

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

WHY IS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST GOOD NEWS?

Danny Douglas

The word, *Gospel*, is translated from the Greek word, *euangelion*, and it means: “glad or joyful tidings, good message, good news.” Indeed, the Gospel is good news, and those who bring it have a distinct privilege and responsibility. In Romans 10:15 Paul emphasizes this point, as he quotes from the prophet Isaiah, “**How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!**” (Isa. 52:7).

It is the God-given duty of the Lord’s church to proclaim the gospel to a lost and dying world (Mark 16:15-16). Paul stated to the Ephesians, “**to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be known through the church the manifold wisdom of God,**” (Eph. 3:10, *ASV*, 1901). Yet, as wonderful as the Gospel is, the soul who refuses to obey it will be eternally destroyed (2 The. 1:7-9). Now, let us consider why the gospel of Christ is such good news, and why it is so urgent for us to obey and teach it!

“**As cold waters to a thirsty soul, So is good news from a far country**” (Pro. 25:25). The good news of God, the Gospel, was brought down from heaven to earth by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). Inspired men have recorded this message for us in the Sacred Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 2:13). Man is lost and condemned without the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). To downcast man, lost in sin, hungering and thirsting for salvation—the Gospel has come!

If we really appreciate the Gospel of Christ, then we will be willing to: (a) suffer for it, like Paul (2 Tim. 1:8-9); (b) sacrifice for its proclamation, and realize that carnal things are very small in comparison to the spiritual blessings brought forth by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:11-18; Eph. 1:3-7; 3:8); (c) “**be fellowhelpers to the truth**” (3 John 8); (d) be “**fellow-labourers**” in the Gospel (Phi. 1:17; 4:3); (f) spread the Gospel message ourselves (Acts 8:4; Pro. 11:30); (g) help faithful men to be trained to preach and teach it (2 Tim. 2:2). In the Lord’s church today, we urgently need to have a greater love and devotion to the “**glorious gospel of the blessed God**” (1 Tim. 1:11). It is noteworthy that beloved apostle Paul refers to it as the “**glorious gospel of Christ**” (2 Cor. 4:4)!

WHY IS THE GOSPEL SUCH GOOD NEWS?

1. *The Gospel is Good News because it tells man of the Savior who came to earth to save him* (Luke 2:10-12; 19:10). As the song says: “Why Did My Savior Come To Earth...Because He Loves Me So” (1 John 4:8-10; Phi. 2:5-11; Rom. 5:6-11; Rev. 1:5). In the Gospel we learn about: “**the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me**” (Gal. 2:20b). A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord. The Gospel announces: “**how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures**” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Man, under the condemnation of sin, has a Savior who loves him, and who shed His precious blood to save him and wash away his sins (Mat. 1:21; Rev. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:19). It is good news indeed to learn that sinful man does not have to be lost in hell (Rom. 5:8-9)! Now that is truly good news!

2. *The Gospel is Good News because it is for all people* (Rom. 1:16; Acts 15:7). Jesus commanded His disciples:

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

MORE ABOUT MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

In the March 2021 issue of *CFTF*, our front page article was titled “Who Can and Who Cannot Marry Without Committing Sin?” It was authored by the late Thomas B. Warren and was originally printed while he was editor of the *Spiritual Sword* in Vol. 15, No. 15, April 1984, pp. 46-48. Although not disagreeing with bro. Warren’s teaching, a reader wrote a kind email to us saying he did not think the Warren article was thorough enough because it did not deal with several points he thought ought to be mentioned regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR). Regarding himself, he wrote that in over 40 years he had not heard a sermon or read an “article about exactly what defines Biblical Marriage.” He also wrote that the Warren article is “not very controversial and breaks no new ground.” He then gave us his thoughts on what he considered today to be neglected in the study of MDR. Indeed, we agree with him that today much more ought to be and could be taught on MDR as well as teaching concerning the roles of males and females and other matters related thereto.

The foregoing being as it may, between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s, or thereabout, much study and discussion regarding MDR took place. Of course thorough teaching on a topic(s) 40 to 50 years ago does not rule out the need of succeeding generations being taught the truth about it as well as exposing and refuting the error concerning the same. The foregoing being the case, we must point out that there are plenty of brethren today, not to mention non-Christians, who need what is taught in said Warren article. Also, with many the material in Warren’s article continues to be controversial. (I recommend the following books on MDR by bro. Warren. *Some Critical Questions on Divorce and Remarriage, Under Bondage To The Law of Christ—The Only Real Freedom*, and *Your Marriage Can Be Great*, ed. Thomas B. Warren [1978]. One can check with Amazon regarding getting his books and at <https://warrenapologetics.org/tbw-other-theological-works> regarding the availability his writings.)

