

*“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5:32)*

Today we are going to make an examination of the issue of adultery, and specifically as it relates to divorce and remarriage. If any of this doesn't make sense or I don't spend enough time on some piece, let me know.

I decided to look at this topic for a number of reasons. First, it seems to me we haven't directly addressed it in depth for a while, second, it constantly crops up in our public preachments, specifically I've been told by a number of people lately in various ways and places that divorce and remarriage isn't REALLY adultery (most recently from our good friend and always a good source for angst and wonder Pope Francis, who basically told the Catholic hierarchy recently to look the other way from divorced and remarried people, and let “God work out the details”), and finally, there are a lot of young folks in this body who need a clear understanding of these matters, so it's always good to bring them back to the forefront of our discussions.

Let us first establish that adultery is indeed a deeply pernicious sin that is a great offense to God, not “just how it is today” or something equivalent to a so-called “little white lie”. Adultery is a grave sin against God, both physical and spiritual adultery, as we will see.

Adultery was explicitly forbidden under the moral law. I distinguish this here because I want it to be clear this is not a cultural anachronism. The *laissez faire* viewpoint our generation takes toward adultery is neither novel nor new. Adultery has existed since the fall if you look at Adam and Eve's rebellion in the proper light. Moses codified that adultery was forbidden in the judicial construct of Israel not just a moral dictate when he wrote

*“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Exodus 20:14)*

I say again that the idea of fidelity and loyalty to your spouse is not a new or unique issue introduced by the Mosaic code – it is not just some seemingly arbitrary restriction on behavior, the way the world views, for example, the dietary law against eating shrimp. It is a moral law. It is frequently referred to as a Noachide law, or the moral laws that governed men before Mount Sinai. It is one of those laws that is written on our hearts. This was solidly established in the garden of Eden at the creation:

*“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)*

The word cleave here is the key. It is Strong's 1692, daw-bak' and means to cling or adhere – in its most literal sense – to impinge. Don't know what impinge means? It means to affect, touch, influence, impact, or encroach. The sense is a loyalty, fidelity and togetherness so strong it cannot be torn apart. If you look at verse 23, it is a

completion of the idea Adam first expresses as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”. It is more than just that a man’s wife is a piece of him, his flesh and bones, one body because God took that piece of Adam to form Eve. There is an active and willful joining together of himself to her that Adam is expressing and declares forevermore – that a man leaves his father and mother to cleave to his wife, and he does so in the eyes of God. He commits himself and makes her a part of him and he a part of her, inseparable and forever joined.

You can get more of this sense if you look at where else the word cleave is used.

*“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”* (Deuteronomy 10:20)

This idea goes hand in hand with not serving idols or false gods. We are to adhere ourselves to God so strongly that no other god can enter into our hearts or minds, regardless of what they tempt us with.

*“The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.”* (2 Kings 5:27)

Naaman had no hope of ever parting his body from the raging effects of leprosy or the stigma of it. It was forever bound to him and his bloodline. Nothing could be done to separate that disease from him.

*“His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are **joined** one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered.”* (Job 41:15-17)

This is the LORD describing Leviathan to Job as He answers him out of the whirlwind, and I think does an eloquent job of describing the physical nature of this idea of cleaving. The word is translated here “joined”, but it means the same thing. “One is so near to another that no air can come between them”. That is a powerful image right there. Two things so close together that no air can get between them. How often do we find ourselves working on a project where we tear something apart, and on the outside it looked like the two pieces of a board or metal were tightly compressed together, only to find corrosion or rot in the middle? For no air to get between two of anything means they are in effect one thing, whatever that thing is. There is no molecular or atomic gap, as it were, between the two pieces. That’s some serious cleaving to one another right there.

I remind you, this is the same word as in Genesis 2, and so this language should conjure up in your mind the same kind of eloquent imagery about a man and his wife. A man and his wife have from the beginning of the human experiment been inseparable. They should be so close to one another in how they interact, treat one another, and present to the world that there is as though there is no air between them.

They are established by God as one flesh, one unit, one tightly coupled entity that cannot be divided or sundered by any other than God.

Adultery works to tear apart one flesh and make it again into two. That is the violence that adultery, including that via divorce and remarriage, creates. Think about what it would take to rip off your own arm. The extreme violence that would be required to tear off even your own pinky finger is tremendous. It requires the mental violence of hating your own flesh enough to tear it off, declaring that there is no longer any value in this piece of your body, as well as the physical violence and strength to accomplish the task.

