

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

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www.thegoodnewsofgod.org

“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.”

Acts 20:26-27, NKJV

From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 SEPTEMBER 2023

It is with great joy we present the first edition of *The Whole Counsel of God*. In addition to our weekly **Bible Blog** posts, if the Lord wills, we aim to publish this journal the first day of every other month. It is our goal to present only the truth of God and our Lord Jesus Christ because, after all, only His truth and our obedience to it will set us free from sin (**John 8:31-32; Heb. 5:9**).

In keeping with the name of this publication, we strive to teach the truth on all manner of Bible subjects, especially often overlooked subjects and those topics many have deemed “*divisive*” and “*controversial*,” even among members of the Lord’s church. By focusing on these subjects, we do not aim to be quarrelsome; rather, we place special emphasis on these topics because we fear ever being grouped in with those whom Paul described in **2 Tim. 4:3-4**. We seek to not only speak the truth as we examine each Bible subject, but we also strive to always do so in love (**Eph. 4:15**). We recognize the great responsibility and stricter judgment our Lord has placed on Bible teachers (**James 3:1**). Therefore, with great humility, an earnest desire to better understand the truth, and the goal of us all spreading that truth to a world who desperately needs saving (**Matt. 28:19-20**), we send out this publication to its readers.

This journal has what might be called an “open-door” policy. If a reader disagrees with any of the information presented in this publication, the person may write a rebuttal that we will be publish in the next edition of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We are not so dogmatic in our beliefs that we refuse to listen to an opposing viewpoint, nor do we want to silence someone who strives to use book, chapter, and verse (**Col. 3:17**) to debate their cause and understanding of God’s word (**Jude 3; Acts 15:2,7; Acts 17:17; Acts 19:8-9**). The goal is always for all believers to become unified together in God’s singular truth (**Eph. 4:1-6**). May God bless us all in our endeavours to serve Him faithfully.

(DTS)

The Whole Counsel of God is designed, edited, and published every other month by Dylan Stewart. All correspondences should be submitted via the **Contact Form** found [here](#).

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If you would like to schedule a free one hour Bible study at your convenience, please submit a request via the **Contact Form** listed above. Bible studies may be conducted via telephone, text message, email, Skype, in-person (if possible), or any other method you may prefer.

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Following Elders into Error

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Elders have a vital function in the Lord's church. They are to oversee the flock - they are to feed, or shepherd, the local congregation of which they are a part of (**Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2**). Elders are to watch for grievous wolves (or false teachers) who threaten the flock (**Acts 20:29-30**), convict (or "*refute*" - NASB) the gainsayer (KJV), or those who contradict (**Tit. 1:9-11**), admonish the members (**1 Thess. 5:12**), and be good examples to the flock (**1 Pet. 5:3**).

Another significant passage is **Heb. 13:17**. It says, in speaking of elders, "*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.*" Members are to be subject to the authority of the elders who oversee the flock, and most Christians recognize this principle. However, there are times when elders may lead a church into error. They have the church involved in various activities, which are without Bible authority. What should be the attitude of the members at this point?

Frequently, error will creep into a congregation. Some Christians will defend their involvement with that congregation based on the authority of the elders. They might contend, "These men are our elders, and we are to be subject to them." The idea seems to be that the individual member is relieved of the responsibility of disfellowshipping and rebuking error (**Eph. 5:11, II John 9**). They feel like this because the elders, who they are to be subject to, have decided that a particular practice is scriptural.

This thinking is erroneous. Let us apply this reasoning to some other realms of authority to which we are to be subject.

GOVERNMENT / CITIZEN

The Bible teaches we are to be subject to civil authority (**Rom. 13:1-7**). Should we obey the government, however, if it tells us to do that which is contrary to God's word? This very situation occurred in **Acts 5** when the Jewish authorities imprisoned the apostles for teaching God's word. After an angel released them, they went back to the temple to continue teaching. When brought before the council, the high priest (**v.28**) asked them, "*Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!*" Peter then responded, "*We must obey God rather than man*" (**v.29**). Thus, when God's law comes in conflict with the ordinances of men, obedience to God is still essential! The authority of the civil government does not give us an excuse to disobey God.

HUSBAND / WIFE

The Bible also teaches the husband is to be the head of the wife, and the wife is to be subject to her husband (**Eph. 5:23-25**). However, if a husband were to tell his wife not to attend church services, for example, she should not do what he says. In that situation, she would have to obey God rather than man. The wife would not be able to excuse herself before God for missing services based on having to be subject to her husband.

PARENT / CHILD

Another principle taught in the scriptures is that children are to be subject to their parents (**Eph. 6:1**). Again, they are to obey their parents *“in the Lord.”* A child whose father tells him to lie, for example, could not do so as he is asking the child to violate God’s word.

