

Adultery and Church Membership

- I. The covenant of marriage.
 1. Marriage is a covenant (**Mal 2:14**).
 2. Covenant - 1. A mutual agreement between two or more persons to do or refrain from doing certain acts; a compact, contract, bargain; sometimes, the undertaking, pledge, or promise of one of the parties.
 3. The covenant of marriage is different from any other covenant that men can establish.
 - a. It is life-long (**Rom 7:2**).
 - b. It is made between husband and wife, but it is enforced by God and His law (**Rom 7:2; Mat 19:4-6**).
 - c. The husband and wife become "one flesh" (**Mar 10:8**).
 - d. It cannot be annulled (**Rom 7:2; Mat 19:4-6**).
 - i. Any other covenant made by men can be annulled if both parties agree to dissolve it.
 - ii. It is *their* covenant and *their* law that *they* established, therefore *they* can alter or abolish it if *they* decide to.
 - iii. Marriage is not such because it is enforced by God's law which is immutable (**Heb 6:17**).
 - e. The covenant is dissolved only by death (**Rom 7:3**).
 4. The covenant of marriage is a *covenant of the eyes* (**Job 31:1**).
 - a. One's spouse is "a covering of the eyes" for him (**Gen 20:16**).
 - b. The marriage covenant is also a covenant of the heart which is evident in that it can be broken in the heart (**Mat 5:27-28**).
 5. The covenant of marriage is essentially a license for sex and is a mutual agreement between husband and wife before God that they will have sex only with each other and no other.
 - a. This is evident because sex within marriage is blessed and honorable before God, but God will judge those who have sex outside of marriage, (whether before or during) (**Heb 13:4**).
 - b. Whoremonger - One who has dealings with whores; one who practises whoredom; a fornicator, lecher.
 - c. Whore - 1. a. A woman who prostitutes herself for hire; a prostitute, harlot.
b. More generally: An unchaste or lewd woman; a fornicatress or adulteress. to play the whore (of a woman), to commit fornication or adultery.
 - d. Whoredom - 1. The practice of playing the whore, or of intercourse with whores; illicit sexual indulgence in general; fornication, harlotry.
 - e. Fornication - Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted use, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman. In Scripture extended to adultery.
 - f. Adulterer - 1. One who commits adultery; who violates a marriage-bed, whether his own or another's.
 - g. Fornication is flatly condemned by God (**1Co 6:18; Eph 5:3; 1Th 4:3**).
 - h. God says that if you want to have sex, get married (**1Co 7:1-2; 1Co 7:9**).

6. God's law allows for spouses to separate, but not to remarry another person (**1Co 7:10-11**).
 - a. God hates divorce (**Mal 2:15-16**), but he permits it.
 - b. Divorce or separation does not abolish the covenant.
 - c. The covenant remains intact and in force, which is evident in that to divorce your spouse and marry another is adultery (**Mar 10:11-12**).
 - d. The same is true if a woman who was divorced by her husband remarries (**Luk 16:18**).

II. The act of adultery which breaks the covenant.

1. Adultery - 1. Violation of the marriage bed; the voluntary sexual intercourse of a married person with one of the opposite sex, whether unmarried, or married to another (the former case being technically designated single, the latter double adultery).
 - a. Adultery is condemned under God's law in both testaments (**Exo 20:14; Mat 5:27-28**).
 - b. It is a high crime (**Pro 6:25-35; Job 31:9-12**).
 - c. Heinous - 1. Hateful, odious; highly criminal or wicked; infamous, atrocious: chiefly characterizing offences, crimes, sins, and those who commit them.
 - d. It has steep penalties under both testaments (**Lev 20:10; 1Co 6:9-10**).
2. Since marriage is a covenant of exclusive sex between husband and wife, it would follow that sexual infidelity (adultery) is the only thing which breaks the covenant.
3. This is precisely what the scripture teaches (**Mat 19:9; Mat 5:32**).
 - a. If a husband puts away his wife for any reason except for her commission of fornication and marries another woman, he commits adultery.
 - b. The "except it be for fornication" clause in Mat 19:9 proves that fornication is the only condition which breaks the covenant and allows the innocent spouse to put away the guilty spouse and marry another.
 - c. It is evident that fornication breaks the covenant, else the husband would be committing adultery when he put his wife away and remarried.
 - d. It is also evident that the covenant is no longer binding on the husband (innocent spouse), but is still binding on the wife (guilty spouse) in that "whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Mat 19:9b).

III. The state of adultery by unlawful marriage.

1. If a man puts away his wife and *marries* another woman, he commits adultery (**Mar 10:11**).
2. Notice, it is *marriage* with another woman, not only sex with another woman, that causes him to commit adultery.
3. If the husband marries another woman, he has entered into a second life-long covenant with another woman and that second covenant is binding just like the first.
4. At that point he is in an *irremediable state of adultery* because he is bound for life to two women and can't dissolve either covenant.
5. His wife could not choose to restore the marriage to him even if she wanted to because he is bound in covenant to another woman.
6. A man in such a state must be permanently excluded from the church because he is in an ongoing state of adultery (**1Co 6:9-10**).

