

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 27

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

March, 1993

No. 3

"HE HATES DIVORCE"

(Part One)

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Divorce is a problem of epidemic proportions in America and has become a serious problem for the Lord's church in recent years. Nearly one half of all first marriages will end in divorce. Most of those whose first marriages fail will remarry at least once; many will divorce and remarry more than twice. Few of these have heard the Scripture which says, "For the Lord God of Israel says that **He hates divorce...**" (Malachi 2:16, New King James Version). Although God hates sin (unscriptural divorce), He does not hate the divorced. He sent Jesus to die on the cross for that sin as well as all others (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). People who are improperly divorced and adulterers in marriages of which God does not approve have the right through Jesus Christ to the forgiveness of sins, just as those who commit other sins. However, the gospel calls on all of us to quit our sins (repentance) before that forgiveness is granted through obedience to other gospel commands (Acts 17:30-31). Elders, preachers, teachers and others in the church who hold responsible positions are going to be held accountable for what they teach and allow to be practiced in these areas (James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17). Brethren and friends, we had better get serious about these matters!

Problems We Face

Since great numbers outside the church have been divorced and remarried, some several times, what should be the teaching and attitude of the church toward such persons who want to obey the gospel? Some elders and preachers accept the notion that non-Christians are not under the marriage and divorce requirements of passages such as Matthew 19:9, and that such people ought to be welcomed to obey the gospel without change in their marital status, whether they are in their first,

second or fifth marriage and without concern for the cause(s) of any divorce(s). For those within the church there are now multiple reasons being set forth which supposedly permit divorce and remarriage by Christians. Some say that "desertion" by a mate authorizes the one who is left to divorce and remarry. Perhaps the latest teaching in these matters is the concept of "covenant breaking" being equal to adultery. We will deal with this doctrine in a subsequent lesson, but it is basically that one enters into a covenant with a husband or wife in marriage, and if one does anything which violates some part of that covenant (agreement), that person has committed a kind of figurative adultery which then permits one's mate to divorce and remarry. So serious are these problems that some congregations are becoming known as "churches who will accept people who have been divorced and remarried any number of times for any reason."

Are these things right? Or, are some elders, preachers and teachers compromising what God's word says on marriage, divorce and remarriage? Are some willing to ignore or pervert the Scriptures in order to avoid conflict with unauthorized marriages and to keep people in the church, who would otherwise leave rather than conform to God's requirements on marriage, divorce and remarriage?

Love and Compassion

Those who hold to what is being called the "traditional view" on this subject are often accused of being "unloving" or having "no compassion" with people who have made mistakes in their marriages. First, we ought to be loving whenever we teach the truth of God's word (Ephesians 4:14). Second, "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion" (Psalm 111:4), but it is also stated of

Him, "The works of his hands are verity (truth) and judgment; all his commandments are sure" (verse 7). God is compassionate, but He is also a judge and demands our obedience to His commands. Our compassion must be balanced with the truth of God's word. Third, in showing compassion we must not forget to seek to turn people from their sins (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20). Leading someone to abandon all sin and find salvation in Christ is the greatest love we can show (Mark 12:31; 16:15-16; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Fourth, our first obligation is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). This includes keeping His commandments and teaching others to do likewise (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). One does not show compassion to others by overlooking sins which will cause them to be lost eternally (cf. Ezekiel 3:17-21).

Was Ezra unloving and without compassion when he commanded the men of Israel to put away all of the strange wives they had married contrary to God's (Ezra 10:1-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-6)? If not, then neither are we being unloving and without compassion today, when we insist that men and women abide by God's laws on marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Some Key Passages

Matthew 19:1-9 - In this passage of Scripture Christ gave God's will for marriage, divorce and remarriage for **all people**, whether God's children or unbelievers. When some Pharisees asked Jesus if one could divorce his wife for any cause, the Lord went back beyond the Law of Moses to creation and the beginning of time. Quoting from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, Jesus pointed out that God's original marriage law was for a male and female to unite as husband and wife, becoming one flesh for life (verses 4-5). Going back to the beginning shows that this marriage law is for **all people, not just the Jews**.

