – John's ministry and Jesus' ministry. (Luke 16:16) We also see how the Old Covenant is being superseded during the life of Jesus through His high priesthood. As Hebrews clearly explains, Jesus was able to function as a high priest, even though He came from the tribe of Judah, and priests did not come from Judah according to the Law of Moses. This is because Jesus belonged to a higher priesthood, the order of Melchizedek, to whom Abraham had paid tithes. (Hebrews 7:11-17) In this He can function as High Priest, and offer himself as sacrifice. Hebrews even says this necessitates a "change in the law." (vs. 12) Jesus strictly speaking did not break the law, because of His higher priesthood, but He functioned above the law through it.

Here's one level of understanding how Jesus was able to do this: It's because the "law" does not only refer to the commandments of Moses. The law can also refer to all the revelation, whether from Genesis to Deuteronomy, or through the Prophets as well. That is in part why we see Jesus explaining New Covenant marriage from Genesis 2, and why Paul also goes to Genesis to explain Jesus' priesthood. While transcending the statutes in the Torah, the Lord is indeed resting on the law, in the sense of resting on all previous revelation. Genesis is a part of the Books of Moses, and it reveals truths beyond the commandments. So in that sense Jesus IS explaining the law in His teaching, and not contradicting it. He draws from all revelation. So does Paul.

So how could Jesus' teachings – which at times are essentially new – coexist with Moses' teachings shortly before the Mosaic Covenant faded away? A part of the answer lies in the fact that Jesus did not receive full public and official authority over the Church until the resurrection and ascension. It was at this point He became head over all things to the Church. (Ephesians 1:22) It was at this point that He has official authority over all things in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18) That means His teachings were for a time shortly to come, but would not have had binding authority on all the public of Israel anyway. That would happen at His atonement and resurrection. His teachings would become official over the new people of God at that time. They did not have full covenantal authority over all Israelites, even though they were true and reflected God's truth. That's why Jesus says, "until all is fulfilled." (Matthew 5:18) The other part of the answer, as I mentioned earlier, is in the fact that Jesus' teachings rest on Moses already. They do not rest merely in the commandments, but in the whole of Old Covenant revelation. Jesus is teaching Moses then, and He does so in a fuller sense than we find in the law. He gives us the fullness of God's revelation.

Understanding the New Covenant is a blessing not just to understanding this doctrine, but others as well. If you let Scripture speak plainly, the New Covenant clearly was birthed in stages, and started before the cross. We see the new teachings being laid down in the earliest stages, even beginning with John the Baptist. We see doctrines regarding both marriage and making vows (Matthew 5:34) that are different from Moses, and which Jesus explicitly contrasts with Moses. We see a “new commandment” to love one another as Christ has loved us. (John 13:34) Remember, Jesus taught the apostles that what they “bind on earth” is bound in heaven, and what they “loose on earth” is loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:18) This came before the cross, and referred to their authority, even while the Sanhedrin ruled, and the Pharisees were the accepted religious teachers. Jesus gave His apostles power to forgive sins (John 20:23), even while the Temple stood and people were turning to animals and priests to have their sins covered. We also see what some call the “beginning” of the New Covenant before the cross, in the Last Supper. When Jesus taught – “do this in memory of me” – He both gave a new teaching, and a liturgical practice that would be characteristic and lifegiving to the Church up to the present. (Matthew 26:26-28) It was rooted in a past teaching about the Passover, but it was new, and carried new meaning and unique grace. It occurred before His atoning death.

Then we see the cross – which provided atonement – and the resurrection – which brought us to the newness of life. These would be the sin sacrifice for the New Covenant people as well as their rebirth, much like the original Passover and the passing through the Red Sea, protected Israel from death and brought them into being as a nation. After that, we have the Church become the Spirit-filled Church at Pentecost, taking on a spiritual power and a witness that it did not have until that time – the Spirit indwelt new believers and brought miraculous gifts, which witnessed that this was the power of God, and what the apostles taught was true.

