

## Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Sexual Immorality & the Unbelieving Spouse
- 3 Physical & Emotional Abuse
- 4 “No Valid Reason for Divorce” Perspective
- 5 Divorce That Is Sin, but Not Unforgivable
- 6 Remarriage After Divorce
- 7 Conclusion

## Introduction

Divorce has long been a difficult and controversial topic in the church. In our culture today, nearly everyone has been affected by it in one way or another. We all know someone, whether it be a family member or close friend, who has experienced the pain of a broken marriage. Or maybe you have experienced divorce first-hand. If so, I’m sure I don’t have to tell you how messy and hurtful it can be both for you and the children, if there any involved. Moreover, as a believer in Christ, I am sure you may have asked yourself more than once: “Will God still forgive me if I get a divorce or remarry? Will I still remain saved or will I lose my salvation forever?” Those

are all good and pertinent questions, especially for those believers that have already been through a divorce or are seriously planning to. First, we need to find out from the Bible which cases of divorce or remarriage are sin. Second, for those situations where divorce is clearly a sin, we must determine, again with the help of Scripture, whether that kind of sin is unforgivable and may cause believers to forfeit their eternal salvation.



## Sexual Immorality & the Unbelieving Spouse

*In Scripture, there are two definite instances in which divorce is allowed by God and not considered a sin.* The first admissible reason for divorce, depicted by Jesus in Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:9, is unfaithfulness through sexual immorality, which applies to both spouses:

Matthew 5:31-32 (NKJV)

<sup>31</sup> “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

<sup>32</sup> 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.

Matthew 19:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> 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.”

There are some spiritual leaders in the body of Christ today who contend that, based on these two passages, only sexual immorality is a valid reason for divorce. If that's the case, then apostle Paul contradicted Jesus, because in 1 Corinthians 7:15, he added a second situation in which divorce was not a sin, that of an unbelieving spouse wanting to separate:

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

<sup>13</sup> And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

<sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

<sup>15</sup> But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister *is not under bondage in such cases*. But God has called us to peace.

Later on, we will see that when Jesus said in Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:9, and Mark 10:2-12, that a man should not divorce his wife for any other reason except sexual immorality, he was actually addressing a specific hot debate of His day on divorce, that was based on Deuteronomy 24:1-2.

## Physical & Emotional Abuse

You may ask: “What about those situations of physical abuse or neglect of a spouse? What about emotional abuse or neglect of a spouse? Are any of these acceptable reasons for divorce? What does the Bible say about this?” Well, there is no easy answer to this dilemma, because the Bible doesn't have a clear-cut, black-and-white answer to this. Here is where things get complicated and into the gray area. Here is where we need to rely on the Holy Spirit to give us revelation and understanding of His heart on the matter. If we look carefully in Scripture with an open and sincere heart, we will find out that the Bible actually has a solution to this difficult issue.

First, I invite you to observe in Scripture through a few examples that, *as a general principle, God's love and mercy are always greater than His justice*. Without diminishing His righteousness and punishment for sin in any way, God is always in the business of encouraging, building up, and restoring people's lives in spite of their mistakes and failures. He always rejoices to see His children happy and well. Even in those Old Testament times, during the Law of Moses, when God seemed very cruel and harsh in His punishments to people's acts of disobedience, He still did it out of care for them and because there was no other way to accomplish what He needed to accomplish for humanity as a whole. The moment we become parents of our own children, that's when we can begin to understand and experience a glimpse of God's

heart for His children. No matter how bad children can become and no matter what evil things they might do, normal fathers and mothers will never give up on their children, and they will always do everything in their power to see them well and happy. When Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God could have left them to die forever according to His justice and never redeem them. However, because of His great love, He found a way, though painful, tedious, and costly, to save humanity from eternal destruction, without lessening His righteousness. In Matthew 12:1-8, Jesus' disciples plucked off heads of grain and ate them on the Sabbath because they were hungry and the Pharisees accused them of doing something unlawful on the Sabbath. Let's see what Jesus' response was:

Matthew 12:1-8 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

<sup>2</sup> And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing *what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!*"

<sup>3</sup> But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:

<sup>4</sup> how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which *was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?*

<sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the law that *on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?*

<sup>6</sup> Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.