Although presently not in print, *Your Marriage Can Be Great* and other truthful works on MDR written by different faithful brethren have been before the public for over forty years (some much longer). Next of all, neither Warren nor *CFTF* represented said article as dealing with any topics other than what it explicitly covered and what it implies. Of course all of the issues mentioned by our kind email respondent cannot be dealt with in one article.

He also said in his email that the real problem is not what was taught in said Warren article, “but the problem is in applying that biblical principle to individual cases; a subject almost nobody ever broaches in print.” With all due respect to our emailer, I cannot know to what writings he has or has not been exposed concerning this topic. And, certainly, some areas in the overall MDR subject get more attention than others. But that is the case with many issues.

When it comes to dealing with “individual cases,” there is no end to the various scenarios involved. There will never be a time when one can apply for the other person the truth regarding MDR to that person’s given situation. We cannot know the counsels of another’s heart except as one reveals them. Even then, we only

know the perspective of the person who relates his/her case to us in such matters. All we can do is make sure the truth on the topic (in this case MDR) is clearly and thoroughly taught, dealing with any error that may come to light in such a discussion. Then, exhort such people in view of eternity to honestly and objectively with all gravity and soberness apply the truth bearing on their personal cases with a willingness to sacrifice whatever it takes to be compliant with God's truth and making it as sure as they can (John 8:31, 32; Eph. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; John 12:48).

As previously noted, from the mid-1970s until about the mid-1980s, MDR was very much discussed. However, I freely admit that the writing, preaching, and debating was more in the areas covered by said Warren article. That being noted, other areas such as what constitutes a Biblical marriage, the point in time at which God joins a man and woman to be husband and wife, the point in time when God dissolves a marriage by divorce, the place of civil law in MDR, et al., have been studied and debated. That is the case if for no other reason than in the process of studying what is discussed in said Warren article one will be taken into the other areas noted above.

EVERY GENERATION MUST BE TAUGHT

I emphasize again, as it is the case with the gospel and every component part of it, every generation must be taught the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on MDR. But to say that the topics about which our emailer mentioned have not been dealt with is painting with too broad of a brush stroke. Besides my own study of MDR, I would not attempt to count the times over the last 50 years that I have personally dealt with the topics our emailer mentioned, or how many discussions I have had with preachers, and in classes I taught as well as those in which I participated as a student about various aspects of MDR. However, as space permits we will give some attention to MDR in the remainder of this article.

THREE GREAT INSTITUTIONS

(1) In the beginning, before sin entered the world through man, God created marriage and the home for the good of mankind (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 John 3:4). Jesus confirmed the foregoing in Matthew 19:4-6. Focus on the words *leave* and *cleave* in the previous verses. "**Leave**" translates the Greek word *kataleipo*, meaning literally "to leave down." Thus, to leave behind or forsake. "**Cleave**" translates the Greek word *kollao*, meaning to join fast together, to glue, to cement. *Thus, God's marriage law is this, one man for one woman for life.*

(2) God also set up the principle of civil government among men (Rom. 13).

(3) The church God had purposed before the foundation of the world for the housing of the saved in the Christian dispensation was begun by Christ in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following His resurrection (Eph. 3:10, 11; Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:37, 38, 41, 42, 47; 20:28; Eph. 1:3).

At present, it is the first institution of the foregoing list with which we are concerned. Indeed, the inspired apostle Paul tells us, "**to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband**" (1 Cor. 7:2). And, we read in the Hebrews epistle, "**Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge**" (Heb. 13:4).

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

A scriptural marriage is a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews*

13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage. A man and a woman who are Biblically authorized to enter into said marriage must decide to live together as husband and wife until death do them part. Having mutually decided the same, at a certain point in time, said man and woman declare themselves before any and all to be husband and wife. That is "the when" God joins them together in marriage and "the when" their home begins.