APPLICATION TO ELDERS / CHURCH

The lesson from these examples is quite clear. Being subject to human authority does not justify our participation in error. Citizens are to be subject to the government, wives are to be subject to their husbands, and children are to be subject to their parents. However, when any of the aforementioned authorities ask us to violate God’s will, we must disobey them, and we are responsible when we do not.

Similarly, we cannot justify our involvement with a congregation which practices error, based on subjection to the elders. Elders leading a group into error do not serve as a “buffer” between the members and God, as members are still responsible for their involvement with that error. What if the elders of a congregation, for example, decided to put instrumental music into the worship? Could a person justify his involvement with this innovation by saying, it was the elder’s decision after all, we are subject to the elders? Would the person be any less responsible?

CONCLUSION

We must keep in mind **Eph. 5:11**. This passage says, *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”* **II John 9** points out how it is essential for us to *“abide in the doctrine of Christ.”* Paul warned the Ephesian elders that after his departure, *“grievous wolves”*

would *“enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of yourselves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).* As Christians, we must not tolerate error - we cannot fellowship it. One day we must give an account. On the Judgment Day, excuses we make for involvement with error will not do us any good!

MYTH BUSTERS

**“They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths”
(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)**

Early in His ministry, Jesus taught that if we faithfully follow God, He will provide our basic necessities. In Matt. 6:31, for example, Jesus stated, *“Therefore, do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.”* Many today are afraid to teach the truth of God’s guaranteed provision to those who faithfully follow Him due to the false “prosperity gospel” doctrine that countless false teachers have profited from and made famous. No doubt, this doctrine is not supported by scriptures; yet, the Bible absolutely does teach that if we faithfully follow God, He will provide - either directly or indirectly - for our basic needs. We need not worry.
(DTS)

Does 1 Cor. 14:34-35 Apply to the Modern Assembly?

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Although most true Christians believe it is wrong for a woman to preach in the church's assembly, many of them do not believe **1 Corinthians 14:34-35** forbids it today (they believe other passages forbid it), because they believe the passage does not apply to the modern assembly. I disagree with this conclusion that **1 Cor. 14:34-35** does not apply to the modern day assembly, and would like to state why in this article.

DOES THE CHAPTER ONLY REGULATE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Some teach since **chapter 14** is primarily dealing with spiritual gifts, that we cannot apply it to today since spiritual gifts are not being exercised today. I believe this to be an unwarranted assumption, that just because **chapter 14** is primarily dealing with the regulation of spiritual gifts, that we cannot learn anything for ourselves (in absence of those gifts) today. For example, can we not see the instruction to the tongue speakers and the prophets in **1 Cor. 14:27,31** to speak one at a time would apply in principle in equal force today to uninspired speakers? In other words, we should not have two speaking at once even in today's assemblies. Also, is it not true the concluding remark of the chapter ("*Let all things be done decently and in order*") would apply just as much today as it did then? Moving to another context: Don't faithful Christians recognize **Acts 20:7** as a binding examples (concerning the frequency of partaking of the Lord's Supper) even though Paul's speech to that assembly was almost certainly inspired, and therefore "that assembly can't be duplicated?"

THE GREEK WORD FOR SILENCE

Some point out the Greek word for "*silence*" in **verse 34** is also found in **verses 28 and 30**, and then make application that **verses 28 and 30** "thus enforce the same degree of silence upon the persons mentioned and under the circumstances described." To this I wholeheartedly agree! When one person is already speaking in tongues (the circumstances of **verse 28**), another tongue speaker should be just as quiet as the woman should be during the whole assembly (the circumstances of **verses 34-35**). Likewise, when one person is already prophesying (the circumstances of **verse 30**), another prophet should be just as quiet as the woman should be throughout the assembly. Keep in mind **verses 34-35** are not a regulation against two speaking at once as **verses 28 and 30** are; **verses 34-35** forbid a woman from speaking in general during the whole assembly, even when no one else is speaking.

COMMANDED TO BE UNDER OBEDIENCE, AS ALSO SAITH THE LAW

Some think the phrase, "*but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law*" (**verse 34**), somehow allows women to speak in today's assembly. They attempt to find a woman speaking "in the assembly" in the Old Testament, and then reason that since women could speak then, and since today's women are to be under obedience as Old Testament were, then a woman today can also speak.

