

# Divorce isn't the Unforgivable Sin

**1. To understand what Jesus said about divorce, you must understand the Law at the time Jesus gave us the New Law on the subject. According to the Old Testament (that we are no longer under), *Deuteronomy 24:1-5* tells us: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife (second husband), and if the latter husband (this second husband) turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband (second husband) dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband (first husband) who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled (had sexual relations with another man)...”**

**A. Sexual intercourse is what constituted marriage. *Genesis 24* tells us that Abraham got a wife (Rebekah) for his son Isaac, and they were married (became husband and wife) when they had sexual intercourse in Isaac’s mother’s tent.**

**B. And the wife must have been a virgin according to *Deuteronomy 22:13-30*.**

(1) *Verses 13-19* said that if any man marries a woman and then tries to divorce her claiming that she was not a virgin (but she was); he was punished, fined 100 shekels of silver (which was given to the girl’s parents), and then he could not divorce her the rest of his life (his punishment). Makes you wonder who was really punished here!

(2) *Verses 20,21* said that if the charge was true, and she was not a virgin, she was stoned to death in front of her father’s house (This is what Joseph could have done to Mary the mother of Jesus). Aren’t you glad we are not under the Old Testament, and maybe why Jesus changed it!

(3) *Verse 22* said that if a couple was caught in the act of adultery, they were both killed!

(4) *Verses 23-27* said that if a man raped a girl (he had sex with her before they were married), and the girl did not cry for help, they were both killed! But, if the girl cried out for help, only the man was killed.

(5) *Verses 28,29* said that if a man had sex with a virgin who is not engaged to him (pre-marital sex), then he had to give the girl’s parents 50 shekels of silver, marry her, and he could never divorce her (This is what Joseph decided to do for Mary so she would not be stoned to death).

2. Now that you understand the attitude of the people during Jesus' day (Old Law), you will better understand what Jesus changed (New Law).

A. New Testament gives only three exceptions that allow a man or woman to remarry:

(1) **Death.** *Romans 7:2-3 says: "By Law a married woman is **bound** to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive she is called an adulteress. But, if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man."*

(a) "*Bound*" is from the Greek word *deo* which is translated: "to bind."

(2) **Unfaithfulness.** In *Matthew 19:9* Jesus said: "*I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.*"

(a) You can marry again only if your spouse was having an affair (sex with someone else).

(b) Jesus said in *Matthew 5:31,32*: "...*anyone who marries a woman so divorced (because she cheated on her husband) commits adultery.*" And in *Mark 10:9-12*, Jesus clarified that the same rule applies to both the man and the woman.

(c) Up until Jesus spoke these words, the Jews followed the Old Law for divorce and remarriage (*Deuteronomy 24*), which Jesus quotes from. The Old Law stated that a husband could legally divorce his wife even though she was not unfaithful to him, by simply handing her a certificate of divorce; and then the woman could remarry without committing adultery. The Old Law stated that adultery was only committed if she tried to go back to the first husband after she was remarried to a second husband. Jesus is now telling them (New Law) that she can not marry the second husband unless her first husband was unfaithful to her. If she does, she commits adultery. And then, anyone who would marry a woman who was divorced for any reason other than the fact that her first husband was unfaithful to her, would also commit adultery by becoming her second husband (the Lord looked upon her as still married to her first husband).

(3) **If you marry an unbeliever and he or she leaves you.** *I Corinthians 7:15,16 says: "But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not **bound** in such circumstances."*

(a) The word “**bound**” is the Greek word *douloo* which translates: “to bring into bondage; enslave.”

(b) “**not bound**” means “...released from the law of marriage” when compared to **Romans 7:2,3** (which also uses the same word “bound.”)

(c) **I Corinthians 7:27** (in this same chapter) goes on to say: “Are you married?” In the Greek it literally says: “Have you been bound to a woman?”

(d) So, when you compare **Romans 7:2,3** to **I Corinthians 7:15,16,27**, the Scripture in **I Corinthians 7:15,16** “A believing man or woman is not bound...” means they are no longer married.

**B. Except for these three exceptions (death, unfaithfulness, and the unbeliever leaving you), Christians are commanded not to divorce their spouse.**

(1) **I Corinthians 7:10-14**: “To the married I give this command (**not I, but the Lord**): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (**I, not the Lord**): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.”

(a) “**I, not the Lord**” simply means that Paul was not directly quoting Jesus when He was on earth (as he did in the previous statement). But, Paul is still under Divine inspiration when he said this command (**II Peter 3:15, I Timothy 2:7, and Romans 9:1**).

(2) **I Corinthians 7:12-14 continues**: “...And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him (just because he’s not a Christian). For the **unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife**; and the **unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband**. Otherwise your children would be unclean; but as it is, they are holy.”

(a) “**Holy**” is the Greek word *hagia*: “to separate oneself to God.” And the word “**sanctified**” is the Greek word *hagiasmos*: “a separation to God; the course of life befitting those so separated; that relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ; of the separation of the believer from evil things and ways. **It must be learned from God, as He teaches it by His Word**. It is an individual possession **built up, little by little**, as the result of **obedience to the Word of God**, and of **following the example of Christ**.”