<sup>7</sup> But if you had known what this means, '*I desire mercy and not sacrifice,*' you would not have condemned the guiltless.

<sup>8</sup> For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Jesus first reminds them from the Old Testament the occasion when king David ate the showbread from the house of God which was not lawful for him to eat, but only for the priests, and still God didn't strike him down. This is again a situation where God's love and mercy were greater than His already established law. Then, Jesus provides another example where the sanctity of the Sabbath is violated by priests and they are still guiltless. In Mark 2:23-28 account of the same story, Jesus even says that the Sabbath was made for the man and not the man for the Sabbath, again putting the well-being of humans above the Sabbath's law. Finally, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for condemning the guiltless, because God desires mercy and steadfast love more than sacrifices.

Another example of God's love going beyond His given law comes from the story of apostle Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10. In this passage, Jesus told Peter in a vision to eat unclean animals that were forbidden by the Law of Moses, to prepare him to accept the fact that the gospel and the kingdom of God were for the Gentiles as well, and not only for the Jews.

Let's go a step further and recognize God's care and protection for the vulnerable in Scripture, especially for women in the context of marriage. Some of the material presented on this point in particular, but not only, is taken from Gretchen Baskerville's book entitled: "The Life-Saving Divorce: Hope for People Leaving Destructive Relationships." Now, there are for sure cases of marriages where the man is abused physically or emotionally by his wife, but those are more rare. Usually, the wives and the kids are abused by the husband. Nevertheless, the principle applies to both husbands and wives. A key verse that shows God's heart for the oppressed or the abused is

Jeremiah 22:3:

Jeremiah 22:3 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and *deliver from the hand of the oppressor* him who has been robbed. And *do no wrong or violence* to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, *nor shed innocent blood* in this place.

Moreover, in the Old Testament time, where the culture and society were patriarchal and women had fewer rights than men, the Law of Moses still protected women or whomever the vulnerable spouse was. Even in those times, the wives had some significant legal rights. The Law of Moses allowed divorce (and actually commanded divorce) for breaking any of the three marriage vows found in Exodus 21:10: food, clothing, and marital or conjugal rights, which in this verse, can be defined as “intimate relations.” Let’s read the passage:

Exodus 21:10-11 (NKJV)

<sup>10</sup> If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish *her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights*.

<sup>11</sup> And if he does not do these three for her, then *she shall go out free*, without paying money.

In the book of Exodus, if a man took a second wife, it was against God’s command to reduce the first wife’s food, clothing, or marital rights. He was not allowed to demote her to slave status. If he was unwilling to treat her as a wife, he had to let her go (or she could go free), so she could marry someone who would treat her properly. You may say: “I’ve read the Bible cover to cover and I’ve never heard this verse before. How can you claim this obscure verse is important? We’ve never heard it in Sunday school, or youth group, or adults sermons.” However, as it turns out, this passage was the cornerstone for Jewish marriage and divorce law in the Old Testament and during the time of Jesus. The Jewish Rabbis discussed exactly how much food, what types of clothing, and for how long you could neglect your wife or husband before you crossed the line. So, in terms of food, it had to be above the quality of slave or servant’s food. It was the amount of food a man would have to give his neighbor to provide for his wife in case the husband went on a long trip. Clothing had to be suitable for her age and for the season of the year. And the marital rights, also known as conjugal rights, meant intimate relations, physical affection, and basic kindness. Moreover, the rabbis specified clearly that sex had to be pleasing and intimate. Marital rape was not allowed.

In his book, “Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible,” David Instone-Brewer writes: “There are no records of disputes among the rabbis about any of these grounds for divorce based on Exodus 21, except in matters of detail. The rabbis of that time disputed about the length of time by which emotional abuse could be defined, but the principles appear to have been universally accepted from a very early date. From at least Jesus’ time, it was recognized that the three obligations of Exodus 21:10-11 could form the basis of a claim for divorce.” In addition, these three conditions were referred to in the New Testament as well in Ephesians 5:25-33 where husbands were instructed to love their wives in the same way Christ loved the church, to love their wives as their own bodies or as themselves, and to nourish and cherish them:

Ephesians 5:25-33 (NKJV)

