



# Refuting “Mental Divorce”

# What is “Mental Divorce?”

- According to this doctrine, when a person divorces his mate for a cause other than fornication, the divorce is not a “real” divorce and is unrecognized by God.
  - **NOTE** We said **unrecognized** and not **unauthorized**; we agree the divorce is unauthorized.
- Supposedly, when one divorces his wife for a cause other than fornication, the divorce is not a “real” divorce because it is not for the cause of fornication. Therefore, God seemingly does not recognize the divorce.
- This doctrine allows an unjustly civilly divorced person to discover that his former spouse cheated sexually during the marriage, and can then decide to “divorce” his spouse for the cause of adultery.
  - Since there is no legal way to do this, it is a mental act; thusly, “mental divorce.”
  - This “divorce” supposedly is the “valid” divorce and the person, therefore, has the right to remarry after mentally divorcing the spouse, according to this doctrine.

# What is “Divorce?”

**Matt. 5:32** – “But I say to you that whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

**Matt. 19:9** – “And I say to you, whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

- The word “**divorce**” in **Matt. 5:32** and **Matt. 19:9** is translated from the Greek word “**apoluo**” (also translated “**put away**” in the KJV).
  - When speaking of a captive, “**to loose his bonds**” (Thayer).
  - When speaking of the marital relationship, “**used of divorce, to dismiss from the house, to repudiate**” (Thayer).
    - **Repudiate** – “**to reject as unauthorized or as having no binding force**” (Webster); “**refuse to fulfill . . . an agreement, obligation, or debt**” (Oxford Languages Dictionary).

# What is “Divorce?”

- “**Apoluo**” in **Matt. 5:32** and **Matt. 19:9** is a different Greek word than what is used in **1 Cor. 7:10**:
  - “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to **depart** [chorizo] from her husband.”
- “**Chorizo**” in **1 Cor. 7:10** is the same word that appears in **Matt. 19:6**:
  - “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man **separate** [chorizo].”
- Thayer defines “**chorizo**” as “to separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one’s self from, to depart.”
- So, “**chorizo**” can refer to marital separation or divorce.
  - **NOTE** Divorce is definitely under consideration in **1 Cor. 7:10-11** though:
    - “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to **depart** [chorizo] from her husband. But even if she does **depart** [chorizo], let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to **divorce** [aphiemi] his wife.”
- “**Aphiemi**” means “to send away; to bid going away or depart; of a husband divorcing his wife” (Thayer).

# What is “Divorce?” Looking at the Original Greek

## APOLUO

(MATT. 5:32, 19:9)

- Used of divorce, to dismiss from the house, to repudiate (Thayer).

**Termination of Marriage**

## CHORIZO

(MATT. 19:6; 1 COR. 7:10)

- To separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one’s self from, to depart (Thayer).

**Termination of Marriage or Marital Separation**

## APHIEMI

(1 COR. 7:11)

- To send away; to bid going away or depart; of a husband divorcing his wife (Thayer).

**Termination of Marriage**

# Who is Eligible for Remarriage?

When it comes to eligibility for remarriage after a divorce, the scriptures make the following distinctions:

1) It matters **WHY** a divorce occurs.

○ **... whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery ... (Matt. 5:32).**

- There is only one scriptural reason for divorce. Note that remarriage is not even discussed here.

○ **... whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery ... (Matt. 19:9).**

- Remarriage can only take place after a divorce IF that divorce occurs due to (“**for**”) sexual immorality.

# Who is Eligible for Remarriage?

When it comes to eligibility for remarriage after a divorce, the scriptures make the following distinctions:

1) It matters **WHY** a divorce occurs (**Matt. 5:32, 19:9**).

2) It matters **WHO** divorces whom.

○ **Luke 16:18** – “**Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.**”

Person on receiving end of unauthorized divorce is ineligible for remarriage.

• **Matt. 5:32** and **Matt. 19:9** both say what this passage says: whoever marries a person who “**is divorced**” (on the receiving end of a divorce) commits adultery.

• So, it matters who does the divorcing.