If you look to sunder that which God has put together via adultery or divorce, you're doing the same thing – tearing off a part of your body because you have despised it and been thankless for that which you have been given. It clearly says “and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Husbands, your wives are your flesh. Wives, your husbands are your flesh. Ripping that apart is a grave sin, and requires rebellion of an extreme level to attempt. To attempt to undo that which God has done is blasphemous, prideful, thankless and generally refuses to acknowledge God's sovereignty. Now I contend that Scripture teaches you cannot actually tear asunder that which God has joined but to even attempt it is a grave sin. While adultery is a dark hearted violence committed against your own flesh, you cannot tear it apart – you don't have the power.

For my proof text I turn to Matthew 19:6

*“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:6)

How many false preachers have quoted that second sentence in their marriage ceremonies? Just thinking about that makes me want to vomit. It's shameful the fast and loose way these supposed defenders of truth have treated this institution of God. They marry them on Saturday, and then “counsel” them on Monday about their “irreconcilable differences”. It's shameful.

But let us focus on the phrase “let not man put asunder”, which most people treat as though it's some kind of moderate suggestion not to divorce your wife, and they use the context to argue it's only suggesting against divorce. In my study of this, I am convinced that the word ‘let’ is not there. The word translated ‘let not’ is 3361 in Strong's, and can also be translated ‘God forbid’. It would better be translated ‘God forbid man put asunder’ or ‘man cannot put asunder’. In other words, this is not a passing suggestion but an absolute commandment that man not try to sunder this union of marriage that God has assembled.

Let us all agree then that marriage is not a human institution, which the phrase “what therefore God hath joined” ought to conclusively prove to each and every one of you.

Marriage is not a legal construct created by men to accommodate cohabitation between two people (and certainly not the cohabitation of two men or two women together). It is not a social contract. It is not a tax evasion strategy. This thing that modern governments call marriage – where they issue a piece of paper with a couple of people’s names on it with some witness signatures – it is not marriage in the Biblical sense. Man’s legal concept of marriage was perhaps at one time modeled after God’s institution, but it is not the joining together and cleaving of a man and a woman together as one flesh if, when you think you made a bad choice, you can sunder it by putting the paper through a document shredder.

So let us also then agree that once you’ve put that human piece of paper through the shredder, the next time you lie and promise ‘until death do you part’ – that is not God joining a man and woman together as one flesh. A second marriage is not that man cleaving to his wife, he has not left father and mother to do so (since he already left them), and it is a giant bald-faced lie. So that second or third or fourth or fifth or nth marriage, in the eyes of God and the angels, is not a marriage. The only marriage God recognizes is that first marriage. It is supremely irrelevant whether men say it is a marriage. What matters is what God says on this matter, because, as we’ve already agreed, marriage is an institution invented and established by God, so His rules prevail! His rules are perfect, and marriage is a beautiful thing when entered into by two people who fear God.

On the other hand, divorce is a horrible, ugly, violent thing. Be very clear – divorce is a man-made institution. ‘What’, you say ‘Divorce is codified in the Mosaic law! That then makes it okay! Divorce is peachy in the eyes of God if it’s in the law!’

Why yes, yes it is found in the law, and here’s where it is spoken to:

*“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.”*  
(Deuteronomy 24:1)

But that doesn’t 1) give *carte blanche* approval for divorce, or 2) mean it is of God’s invention. Look closely at this law of divorcement. Where is it found? Not in Leviticus, but in Deuteronomy. Gill’s preface to his commentary on Deuteronomy explains the significance pretty well, I think. He says

*“This book is sometimes called "Elleh hadebarim", from the words with which it begins; and sometimes by the Jews "Mishneh Torah", the repetition of the law; and so in the Syriac version, with which agrees the Arabic title of it; and when the Greeks, and we after them, call it "Deuteronomy", it is not to be understood of a second, a new, or another law, but of the law formerly delivered, but now repeated, and also more largely explained; to which are likewise added several particular laws, instructions, and*

*directions; all which were necessary, on account of the people of Israel, who were now a new generation, that either were not born, or not at an age to hear and understand the law when given on Mount Sinai; the men that heard it there being all dead, excepting a very few; and these people were also now about to enter into the land of Canaan, which they were to enjoy as long as they kept the law of God, and no longer, and therefore it was proper they should be reminded of it; and besides, Moses was now about to leave them, and having an hearty desire after their welfare, spends the little time he had to be with them, by inculcating into them and impressing on them the laws of God, and in opening and explaining them to them, and enforcing them on them, which were to be the rule of their obedience, and on which their civil happiness depended.”*

I draw your attention to the phrase “*to which are likewise added several particular laws, instructions, and directions*”, which I use to highlight this passage:

*“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”*  
(Matthew 19:7-8)

The law as laid out in Leviticus was established from the beginning, it wasn't something new that was just made up on the spot as God spoke with Moses. Put another way, there is nothing in the moral law of Moses that wasn't laid down and made clear with Adam in the garden of Eden. From the beginning, there was no such thing as divorce, and certainly no such thing as divorce and remarriage. From the beginning there was only one man and one woman for life.

