

Call to Obedience # 426
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

A Fresh Look At Adultery

by Reimar Schultze

Remarriage, where the first spouse is still living, has received such common acceptance today that few preachers dare to raise their voices against it for fear of losing church members. The fear of God in this case has been replaced by the fear of man. Today the Lord has laid it upon my heart to boldly address this issue to the best of my ability and for the glory of His kingdom. So let us begin.

1. What is Adultery?

Adultery is a sexual relationship between a married person and someone who is not their spouse. This sin is so great, that under Old Testament law it was deserving of death by stoning, and the New Testament teachings exclude all adulterers from the kingdom of God. Here are Jesus' words on adultery: *...Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery* (Mark 10:11-12). With these words, Jesus calls *all* remarriage after divorce adultery, whether it is the husband or the wife who does the divorcing. Simply speaking, adultery is the breaking up of the first marriage to enter into a second marriage.

It is also forbidden for someone, anyone, to marry a divorced person as Jesus said: *...and whosoever marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery* (Luke 16:18). No matter what, a divorced person is not allowed to remarry "ever" until her/his first spouse has died. Following is the teaching of Paul which agrees with Jesus: *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man* (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

The death of the first spouse is the only legitimate exit from one's marriage to enter a second. This is apostolic doctrine and is binding for the church of Jesus Christ for all times. It provides no exemptions, no bypasses

and no exits. Jesus reintroduced the theological and intellectual foundation for this to the Pharisees in a culture where all divorces granted the right to remarry: *..Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder* (Matt. 19:4-6).

So, regarding remarriage, the liberties granted by Moses permitting remarriage after divorce are not allowed in the Kingdom of God. It is from here that we get our marriage vow “for better or worse, till death do us part.” By the passage, “*what therefore God hath joined together,*” we know that no man has authority to dissolve a marriage. This makes God a third party in a marriage and any breakup of that union is not a breakup of a twosome but of a threesome, leaving God out in the cold.

Remember that every marriage is to be a reflection of the love affair of Christ and the church, a reflection of God’s ultimate design for the marriage feast of the Lamb. When there is a breakup of a marriage, it is like somebody spraying graffiti on what was meant to be a beautiful piece of art. Also remember that the Holy Spirit never contradicts the Word of God.

Remember that although remarriage is never allowed as long as the first spouse lives, separation or divorce is sometimes allowed. We find examples of this in Matt. 19:9 and 1 Cor. 7:10-16. However in reference to the “exclusion clause” in Matt. 19, we must understand that this exclusion is limited to divorce but not extended to the right of remarriage, for the following reasons: 1) It makes no sense here in the immediate context where Jesus just said that at marriage man and woman become *one flesh* (one person) never to be separated; 2) It does not fit in the context of other scriptures on this matter; and 3) It is excluded by 1 Cor. 7:10-11 where Paul commands as Jesus’ representative on the matter of doctrine: *To the married I give this charge (not I, **but the Lord**): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife* (1 Cor. 7:10-11 ESV).

Here Paul affirms that Jesus does not recognize divorce as ever terminating a marriage. Again, as long as the first spouse is living, the “one flesh” doctrine stands, no man is allowed to break it up. With this, we see Paul having taken from the teachings of Jesus and fashioning them into church doctrine.

This all can be better understood by looking at God's own marriage as it is revealed in the books of the prophets. For here we find that God, although divorced, refuses to remarry. Let us have a look and be astonished:

1. God is married to Israel. *For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel...* (Is. 54:5).

2. Israel commits adultery and God divorces her. *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce...* (Jer. 3:8).

3. Yet, God reaffirms to His wife that although divorced from her, He is still married to her. *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...* (Jer. 3:14).

4. God pleads with His adulterous wife to come back to Him. He is not looking for another wife: *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings...* (Jer. 3:22).

Clearly, in God's eyes, divorce is never the end of a marriage. Apply this to every scripture on this subject and you come to sound doctrine.

2. Causes of Adultery

The cause for adultery is the lust of the flesh. It always begins with a look (Matt. 5:28) and then proceeds to an act. It is a man or woman becoming totally stupid and blinded to what they are doing, as Solomon puts it: *He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself* (Prov. 6:32 ESV). Speaking in broader terms, it can be said that adultery is always the case of a heart not having been kept. It is a heart that has not taken counsel with God, that has not considered the damage and the scars it will leave behind, not only on the spouse, but also on the children and their children.

Of course, the guilt of a marriage breakup is seldom one-sided. There is rarely an innocent party. It is often the lack of love, the withholding of love on the part of one partner, that makes the other more vulnerable to fall into sin. A marriage breakup will never happen when a husband loves his wife unconditionally as Christ loved the church and when the wife obeys her husband in everything as unto the Lord.

During this day and age, a very legitimate question arises: if there is a divorce and the children stay with their mother, does her need for a new breadwinner justify remarriage? No, there is not one verse in the Bible to support remarriage in such a case. Instead, there are hundreds of times when God affirms that He will take care of His people in every circumstance of life.

And God provides special care for widows and single mothers like divorcees and their orphans.

3. The Way Out

You say to me: “Pastor Schultze, I am divorced and remarried; I have children from both marriages. I see now that I have sinned by having remarried. Where do I go from here?” Hear this, my beloved brother and sister. Adultery is not an unpardonable sin. Jesus came to save sinners, even adulterers and murderers. King David had done both, but he deeply repented (Ps. 51). God forgave him and he became a blessing to the rest of the world in every generation ever since. God can do this for you and make a fruitful vine out of you in Mt. Zion, the city of our God. And once God has forgiven you, you need to forgive yourself.

Your next question is: “Shall I return to my first spouse or remain with my current spouse?” The answer is unmistakably clear from Deut. 24:1-4: do not return to your first wife because she is defiled. Jesus reaffirms this teaching by saying in Luke, as mentioned before, that you should not marry a divorced person. You made a commitment to your second spouse. Now be faithful. God blesses faithfulness.

You say: “Pastor Schultze, this all is a hard teaching.” That is exactly what His disciples felt after Jesus gave them the “no exit doctrine” in Matt. 19. It hit them so hard that they wanted to give up on marriage altogether! Look at their exact words: *His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry* (Matt. 19:10). The way to life is indeed narrow and few there are who find it. Then Jesus said basically: If you cannot handle this, then do not get married (11-12). You can enjoy all the riches of God’s kingdom without remarriage. The ultimate in happiness does not come through marriage but through abiding in Christ.

As I close this treatise, some of you will obviously see the picture more clearly; you will stop justifying your remarriage; and you will repent to enter into the joy of the Lord and then bring forth fruit forever. Others will continue to justify their position by claiming they have special circumstances. Yet others will have many more “what if” questions. To this latter group, I suggest that you consult with the Holy Spirit and seasoned saints of God.

With this article I have cleared my conscience. I have given you the pure Word of God and if you have any disagreement with this, you must address the Word of God and not me. So having said all this, I have fulfilled my responsibility and now the ball is in your court.

The epidemic of divorces and remarriages is destroying our families and churches.

Call to Obedience # 426

PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA www.schultze.org