• The innocent party has to be the one who divorces the sexually immoral person. If such a divorce does occur, only the innocent party is eligible for remarriage.

• Neither the person on the receiving end of an unscriptural divorce nor the person initiating such a divorce are eligible for remarriage.

# Who is Eligible for Remarriage?

When it comes to eligibility for remarriage after a divorce, the scriptures make the following distinctions:

- 1) It matters WHY a divorce occurs (**Matt. 5:32, 19:9**).
- 2) It matters WHO divorces whom (**Luke 16:18**).
- 3) It matters WHEN a divorce occurs.
  - **This is where disagreement arises over the question of if civil law matters.**

# Divorce (Putting Away) is More than a Mental Action

**Matt. 19:9** – "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" (KJV). What does "**put away**" mean in this text?

- It is supposed that "**put away**" means something like "to mentally determine that a person's spouse will no longer be his/her spouse." However, that is not how the Bible defines it.
- When Mary was "**found with child of the Holy Ghost**," the Bible states that "**Joseph her husband . . . was minded to put her away privily**" (**Matt. 1:18-19**).
- If all that is involved in putting someone away is determining in one's mind to put that person away, then Joseph **already** put Mary away in this text. But, to the contrary, Joseph hadn't put Mary away yet even though he was "**minded**" to do so. **That means there is more involved in putting someone away than a mental decision to do so.**

# Divorce (Putting Away) is More than a Mental Action

**Matt. 19:9** – "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" (KJV). What does "**put away**" mean in this text?

- It is supposed that "**put away**" means something like "to mentally determine that a person's spouse will no longer be his/her spouse." However, that is not how the Bible defines it.
- Citing **Deut. 24:1-2**, Jesus explained in **Matt. 19:8** that Moses allowed the Jews to "**put away**" their wives, but notice that **Deut. 24:1-2** does not actually use the term "**put away**."
- **Deut. 24:1-2** says Moses required a man to write his wife "a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." So, to "**put away**" (Jesus's term in **Matt. 19:8** for the actions of **Deut. 24:1-2**) a person had to (1) conjure up a "**bill of divorcement**" (a legal action), and (2) end the cohabitation by sending the person out of the house. **Only after** a person accomplished these two things could a person be free to remarry. This is

# Does Civil Law Matter?

**A well-known gospel preacher in Limestone County, AL published the following statement when discussing marriage, divorce, and remarriage in Guardian of Truth /Truth Magazine in March 1992:**

“Jesus presented the will of God in his teaching on marriage. He never referred to the operation of civil law as such in his teaching, but the operation of divine law, in regard to marriage, putting away, fornication, or adultery. Additional error is taught when the legal intricacies of civil law are imposed on the teaching of Jesus. While people should abide by civil law in this field if divine law permits, the procedures and operations of civil law do not determine what marriage is, what putting away is, what adultery is, or when any one of these has taken place. Only God's will is decisive in any of these matters.”

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- It seems there was no ceremonial or legal requirement to get married before the Law of Moses, such as in the days of Isaac (**see Gen. 24:67**).
  - Since there was no legal requirement for marriage then, evidently there would have been no legal requirement at that time to divorce (if such even existed or if God permitted it).
- **During the time of Moses however, divorce did involve a legal process** requiring a person to write a “**certificate of divorce**” to put away a spouse (**Deut. 24:1-4**).
- **It appears the same legal process was also still in place during Jesus’s day** since in **Matt. 5:31** the Lord repeated the legal process given in **Deut. 24:1**:
  - “**Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’”**

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- It appears that the practice of divorces was at this early period very prevalent amongst the Israelites, who had in all probability become familiar with it in Egypt. The usage, being too deep-rooted to be soon or easily abolished, was tolerated by Moses (Mt 19:8). But it was accompanied under the law with two conditions, which were calculated greatly to prevent the evils incident to the permitted system; namely: (1) **The act of divorcement was to be certified on a written document**, the preparation of which, **with legal formality**, would afford time for reflection and repentance; and (2) In the event of the divorced wife being married to another husband, she could not, on the termination of that second marriage, be restored to her first husband, however desirous he might be to receive her (Jameison-Faussett-Brown, 1871) [jfb.x.v.xxiv].