I would even extend the coming of the Church as the New Covenant people of God slightly past the New Testament era, since we see the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, a handful of years after the last letter was written by the apostles. This publicly revealed to the world that there are not two people of God side by side, nor is the Church merely a sect within Judaism. The Jewish priesthood was now gone and the constant sacrifices were finally snuffed out. There is only ONE covenant people, and that is the Church. There is only one atonement and way to eternal life. That had clearly been true before 70 AD, but this was a public witness to it, and affirmed in the eyes of many who God’s people was. Clearly the change from the old people, to the new people, did not happen in several hours at the cross, even if that act is most consequential. The change of people, like the change of covenants, happened step by step. Jesus’ teachings were one of those steps.

Finally, let me return to my original point, which is simple by comparison. We don’t have to fully agree on everything regarding covenants to understand this: that Jesus taught new teachings during His earthly ministry. He taught differently from Moses. We can know this fact by His own words: Jesus contrasts His teaching with Moses – in fact contrasting the underpinnings of His teaching with the underpinnings of Moses’ teachings. Then He teaches a marriage doctrine

which you will not find anywhere among the commandments. The fact that people who claim Jesus taught the same as Moses cannot find where in Moses that Moses taught the same, only illustrates powerfully that Jesus' marriage teaching is not the same. Jesus brought in a new teaching for a new covenant, which was to come more fully in the very near future. In fact, He made marriage more fully picture Christ and His people, and even picture the godhead. Its lifelong nature would reflect the permanent union between Christ and the Church, as well as the perseverance of the Church throughout the ages. This is a new teaching for a new revelation. At the same time, it is rooted in the fullness of all revelation before it.

9: Only the Woman is Bound for Life:

An objection you will hear only occasionally is the claim that the New Testament marriage teachings are limited by gender. They will very foolishly claim we need to, "Follow the Pronouns" to understand marriage. Since certain teachings do indeed mention a woman and not a man being divorced, they conclude that the man may remarry, at least in some circumstances. While the Follow-the-Pronouns objection comes in some variants, one of the commoner ones is to say that a man who has been divorced by his wife is not bound to her, and can remarry, since the Bible does not explicitly mention this one situation. Others may claim more broadly that somehow women are bound in general, and men are not. Either way, one of the reasons you hear this objection infrequently is because it is one of the worst, and many would be embarrassed to make it. Since I have dealt with these people before, and at length, I want to include a response.

There is not a limitation by sex on what the New Testament teaches on marriage. Both man and wife are bound for life, and neither man nor wife may remarry. The gender objection rests heavily on the fact that the NT doesn't mention every possible divorce and remarriage situation, so there must be certain situations that fall outside of its coverage. Yet the NT does not need to mention every possible situation, since the truths it gives make clear that the teaching is broad, is for everyone, and covers both sexes. The reason why some of the teachings specifically mention a man sending away a wife, or a wife being bound for life, is because men divorcing wives was the much more common situation. Few women in that day initiated divorce, and it would have been much harder for them to get by without their husbands. The Bible is speaking to the normal situation of the day, although at times it DOES speak to both genders.

Marriage being fully binding for both sexes makes sense of the covenantal nature of marriage. A covenant in general is binding on both parties. It also makes sense of why remarriage is called adultery; this term applies since if one of the partners takes another partner, they commit adultery because they are already married to someone else. There is consistent logic there. It is the lifelong covenant that does not allow remarriage. In contrast, if one assumes a man can take a new partner (at least in some situations) and a woman cannot, it becomes arbitrary to call the act of remarriage adultery. If there is not really a binding covenant, then a woman remarrying is

certainly not adultery either. Neither one is adultery. Yet if there is a covenant, it is adultery for both partners. That means the covenantal sense behind marriage teaching would get destroyed, where a unique situation for the divorced man demands that special rules now apply to covenants. Suddenly they only function one way. Where does that come from, if not wishful thinking? I must add though, that's no stranger logic than the argument that the "innocent party" in adultery can remarry, but the other sins if they do. Both claims destroy any consistent covenantal logic behind New Testament marriage teachings.