The requirements of civil law bearing on MDR are to be obeyed only where said laws are in harmony with God's laws (Rom. 13; Acts 5:29). For good or bad, it must be understood that man has, does, and will change civil marriage laws as he does other civil and criminal laws. Regardless of such changes, Godly persons must first, foremost, and always be concerned with this—*complete and total compliance with God's laws regardless of the topic under consideration or the human laws pertaining thereto* (Col. 3:17; Jam. 1:25). Thus, this is the case regarding civil laws relating to MDR. No civil law can alter or make null and void God's laws on MDR or any other part of His will. *If man's law could change God's laws, it would not be a sin in the United States to abort babies on demand or engage in homosexual marriages, for both are or have been legal under civil law.* Regardless of any changes in the foregoing two laws, God's laws remain the same. It is the higher law of which there is no higher to which we must submit.

Our faithfulness in the Lord's church works not only and ultimately to win souls to the Lord, but through the gospel lived, taught, and defended influence all men, even and especially civil governments among men, to enact laws derived from and based solely on God's laws. This is a part of how Christians are the salt of the earth and the leavening for good in the world. The church is to live, teach, and defend the will of God on all religious and moral matters.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

With the foregoing in mind, consider the Samaritan woman with whom Jesus conversed at Jacob's well. When the topic of their conversation touched on the woman's husbands, Jesus said to her, "**For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly**" (John 4:18). Notice that Jesus confessed that she had been married five times, but the man with whom she lived at the time of their conversation was not her husband. Whatever others may have called their cohabitation, they were not in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage*.

It must also be understood that the sexual union does not join the male and female together in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage*. Think about it for a moment. If sexual union joined a man and woman in marriage, the man and woman must engage in fornication to become married. This would mean Jesus would have been in error when He told the Samaritan woman, "**he whom thou now hast is not thy husband**" (John 4:18), for he would have been her husband by sexual union. I never cease to be amazed when it comes to the machinations of some people, especially brethren, in their attempts to get around the truth of God's Word on this and other subjects!

JOSEPH AND MARY

Continuing with another example from the scriptures, Joseph and Mary were married for some time before they engaged in a sexual union. Of Joseph, the scriptures tell us, "**And knew**

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“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). Indeed, Christ **“by the grace of God”** tasted death **“for every man”** (Heb. 2:9).

Every soul needs the gospel, yet, many in the church treat with indifference the soul-saving message! The story was related several years ago about a man who decided to move from the country to the city. Before leaving he gave a bag of wheat seed to one neighbor and he gave another bag to another neighbor. When he returned to visit a year later, he passed by one man’s field and it was chock-full of golden grain. He passed by the other man’s field and it was grown up with weeds. He asked him about the bag of wheat seed and he said, “I put it in the attic and the rats ate it.” This is like the attitude that many have toward the gospel. They neglect the study of it, obedience to it, and the teaching of it! Although it is the most precious seed in the world. **“The seed is the word of God”** (Luke 8:11).

3. *The Gospel is Good News because it is the “gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24). **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us...”** (Tit. 2:11-12). Because of God’s grace, man has the privilege of being taught the Gospel of Christ. Moreover, the Gospel is the message of God’s grace, and the grace of God has made the Gospel possible. By it we have access to God’s grace (Tit. 2:11-12; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1-2; 10:17; Tit. 3:4-7; 1 Cor. 15:1).

Without the Lord’s grace, no one could be saved (Eph. 2:8). When the apostles and elders came together in Jerusalem to consider the matter of circumcision, which certain Judaizing teachers were erroneously seeking to bind on new Gentile converts to Christ, Peter announced: **“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they”** (Acts 15:11).

4. *The Gospel is Good News because by it we are begotten by God and become His children* (1 Cor. 4:15; Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). When one obeys the Gospel of Christ, he is begotten by God and born into His house, the church of Christ—the kingdom of God (1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13-14). As physical children are begotten by their fathers, God’s children have been begotten by His seed, the Word of God (Luke 8:11; Jam. 1:18).

The apostle Peter declares that those who have been purified and born again by the truth of the gospel, are under the Divine obligation to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,

by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

What a privilege to be a child of God (John 1:12-13). **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”** (1 John 3:1).

5. *The Gospel is Good News because it is the “gospel of God”* (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 The. 2:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 4:17). It is from God—not men! Inspired men received it from God; they did not receive it from man (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 2:6-16). Unlike the teachings and inventions of man, the gospel is perfect and eternal (Eph. 1:13; John 8:32; Tit. 1:14; Mat. 15:9; 15:13; 2 John 9; 1 Pet. 1:25; Rev. 14:6).