(b) The “*unbelieving husband,*” “*wife,*” and “*children*” have been “built up, little by little” as a result of the “*believing*” wife or husband’s “obedience to the Word of God,” as they see him or her “following the example of Christ,” taught in the New Testament Scriptures.

(c) But, a Christian spouse cannot save their family by being Christian enough for all of them. They can only teach them “little by little” the “Word of God,” which gives hope to their family (A hope they wouldn’t have if they left).

(3) *I Peter 3:1,2* explains your best witness to your family is not preaching but teaching by example: “*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe in the Word, they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*”

### 3. The key word in looking at the sin of divorce is “adultery.”

A. Since the Bible tells us marriage is when two people join together in sexual intercourse (thereby becoming “*one flesh*”), the term “adultery” could apply even to those not “legally” married, but sexually active. A couple that is living together, but not married in the sight of the government, is still looked upon as married in the sight of God.

(1) *John 4:16-18*: “*Jesus told her, ‘Go, call your husband and come back.’ I have no husband (legally),’ she replied. Jesus said to her, ‘You are right when you say you have no husband (legally). The fact is, you have had five husbands (in the sight of God), and the man you now have is not your husband (legally).’*”

(2) *I Corinthians 6:16*: “*Do you not know that he who unites (sexual intercourse) himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘the two will become one flesh.’*”

B. And, before a person excludes themselves from the sin of adultery, they need to read Jesus’ definition of the word in *Matthew 5:27,28*: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery (Exodus 20:13). But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.’*” Pornography?

C. Now that we’ve greatly broadened the possibilities of committing this sin, we must ask ourselves what Jesus would say to someone who has committed adultery (even in their heart). Would He forgive us?

(1) *John 8:3-11*: “*The teachers of the Law (Old Testament) and the Pharisees (church leaders, or Preachers) brought I a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women*

(where is the man? **Deuteronomy 22:22** says both were to be stoned)...*But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger* (maybe He's writing the names of the women these accusers had committed adultery with). *When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin (adultery), let him begin stoning her.'* Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground (finishing his list?). At this (after they had a chance to read whatever He wrote on the ground) *those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up* (Why did they leave one at a time while He wrote on the ground, and when the last man left, He was finished writing?) *And asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'* (Remember, they could only stone her if they were not guilty of adultery) *'No one sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'*”

(2) We know, according to **I Corinthians 6:9**, that those who commit adultery will not go to Heaven. As a matter of fact, in **Matthew 5:28-30**, Jesus said they would go to Hell! Yet, here we see that Jesus will forgive the sin of adultery (as He will any sin except Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 12:31**)).

(3) **James 2:10** says that one sin is as great as another in the eyes of God, and **Romans 3:23** tells us everyone has sinned, and, according to **I John 1:8-10** the one that says they haven't sinned is a liar. So, whether our sin was adultery or something else, it doesn't matter — **Romans 6:23** says we all deserve “death!”

(4) **So what do we do? Repent! Jesus said in Matthew 21:28-32 that the reason prostitutes (those who committed this sin of adultery) were getting into “the Kingdom of God” was because they repented, and stopped doing it!**

#### **4. But, can a person that has committed this sin of adultery still be blessed by God, and be allowed to serve Him in Christ's Church?**

**A. John 4:35-42** tells us about the woman Jesus met in Samaria by the well. After talking with her and pointing out the fact that she was divorced, and thereby committed adultery five times, and was currently living with someone outside of marriage— He told His disciples (who did not think Jesus should be talking to such a woman) in **verse 35**: *“Open your eyes and look at the fields* (referring to the divorced and adulterous woman who had repented and brought many Samaritans to Jesus who worshiped at the wrong Church)! *They* (the woman and sinners that His disciples would never let into their Church) *are ripe for harvest... 'One sows and another reaps' ...I sent you to reap what you have not worked for* (because you excluded people like this divorced woman who committed adultery). *Others* (like the divorced woman and Samaritans who went to the wrong Church) *have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”* And because Jesus forgave, accepted, and used a divorced person who had repented of her sin, **verse 39** says: *“Many of the Samaritans* (wrong denomination) *from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony.”*

**B.** Some say that in order to repent of adultery you must first divorce your second wife (that you committed adultery with) and go back to your first wife. Otherwise, you are still living in the sin of adultery and have not repented, and therefore cannot be forgiven.

(1) *Matthew 21:28-31* tells us that Jesus said that prostitutes were getting into Heaven because they repented. Did they all find and marry the first man they ever had sex with? Or, did they all remain single?

**C. II Samuel 11-12:25** tells the story of King David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband to cover it up. God did punish them for their sin by taking their first baby. But, He then not only forgave the murder and the adultery, but He allowed them to be married (even though both of them were adulterers), and blessed them with a second child who became the next King of Israel (Solomon)!

**5. According to *I Timothy 1:12-17*, the Apostle Paul was “*the worst of sinners*” (a murderer and blasphemer of Christ); Yet, he said, God still “*appointed me to His (Christ) service.*”**

**A. Why? Verse 15-16 says:** “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life.*”

**6. So, how did Paul get his life straightened out, and get this forgiveness and mercy?**

**A.** By his own words in *Acts 22:16*, he was told: “*And now why do you delay, arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the Name of the Lord.*”

**7. And now what does a sinner do?**

**A. In *Philippians 3:12-14* Paul answered:** “*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*”