Moses created the law of divorcement “because of the hardness” of the hearts of the rebellious Jews toward their wives. Again from Gill's comments on Matthew 19:8:

*“it [the bill of divorcement] was only a sufferance, a permission in some cases, and not in everyone; and that because of the hardness of their hearts; they being such a stubborn and inflexible people, that when they were once displeased there was no reconciling them; and so malicious and revengeful, that if this had not been granted, would have used their wives, that displeased them, in a most cruel, and barbarous manner, if not have murdered them: so that this grant was made, not to indulge their lusts, but to prevent greater evils; and not so much as a privilege and liberty to the men, as in favour of the women;”*

What Gill misses here is the connection to Malachi 2, which serves to put a finer point on the idea that divorce is a declaration and creation of men, not of God as a positive and allowable action:

*“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.” (Malachi 2:16)*

Here we see clearly that the putting away or divorcing of your wife or husband is an attempt to cover the bloody and violent action committed when you attempt to sunder that which God has put together and declared NOT to take apart.

In case you're not following the dots with me, I'm going to pause to connect them directly. If you are married, and you engage in sexual concourse with another person, or you engage in said concourse with a married person when you're single, that's adultery. Being divorced under the law of man doesn't change that. If you divorce your wife or your husband and you go sleep with someone else, even though you've got a freshly signed "divorce decree" and/or "marriage certificate", you're committing adultery. You cannot insert air between those two who are one flesh, and some tacky piece of paper doesn't change the laws of God on the matter. Once married, married until death. How simple is that?

Don't think I have this right? Perhaps you should more closely consider this scripture again from Matthew 5

*“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 that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Matthew 5:31-32)*

And this one, where Jesus says essentially the same thing, but instead of it being a part of His general sermon, this is in direct response to an argument the Pharisees set before Him, and He spends time expounding it further to His disciples:

*“And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” (Mark 10:11-12)*

This was clearly an important matter in the preaching of Christ, and men would do well not to be so cavalier in their treatment of it! He directly lays it out that divorce and remarriage is adultery!

But wait, what about Paul's treatment of the marriage of believers and unbelievers? Doesn't he lay out that divorce and remarriage is acceptable in that case?

No, he does not. Let's look at the text:

*“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the*

*Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:10-15)*

Where those who use this to justify divorce and remarriage focus is on this phrase – “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases”. “See”, they say, “Paul says we aren’t under bondage!”

Well, friend, if you consider your marriage bondage, there is your first fundamental problem. That’s also the first clue that divorce isn’t what Paul is talking about here. I don’t find a single verse in the Bible that refers to marriage as bondage. If I’ve missed something, I’d be happy to be corrected, but I think that’s an important point here. Marriage is a joining, a cleaving of one to another. That is not the same as bondage. Bondage is forced servitude. Marriage is a blessed union of two souls to be help meet for one another.

The situation of a believer and unbeliever can be a difficult one, especially if the unbeliever cannot see past their own selfish ways or the believer cannot accept the crook in their lot of having an unbelieving spouse. But that little difficulty doesn’t absolve a person from their duty to their own flesh, and in fact may present a heightened need to focus on how to help the unbeliever. What Paul is exhorting us to here is to first, live peaceably if at all possible, and secondly, understand there is no obligation to **put** that unbelieving person into a state of bondage to keep them in the house. If they cannot abide the truth, there is nothing you can do for them, and you should not try to hold them hostage, as it were, with some sort of bondage or obligation. If they can’t live peaceably, let them go, and understand you are not under obligation to chase them down. At no point here does Paul even HINT that you then have the right to go file for divorce, much less marry someone else.