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- To give her a writing; to sit down deliberately to look at the matter, and probably, also to bring the case before some scribe or learned man, **to write a divorce in the legal form** (Barnes, 1974).
- The prohibition of a return of the wife to her first husband, as well as the necessity of a **formal bill of divorcement** being given to the woman before she could be sent away, could not fail to be checks on the licence of divorce, as doubtless they were intended to be . . . Moses restrains divorce thus far that he requires it to take place . . . **by means of a legal document** (The Pulpit Commentary, 1962) [Deuteronomy].

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- The Law of Moses put some restraint upon the freedom with which men had till then put away their wives; for thenceforth, **a divorce could not take place until some legal steps had been taken, and a regular instrument had been drawn up**; and this delay might often be the means of preventing a divorce which might otherwise have been effected in a moment of passion (The Pulpit Commentary, 1962) [Mark & Luke].
- A writing of divorcement. The man who desired to divorce his wife could not effect this separation by mere word of mouth or by violent ejection; he must have a **written document formally prepared and witnessed**, necessitating certain delay and publicity . . . **The bill of divorcement had to be drawn and witnesses procured**, and afforded time to obviate the effects of sudden impulses of passion (The Pulpit Commentary, 1962) [Matthew].

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- The Hebrew word “sepher” (Strong’s #5612) translated “**bill**” or “**certificate**” is from the word “cephar,” which he defines as: “properly, writing (the art or a document); by implication, a book -- bill, book, evidence.”
- Brown-Driver-Briggs specifically define the example of the “**certificate of divorce**” in **Deut. 24:1-4** as a “legal document.”
- The NET translators render the phrase in **Deut. 24:1-4** as a “**divorce document**” instead of certificate of divorce; in **Matt. 5:31**, the NET translation of “**legal document**” is used to represent the “**divorce document**” mentioned in **Deut. 24:1**.
- So, contrary to what many mental divorce advocates will tell you, God granted governments the power to begin/end marriages (even unscripturally) thousands of years ago.

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although Jesus did not specifically define the procedure for divorce in a legal sense, the very word “**divorce**” demands that there be some sort of legal procedure involved in dissolving the relationship.

- **Oxford Languages Dictionary** – *the legal dissolution of a marriage by a court or other competent body.*
- **The Britannica Dictionary** – *the ending of a marriage by a legal process.*
- **Cambridge Dictionary** – *an official or legal process to end a marriage.*
- **Vocabulary.com** – *the legal dissolution of a marriage.*
- **Merriam-Webster** – *the action or an instance of legally dissolving . . . a marriage.*
- **American Psychological Association** – *the legal dissolution of marriage, leaving the partners free to remarry.*

Jesus did not define the legal/formal procedure for obtaining a divorce, but that does not mean there is no legal/formal aspect to obtaining a divorce.

# Does Civil Law Matter?

Although neither Jesus nor Paul addressed civil law when explaining the New Testament law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, civil law clearly does play a part in this matter.

- In our society today, both marriage and divorce require a legal process, and we are required to follow the laws of the land (**1 Pet. 2:13, etc.**). As it pertains to marriage, this means:
  - Couples desiring to marry must file a marriage certificate at the local courthouse.
  - A person desiring to divorce his spouse must also legally file to do so at the local courthouse.
    - Both instances follow legal procedures.
- If, as our brother and mental divorce advocates teach, “the procedures and operations of civil law do not determine what marriage is, what putting away is, what adultery is, or when any one of these has taken place,” then here are the consequences . . .

# Consequences of Denying that Civil Law Matters

- There is no need for a couple to legally file a certificate for marriage. They could just say mentally "we are married" and start living and sleeping together and there would be nothing wrong with it.
  - **In other words, shacking up = nothing wrong with it as long as "mental marriage" occurs.**
    - Clearly, then, civil law does matter as it pertains to marriage.
- Likewise, if civil law does not determine when a putting away (divorce) has taken place, that would mean there would be no need for a couple to legally file for divorce. They could just say mentally "we are divorced."
  - **QUESTION:** If a person can mentally divorce their spouse AFTER a legal divorce has taken place like the mental divorce advocates contend, why can't a mental divorce take place BEFORE or altogether without a legal divorce?
    - See the issue with their logic? Clearly, then, civil law does matter as it pertains to divorce and remarriage.