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

6. *Christ’s Gospel is Good News because it tells man of heaven and makes the hope of heaven possible.* Truly, it brings hope to a dark and hopeless world. Precious souls learn of this hope through the gospel, as Paul stated to the Colossians Christians,

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel (Col. 1:3-5).

Yet, we must continue steadfast and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel if we are to reach Heaven. Paul went on to declare to the Christians at Colossae who had been reconciled to God:

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (Col. 1:21-23).

7. *The Gospel of Christ is Good News because it brings peace. It is the “gospel of peace”* (Eph. 6:15; Rom. 10:15). By the Gospel, God has made peace between Jew and Gentile, and between Himself and man (cf. Eph. 2:11-22).

Through the Gospel, man is able to have his sins remitted by the blood of Christ, and therefore have access to God the Father (2:13-18). It is through the gospel that man learns how to reach the blood of Christ, whereby he is made near to God: **“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”** (Eph. 2:13). Paul speaks in powerful and beautiful terms of the peace of

God available to man through the gospel: **“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Phi. 4:7). By the Gospel **“we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Rom. 5:1). This is a peace which the world cannot provide (John 14:27; 16:33).

On the first Pentecost Day, following the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, the apostles were **“filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance”** (cf. Acts 2:1-4). It was on this day that the church of the Lord, the kingdom of God, came, just as Jesus had predicted (cf. Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:4; 2:47). The beginning of the church was attended by the gospel being preached for the first time in its fullness. After Peter’s sermon, the Jews cried, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter gave this answer: “...Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (cf. Acts 2:37-38). It is noteworthy that they were to be baptized for the express purpose stated by the apostle, **“for the remission of sins.”** This was the same purpose for which our Savior shed His precious blood, as He had stated a few days earlier when He instituted the drinking of the cup in the Lord’s Supper, saying: **“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”** (Mat. 26:28). This implies that when one is baptized **“for the remission of sins,”** he reaches the blood of Christ, that is, he is baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). This is also in harmony with the command which Ananias gave to Saul of Tarsus to be baptized to **“wash away thy sins”** (Acts 22:16), in that, it is only the blood of Christ which washes sins away (Rev. 1:5).

The preaching of the gospel, including the remission of sins, and the apostles’ reception of power from on high on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1-38), is a fulfilment of that which Jesus had predicted before His ascension:

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:45-49).

8. *The Gospel is Good News because by it we are called unto God, and by it we are able to obtain “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 The. 2:14). **“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord”** (1 Cor. 1:9). Thus, the Gospel is the means by which God calls men to Him. Thus, we can understand why God wants all men to hear the Gospel of Christ (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). What are we doing about it?

Moreover, with the gospel, the Christian is able to overcome any sin and to defeat any error. Hence, Paul teaches that the Christian soldier is incomplete without taking the **“sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”** (Eph. 6:17), and this is the only offensive weaponry that we have.

We not only are to use it as a weapon wherewith to win souls, to build up the church, and to defend the body of Christ, but we are to defend it against any attacks made upon it, like Paul, who said: **“...I am set for the defence of the gospel”** (Phi. 1:17).

9. *The Gospel of Christ is Good News because it is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Rom. 1:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2). To believe the gospel is to obey it. Christ became the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). In the New Testament sense, to believe involves obedience to God. We find that belief is the opposite of disobedience in the Scriptures: **“He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him”** (John 3:36; *ASV*, 1901).

Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Pet. 2:7-8).

Our **“Saviour Jesus Christ... hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”** (2 Tim. 1:10). To Christians it is called, **“the gospel of your salvation”** (Eph. 1:13). It informs man that to be saved, he must: hear and believe the Gospel (Acts 15:7; Rom. 10:14-17); repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30); confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10); and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Having put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4), one must remain faithful (Rev. 2:10; John 8:31-32; 14:15, 21-24; 1 John 1:7). Those who walk in the light are those who have fellowship with God and the faithful and who receive the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ, as John wrote to the brethren: **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7). Those who walk in the light are those who know the Lord by obeying His commandments (1 John 2:3). Their lives are worthy of the glorious gospel of Christ, as Paul states to the Lord’s church at Philippi,

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel (Phi. 1:27; *ASV*, 1901).