There are a number of things wrong with this argument. First, this argument con-

tradicts what the passage actually says, that women are not to speak in the assembly. Second, the passage is saying when women don't speak, they are under obedience. Not speaking is how they remain in obedience in this context. The passage is not saying it is right for them to speak as long as they remain under obedience; instead the passage is saying when she is silent she is being obedient. Third, the passage is not saying women are to be silent, as also sayeth the law, but that they are to be under obedience, as also sayeth the law. So the passage is not saying women are to be in obedience to the same instructions as in the Old Testament, but only that both laws taught obedience on the part of the woman. The application of this role of submission may be different under some circumstances depending on the covenant, but both laws taught obedience on the part of women. To illustrate, we might say that a man is to be in obedience to God in the New Testament just as he was in the Old. We don't mean the regulations (like the Sabbath) to be obeyed are the same; we are simply saying both laws require obedience. Likewise obedience under the old law and obedience under the new law are not necessarily the same relative to women speaking in an assembly.

DOES "YOUR WOMEN" ONLY REFER TO THE PROPHET'S WIVES?

Another thing to keep in mind is the prohibition in **verses 34-35** is not just against inspired women speaking, it is against all women speaking (**verse 35b**). Some maintain the "*your women*" of **verse 34** is referring only to those women belonging to the prophets (their wives), since the section has just concluded discussing the prophets in **verses 29-32**. The argument then is that since there are no prophets today, there are

no prophet's wives, therefore the passage applies to no one today. I don't believe the passage is only referring to the prophet's wives for at least two reasons. One reason is because **verse 33** seems to be the conclusion to the preceding paragraph, and indeed many translations so mark it. Regardless, it is impossible to prove from the context that "*your women*" of **verse 34** only refers to the prophet's wives, it can only be an assumption.

The second reason I don't believe the "*your women*" of **verse 34** refers only to the prophet's wives is because of the difference in person of the verbs and pronouns used in the passage. The book of **1 Corinthians** is addressed to all saints in Corinth (**1:2**) and therefore a second person verb or pronoun would naturally be referring to the group as a whole unless otherwise stated. Closer to the immediate context of the verses in question, **1 Cor. 14:6** shows us Paul is addressing the "*brethren*" as a whole, not just a selected portion. The word "*brethren*" is used again in **verses 20, 26, and 39**, showing the whole chapter is addressed to the brethren as a group; this whole group is what is being addressed by the second person verbs and pronouns. So then the "*your*" (second person) women of **verse 34** would naturally refer, not to a select group of women, but to the Corinthian women as a whole.

Notice when select groups of brethren are being talked about, such as the tongue speakers and the prophets in **verses 27-32**, the third person is generally used. Most can see this for themselves from the English. As for the Greek, I am told the verb "*speak*" in **verse 27** is in the third person, "*keep silence*" and "*speak*" in **verse 28** is in the third person, as well as the verbs "*speak*" in **verse 29**, and "*are subject*" in **verse 32**. On the other hand, the verb "*come together*" in

verse 26 is in the second person, referring to all the “brethren” (not just a select group) and the word “your” in “your women” in verse 34 comes from the pronoun “you,” obviously referring to the whole group being addressed just as verse 26 is. **NOTE: I believe that verse 31 (second person verb “prophecy”) is again referring to the brethren as a whole, and is basically teaching that following these regulations would give an opportunity for all to prophesy, which all should covet to do (verse 39).**

“LET THEM ASK THEIR HUSBANDS AT HOME”

Some quote from verse 35 “let them ask their husbands at home,” as further evidence only the prophets’ wives are being referenced. The reasoning is that the passage is only talking to women who had husbands, therefore it must not be a general admonition. But the phrase, “let them ask their husbands at home,” does not prove all of the women under consideration had husbands, but only that they did as a general rule. For example, if you were teaching a women’s Bible class consisting of 90% married women and 10% single women, you could ask them to ask their husbands a question at home, even though some of them did not have husbands. You would not be excluding the single women. Those who make this argument on “husbands” probably understand the word “home” here in exactly the same way I understand “husbands.” It is not that the “home” is the only place that the women can ask a question, but that it is typically the place the question would be asked.

VERSE 35 GENERALIZES THE REGULATION TO ALL WOMEN

Having said all that, let me emphasize that even if I am wrong about who the “your women” of verse 34 are, that is, even if

“your women” does refer only to the prophet’s wives, **1 Cor. 14:34-35** would still apply to women today because verse 35 generalizes the passage to all women, then and now. Whoever the “your women” of verse 34 are, whether they are the Corinthian women as a whole or just the prophet’s wives, verse 35 says it is wrong for that group to speak because “it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” In other words, it is wrong for the Corinthian women (or the prophet’s wives) to speak in the assembly because it is wrong for women in general (all women everywhere) to speak in the church. And this would certainly apply to women today!