# Civil Law Does Matter, But Let's Be Clear . . .

- **Civil law does not define marriage; the Bible/God does.**
  - **And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:4-6).**

# Civil Law Does Matter, But Let's Be Clear . . .

- **Civil law does not define marriage; the Bible/God does (Matt. 19:4-6).**
- **Civil law also does not define what is an authorized marriage, divorce, or remarriage; the Bible/God does.**
  - Divorcing for the cause of fornication is the only authorized reason to dissolve a marriage and then be able to remarry **(Matt. 19:9; etc.)**.

# Civil Law Does Matter, But Let's Be Clear . . .

- Civil law does not define marriage; the Bible/God does (**Matt. 19:4-6**).
- Civil law also does not define what is an authorized marriage, divorce, or remarriage; the Bible/God does (**Matt. 19:9; etc**).
- Neither does civil law also define nor dissolve the marriage bond; the Bible/God does.
  - “For the woman who has a husband is **bound by the law** to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is **released from the law** of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man” (**Rom. 7:2-3**).
  - “**bound by the law**” of God, not civil law.
  - “**released from that law**” which God bound, not civil law.

# Civil Law Does Matter, But Let's Be Clear . . .

- **Civil law does not define marriage; the Bible/God does (Matt. 19:4-6).**
- **Civil law also does not define what is an authorized marriage, divorce, or remarriage; the Bible/God does (Matt. 19:9; etc).**
- **Neither does civil law also define nor dissolve the marriage bond; the Bible/God does (Rom. 7:2-3).**
- **BUT civil law does establish when a marriage (not the bond) begins and ends (Rom. 7:2-3).**

# God Recognizes Civilly Approved Marriages

**God does not authorize unscriptural marriages, but He still recognizes they exist as “marriages,” which proves civil law does factor into this discussion.**

- When John rebuked Herod for his unlawful relationship with Herodias, **Mark 6:17** still defines that relationship as a marriage:
  - “For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had **married** her.”
  - The marriage was unlawful, but God still recognized it as a marriage nonetheless (albeit one that needed to be terminated). This is significant because God did not authorize that marriage to begin; civil law did.
  - Civil law does not define marriage nor does it determine if a marriage is divinely authorized, but civil law does establish when marriages begin/end.
    - **Put another way, civil law does not determine the beginning/end of the marriage bond, but it does determine the beginning/end of a marriage.**

# God Recognizes Civilly Approved Marriages

**God does not authorize unscriptural marriages, but He still recognizes they exist as “marriages,” which proves civil law does factor into this discussion.**

○ Even though Jesus condemned unscriptural marriages, divorces, and remarriages, He still recognized them as **marriages** and **divorces**.

• **Matt. 19:9** – “**And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.**”

• In this verse, we have an unscriptural putting away, which Jesus calls **divorce**.

• In this verse, we also have an unscriptural remarrying, which Jesus calls **marriage**.

• Therefore, God recognizes the actions of civil law as it pertains to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. **He may not authorize what civil law does, but He still recognizes what has occurred.**

• An unscriptural divorce or remarriage, then, are just that – **divorce** or **remarriage**.

# God Recognizes Civilly Approved Marriages

**God does not authorize unscriptural marriages, but He still recognizes they exist as “marriages,” which proves civil law does factor into this discussion.**

- **Matt. 5:32** – “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who **is divorced commits adultery.**”
  - So, the Lord recognizes when people put away their spouse even unscripturally. He says the person “**is**” divorced.
    - Mental divorce advocates say no divorce has occurred, contradicting Jesus.
- **Matt. 19:6** – “**What God has joined together, let not man separate.**”
  - Not only is man capable of separating unjustly, God recognizes when man does unrightfully separate/put asunder.
    - Mental divorce advocates say man cannot separate and only God does that, but Jesus wouldn’t say “**let not man separate**” if man is incapable of doing so.