Remember that under the Levitical code, adultery was very, very serious business:

*“And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:10)*

Note here that both the man and the woman are called out as being bound for death; there is no ambiguity here, there is no mercy afforded, there is no finger pointing or one being more at fault than another. It takes two to tango as they say. If a man and woman were discovered in an adulterous relationship, they were to be put to death. I have had people argue from some warped understanding of the law of jealousy (see

Numbers 5) that adultery is primarily only something women can be convicted of, since many men in Scripture had multiple wives (Abraham, David, Jacob, etc.), and the law of jealousy only allows for the woman to be brought forth and tried if she is suspected of adultery. They primarily argue from either a complete misunderstanding or a willful wresting of verse 31 in Numbers 5, which says

*“Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.”*

They argue that the verse means the man with whom the woman has arguably committed adultery is guiltless. Of course that’s balderdash. The man in this verse is the woman’s husband. The point being that if a husband is stricken with suspicion and jealousy that his wife has committed adultery and takes this remedy, rather than hating his own flesh and building resentment, anger, and hatred toward her in his heart, whether she is guilty or not, he has committed no sin in his jealousy. If, on the other hand, he holds that suspicion in his heart and does NOT act according to the law, but takes some other course of action, he HAS committed a sin and is guilty of not properly guiding his wife toward repentance and dealing with his house.

This kind of argument is specious and demonstrates a complete inability to understand simple English, much less Scripture. By their logic, men can basically do whatever they want in regard to their wives and it’s perfectly okay because the Patriarchs did it, and this passage condones it. It also demonstrates the lengths to which men will go to in order to justify their sins and make the Bible seem confusing or complex in its dealings with simple matters.

Let’s be clear about the core of this argument – “the Patriarchs did it so why can’t we”. The Patriarchs doing a thing doesn’t make that thing okay; it doesn’t excuse it in the least. David committed cold blooded murder in his lust-driven desire to have Bathsheba and try to cover up his adultery. That isn’t okay. The adultery wasn’t okay, and the murder wasn’t okay. You can’t look at that event and draw any other conclusion unless you’re trying to cover up or excuse some darkness in yourself. What David did on all accounts was wrong, and the Lord rewarded him for it pretty severely. Don’t use someone else’s bad behavior to justify your own.

Adultery is soul damning stuff. Literally –

*“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.”* (Proverbs 6:32)

That word “destroyeth” means just what you probably think it means – eternal destruction and punishment. You commit adultery, without repentance, you go to hell. If you won’t acknowledge that sleeping with the woman you call your third wife is really living in an adulterous relationship, you’re not repentant and you’re headed for hell. It isn’t just the first time you sleep with her (or him), it’s every time. It’s every good morning kiss and everything else you do with that person who is not your spouse.

Every day you live in that relationship you're renewing that sin, and you cannot say you are repentant until you leave that sin. This is really simple and doesn't need to be complicated by a lot of rationalizations and legalistic mumbo jumbo. The Biblical standard is

**One man. One Woman. One lifetime. Period.**

No divorce. No remarriage. No polygamy. No polyandry. For the love of God no fag or dyke marriage. No animal marriage (just wait, it is undoubtedly coming). God is merciful to us and keeps these things simple for us to grasp ahold of, to cleave to.

Paul teaches us about the one thing that actually can sever or dissolve this bond:

*“So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”* (Romans 7:3)

Now this doesn't just apply to the woman, it applies equally to the man, but in the context it is more expedient to use the specific case of the woman, since Paul is making the argument that the body of Christ has removed our bond to the law of Moses and the manner of worship proscribed therein replacing it with the New Testament Church, and it is not spiritual adultery to bond ourselves (particularly believing Jews) as the bride of Christ. It is, as it were, that their first husband, the worship at the Temple, is dead, and now they are free to bond themselves to New Testament Worship. These are heavy and weighty matters and should occupy some of your thoughts from time to time.

This generation's response to these heavy ideas is to ask why adultery is such a big deal? It's not like murder or being hateful, and if you say you're sorry and make it up to your husband or wife, and they forgive you, it's all good, right?

That kind of talk says you're a blithering idiot when it comes to the significance of marriage and God's symbolism in it, and for the good of your soul, you really should stop being a blithering idiot. Is there room for forgiveness? Yes, and I'll get to that in a moment, but cavalier thinking and the talk of blithering idiocy is bad for the soul. These are serious matters and should not to be taken lightly.

I hope you understand this, but to be plain, marriage is a symbol of Christ's relationship with His church. He did not take many brides. He took one and only one.