CONCLUSION

When Paul taught in **1 Cor. 13** there would come a time when the miraculous gifts would cease, he did not say that the regulations about women speaking in the assembly would also cease. Yes, **1 Cor. 14:34-35** does rightfully apply today to the modern assembly and we should preach it that way unashamed!

SWORD SWIPES

“Shun profane and vain babblings” (2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV)

Considering the suffering that our Lord endured for us on His cross (Matt. 27:27-56), we should never think anything God expects of us while carrying our own crosses “just doesn’t seem fair.”

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).

(DTS)

The Problems with Disregarding 1 Cor. 11:2-16

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1 Corinthians 11:2-16 teaches women, when praying or prophesying, must do so with their heads artificially covered (“veiled” - RSV), while the opposite requirement is established for men. Much debate and controversy has occurred due to disagreements on what this passage teaches and whether or not these requirements apply today. I affirm that the commands regarding the artificial covering (as well as the natural covering) do, in fact, still apply today, because if we disregard the truths this passage teaches, then we must also make the following conclusions for the sake of consistency.

We must ignore the principle of headship (**1 Cor. 11:3-5a**), which means we must also throw out what Paul said in regards to the family dynamic in **Eph. 5:22-29**. If man being the head of woman does not necessitate that women cover their heads when they pray or prophesy, then neither does it necessitate women submit to their husbands, as **Eph. 5:22-24** requires.

We must ignore the order of creation (**1 Cor. 11:8-9**), meaning we also must not bind **1 Tim. 2:11-12**, which requires women to be in subjection to men by not usurping authority over them. Women exercising authority over men is condemned for the same reason the artificial covering is required for women. It is inconsistent to accept **1 Tim. 2:11-12** while ignoring **1 Cor. 11:8-9**. Similarly, we must also throw out **1 Cor. 14:34-35**, which requires women to be in complete silence during the whole church assembly, because God says it is “shameful” for her to speak in church. Shame is the same consequence of women not covering their heads

when they pray or prophesy due to it being one and the same as shaving their heads (**1 Cor. 11:6**). If it is not shameful for women to uncover their heads when praying, then it is not shameful for them to speak in church.

We must ignore what nature teaches (**1 Cor. 11:14-15**), meaning we must also throw out what nature teaches about homosexuality (**Rom. 1:26-27**). The next time a person who disregards the covering is tempted to use the line of “the plumbing doesn’t fit” when trying to explain how God’s natural revelation (the human body in this case) shows homosexuality goes against what God authorizes, just remember the inconsistency in using that line while ignoring what nature teaches about men and women’s natural coverings, which are exemplified by their artificial coverings (or lack thereof in the case of men) when they pray or prophesy.

If we conclude the covering instructions do not apply since prophecy is a gift of inspiration Christians do not possess today, we also must throw out **Acts 20:7** for the same reason, which teaches us the only authorized day to partake of the Lord’s Supper each week. Furthermore, we must throw out all other commands/approved examples where spiritual gifts are used. Similarly, if we conclude the covering instructions do not apply since it was just a “tradition,” then we must also throw out every single word of the New Testament not in “red letters” because the apostles taught their “traditions” by “word” and “epistle” (**2 Thess. 2:15**). The New Testament just got really small, didn’t it?

See the problems with disregarding what 1 Cor. 11:2-16 teaches?

“Only In the Lord”

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I recently received a question from one of our readers regarding the application of the apostle Paul’s instructions about marriage options for widows, specifically asking if the same should be expected of widowers. Paul writes, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to marry whom she will, only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Paul then gives his personal judgment that she would be happier if she remained unmarried (v.40)

The key to understanding what is expected of a widow who wants to marry is to figure out what is meant in this passage by the phrase “only in the Lord.” In order to determine what the word “only” indicates, we must first determine what the phrase “in the Lord” means in this passage. This is not easy since the phrase is used more than 100 times in the New Testament but does not always have the same meaning. The translators of the NIV tried to settle the issue for us by wording it “but he must belong to the Lord,” and the NET followed suit with “only someone in the Lord.” However, these are interpretations rather than translations.

There are three differing interpretations among Bible believers as to what is expected of a widow wants to marry:

1. The phrase “in the Lord” is equivalent to “in Christ.” So, if she wishes to marry, she must choose a man who is a Christian.
2. The phrase “in the Lord” means “in accord with the Lord’s will,” so she is free

to marry whom she wishes as long as both he and she have a right to marry.

3. The instruction is limited to the “present distress” and is no longer applicable.

I will not try to keep you in suspense as to my conclusion - I believe Paul is answering some specific questions that he received in a letter from the Corinthian brothers (7:1). His answers included instructing a widow who wants to marry to do so only if the one she wishes to marry is a Christian. If my conclusion is correct, I see no reason why he would have answered differently if the question had been asked about a widower. Let me comment on the other proposed interpretations.