IV. The state of adultery by being put away and not forgiven.

1. If a husband has sex with a woman besides his wife, he has committed an act of adultery.
2. This act breaks their covenant of marriage as was before proved.
3. Therefore, if the husband has committed adultery and therefore broken the covenant, that makes him an adulterer and a covenant-breaker, which will get him excluded from the church if it is publicly known (**1Co 6:9-10; Rom 1:31**).
4. At the point his wife finds out about it, she is free to put him away for adultery and marry another if she chooses (**Mat 19:9**).
5. She could also choose to forgive him and restore the marriage (Mat 19:9 and Mat 5:32 do not state that she *must* put him away).
6. If she chooses to put him away and not restore the marriage (which Mat 19:9 gives her the power to do), she is holding him in breach of the marriage covenant.
7. Since he is held in breach of the marriage covenant, he is in a state of covenant-breaking.
8. Since adultery is the only thing that breaches the marriage covenant, her decision to put him away and not restore the marriage holds him in a state of adultery (adultery = breach of the marriage covenant).
9. Since the duration of the marriage covenant is for life, the duration of the state of covenant-breaking and the state of adultery is for life.
10. Therefore while he is put away from the marriage for adultery, he must be put away from the church because he is in a state of covenant-breaking and adultery.
11. Until his wife remarries, he is in a *remediable state of adultery* which can be removed by restoration of the marriage covenant.
12. Once his wife remarries, he is in an *irremediable state of adultery* because she cannot restore the covenant of marriage to him.

V. The question of forgiveness.

1. What if the husband (offending spouse) repents after committing adultery? Does his wife still have the right to put him away? Aren't we commanded to forgive those who sin against us?
 - a. The wife (offended spouse) is empowered by Christ in (**Mat 19:9**) to put away her husband for fornication and marry another without being guilty of adultery.
 - b. She could choose to not put him away and preserve the marriage, but she doesn't have to. It is not imperative in Mat 19:9 that she must put him away, but it does give her the power to if she chooses.
 - c. Repentance is not given any consideration in this passage. If the Bible doesn't state it, it shouldn't be assumed.
 - d. Remember that there was no consideration given for repentance when it came to judgment for adultery under the law of Moses (**Lev 20:10**).
 - e. If the wife doesn't have the right to put away her husband for fornication if he has repented, then the lawful cause for putting away one's spouse and marrying another would be "except it be for fornication without repentance", but Jesus only said "except it be for fornication" (**Mat 19:9**).
 - f. This same reasoning is applied to the situation of the fornicator in **1Co 5**.
 - i. The church was instructed to put him away from among them and his repentance was given no consideration (**1Co 5:1-5, 11, 13**).

- ii. If the wife's power to put away her husband for fornication is conditioned on his repentance, then by the same reasoning the church's power to put away a fornicator would be conditioned on his repentance.
- 2. What if he repents after he is put away? Must she restore the marriage to him?
 - a. Once the marriage covenant is broken due to fornication/adultery and he is put away, she is free to marry another and is under no obligation to restore the marriage with him per Mat 19:9.
 - b. Once again, repentance is not a factor according to the words of Christ.
- 3. Can't she forgive him so that he can be restored to the church, but NOT restore the marriage with him?
 - a. We are commanded to forgive one another (**Col 3:13**).
 - b. The church is commanded to forgive a brother who has been excluded and has shown godly sorrow for his sin (**2Co 2:6-8**).
 - c. In the case of a husband who committed adultery, the wife must forgive him in the sense of (**Rom 12:19-20**) by not harboring wrath in her heart towards him.
 - d. The wife cannot forgive the husband, in the sense of removing his sin of adultery, and at the same time NOT restore the marriage with him.
 - i. As was before proven, when the husband is put away for adultery, he is held in a state of covenant-breaking and adultery.
 - ii. In order for the wife to forgive the husband in the sense of allowing him back into the church, she must remove the state of adultery and covenant-breaking that he is in which is making him ineligible for church restoration.
 - iii. In order for her to do that, she must restore the covenant of marriage, because as long as the covenant is broken and still binding, he is a covenant-breaker and an adulterer.
 - iv. She can *say* that she forgives him and doesn't consider him to be in a state of adultery and covenant-breaking, but *saying* that doesn't change his state, only restoring the covenant does.
 - e. Therefore as long as she refuses to restore the marriage with him, he is in a state of covenant-breaking and adultery and such cannot be restored to the church in that condition (**1Co 6:9-10; Rom 1:31-32**).

VI. A sobering lesson.

- 1. Let this be a sobering lesson for us all.
- 2. If you commit adultery, you stand to lose your place in the house of God *permanently*.
- 3. Adultery is a heinous crime to be punished by the judges (**Job 31:11**).
 - a. Don't be without understanding -- it will destroy your soul and your reproach shall not be wiped away.
 - b. "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. 33) A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away." (**Pro 6:32-33**)