

***The New Testament's Teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. Part II.***  
*Does Matthew 5<sup>31, 32</sup> and 19<sup>9</sup> Provide a Means for Both the Guilty and Innocent to Remarry?*

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In the gospels, there are two scriptures which talk about remarriage: Matthew 5<sup>31, 32</sup> and Matthew 19<sup>9</sup>. The first came from the sermon on the mountain; the second as a result of a question asked by the Pharisees as Jesus came into the coasts of Judaea beyond the Jordan. In the King James Version, the scriptures read as follows:

*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her committeth adultery (Matthew 5<sup>31, 32</sup>).*

*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 who is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19<sup>9</sup>).*

These texts represent a divine-approved departure from the general laws of marriage and divorce which are found in Mark 10<sup>11, 12</sup> and Luke 16<sup>18</sup>. Those texts provide no remedy for remarriage. In Mark, we find, “*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.*” Luke says, “*Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.*” While it may seem inviting to isolate the texts found in Matthew from those found in Mark and Luke because the latter two provide no “remarriage” clause, the lawgiver Jesus Christ has forever made that impossible. Inasmuch as he is the lawgiver, he brought forth the doctrine of the Father to men (Hebrews 1<sup>1</sup>), so all of these scriptures form a family of teaching on this subject in the gospels. Matthew cannot be divorced from Mark and Luke. As I pointed out in a previously written paper, omit the “except” clause from Matthew 19<sup>9</sup> and you have Mark and Luke. Add the “except” clause to Mark and Luke, and you have Matthew. Now, let us consider remarriage.

Remarriage, according to both of these texts, is possible under a limited condition—fornication. The language of Matthew 5<sup>32</sup> (saving for) and Matthew 19<sup>9</sup> (except it be for) create this condition. In doing so, Jesus excludes all other conditions which would allow a remarriage. The very thing that makes the “one flesh” in marriage has the potential to destroy the relation when violated by fornication. Put simply, a sexual act by one marriage partner outside of the marriage violates the integrity of that marriage. The other partner in that marriage, if they have done nothing to cause the guilty party to commit the act, shall be the innocent party. It is the right of the innocent party to remarry without divine penalty. If the guilty party should remarry, they are in an adulterous relationship. By violating the marriage bed, they have forsaken all rights to remarry. It is at this point that the question surfaces for which the title of this brief paper is named. If fornication within a marriage destroys the integrity of that marriage, that is

to say opens the door for divorce and remarriage for the innocent party, does it not free the guilty party as well? If fornication is the only legitimate reason for divorce, does the very act itself not completely disconnect the parties from the marriage covenant? If there is no longer a covenant, the parties are no longer legally connected. Some rush to this conclusion, believing that this allows the guilty party to remarry.

This logic seems irresistible. If it were pressed to its logical conclusion, there would be no justice for the “innocent” party. The “guilty” party’s rights would be the same as the “innocent” party. Consider the consequences of this logic. A man guilty of having sex with someone other than his marriage partner is put away. But since fornication dissolves the marriage bond, he is free to remarry. He remarries, committing fornication against the next partner and is put away. But fornication dissolves the marital contract freeing both parties to remarry. He marries again and does the same thing again, and so on. We can see the utter foolishness of the entire matter. According to this misunderstanding there is no penalty! You want the right to remarry? Go out and commit fornication! Break that marriage covenant! Then do it again! Do it again!

Matthew 5<sup>31, 32</sup> and 19<sup>9</sup> do not grant the guilty party in a divorce for fornication the right to remarry. The Lord protected the rights of the innocent. It is the guilty who is without rights. God is just. While the guilty can obtain forgiveness for his sins, the law is plain. Forgiveness of sin is not understood in the language of the right to remarry. If there were a right to remarry for the guilty, the Lord would have made that matter plain enough. The Lord who will judge all in the last day will judge fairly and righteously. He has made his commandments clear so that no man would be ignorant. He has brought his commandments well within the power of men to perform so that no man is without excuse.