A common argument for “only in the Lord” meaning in accord with God’s will is an appeal to similar wording in other of Paul’s writing, especially his instruction to children to “obey their parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). The most common interpretation is that he was telling children to obey their parents as long as what is demanded is in accord with God’s will. However, consider that Paul was writing to Christians to Ephesus where the letter was most likely read in their assemblies where children would be admonished to obey their parents who, as Christians, could be trusted to command what was right.

Another example of similar wording is Paul’s admonition to wives to “submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Col. 3:18). This might be telling wives that obey-

ing their husbands is “fitting” for one who is in Christ.

I readily admit that children should obey their parents and wives should obey their husbands only so long as what is required is according to God’s will. This could be what Paul meant, but it is not the only plausible conclusion. There are many examples of the phrase “*in the Lord*” clearly referring to those “in Christ.” In this very context Paul writes, “*For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman.*” In the last chapter of Romans, Paul uses phrases “*in the Lord*” and “in Christ” interchangeably. Note the following: “*Greet Priscilla and Aquilla, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus*” (16:3); “*Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who were in Christ before me*” (v.7); “*Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord*” (v.8); “*Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ*” (v.9); “*Greet Appelles, approved in the Lord.*” There are more - check out **verses 11-13**.

The “*present distress*” was Paul’s reason for advising Christians to “*remain as he is*” (1 Cor. 7:25ff). It may be that Paul’s “*judgment*” stated in **verse 40** is due to the distress at the time, but it does not necessarily follow that “*only in the Lord*” was specified for that reason.

It is my conviction that any faithful Christian (whether a widow, widower, or otherwise single) would want to marry a Christian and this is consistent with God’s expectation throughout all generations. The Old Testament, though not a law for us, is our “*tutor*” (Gal. 3:24), and God’s attitude toward His people marrying outside of His people is evident.

The apostle Paul was a single man (by choice), but he made it clear that he had the “*right to lead about a believing wife*” (1 Cor. 9:5). It is significant to me that the Holy

Spirit included the word “*believing*” regarding Paul’s right.

The marriage relationship is the most intimate relationship between two people. The wife is a man’s suitable “*helper*” (Gen. 2:15) in ways more than just physically. The Christian should choose someone who will “help” him/her go to heaven. The unbeliever is headed in a different direction than the faithful Christian. Even if you disagree with my conclusion, I would hope that we could all agree that godly wisdom should motivate a Christian to choose a mate with the same goal - eternal life. So I leave you with the admonition of the apostle Paul: “*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:15-16).

ILLUSTRATIONS

**“He did not tell them anything without illustrating it with a story”
(Matt. 13:34b, GW)**

Drop a pebble into a pool of water and you will be amazed at the ripple effect from such a small rock creating waves. Our daily actions have the same effect. We can choose to do good and it may positively impact others in ways we could never imagine (see Ruth 2:1-10, 4:1-22; Matt. 1:1-6). Or we can choose evil and it may have an equally negative impact on others we might not realize (see Gen. 2:16-17, 3:6,16-19). Although the effects may not be directly visible to us, our choices impact those around us. What kind of “waves” are you choosing to send out this day?

(DTS)

Necessary Conclusions from Matt. 5:32

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PUBLISHED AT [HTTP://WWW.MENTALDIVORCE.COM](http://www.mentaldivorce.com)

Matt. 5:32: *“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 that is divorced committeth ADULTERY.”*