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as *Christ also loved the church* and gave Himself for her,

- <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
- <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.
- <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives *as their own bodies*; he who loves his wife loves himself.
- <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes and cherishes it*, just as the Lord does the church.
- <sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.
- <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
- <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
- <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife *as himself*, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Going back to the Old Testament, let's talk about the treatment of a woman who was captured during a battle. If a man took a captive as his wife, which meant she wasn't even a Jew, he had to do her the honor of letting her mourn before sleeping with her. As his wife, she had to be treated properly. The Law of Moses required divorce in cases where a man attempted to reduce his wife to a slave or sell her. He had to let her go and give her the freedom to marry someone else by giving her a certificate of divorce. The husband could not treat this woman any way he wanted. She was either a wife with rights, or she had to be set free:

#### Deuteronomy 21:10-14 (NKJV)

- <sup>10</sup> “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive,
- <sup>11</sup> and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife,
- <sup>12</sup> then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails.
- <sup>13</sup> She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.
- <sup>14</sup> And it shall be, *if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free*, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; *you shall not treat her brutally*, because you have humbled her.

Let's take a look at another example in Deuteronomy 24:1-2 where God protects the betrayed husband, but does not cut off the indecent or immoral wife:

#### Deuteronomy 24:1-2 (NASB95)

- <sup>1</sup> “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because *he has found some indecency in her*, and *he writes her a certificate of divorce* and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,
- <sup>2</sup> and she leaves his house and goes *and becomes another man's wife*,

In this case, a man divorces his indecent wife by giving her a certificate of divorce and sending her out. It is expected that she would

remarry. The point is that a certificate of divorce allowed her to remarry. Instone-Brewer said: "It would have been a most valuable document for a woman to possess because it gave her the right to remarry. Without it, she would be under the constant threat of her former husband, who could claim at a later date that she was still married to him and thus charge her with adultery." The bottom line is that remarriage for both parties – the guilty and the innocent – was acceptable. Marriage was both a fundamental right and an obligation in ancient society.

Now it's time to connect this passage from Deuteronomy 24:1-2 with what I said earlier about Jesus saying that sexual immorality or adultery was the only valid reason for divorce. In the time of Jesus, some rabbis claimed they found a loophole in Deuteronomy 24:1 for men who wanted to dump their wives for any reasons, even trivial ones, such as burning a meal. So, there was an intense debate between two interpretations of this Old Testament passage. The controversy was this: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for 'any matter' ('any cause' or 'any reason')?" It was an issue because men wanted to get a divorce in a court that favored their interests. And there were two schools of thought: (1) the Jewish School of Shammai and (2) the Jewish School of Hillel. The School of Shammai had the toughest rules about divorce. They believed Deuteronomy 24:1 meant that a man should not divorce his wife, except if he found a *matter of indecency* in her. They believed this passage was specifically talking about *adultery*. They also believed in the Law of Moses that breaking the marital contract (food, clothing, and love) represented valid grounds for a divorce as well. The School of Shammai was the one protecting women from unjust divorce. Let's contrast that with the Jewish School of Hillel, which had the most lax rules on divorce. They believed Deuteronomy 24:1 meant that a man may divorce his wife for *any matter*, for example, anything that seemed objectionable to him. They called this "any cause." This verse opened the door to divorce for *any reason*, similar to "no-fault" or "irreconcilable differences" divorce today. They also believed, like the other school of thought, that breaking the marital contract (food, clothing, and love) from Deuteronomy 21 was valid grounds for divorce. However, their viewpoint made women vulnerable to unjust divorce. So, in Matthew 19:3, when the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason, they were actually testing Him to see what His position was on Deuteronomy 24:1 and with which school of thought He agreed. The Bible actually says in Matthew 19:3 that they were testing Him. The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus' popularity and wanted to trap Him. By the way, it is worth mentioning here that there is another version of this question in a parallel account of the same story in Mark 10:2, where the words "for any matter" are missing. In the Mark passage, the question sounded simply like this: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" However, Mark's version, as it stands, doesn't make sense. We already know that the Law of Moses in the Bible allowed divorce and sometimes even commanded divorce. And we know that the Jewish law specified the conditions for divorce. Anyone in Jesus' time knew that divorce was permitted and knew what a valid divorce was. So, it is safe to assume that Mark's account was referring to the same issue from Deuteronomy 24:1, but Matthew's account is more explicit. In response to the Pharisees' question, Jesus first suggests them to go back in time and think about God's original purpose in marriage, expressed in Genesis 2:24:

Genesis 2:24 (NKJV)

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Then Jesus adds:

Mark 10:8-9 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore *what God has joined together, let not man separate.*"

Jesus says that, from the beginning, God intended marriage to be lifelong, monogamous, and binding in God's sight. He is clear why marriage is supposed to be a life commitment neither spouse should break. It was not merely a temporary agreement. Its purpose was for two people to grow together in love and commitment, so as to become one flesh. But this is not the answer the Pharisees were looking for. Now, the religious leaders pushed back and asked in Matthew 19:7: "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied: "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." Jesus taught them that divorce was not God's ideal, but He agreed with the Law of Moses that sometimes was necessary because of "hardheartedness." Notice that He didn't prohibit a "certificate of divorce," a document needed for women to remarry, and He also agreed with the School of Shammai on the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, that it meant adultery, and not "any cause." In the Bible, the concept of "hardheartedness" applied to the person who was unrepentant and we can infer from this that they broke at least one of their vows repeatedly. The term "hardhearted" doesn't apply to the victims of the hardhearted behavior. It does not refer to a person who has decided to leave due to the abusive or unfaithful or neglectful behavior.

In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus addressed the same issue from Deuteronomy 24:1, because Verse 31 quotes exactly that passage from the Old Testament. To summarize, when Jesus said in those three passages (Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9, and Mark 10:2-12) that adultery was the only valid reason for divorce, He did not delineate a general and universal principle that would exclude any other acceptable reasons for divorce, but He defined concretely the term "indecency" or the matter of indecency from Deuteronomy 24:1 and in that context He excluded all the other trivial reasons for divorce that the religious leaders were trying to insert in the text there.

Next, let's analyze the very definition and meaning of the marriage covenant. *Marriage should be a lifelong commitment to love, care, and kindness*, as we've seen in Ephesians 5. But what if it's the opposite? If one side doesn't keep the vow, he or she has already broken the covenant or "divorced" his or her spouse, and the other is free to go. Justin Holcomb, a minister and a professor of theology and apologetics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Reformed Theological Seminary, says that "when a man chooses to be abusive, he breaks the covenant. *An abusive man forfeits the right to remain married.*"

You probably figured out by now where I am going with this. Based on what we've seen so far, do you think God is a cold-hearted deity who thinks anything your spouse does to you is fine and really doesn't care if you're being abused or neglected? No, that's not the God of the Bible. If we put together all these three principles - God's love over His justice in the Bible, God's protection of the vulnerable, and the very definition of marriage - we can safely conclude that divorce in the case of physical or emotional abuse is biblically acceptable and it is not considered a sin. The same goes for remarriage in those instances. Of course, every other avenue to avoid divorce should be employed first (i.e. Christian counseling or pastoral counseling), but if abuse doesn't stop, you can love God and get a divorce and God will still love you. If you needed a divorce to save your life and sanity, God will be on your side. Yes, even if the abusing spouse is a believer and has not been unfaithful through adultery, but continues to abuse the other spouse or children, divorce and remarriage are not sins before God for the victims of the abuse.

## “No Valid Reason for Divorce” Perspective

In spite of the amount of scriptural proofs that divorce is not sin in the three cases we’ve just analyzed (sexual immorality, abandonment of the unbeliever, and physical or emotional abuse), there are still some spiritual leaders in the body of Christ that dismiss this evidence, advocating that there are no acceptable reasons for divorce in the Bible whatsoever. This view is based on their interpretation of Malachi 2:16, where it says that God hates divorce, and Mark 10:9, where it says that what God has joined together, let no man separate. The proponents of this view suggest that a truly godly disciple of Christ would never divorce no matter what. However, by their stance, they put pressure on the abused, betrayed, or neglected spouse to stay in a marriage and endure it even to death.