# “Marriage” vs the Marriage “Bond”

- **Marriage Defined:** One man and one woman for life, with only exception (**Matt. 19:4-9**).
- **Marriage Bond Defined:** “**For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man**” (**Rom. 7:2-3**).
- God’s general rule is that the marriage bond is for life. Death and divorce for the cause of fornication are the exceptions to this general rule and how God looses the bond.
- In this passage, we can see how the marriage bond continues even after an unscriptural divorce.
  - . . . if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress . . .

# “Marriage” vs the Marriage “Bond”

**Divorce does not automatically break the marriage bond.**

- **Rom. 7:2-3** proves the marriage and the bond are not equivalent when it gives the case of a woman that is bound to her first husband, while married but not bound to a second husband.
  - God recognizes the second marriage as **marriage** (. . . **she marries another man . . .**), but He does not bind them together.
- The woman is still bound to her original husband. That’s why a remarriage while the original husband is still alive makes her an adulteress.
  - Therefore, the marriage and the bond are two different things.
- Divorce does not necessarily loosen the marriage bond. Only divorce for fornication does that, and only for the innocent party.

# “Marriage” vs the Marriage “Bond”

## **Divorce does not automatically break the marriage bond.**

- Mental divorce advocates contend that after a wrongful divorce of an unwilling mate, the couple are still married for as long as they are bound. **1 Cor. 7:10-11** disproves this:
  - “Now to the **married** I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain **unmarried** or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.”
- When a person wrongfully divorces an unwilling mate, God recognizes the person as “**unmarried**.”
  - They were once married, but are now unmarried due to what civil law has authorized. They are still bound, but they are now unmarried.

**Woman initiating  
unauthorized divorce.**

# “Marriage” vs the Marriage “Bond”

## **Divorce does not automatically break the marriage bond.**

- Husbands/wives and civil law can begin/end marriages unscripturally; they cannot, however, begin/end the bond – only God does that.
- Marrying, separating, and divorcing are things that man does.
  - **Matt. 19:6** – “let not man separate.”
- Binding and loosing are things God does (**see again Rom. 7:2-3**).
  - God binds (obligates) a couple when they become scripturally married.
  - God looses that couple when one of the parties dies.
  - God also looses the innocent party for remarriage when a divorce for fornication occurs.
- Contrary to what most mental divorce advocates teach, there is a clear difference in “marriage” and the marriage “bond.”

# “Remain Unmarried or Be Reconciled”

A wrongfully divorced person is to “**remain unmarried or be reconciled**” to their spouse (**1 Cor. 7:11**).

- Mental divorce advocates say it is NOT necessary to “remain unmarried” if the one who perpetrated the wrongful divorce later commits fornication.
- They say the innocent party is wrongly punished; “it’s not fair.”
  - **AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY I AGREE!! IT’S NOT FAIR AT ALL!!!**
  - BUT this matter of fairness isn’t God’s fault; it’s man’s fault! Man is the one inflicting suffering on their spouse when they wrongfully separate what God has joined together. And it does not change what God requires from the one on the receiving end of a wrongful divorce.

# “Remain Unmarried or Be Reconciled”

- The very people to whom Jesus spoke to in **Matt. 19** understood how difficult this law on marriage and divorce was/is.
  - “**If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry**” (**Matt. 19:10**).
- To Jesus’s disciples, it was better not to marry than commit to such a law of permanency and a law with such difficult repercussions.
- It’s a hard truth to accept there only being one scriptural reason for divorce and one scriptural reason for remarriage after such a divorce, but it’s still the truth, regardless of any emotional appeal or human reasoning.
- And, again, Paul told us exactly what to do if our spouse unscripturally divorces or separates from us.
  - **... let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband ...** (**1 Cor. 7:11**).
  - This is not a recommendation, nor is there a third option to wait for the sinning party to commit fornication after already finalizing a divorce.