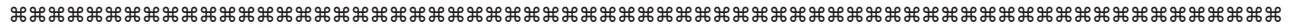
Those who do not know God and have not obeyed the

glorious gospel of Christ will be lost eternally.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:7-9).

The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the cross of Christ and the unsearchable riches of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:2; Eph. 2:13; 3:8). When brethren are faithful and uncompromising like the apostle Paul, this enables the **“truth of the gospel to continue”** with the brethren (Gal. 2:4-5). How great the gospel is!

—704 Azalea Dr.



THEY MINGLED AMONG THE HEATHEN

Benard Kagaga

In many instances God’s people fail because they compromise God’s commands, but they deceive themselves into thinking that all continues to be well with them and God. During the time of the nation of Israel, God drew a line for them not to cross. Yes, God had a reason why His people were not to mingle with their heathen neighbors. Let us briefly notice the border line that Israel was not to cross. To Israel God declared:

thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God...God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not...choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen...Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations (Deu. 7:6-9).

Being a chosen and a special people unto Him, God always demanded His people remain separate from those in the world. To the church in Corinth Paul wrote:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate...and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Why is it that God does not want His people to mingle with the unbelievers? The reason is given in another of Paul’s statements to the Corinthians. He wrote, **“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners”** (1 Cor. 15:33).

Being a chosen and a special people unto God, the LORD commanded fleshly Israel upon entering Canaan to drive the wicked inhabitants out of it. However, the Bible tells us they **“did not utterly drive them out...but the Canaanites dwelt**

among them, and became tributaries” (Jud. 1:28-30). And, later on the Psalmist said, **“They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: But were mingled among the heathen”** (Psa. 106:34-35a). Notice that the Israelites **“learned”** bad things from the heathen people they refused to drive from the land (35b).

Israel of old learned of the heathen’s **“idols: which were a snare unto them”** (v. 36). Spiritual Israel, the Lord’s church, must not allow worldly people or worldly religions such as denominationalism to invade the church. If and when that happens, brethren will learn of **“their works”** (v. 35b) and serve **“their idols”** (v. 36). As **“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”** (1 Pet. 2:9) we are commanded, **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers... for ye are the temple of the living God... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate”** (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

From the heathen, fleshly Israel learned to reject the value of life. The scriptures inform us that Israel,

sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood (v. 37-38).

The Holy Spirit inspired wise man said, **“the LORD hates... hands that shed innocent blood”** (Pro. 6:16-17).

Fleshly Israel learned of fornication for **“they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions”** (Psa. 106: 39). The high standard of morality must always be kept, preached, and defended, if brethren are to understand and do God’s will.

Those who mingle with the world as fleshly Israel did means they will also mingle in eternity with them, but in the wrong place (John 12:48; Rev. 21:8). Moses was in fellowship with God. He also knew that God had drawn a line of fellowship for Israel. Thus, on one occasion he said to the children of Israel, **“Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me”** (Exo. 32:26). By the which he meant God demanded of Israel their complete separation from the heathen remaining faithful to Him in all things. Thereby Moses meant that those who would be in fellowship with God should come unto me, for I am in fellowship with God. What a lesson for the church today!

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her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Mat. 1:25). Although no sexual union had transpired between Joseph and Mary, they were in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage* BEFORE Jesus was born. Is it not clear that the physical sexual union is a privilege and a blessing that comes as a result of a scriptural marriage?

JOHN AND HEROD

John, the forerunner of Jesus, declared to Herod concerning his wife, **“It is not lawful for thee to have her”** (Mat. 14:4). Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, records that Herodias was Herod’s niece, a daughter of his brother Aristobulus (*Antiquities* 18.5.1). Matthew tells us that she was also **“his brother Philip’s wife”** (Mat. 14:3). But that bit of information does not begin to tell us of the immoral mess that characterized the conduct of that family. So, we shall look a little more into the history of this foul family.

Matthew and Mark tell us that Philip was Herodias’ first husband (Mark 6:17). However, Josephus simply refers to him as “Herod” (*Antiquities* 18.5.1). “Herod” and “Philip” were names common to the Herodian family. Thus, they probably were applied to Herodias’ first husband. Many scholars who are students of antiquity reference him with “Herod Philip” without giving a reason. But among the ancient sources extant there is no reference to him accordingly. We emphasize that this was not the Philip whom Luke identifies as the tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (Luke 3:1). Although that Philip was also Herod’s brother. The Herod Philip whose wife Herod Antipas took was a son of Herod the Great by Mariamne, the daughter of the High Priest (*Josephus*, Wars 1.28.4).