While man was not to "put asunder" or separate what God had joined in marriage, because of the Jews' "hardness of

(Continued on page 2)

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

. . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the ZIP CODE. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Ted J. Clarke EDITOR

Publication No. 211780

(Continued from page 1)

heart" regarding their women, God permitted them to divorce their wives and give them a "bill" of proof. This "bill" enabled divorced wives to remarry and obtain their necessary livelihood. Notice that this was stated by Christ to be a temporary exception and was not God's original will, which He had just stated in verses 4-6, one man for one woman for life, without divorce.

Jesus then, after reaffirming God's original teaching on marriage, stated **the only exception to marriage for life**, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). The "whosoever" of this passage is connected with the man and wife of verses 4-6, meaning every man and wife, Jews or Gentiles, believers or unbelievers. Therefore, no one has the right to divorce his/her mate "except it be for fornication," and no one divorced has the right to remarry unless that person put away his/her mate because of his/her sexual immorality. The word "fornication" is the broad New Testament term for all sexual immorality whether with men, women, children or animals. The term also includes incest and homosexual or lesbian activities. The Greek-English lexicon (dictionary) by Arndt and Gingrich states that the Greek work translated into English as "fornication" is used "of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." [A *Greek-English Lexicon*

of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 693]. Since the New Testament law of God authorizes only husbands and wives who are married to each other to engage in sexual relations, every other kind of sexual activity is "unlawful" (cf. Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 7:1-4). If one's mate becomes guilty of fornication, the innocent offended mate (who is not guilty of this sin) may divorce the guilty party with God's approval and remarry another who is eligible for marriage. **This is the only type of divorce and subsequent remarriage which is acceptable to God, according to the Lord in Matthew 19:3-9.** Of course, one does not have to divorce a mate guilty of adultery. It would be best to try to save the original marriage and forgive the mate that sinned, if there is repentance and genuine hope for reconciliation. It should go without saying that the person whose mate dies is also permitted to remarry another eligible person (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

A summary of Matthew 19:3-9 shows: (1) that the original marriage law authored by God in Eden is the law to which all people are subject; (2) that marriage law gives one woman to one man for life; (3) that Christ gave one and only one exception to a lifetime marriage, which is, the right of the innocent spouse to divorce his/her mate who is guilty of fornication; (4) that anyone who divorces for any reason other than fornication has sinned, violating God's law of marriage; and (5) that only the offended party who puts away his/her mate for fornication is authorized by God to remarry.

This discussion of marriage, divorce and remarriage will continue in our next issue with a consideration of "When is a divorce not a divorce?" and "May the guilty party remarry?" We will also continue a discussion of other key Scriptures pertaining to these matters.

Watch your thoughts

For they become words.

Watch your words

For they become habits.

Watch your habits

For they become character.

Watch your character

For it becomes your destiny!

"BLESS YOU"

by Allen Webster

He promised a safe landing, but not smooth sailing. He assured a winning race, but not without obstacles. He furnishes a rose garden, but roses have thorns. He sends a rainbow, but only when it rains.

The longer we run the Christian race, the more we see that it is going to be a struggle to make it to heaven. We ought not be surprised for this has always been the case. Those Christians who composed the seven Asian churches had to overcome overwhelming difficulties (Rev. 2-3). They faced social ostracism, political oppression, confiscation of property, loss of jobs and livelihood (2:9), physical abuse, and even martyrdom (2:13). The Jews were against them (2:9). The Roman leaders hated them (2:10). False teachers were destroying them (2:14). Pagan worshippers were seducing them (2:20). There were plenty of obstacles!

Strikingly, Jesus never promised to remove the persecution. In fact, He said it would get worse (2:10). But He promised that it would be worth it. His blessings always outweigh Satan's bullying. Notice a collection of the blessings promised to the "overcomers" in the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH THE TREE OF LIFE (2:7). Christians would again have access to the tree of life which was last mentioned in Genesis 3:24. What man lost by sin in the Garden of Eden, where apparently its fruit gave fullness of life and immunity to death (Gen. 3:12-24), is now restored in Christ to those who overcome sin. It symbolizes eternal peace, contentment, life, and security (Rev. 22:2, 14, 19). *Paradise* denotes the parks of Persian kings and is used in the Bible for the Hadean place of rest (Lk. 16:19-31; 2 Cor. 12:1-3).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH A CROWN OF LIFE (2:10). The Christians in Smyrna are informed that God's people cannot be defeated! They may have trouble, but they are set for victory (2 Cor. 2:14). This victory crown or wreath was worn by champions of athletic contests and victors in war. It was a symbol of honor, glory, and prestige. Smyrna was famous for such athletic events and her pagan