*“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.”* (Song of Solomon 6:8-9)

There are many options, many choices that Christ could make. There are many queens, concubines and virgins that could have been chosen in the earth, but He chose His “one”, His church to be His bride. He could have chosen all churches, all religions in the earth, as those who put forth the false notion that all religions are just spokes of the same wheel. He could have chosen all of mankind to make His promise to, but as we’ve recently heard there is clear and convincing Scriptural evidence that He did not. He could have done any of an infinite number of things, but He made this bond that cannot be sundered with – and only with – His church. This bond cannot be broken, His mind cannot be changed, His bride cannot desert Him, and none of those other stately or whorish women hold so much as His least attention or any attraction for Him. There is nothing to draw Him away from His beloved or even cause Him to divert His eyes in their general direction. In His sight, there is only one choice to make, and that is His bride. He is the ever faithful, loving, kind, compassionate, caring husband.

Just as the bond between man and wife cannot be severed (least of all by a divorce decree in some wicked, corrupt, crooked court), the bond between Christ and His church cannot. Herein is great hope for all His people – both Jew and Gentile. No matter how we may play the harlot spiritually, we cannot sever this bond, this oneness. Our infidelity will not separate us from Him because He has decreed that it cannot; if we will return from our adultery, our chasing of other gods, our chasing of earthliness, He will take us back when we falter.

Jeremiah 3 tells us many things about this issue of adultery and returning from it. This is some good stuff right here, and I ask you to pay close attention to it.

*“They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest. The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with*

*stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...” (Jeremiah 3:1-14)*

Let's start with "they say". The proverbial "they". This is significant, and goes to my point earlier about Leviticus vs. Deuteronomy. "They say", and NOT "I say" or "The LORD saith", or "The voice of the Lord hath said", or anything even remotely close to these things to indicate that God said this thing and commanded it. The good old collective group of troublemakers "they" say that if a man puts away his wife and she becomes another man's wife, she cannot return to her husband. Who is the "they" here?

The "they" is the same hard-hearted Jews who brow-beat Moses into creating the law of divorcement in the first place.

*“And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 24:3-4)*

How unmerciful would a man or a woman be to not forgive their flesh and bones if they came seeking forgiveness? A man or a woman goes off and commits adultery against their spouse, and repents of it, and is genuinely sorrowful for it, and I'm supposed to tell them they can't return? What? That makes no sense in the light of God's example. Am I going to force that woman to take her adulterous husband back into her bed and forgive him? Not sure how I'd do such a thing, but I sure can't use scripture to forbid it, and I think there is argument to be made that if you find yourself in that situation, you should at least try to forgive the offending party if you believe they are actually repentant, and you call yourself one of God's people. If you find yourself on the other side of that, in a mess your lust and covetousness created, get your backside away from that other woman and do whatever it takes to make it right with the flesh of your flesh! Short of leaving the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing you shouldn't lower yourself to do to make a situation of treachery and deceit right and give her reason to forgive you. It doesn't matter if you're on wife 10, if you want to get right

with God, you're going to at least try to make it right with your actual wife, and if she won't have you, then live alone. This passage in Deuteronomy 24 is not a commandment of God not to take back your wayward wife or husband, plain and simple, it is a concession to the hardness of the Jews' hearts!

God has told us to return to Him and He will take us back from our adultery! And don't think that Jeremiah 3, since it's talking about Israel and Judah departing from their God to lust after other gods on every high hill and under every green tree; to chase after the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; to worship every other god they can find before the I AM; I say don't think that just because it speaks directly to the Jews there that it doesn't apply to Christ's church in this age as well. I assure you it does.

You think that we don't fall off the path from time to time? Do you sit in your seat there and think this body is perfect, or you yourself have never committed adultery against your God? Get over yourself. Of course we have and we all from time to time do. You want to hold yourself up as somehow different, because we haven't put some giant idol of a cross in the front of our building, or we haven't slid off into infant baptism, or built ourselves a Sunday School ministry, or gone the way of prosperity religion? You better check your thinking. That's the trap the Pharisees so horrifically fell into. They held themselves out as holy and beyond reproach. Let us avoid that pitfall, friends!

I remind you of this verse:

*"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28)

Christ clearly tells us that it doesn't take physically committing a sex act with someone who is not your wife or husband to commit adultery. The desire to do so is enough to be guilty of this vile sin. By extension then it doesn't take walking into a Catholic whore house and bowing down to a statue to commit spiritual adultery and fall into idolatry. I submit to you that every time you look longingly at some other way of life, you covet some aspect of life that isn't God's way, that every time you look to another god, including capitulating to your pride, conceit and lusts, you commit adultery in your heart toward the Bridegroom. Every single instance in our lives where we seek some easier path, some vengeful way, some direction that is not explicitly and clearly based in scripture, a way that comes from the darkness of our own wisdom and the vanity of our own pride, we are committing spiritual adultery.