We can know that we don't need to "follow the pronouns" first because Jesus speaks directly to the nature of marriage BEFORE He mentions the woman being divorced in Matthew 19. He also speaks to the nature of marriage in Mark 10. He establishes that God's will at creation is different from the teaching in Moses, and that what God has joined together in marriage, man may not separate. These are truths which transcend gender, or the mention of the wife in the teaching He subsequently gives in Matthew 19. He mentions this general truth before He mentions the wife.

We can also see that various teachings in the New Testament mention both sexes. In Mark 10, Jesus says that both man and wife commit adultery if they divorce their spouse and marry another. 1 Corinthians 7 specifically teaches both man and wife not to depart from their spouse. Luke 16:18 speaks of both the man sending away and the woman being sent away committing adultery if they remarry. If all of these mention BOTH sexes why should we assume there is a limitation by sex in the NT marriage teachings? It makes little sense.

One final test would be that in one passage we see that both genders are mentioned, and in another passage teaching the same principle, only one is mentioned. That proves we cannot assume that one gender is intended in the doctrine and not the other. For example, if Mark 10 speaks of both man and wife committing adultery if they remarry (vs. 11-12), and Romans 7 speaks only of the woman committing adultery (vs. 2-3), we can understand that the mention of only the wife at times does not limit it to only the wife. Both spouses are mentioned elsewhere. The same is true when we see 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 -- which teaches that neither man or wife may depart from their spouse -- and also see that only the wife is said to be bound in 1 Corinthians 7:39. The Holy Spirit does not limit us to gender when He at times only mentions one sex in these teachings. He is speaking to what was the normal, by far most common situation of the day.

That means that while it's true not every single divorce situation is mentioned in Scripture, we confidently know that men may not remarry just as women may not remarry. We can know this through the broad teaching on the nature of marriage that Jesus gives, prior to mentioning one gender. We can know it from the fact that both man and wife are mentioned in multiple situations. We can know it from the fact that passages teaching the same doctrine at times use one sex, and at times both. Moreover, claiming the lifelong marriage bond only applies one way violates any consistent understandings of covenants. The argument by gender is a poor attempt to

justify remarriage, even if only in limited situations, and seems to be wishful thinking on the part of the guys out there. Some of you reading this likely have not heard that argument before, but I want you to be aware of it, and benefit by knowing why it is so poor. We don't just follow the pronouns when we read the Bible. We follow all the other words too.

10: I Wasn't a Believer when I Married:

The idea that the binding nature of marriage does not apply to nonbelievers appeals to a multitude. It allows them to wipe marriages clean off the record for just about any reason. If one, or both of the parties wasn't a believer, then goodbye. The marriage was not binding. The Catholic Church actually uses this reason for a number of annulments, sometimes putting it under the category of Pauline Privilege, even though it falls under a different category. If a Catholic priest wasn't there, they just can't be sure it was a real marriage to begin with. They can declare it void. If one spouse was a Protestant, it must not be real.

Yet this ever popular excuse for committing what Jesus calls adultery does not pass the test of the Bible. The plain text, and the general principles of Scripture easily refute it. Marriages are by their nature binding, not just the marriages of Christians. We can know this in part because we know that the moral law applies to all and can be known to all. Romans 1 and 2 teach that man knows about the law of God in his heart, and will be held accountable. Romans 1 specifically ends stating that the nonbeliever knows a variety of sins are worthy of death, but both does them and approves of others who do them. (vs. 29-32) Romans 2 teaches that the pagan has a form of the law on his heart, so that alongside the Jew – who has the law in the Torah – he will be held accountable. He will be judged by God for his sins. (vs. 12-16)

We also see examples of non-believers being held morally accountable. One of the clearest, as it pertains to marriage law and morality, is with King Herod. Herod is commanded to repent of an immoral marriage by John the Baptist. (Matthew 14:3-4) He is not released from moral responsibility because he is not a believer. This is most relevant because it shows a nonbeliever not only held accountable, but held accountable to marriage doctrine. Regarding sin generally, we also see pagan kings judged for their evil (Ezekiel 28:2-10), and pagan tribes destroyed because of their centuries of committing sin. (Deuteronomy 7:1-5) Therefore, we should not expect that the unbeliever is above the moral law, or that it only applies to believing Israelites, or later Christians. The moral law, including in marriage, is for all mankind.