First, it is critical to recognize that God Himself is a “divorced” person. In Jeremiah 3:8, God gives Israel a certificate of divorce. In other words, God divorced Israel:

Jeremiah 3:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and *given her a certificate of divorce*; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

One could argue that God was not exactly married to Israel the same way a man is married to a woman, but against this it could also be argued that the covenant relationship God had with Israel was far stronger and far more binding than the relationship shared between a husband and wife. Some might also say that it was okay for God to divorce Israel because of her numerous acts of infidelity to Him, and infidelity is the one basis by which divorce is allowed (Matthew 19:9). Of course, Jesus says that the only reason for this exception was because of the hardness of people’s hearts (Matthew 19:8). Ideally, not even marital infidelity should result in divorce, as in God’s eyes, the marriage union lasts as long as both spouses live. This is even more true of God, whose patience and long-suffering are nearly without limits. Yet the limit was reached, and God gave Israel a certificate of divorce. So, God is a “divorced” person.

Next, let’s analyze Malachi 2:16, where supposedly it’s written that God hates all divorce. This one verse is so influential and it keeps Christians, whose lives and sanity are in danger, trapped in their destructive marriages. It tells faithful spouses that there is no way out, but death, and they are trapped for the rest of their lives. This interpretation leads to depression, suicide, domestic violence, and homicide of many faithful spouses. Does the Bible quote God as saying: “I hate all divorce”? No! The translation of this verse from the ancient Hebrew language to English is incorrect. The earliest English Bibles (Wycliffe, Geneva, Bishops, and the Great Bible) didn’t translate it as “I hate divorce” or “God hates divorce.” And neither do the three most recent English Bible translations (NIV, ESV, and HCSB). Malachi 2:16 was written about 500 years before the time of Christ. For the first 2,100 years of Bible translating (from about 500 BC to AD 1600), no Bible translation said, “I hate divorce” or “God hates divorce.” The entire context of Malachi 1 and 2, is God’s stinging rebuke of hypocrites who make showy displays of loyalty to the Lord, but in reality are cheating Him. Then God says He doesn’t answer their prayers because of how bad they treat their wives. This verse is not about God’s anger at divorce, but his anger at hypocritical, unfaithful, violent husbands who dump their wives without a just cause. The Hebrew text does not say “I hate divorce.” Rather, a more accurate translation from Hebrew to English of this phrase can be found in the New International Version of the Bible:



## Malachi 2:15b-16 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> ...So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

<sup>16</sup> *"The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the Lord Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.*

The same verses in the English Standard Version read like this:

## Malachi 2:15-16 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> ... So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

<sup>16</sup> *"For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."*

The Holman Christian Standard Bible published by Lifeway (Southern Baptist), translated it like this:

## Malachi 2:15-16 (HCSB)

<sup>15</sup> ...So watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously against the wife of your youth.

<sup>16</sup> *"If he hates and divorces his wife, " says the Lord God of Israel, "he covers his garment with injustice," says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.*

God is not against all divorce. God is against treacherous divorce, divorce where the vow breaker abandons the faithful spouse. And God is also against treacherous treatment of spouses, such as abuse, abandonment, neglect, and exploitation, as we've already seen. This entire passage is about breaking promises. And God's hatred toward divorce is focused on those who break the marital contract by doing wrong and acting treacherously. Notice God's summary statement from the end of Verse 16: "So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." God doesn't say, "Don't divorce for any reason." In fact, we see in Ezra 9-10 Israelites returning from exile and taking vows before God to divorce their foreign wives. It is treachery that God hates. God understands divorce, when it is justified. Since God hates treachery toward wives, we can conclude this: *Divorce is not evidence of moral decay in society. Tolerating abusive marriages is.* Divorce is just a symptom of the "sickness" and it's not the root problem.

What about Mark 10:9 where it says that what God has joined together, let no man separate? First, I believe we can agree that not in all marriages God joined the two together. Sometimes, two join together in marriage by themselves without even asking God about it, out of lust, social pressure, or maybe out of parents' pressure. Second, Jesus was quoting Genesis 2:24 where God said, before the fall of man, that a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife, and they shall be as one flesh. And yes, that was God's intended purpose for marriage that the two spouses would never separate and that ideal still stands firm today. Married couples, especially Christian ones, from the very beginning should never even conceive the idea of ever separating. In case of issues, they should always attempt to get help and try any other option, except divorce. However, sometimes the last resort is divorce. If we take a look at verse 16 of the same

chapter of Genesis 2, we also see God commanding this to man before the fall: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." In this case, God's ideal and intention from the beginning was that man would not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and die. Did man obey His command? No! What did God do? Did He leave him to die forever? Of course not. He immediately began working on man's way of salvation from that predicament. The same applies to divorce. It is not God's first choice, but if it happens, God will always be involved in the restoration process of those affected by the separation.