1. Man has the capability to “put away” his wife for a cause other than fornication, just as he has the capacity to commit any other sin.
2. Since man’s sinful act of putting away in this case is indisputably unapproved, the Lord’s reference to “put away” includes divorce in which the two parties are still divinely obligated to one another (**Rom. 7:2-3**).
3. To wrongfully “put away” is designated in scripture by the selfsame verb of action that denotes putting away for fornication. Thus, the procedure which any particular society recognizes as divorce is the process whereby both authorized and unapproved divorces are finalized.
4. When man perpetrates a wrongful putting away against his innocent wife, “it causeth her to commit adultery.” Why? The “one flesh” relationship is no more (**Matt. 19:3-6; Mark 10:2-9; 1 Cor. 7:2-5, 10-11**).
5. Since the man’s sinful putting away is the factor that “causeth her to commit adultery,” it is evident that the wife who the Lord said “is divorced” in this instance was “innocent” of fornication at the time she was put away (**Matt. 19:9b; Luke 16:18b**).
6. God recognizes the act which man perpetrates against his innocent mate, even when the action is taken against His will and in contempt of the divine obligation. Jesus calls that action “put away” and identifies the recipient of that action as “divorced.” Who will deny the Lord’s words and say that she “is” not “divorced” (**Rom. 3:4**)?
7. The Lord made a distinction between the one who puts away his marriage companion and the one who “is put away,” differentiating them in two separate, complete phrases connected by the word “and.” Obviously, they are not the same! It clearly matters who puts away whom!
8. The divine pronouncement of “adultery” is clearly applied to the put away person who the Lord says “is divorced” when they remarry (**Matt. 5:32b**). The inference is clear - this remarriage refers to another while their obligated (bound) mate “liveth” (**Rom. 7:2-3**).
9. Because scripture teaches that the one who wrongfully divorces his mate “causes her to commit adultery,” the necessary conclusion is that if a put away person is to avoid adultery, she must “remain unmarried” or “be reconciled” to her obligated partner (**1 Cor. 7:10-11; Matt. 19:11-12**), for “so long as he liveth” (**Rom. 7:2-3**).
10. To contend that a person who “is (already) divorced” (separated) can later “put away” for the cause of post-divorce fornication is to advocate a second putting asunder of what is already separated. Nowhere in scripture is such a concept revealed.

Interracial Marriage

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Racism is a sin dividing the human family, blotting out the fact that man was created in the image of God (**Gen. 1:27**) and violating the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of our God and Father in Heaven. Racism is a sin that says some humans are inherently superior and others inferior due to the color of one's skin. The sin of racism mocks the very words of our Lord, who commanded, "*Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*" (**Matt. 7:12**). Not only does the sin of racism disregard the words of Jesus, but it is also a denial of the truth of the dignity each human is provided by God since the creation. Racism is a work of the flesh. No person should be favored or discriminated against due to the color of his skin because God Himself does not discriminate in such a manner.

God's love is unconditional (in a sense) in that we, though we separate ourselves from God through sin and disobedience, He continues to love us. Paul explains, "*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*" (**Rom. 5:8**). Now, of course, this truth must not be contorted to presume that God's goodness allows us to continue in that which separates us from Him, but, instead, is meant to draw us to Him through repentance (**2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4**). God's love is very conditional in this regard. Yet, if we are to exemplify God and Jesus in our lives as we are commanded (**Matt. 5:48; Eph. 5:1-2**), then we too must love people in the unconditional way that God loves, that is without respecter of persons.

Paul plainly states, "*There is no partiality with God*" (**Rom. 2:11**). Peter needed to be reminded of this fact in **Acts 10**. The Lord appeared to Peter in a vision helping him understand the same truth that Paul taught in **Rom. 10:34**, which is "*God does not show favoritism*" (**NIV**). Unfortunately, Peter needed to be reminded a second time that "*God shows personal favoritism to no man*" when he played the hypocrite in front of Paul (**Gal. 2:6**), treating Gentiles differently than he treated Jews (**Gal. 2:11-21**). Peter would have done well to heed the advice of the wise man in **Prov. 24:23**. There, we learn, "*These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment.*" In our modern society, although discrimination based on race, nationality, language, etc. is less prevalent now than in years past (**there is, however, certainly still much work left to do**), racism - specifically through the form of negative perceptions concerning interracial marriage - still very much exists today, even within the church.

Those who claim the Bible supports the disapproval of interracial marriage often point to a command given to the Israelites under the Law of Moses. In **Deut. 7:3-4**, we read, "*You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.*" Of course, the first flaw in this argument is the fact that Christians are not under the Law of Moses today. That

law became “*obsolete*” (**Heb. 8:13**) the moment Christ died on the cross (**Col. 2:13-14**). If a Christian so much as attempts to bind one single law from the Law of Moses, we lose our salvation - Christ becomes of no profit to us (**Gal. 5:1-4**). Additionally, using **Deut. 7:3-4** as a proof text to support the scriptures not authorizing interracial marriage is flawed for the very simple fact that the command had nothing to do with God’s people marrying someone whose skin was a different color.

Under the Law of Moses, God imposed the restriction for His people to not marry foreign people to prevent them from succumbing to temptations of idolatry. Let us examine **Deut. 7:3-4** once more so this truth is clear: “*You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.*” Additionally, **Neh. 13:23-26** makes this truth of the matter even more obvious. Nehemiah asks in **v.26**, “*Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin.*” God required His people to be separate from the sinful nations around them in order to keep them from being corrupted by the pagan people’s evil practices. It, indeed, has always been true that “*evil company corrupts good habits*” (**1 Cor. 15:33**). Furthermore, we can see some of the specific groups of people whom God forbade the Jews from marrying specified in **Ezra 9:1**. Every group listed are all dark-skinned nations similar to the Jews. Thus, it is made more obvious that the reason God condemned intermarriage between

His people and the other nations had nothing to do with skin color.