priestesses wore garlands as they served the temples. These were usually made of leaves or flowers and soon had to be replaced. By contrast, the Christian's crown will never fade (1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:4). "Crown" here (*stephanos*) is not a royal diadem (*diadema*) like Christ wears, but an emblem of festivity (Swete). It is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH IMMUNITY TO THE SECOND DEATH (2:11). The unbeliever dies and finds another "death" awaiting him; the believer dies and finds eternal life. The first death (physical) is temporary, the second (separation from God in hell) is eternal (Rev. 20:6, 14, 15; 21:8).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH HIDDEN MANNA (2:17). On their journey through a dreary desert to the land of promise, the children of Israel were sustained for four decades by manna (corn from heaven and angel's food, Psa. 78:24, 25). God spread a table for them in the wilderness. On our journey through the wilderness of trials and temptations, we are nourished by Jesus - "Manna" from above, "the Bread of life" (Jn. 6:31). He is our spiritual sustenance which the world cannot understand (cf. Phil. 4:7).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH A WHITE STONE (2:17). Pergamos engaged in the mining of white stone for commercial use. Stone symbolizes durability and white indicates purity. So together, they signify purity that will last through life and into eternity. Our salvation is written in stone!

There are four explanations of what this phrase means. Each has merit and perhaps all four are meant: (1) The white stone was given to a man who had been tried and justly acquitted. He carried it as a sign that he was free of the charge of crime which had been brought against him. The word occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Acts 26:10 where Paul said, "I gave my vote [literally, "my pebble of voting"] against them."

(2) The white stone was given to a man who was freed from slavery and made a citizen of the province. He carried the stone as an indication of his citizenship. (3) The white stone was given to the winner of a race or contest as an indication that he had overcome

opposition. (4) The white stone was given to a warrior returning from battle with victory over an enemy.

We can easily see how each of these would apply to the overcoming saint. We have been acquitted of our sins because Christ washed us clean in His blood (Rev. 1:5, 6; Acts 22:16). We were slaves to sin, but Christ emancipated us (Rm. 6:13; Jn. 8:32). We are in a race and one day will win a prize (Phil. 3:13, 14). We are defeating the devil in the battle for our souls (Eph. 6:12-17).

CHRIST PROMISED TO BLESS THEM WITH A NEW NAME (2:17). Names are important to God. He will give us a name that shows that we belong to Him. A new name indicated an advancement in life - Abram to Abraham; Jacob to Israel; Saul to Paul (cf. 3:12; 22:4). In the Old Testament, the high priest had the name "Jehovah" written on the front of his mitre or headpiece (Ex. 28:36). This indicated that priests were consecrated to God. In the New Testament, God's priests (Christians) have a new name, the name of Christ written on their foreheads (3:12; 14:1; 20:4; 22:4). It indicates that Christ has conquered them; He is their Ruler.

Christ is waiting to bless you. Hang in there!

80 Road, #321
Tiptersville, MS 38674

Man's Role In The Home

by Bill Brandstatter

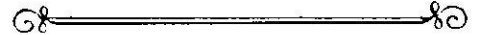
Through the years a number of articles have been written and sermons preached on "Woman's Role in the Church." Part of the reason for this is because of the abuse of such today. But there is another topic of importance that concerns Christians which also needs to be addressed. Have we forgotten that "man has a role in the home?"

A man's responsibility consists of support for his children and wife. God said to Adam in the long ago, **"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"** (Gen. 3:19). Paul later on alludes to this when he writes, **If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"** (1

Tim. 5:8). Some of the Christians at Thessalonica had an incorrect attitude in regards to working. Paul wrote to them that, **"We command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"** (2 Thess. 3:10). But, a husband's role in the home does not end here. There is more a husband must do.