Let's understand verse 28 a little more clearly. If you look at verse 27, you have Christ saying

*"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:"* (Matthew 5:27)

Now, this “Ye have heard” is very similar to “They say” in its meaning. Obviously the law says “Thou shalt not commit adultery”, so it’s not quite the same, and Christ is clearly not laying out some argument that committing adultery is only a cultural taboo or something the Pharisees made up. Christ here is clarifying a very important part of the moral law, and you’ll note that in Matthew 5 this is a sermon to a multitude of people, this passage of Scripture commonly being called the Sermon on the Mount. Christ is not here arguing some finer point, or correcting some minute error the Pharisees are making. This is a general and broad-based declaration of truth delivered by Christ as He preaches a sermon. It applies to everyone. Now, the Pharisees had developed an especially bad habit of taking a super legalistic view of the law, and it is that uber-strict, “by the book and only the words in the book” approach Christ is openly preaching against with this point.

The common teaching of the day was that unless you committed an actual physical sex act with a married man or woman, you weren’t committing adultery and therefore weren’t sinning if you just had lewd thoughts about your neighbor’s wife, for example. To put that in modern parlance, “it’s okay to look but not touch”. To see the folly of this, apply that logic to something else, like, murder. In this mode of thinking, it would be okay to plot the murder of a person as long as you don’t actually kill them. Of course that makes no sense and goes against the clear spirit of the law. The Pharisees spent a great deal of time teaching this folly, as it was self-serving and allowed them to appear pious and righteous as they wallowed in their sins.

Christ obliterates their teaching in one fell swoop. He teaches us without ambiguity that the desire to take up a sin is just as bad as the doing of it. Very simple.

This is the danger God’s people face every day. This is what we must war against and plainly declare to the world to be careful of. If we do not check ourselves every minute of every day, looking to the ways of God and how He has commanded us to conduct ourselves as His ambassadors, keeping our eyes on that strait gate, focused on our beloved Bridegroom, our eyes can be so easily diverted to chasing after the whore of Babylon. If we do not give all diligence to making our calling and election sure, to fight for the prize which we seek, we will not attain to it and instead will fall to the wide path that leads to destruction. Make no mistake about it. There are many queens, concubines, and virgins who are all very alluring, seeking to draw us away from our beloved, and their temptations are all deadly to our souls.

As I said before, though, our God provides us hope. Not hope that we should tempt Him, and treat Him as the Children of Israel did, not taking His warnings seriously, seeing their peril, closing their eyes and ears, hardening their hearts to His ways. No, let us not take this mercy for granted, but let us see it as a beacon of hope to us as sinners.

*“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you”* (Jeremiah 3:14)

He commands His adulterous people, who have chased other gods to return, for He is married to us. But look at verse 8

*“And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce”* (Jeremiah 3:8)

This provides further evidence that the bill of divorcement does not sunder the marriage bond. God Almighty, in His infinite mercy affords us a path back to Him. Here is one of the greatest and most glorious mysteries of Scripture:

*“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Ephesians 5:32)

This is why marriage, divorce, and adultery matter so much. If you cannot grasp the symbolism in it, the living, breathing example that God has provided to us to show in a real-time, living way His relationship with His church, what hope could you possibly have? The treatment of this matter is as strong an indication of where the candlestick is in the earth as possibly any other sign. Keeping this issue in front of the world’s eyes and making spiritual fidelity our constant driving force is one of our most important tasks. Remember, John Baptist died preaching just this thing.

*“For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.”* (Mark 6:17-18)

Adultery, divorce and remarriage as adultery, and spiritual adultery are not small matters. We must be diligent in our pursuit of fidelity to our Bridegroom, and stress to this generation the importance of avoiding it. In the discourse to the church at Thyatira, recall, it is adultery that draws men to their destruction

*“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”* (Revelation 2:22)

His faithful Bride will not be drawn into that bed of adultery, for His Church cannot be separated from Him

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”* (Romans 8:35)

In that, let us be humble, meek, and faithful; let us be obedient, and when we go astray, let us return in repentance to our Bridegroom that He might forgive and restore our bond to Him. Let us never forget our depravity and tendency to stray and strive to enter in at the strait gate by walking in fidelity all our days.