There is no single scripture in the Bible that supports the belief that God does not authorize interracial marriages. The only possible way a Christian may try to use passages such as **Deut. 7:3-4** to teach God’s truth is to illustrate the point that Christians must not marry non-Christians since that relationship qualifies as an “*unequal yoking*” and God has always expected His people to “*come out from among*” the world and “*be separate*” (**2 Cor. 6:14-18**). There is likely no greater example in scripture illustrating the danger of unequal yokings than Solomon (see again **Neh. 13:23-26**). However, it is not plausible nor is it of sound doctrine for New Testament Christians to use any of these verses to attempt to prove the false notion that God has not authorized interracial marriages. There is not one single New Testament passage forbidding people from marrying outside their race.

No matter the justification for a Christian having negative attitudes toward people in interracial marriages, the Proverbial writer said it correctly: “*The Lord is the maker of [us] all*” (**Prov. 22:2**). As people striving to live up to our calling as children of our maker and God, we must remember what Peter told Cornelius and his family when he concluded, “*You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean*” (**Acts 10:28**). We know the scriptures say, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ*” (**Gal. 3:28**), and we know we are all one TO Christ (**NOTE: Please do not misuse my statement to argue men and women, slaves/bondservants [employees] and mas-**

ters [employers], etc. do not have different responsibilities as individual Christians because the New Testament teaches the opposite]). We know we are all one to Christ because He died for the entire world, not just white people, black people, men, women, etc.; He died for all (**John 3:16**). Since God loved all of mankind enough to send His Son to die for every person, isn't it incredibly hypocritical for a Christian to look down upon a person for being in an interracial relationship since we are expected to love as God loves? Remember what Jesus commanded the night He was betrayed: "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (**John 13:34-35**). How can we possibly say we love as Christ loves when we look down on a person and their relationships due to the color of a person's skin? The answer, obviously, is we cannot say we love as Christ loves.

The New Testament repeatedly celebrates the fact that Jesus's redemptive sacrifice has united people of all races, languages, financial circumstances, social statuses, etc. by providing every person with the opportunity to be redeemed from our sins and enter into His church, purchased with His shed blood (**Acts 20:28**). Possibly no passage of scripture more perfectly illustrates this truth than **Eph. 2:11-22**. Here, Paul indicates Christians of all races and ethnicities have been made heirs of the covenant promises of God, being brought together into one singular body with true believers the world-over, all united by faith, obedience, and service to God. Those "*who once were far off*" (all non-Jews) have the opportunity to be "*brought near by the blood of Christ*" (**Eph. 2:13**). Through Christ, all have access to God by the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 2:18**). Racism - in whatever

form it manifests itself - denies these simple, basic, and foundational truths of the gospel.

To classify interracial marriage as unauthorized by God or to view those in such relationships in a negative light is to deny one of the greatest accomplishments of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is a contradiction of what the gospel message is meant to do in reconciling all believers "*to God in one body through the cross*" (**Eph. 2:16**). Racism in the church, or even indifference to it, must be eradicated. Remember, even if we recognize the truth on this subject but choose to just "go along to get along" with brethren who are in error on this point or any other point, we can be guilty of partaking in another man's sins (**2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 5:22; Eph. 5:6-7**). If we ever have negative perceptions toward any person due to race or them being in interracial marriages, we must repent. God's word is right (**Psalms 119:160**), so let us all accept what our Lord has said on this matter.

Did You Know?

In **Rom. 1:28-32**, there is a long list of sins described which God views as those practicing and condoning "*such things are worthy of death*" (v.32). Did you know that sins like backbiting and gossiping are on the same level as murder? Likewise, being a "*covenant-breaker*" (ASV) is on par with being a "*hater of God*" (NKJV). Simply being "*undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, [and] unmerciful*" all are worthy of death. Truly, there is nothing minor or insignificant about even the "*smallest*" of sins.

(DTS)

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).

“Repent Ye Therefore”

CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR.

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Repentance - a commandment of God, an obligation of man, but at the same time a wonderful privilege extended by God, to man. What if, after committing sin, there were no chance for repentance? Since sin cannot enter heaven, all who ever sinned (and "*all have sinned*") would surely stand condemned before God in the judgment, and be shut out of heaven. Therefore, whatever else we might say on the subject, repentance is an expression of the longsuffering mercy of God. The Jewish disciples were thankful that God had "*granted*" repentance unto the Gentiles (**Acts 11:18**). So, when we come to think of repentance as a burdensome obligation, we should remember that without it all are doomed! And that it therefore is one of the manifold blessings of God.