# A Matter of Self-Denial

- I am certainly not arguing that what I am teaching is easy, but neither did Jesus.
  - But He said to them, “**All cannot accept this saying**, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. **He who is able to accept it, let him accept it**” (Matt. 19:11-12).
- If people want to faithfully serve God, there are clear sacrifices that have to be made. What I have to sacrifice may be different from what you are having to sacrifice. It all comes down to whether or not a person is willing to deny self.
  - Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).
  - What I have to carry on my cross in sacrifice to the Lord is not the same as what you may have to carry, but each of us are carrying things on our own personal crosses if we are following the Lord as we ought.

# “The Innocent Party Is Punished”

- We are accused of unnecessarily and unscripturally imposing celibacy on people, such as what was warned about in **1 Tim 4:1-3**.
  - “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, **forbidding to marry**, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”
- But we are not the ones imposing celibacy; it is the wrongfully divorcing partner causing this punishment. Jesus’s words bear repeating:
  - But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and **there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake**. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it” (Matt. 19:11-12).

# “The Innocent Party Is Punished”

I agree, we do not ever need to underestimate the suffering of people who have been unscripturally put away, but since when does the Bible support the idea that faithful servants of God won't suffer?

○ This passage seems clear:

- **13** And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? **14** But **even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.** “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” **15** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; **16** having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. **17** **For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil** (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

# “It’s Not “Fair”

## About this idea of “fairness” . . .

- Arguably, no one in the Old Testament was treated more "unfairly" than Job. Was it "fair" for God to allow Satan to cause Job immense suffering? How did Job respond to this "unfair" suffering after saying these he regretted?
  - "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know . . . Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes" (**Job 42:3b-6**).
- Look through **Heb. 11**; did not all these people in some way suffer? Yet, they still endured suffering all in pursuit of that better country (**see v.13-16**).
- Was it "fair" that Jesus - the only sinless being in the history of the world - died because of my and your sins? Certainly not! Yet, here we are trying to justify pursuing the very things that caused our Lord to die, all as a matter of "fairness." Shame on us!

# “It’s Not “Fair”

## About this idea of “fairness” . . .

- Whether we want to believe/accept the truth or not, the Psalmist is right.
  - "The Lord’s precepts are fair" (Psalm 19:8, NET).
- Man may treat his fellow man unfairly, but nothing God expects of us is unfair.
  - This whole issue would actually be “unfair” if God still required an unjustly divorced person to remain “enslaved” (ESV) to the spouse who divorces them (1 Cor. 7:15). But God does not require this. He is not being “unfair” at all.
- There is a big difference in fairness and easiness, and the Lord never promised that following Him would be easy; in fact, He said the opposite: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

**Considering what our Lord endured for us on His cross, we ought to never think that anything God expects of us when carrying our own crosses "just doesn't seem fair."**

# Is This a Fellowship Issue?

**YES!**

- **1 Cor. 5** is plain.
  - **9** I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. **10** Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. **11** **But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person.**
    - A person who “mentally divorces” their spouse and remarries is sexually immoral – they are an **adulterer**.
    - Disfellowship from such a person is **REQUIRED**.

# Is This a Fellowship Issue?

**YES!**

- **Eph. 5** is also plain.
  - **3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you,** as is fitting for saints; **4** neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **5** For this you know, that **no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God . . . 8** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), **10** finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. **11** And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**
  - Mental divorce advocates, instead of exposing fornicators and telling them they have lost their inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, tell them they do have an inheritance and they remain in fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, expecting us to do the same.

# Is This a Fellowship Issue?

**YES!**

- To apply **Rom. 14** to moral and doctrinal things it to say that we can receive ANYONE off on any doctrinal point as long as the person in error:
  - **Is fully convinced in his own mind (v.5).**
  - **Considers it clean [proper] (v.14).**
  - **Has faith to self before God (v.22).**
  - **Does it unto the Lord (v.6).**
  - **Gives thanks to God (v.6).**
- In other words, we can be in fellowship with any and every person who is off any number of points but is sincere in what they do.
  - Sounds like something our denominational friends teach, doesn't it? Because it is!