The husband must help in the rearing of children. Often a husband is so busy with work he does not help with the discipline in the home. Paul asks the question in regard to discipline, **"For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"** (Heb. 12:7b). He mentions two verses later, **"We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"** (Heb. 12:9). A father who doesn't discipline his children may be causing his child to be unfaithful to God. If a child will not obey an earthly father, how well will the Heavenly Father be obeyed and revered? The woman's first and foremost responsibility should be to **"love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet keepers at home"** (Titus 2:3:4a). Yet, the man also has a responsibility in the home. Notice that Paul instructs fathers to bring up children **"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"** (Eph. 6:4). The spiritual "bringing up" is directed to the man. This includes more than just bringing a child to services. The examples set at home

(Continued on page 4)



CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Church of Christ, Moko, Ar.	\$25.00
Pilot Church of Christ	40.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Deilhalf Church of Christ, Myrtle, Mo.	20.00
Welcome Hill Church of Christ	10.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Church of Christ, Viola, Ar.	10.00
Church of Christ, Agnos, Ar.	40.00
Church of Christ, Elizabeth, Ar.	15.00
Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Moody, Mo.	25.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ	50.00
Clarkridge, Ar.	
Church of Christ, Garfield, Ar.	35.00

INDIVIDUALS

M/M Hayden Estes, Ash Flat, Ar.	\$25.00
M/M Joe Thomas, Sedan, Ks.	5.00
M/M Warren Gray, Judsonia, Ar.	10.00
Walter Johnson, Harrison, Ar.	20.00
Jimmie Phillips, Pawnee, Ok.	5.00
Pete Phillips, Franklin, Ar.	5.00
Jeff Montgomery, Morrilton, Ar.	10.00

(Continued from page 3)
as a father, husband and Christian are equally important.

A husband must treat his wife correctly. A woman is different than a man. God planned it that way. Peter advises, "**husbands in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered**" (1 Peter 3:7 ASV). By indicating woman is the weaker vessel, Peter is simply indicating the different makeup of the woman. The reference here is not to mental but the physical. If the husband and wife would both practice the golden rule (Matt. 7:12), many marriages would last longer. Paul's "golden rule of marriage" for men is found in Ephesians 5:28. There Paul indicates, "**So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.**" This is not always easy for many men. Yet, if a Christian mate for life is desired, it must be done.

The role of the man in the home can be summed up in one word: RESPONSIBILITY. A man who shirks his responsibility could indeed be the leading cause of his home being destroyed. Lot, in the long ago, because of irresponsibility, caused his family to be lost. Eli's lack of discipline with Hophni and Phinehas caused problems. So will fathers today who are irresponsible or fail to discipline their children. Let us fervently pray that Christian fathers will all realize the importance each plays in his home. May all the fathers reading this article pray to God for the strength and courage to be the kind of father of whom God will say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

206 N. Hancock
Ironton, MO 63650

(Editor's note: Wives, you might leave this paper open to this article and set it in your husband's favorite chair!)

OUR PLEA

No book but the Bible.
No creed but Christ.
No name but the divine.
No plea but the gospel.
No aim but to save.
In Christ - Unity.
In opinion - Liberty.
In all things - Charity.

"NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN"

by James D. Burns

When the chief priests sent officers to bring Jesus, the officers explained their failure to obey by saying, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). Their words were of broader application than that intended by them. Let us notice some areas in which their words were true.

Never man spake with such authority. The authors of the Sermon on the Mount perceived that "he taught them as one having authority" (Matthew 7:28). In this great discourse he repeated, "Ye have heard...but I say." He demonstrated authority not only in his teaching, but authority over nature and even death itself.

Never man spake such truths with such simplicity. Imparting spiritual truths to men is no easy matter. Jesus was unsurpassed in taking heavenly matters and putting them into human language. His parables are prime examples of His superb, yet simple, teaching. Who can fail to understand the parables of the sower, the good Samaritan and the prodigal son? And who can forget?

Never man spake such scathing rebukes. Read His words to Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, cities unrepentant after seeing His mighty works, for strong words (Matthew 11:20-24). Read His denunciation of the "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" in Matthew 23.

Never man spake such words of tenderness, love and compassion. Imagine the tone of His voice as He uttered, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem..." (Matthew 23:39). See Him draw a little child unto Himself and say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me" (Mark 10:13-16). On the cross hear His prayer, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

Never man spake such promises. He promised, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33) and, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). He further promises, "I go to prepare a place for you ...I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3). Who else could make such promises?

Truly, "never man spake like this man."

3380 Coleman Ave.
Memphis, TN 38122

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

"YOU CAN HELP WITH POSTAGE"
MOVING?
Be sure to send us
your change of address



POSTMASTER
Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
P.O. BOX 251
MAMMOTH SPRING, AR, 72554

Second Class Postage
Paid At
Mammoth Spring, AR
72554
Publication # 211780