Josephus tell us that it was in a journey to Rome that Herod Antipas resided with his brother and fell in love with Herodias. This took place while Herod was married to the daughter of Aretas, the Nabatean Arabian king of Petra. Herod Antipas having agreed to “put away” his lawful wife, Herodias then “put away” Philip and married Antipas. Mark plainly writes that **“he (Herod) had married her (Herodias)”** (Mark 6:17). Herod’s divorce of Aretas’ daughter led to war with the Nabatean king because of Herod’s ill-treatment of his daughter (*Antiquities* 18.5.1-4).

It is interesting to note that John had not rebuked Herod only because of his unlawful marriage to Herodias, but as Luke tells us, **“and for all the evils which Herod had done”** (Luke 3:19). But our focus is on Herod and Herodias’ marriage. Concerning said marriage, John declared **“it is not lawful.”** **“Lawful”** does not translate the Greek word *nomos*, meaning “law.” In this case **“lawful”** refers to what is allowed because it is in accordance with divine law. But it must be remembered that in Matthew 12:2-12 the apostle tells of Jesus addressing questions about what was **“lawful.”** This was necessary because the Jews interpreted things as unlawful if they violated their own traditions. As Jesus said of them, **“Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”** (Mark 7:7). Furthermore, because Herod was king and, thus, his own civil authority, he may well have thought whatever he chose to do was lawful—acceptable to God. However, John, as was Jesus, and all faithful followers of God, were and are always concerned with divine law (Jam. 1:25).

If ever there was a clear case of civil authority failing to usurp or alter God’s law, it is found in the case of Herod and Herodias’

civil law marriage. Herod and Herodias’ marriage was a violation of God’s law. Herod was indeed married by civil law to Herodias (in that he had made a civil law marriage covenant with her), but it was unlawful according to God’s law. The two were not in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage* because civil law said they were married. Neither had God terminated their first marriages simply because they had civil law divorce decrees. Thus, people in such relations are in nothing more than adulterous unions that have been made legal by civil law.

Even though such unions are accommodatingly called marriages because of their civil marriage contracts, they are not according to God’s law. No matter how many civil marriage laws sanction such unions or how many divorce courts attempt to dissolve marriages contrary to our Lord’s teaching in Matthew 19:9, they are unlawful. They must be declared unlawful just as, and on the same basis as John pronounced Herod’s marriage to Herodias unlawful. To illustrate: A dog has four legs and a tail. If the Supreme Court of the United States decrees that the dog’s tail is no longer a tail but is a leg, how many legs does the dog have? Answer: The dog still has only four legs. A Supreme Court decision declaring a dog’s tail to be a leg does not change it into a leg. The same is the case with civil law and its power to determine what are acceptable and unacceptable divorces and remarriages. There are two ways a scriptural marriage may be dissolved—death of a spouse or the spouse who is innocent of fornication putting away his/her spouse who is guilty of fornication. That is not nearly it that is it!

In the case of Herod and Herodias, according to God’s law Herod remained married to Aretas’ daughter. Regarding Herodias, the Bible pronounced Herodias to be Philip’s wife after she was married to Herod. That is the case even though Herod and Herodias had obtained civil law divorces from their original spouses. Thus, Herod was not eligible to marry Herodias and Herodias was not eligible to marry Herod, for no husband has scriptural authority to marry another’s man’s wife and no man’s wife has scriptural authority to marry another woman’s husband. Civil law may call such a union marriage, people in general may label such marriage (we continue to do the same today), and the Bible accommodatingly calls it marriage, but God did not join such a man and woman together in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage*. Thus, they are living in adultery. We may as well expect God to join together two men, or two women, or a man and a goat, or a woman and a fence post in a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage* as to expect Him to join a man and a woman in the same when they are not scripturally qualified to contract a *Matthew 19:6-God-joined-Hebrews 13:4-undefiled-bed-marriage* with one another. All such antics mock God and thereby blaspheme His laws governing the same.