## Divorce That Is Sin, but Not Unforgivable

Now, it is true that in the body of Christ there are many today who just throw away their marriages and leave their spouses for all the wrong reasons. The Bible is clear that this type of divorce is sin. However, is that sin unforgivable? Are the divorced individuals condemned for life and for eternity? The answer is an undeniable 'NO', this sin is not unforgivable. God forgives divorce even when it doesn't have valid reasons. If you have been divorced, there is grace and forgiveness for you. Usually, divorce is singled out as particularly bad among other sins, because it is thought to be a sin that people cannot properly repent of, for if someone gets divorced and then repents of it, they are still divorced. The sin still remains. For this reason, people think that divorce is unforgivable because it can never properly be repented of.

However, even divorce or remarriage happen at a moment in time and both of these sins have been removed by the blood of Jesus. Jesus shed His blood on a cross to take away all of your sins. God does not have a bucket of some sins Christians can be forgiven of, and some that aren't. Jesus applies the same forgiveness to divorce as he does lying, cheating on taxes, or any other sin. The moment you were saved, your identity and nature changed and you received complete and total forgiveness of all sins. The only unforgivable sin in the Bible is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which in the context of Matthew 12:22-32 meant rejecting the gospel, because the Pharisees were confusing the work of salvation performed by the Holy Spirit with the work of Satan, thus rejecting the gospel of the kingdom of God. *Basically, the only unforgivable sin is rejecting the gospel and remaining an unbeliever. You will not lose your salvation over divorce.*

## Remarriage After Divorce

One last question might arise in your mind, especially if you are divorced, and maybe not for the right reasons approved by the Bible: "Can I get remarried if I had a divorce?" Yes, especially in those cases of biblically valid divorce, you are free in Christ to marry again. But, even if you divorced for other reasons, since all your sins have been forgiven, you are also free to remarry and get your life back. However, if you were unable to save your marriage the first time, I would encourage you to make sure you are slow to marry again. If you do, be sure they are a believer in Christ. Be sure they are gentle, loving, and honorable. In fact, before you remarry, you need to first be sure you are getting your happiness and joy from Jesus. Don't expect to get all of this from a spouse. If you do, you'll end up disappointed every time. And above all, never forget they are human. They will offend you. That hurts us. Our ability to forgive our spouses greatly improves the quality of our marriage. I will conclude this section with this: If you are married, then stay married, if you can. That's God's heart. If you can't, then God will not punish you. He won't ignore your prayers or withhold blessings from you. You are not blessed because of your goodness. You're blessed because of HIS goodness. And you still remain the righteousness of God in Christ. Your sins are dealt with. But above all, if you are

married, and as long as it depends on you, let your marriage reflect Jesus. Be forgiving, loving, and kind. Jesus is love.

## Conclusion

Can believers abuse this liberating teaching? Yes, of course. However, those who do this, usually do it in other areas as well, and they don't care that much if divorce or remarriage is sin or not. They are usually the oppressing ones and the unfaithful who are interested to get safely out of a marriage they don't want anymore. In their case, I would really doubt that they are genuinely born again. In the same time, there are Christians, who have a heart for God and go through abusive and painful situations, but remain bound by wrong teaching and are not able to fulfill their God-given destiny. They are those that need to hear this message of grace. Should we not tell God's people, especially to the abused and victims, the truth about divorce and remarriage just because some might abuse this message? Definitely not. Apostle Paul was confronted with the same dilemma and question in Romans 6, when he preached grace and security of salvation: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul said: "Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" The fact that some people abused the message of grace didn't stop Paul from preaching it and neither should stop us, because for those who are born of God, the message of grace is the actual secret to their freedom in Christ.