Not only that, but the root of God's will concerning marriage is in the creation itself. Jesus points to this by citing Genesis 2 in establishing that marriage is for life, and teaching that man may not separate it. The creation is a long time before the Torah, or before the New Testament. Yet this is when God revealed His will regarding marriage, -- **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh,"** (vs. 24) -- and gave it to Adam and Eve to live by. It applied to them, and by extension to all mankind. Marriage by

natural law, and marriage in the Bible are the same – two become one flesh for life. This applies to all.

We can also know that marriage is binding to the unbeliever because of the broad language used by Jesus and Paul. In Matthew 19, Jesus speaks of “whoever,” not of “whatever Israelite,” or “whatever disciple of mine.” He says, “**Whoever divorces his wife . . . and married another commits adultery. Whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.**” He is clearly speaking of anyone who gets married, and teaches they may not divorce, and that they commit adultery if they remarry. When Jesus teaches “let not man separate,” He says “man,” which is the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning a human being, whether male or female. Likewise, both Jesus and Paul in their marriage teachings speak broadly of man and woman, husband and wife, not of Israelite man and woman or Christian husband and wife. We can see that these teachings themselves are moral laws for all, and there is no language that would limit them only to groups of believers.

That means that when modern Christians claim their remarriage was justified because they had married as an unbeliever before, they are making up an irrational excuse. They are vainly trying to justify their sin. If the case were that they were kidnapped as a child, and sold tragically to abusers who forced them to marry, we could talk about a marriage not being binding. Yet this is not the case with nearly any western Christian. They have legitimate marriages which they just did not want to stay in, because trouble came to the marriage, or because they sought happiness elsewhere. They are being unfaithful to God, and to their spouse. They might be living with another partner right now, but in God’s eyes, they have a covenant with their first and only spouse. Their new marriage is a sham. It can never be what a marriage actually is. They need to repent of that adultery, and if the Lord allows it, return to their covenant spouse. God joins unbelievers together for life, just as He joins us all.

David Married Bathsheba and Got to Stay Married:

You sometimes hear believers using David and Bathsheba as an alleged justification for Christians being able to sin: If David did it, and he didn’t go to hell, maybe I can commit immorality as well. That’s a sad favorite. Once in a while marriage liberals try their hand at the King David excuse, and argue it this way: David married the wife of another man, and he stayed married with her without being condemned by God for it. That means I can stay in my remarriage too. Jesus may call it “adultery,” but He will allow it just as God allowed David to stay married to Bathsheba.

The fact that someone would even try this argument shows how zealously mankind desires to sin. It takes true desperation, and commitment to one’s sin to point to this situation from 2 Samuel and use it as an excuse. Clearly, David’s situation with Bathsheba does not justify remarriage in the least. Firstly, remarriage is never condemned in the Covenant of Moses, under

which David lived, and divorce was permitted. (Deuteronomy 24:1-2) We are in the law of Christ now, and not under Moses. The law of marriage has changed since David.

Most significantly though, is that Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, was no longer living at that point. (2 Samuel 11:16-17, 27) That means that even in the New Covenant, living with Bathsheba was not adulterous. Her husband was deceased. True, it may be tasteless (to say the least) to marry the woman whose husband you had killed, but according to definitions, it is not adultery. So how can David remaining married to Bathsheba justify staying in a marriage to someone with a living spouse today? There is no meaningful comparison between the two acts, and David's behavior affects New Covenant doctrine not in the least.

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband.

So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Romans 7:2-3

Lastly, remember that David was severely punished for his adultery while Bathsheba's husband was still alive, as well as his conspiracy to murder him. According to the words of the prophet, David lost a child as a baby as divine punishment (2 Samuel 12:14), and had his wives taken away. (12:11) Those are only some of the earthly consequences of the evil of adultery, and its natural results today continue to bring misery. Don't look to David's adultery as an excuse for your own sin. Death and heartache come together with the sin of adultery.

I've come to the end of this discussion of remarriage. Thank you for listening. Do you still think men can continue to live in what God calls adultery?