But, what is repentance? As is most often true, instead of giving us a dictionary-like definition, inspiration gives us a number of illustrations of such. One of these is found in **Matthew 21:8ff**. Here Jesus, in showing his disciples the meaning of this commandment, without obedience to which all would perish, says that a man had two sons who were ordered to go work in his vineyard. One said he would, but did not. The other said he would not, but later "*repented and went*." It is easily seen here that repentance is a complete change of mind. This is seen also on the part of God concerning His creation of man, when we are told that "*it re-*

pented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth" (**Gen. 6:6**). God had changed his mind about man, and had Noah not found favor in His sight, He might have brought an end to the human race then.

Repentance can only be brought about by godly sorrow, which in turn must be produced by genuine faith. One of the many erroneous ideas concerning repentance is the confusing of godly sorrows, or any other kind of sorrow, with repentance. Sorrow, even godly sorrow, is not repentance, but if it be of a godly sort, will lead to repentance. (**2 Corinthians 7:10**.) A person might simply conclude that it is wise, because of social reasons, for business purposes, or even for fear of the "powers that be," to change his way of living. This is not a result of "*godly*" sorrow, and therefore is not the results of Bible repentance. On the other hand, one might be genuinely sorry, with sorrow of a godly sort, and yet be short of repentance. We see then that since godly sorrow worketh repentance, it is not repentance itself. And, since godly sorrow worketh repentance, the changes brought about in one's life because of some other motive, are not the results of repentance.

Repentance, as faith, can only be proven to be a reality by practical evidences. Just as James shows that saving faith is only that which is shown by works, so John the baptizer demanded of those who came

for his baptism, in pretense, that they “bring forth fruits meet for [as evidence of - C.G.M.] repentance” (**Matt. 3:8**). Until there was practical evidence of such, John would not believe that they had repented, which they must do in order to be fit subjects for baptism. Genuine repentance will lead one, first of all, to frankly admit having been wrong. One who will not admit guilt of sins has surely not come to repentance. A penitent individual will also repudiate every former practice found to be out of harmony with the will of God. The individual who continues to practice old sins, has obviously not repented, no matter how much he might say so.

Repentance is UNTO LIFE (**Acts 11:18**). Man, short of repentance, is “dead in trespasses and sins,” and there can be no spiritual life short of true repentance. Peter told the Jews on Pentecost, “repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins” (**Acts 2:38**). To another similar group, he said, “repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out” (**Acts 3:19**). This being so, one is still in his sins as long as he has not genuinely repented, regardless of how many religious groups he might belong to, or how pious he might seem to be.

Of course repentance is not the only command which must be obeyed in order to obtain the remission of sins, but one whose faith and godly sorrow have led him to repent, will gladly confess the blessed name of

Christ, and be buried with Him in baptism, for the remission of his sins.

Let us not conclude that repentance is demanded of the alien sinner only (seemingly many “Christians” have so concluded), for Jesus once and for all denounced that idea when he said to his own disciples, “I tell you nay: but except YE repent, YE shall all likewise perish” (**Luke 13:3**). Indeed God does command “that all men everywhere repent” (**Acts 17:30**), whether it be one out of, or in covenant relations with Him. Peter told Simon, who had obeyed the gospel, as the others of Samaria had done, to “repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart be forgiven thee” (**Acts 8:22**). In the letters to the seven churches of Asia, the Lord, over and over calls upon them to repent (**Rev. 2-3**). As then, so today, there needs to be much repenting done by many members of the Lord’s church.

The impenitent heart is always abominable in the sight of the Lord, regardless of by whom it might be possessed. While on the other hand, God has always respected the penitent and contrite heart. Christ suffered on the cross that “repentance and remission of sins” might be preached in His name (**Luke 24:47**). God desires that all come to repentance, and continues his longsuffering for that very purpose (**2 Pet. 3:9**). Therefore, good reader, in the words of the Lord to the church of the Laodiceans, “be zealous therefore, and repent.”

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Charles Maples preached the gospel for more than 70 years before passing away one month before his 101st birthday in May 2021. Brother Maples was instrumental in my growth as a young Christian. He baptized me into the Lord’s church in May 2012. My grandfather affectionately referred to him as our “ol’ preacher.” This particular article is one that is needed just as much today as it was when brother Maples originally penned it in 1959. Many years have passed, but the truth, and our need to comply with it, has not changed.

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**“BUT WHEN THEY BELIEVED PHILIP AS HE PREACHED GOOD NEWS
ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST,
THEY WERE BAPTIZED, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.”**

ACTS 8:12, ESV

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