EXCEPTION

He who gave the general law governing marriage (Mark 10:2-9; Rom. 7:2, 3) is the only one who has the right to make an exception to it. Jesus’ teaching is universal—**“whosoever,”** meaning everyone in every place. Furthermore, both sentences from Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 are exceptive statements—**“saving for”** and **“except.”** Exceptive statements mean “if and only if” such is the case. Normally, the one who divorces his or her spouse and marries someone else commits adultery. However, the exception to the general rule is when one spouse commits fornication, God permits the spouse who is innocent of fornication to divorce the spouse

who is guilty of fornication, freeing the innocent spouse to marry another scripturally eligible person without committing adultery.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-16

Gentile Christians as exemplified by the Corinthian brethren were converted from paganism (idolatry, immorality, and all the moral degradation connected thereto). Only a cursory reading of the Corinthian letters reveal their debauched conduct before they believed and obeyed the gospel. The case revealed in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 is an example of the foregoing.

In chapter 7, Paul began to answer questions the brethren had put to him. And, we are not surprised that some of those questions were concerned with marriage, particularly a non-Christian spouse departing from a Christian spouse. The apostle deals with the matter in these verses.

It must be kept in mind that Paul's remarks to the Corinthians are not to be taken independent of the rest of the New Testament teaching on MDR. To the contrary, the apostle's remarks are simply a component part of the totality of New Testament doctrine concerning the same. Thus, they do not contradict what is elsewhere taught on MDR, but are to be understood in the light of the rest of the New Testament's teaching bearing on the same.

Regarding a marriage where one person leaves one's spouse, Paul first directs them to what the Lord had previously taught in His earthly ministry (10-16). They would have known the Lord's teaching on the matter because Paul had taught them the whole counsel of God as he had done to the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:27). Indeed, this was his standard practice (1 Cor. 4:17). Thus, they knew that the Lord had commanded (10; See Mark 10:2-12), specifically that a wife is not to leave her husband, but if she does, she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband (10, 11a). From the Lord's teaching they also knew that a husband is not to leave his wife (11b).

Now the apostle turns to what Jesus did not directly address in His earthly ministry. As an apostle of Christ, an ambassador of the court of heaven to the earth, through the Holy Spirit Paul delivered an inspired dictum concerning an aspect of marriage not addressed directly by our Lord while on earth. Paul is exercising the authority of his apostolic office. This is made clear a few verses later when he wrote, "**And so ordain I in all churches**" (17; Also see 2 Cor. 12:12).

In verses 12-16, Paul delivered his inspired instructions—Christians are not to divorce their unbelieving spouses only because they are non-Christians (12-13). Paul informed them that in

living the Christian life Godly spouses would be a "sanctifying" influence on the family (14). However, if the non-Christian departed from the marriage, the Christian spouse is to let the non-Christian spouse leave (15). In verse 16, Paul makes it clear that his inspired apostolic instructions had the salvation of the non-Christian spouse in mind.

IS THE DESERTION OF ONE SPOUSE BY ANOTHER SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS FOR THE DESERTED SPOUSE TO DIVORCE AND REMARRY?

Some have taught that one spouse deserting another was a second reason for the spouse that was deserted to scripturally divorce the spouse who departed the marriage and scripturally marry another. *However, one spouse deserting another is not grounds in and of itself alone for the deserted spouse to put away the departed spouse and marry another.* Why? Answer: Because until the departed spouse commits fornication, the two continue to be in a scriptural marriage. If that is not the case, why did Matthew record that Herodias, after having married Herod, continued to be "**his brother Philip's wife**" (Mat. 14:3)? To emphasize again, it does not make any difference how many civil courts decree a marriage to be over, their decrees do not change God's mind or His laws on MDR or any other divine law (Mat. 5:32; 19:6, 9).

In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul is not discussing divorce and remarriage. He is teaching Christians about their obligations to keep a marriage together when a non-Christian spouse does not desire to be married to a Christian. As we have seen, the Lord had already taught on MDR, but Paul by inspired apostolic authority addresses what the Lord did not directly address during His earthly ministry.

None of Paul's instructions countermand or contradict the rest of the New Testament's teaching on MDR. They do not change a thing regarding when one is married, or the only ground for divorce that permits an innocent spouse who is innocent of fornication to enter into a second marriage scripturally (Mat. 19:6, 9), or the place of civil law in the Christians life. His inspired remarks to the Corinthian brethren are simply another part of the revelation of Jesus concerning MDR.

We know there are other questions on MDR, but in the space we have allotted for this missive in this issue of *CFTF*, we have for the present finished our course. We appreciate those who are careful students of the Bible and we welcome their comments and questions not only on this topic but others as well.

—David P. Brown, Editor