

Does God Bind a Sinner's Marriage?

Introduction

I am an old man, 76 years old. I became a Christian when I was 18 years old. I have read the whole Bible many times. I am not a paid preacher. I do not have a degree from any preaching school or other Christian centers. I have served in the Lord's church in many ways, such as being a song director, youth director, educational director, personal work director, teacher, preacher, and elder. I have never accepted any pay for any of my work for the Lord, my wife and I worked and supported ourselves. My purpose in sharing these things with you is not to get any praise. My purpose is to let us know what a great advantage these things have been to me to help me study with an open mind and to harmonize the scriptures. Harmonizing scripture is by far the most important thing that we can do to help us better understand the Bible.

Now I would like to explain to you what I have just said. If you are not on the payroll of the church, you cannot get fired and lose your monthly income because of teaching something that you believe is the Truth. For example, a preacher who has been to preaching school is usually supported financially by the church of Christ. After he graduates from preaching school, he then must get a job preaching. Question: What must his sermons consist of if he is going to get a job? They must consist of the things that he learned in the school of preaching. Why? If they do not, he cannot keep his job of preaching for the church of Christ. He will be fired and that means no pay check. That also means that the word will get around to other churches of Christ, and it will make it very hard for him to get another preaching job. So you can see the advantage in not going to a preaching school and not being on the church's payroll. Being on the church's payroll will leave the preacher with little incentive to pursue verses that seem to contradict some of the things he has been taught. So as a preacher, he cannot move on up the ladder to better paying jobs because of teaching things not taught in the preaching school.

I can fully understand why our preachers today must teach a certain doctrine or they will be fired and have to pursue other kinds of work to make a living for their family. This is the reason that I said that I have a greater advantage over them. I can study the Bible with an open mind when I read scriptures that do not appear to harmonize with what I have been taught. I do not have to say in my heart that it surely does not mean what it sounds like and just keep on reading, hoping that no one will notice it and ask about its meaning. It is called studying under a very difficult situation when we have to purposely ignore certain scriptures when we are teaching on certain subjects. Question: Do we know what that is also called? Sure we do. It is called being dishonest with ourselves and being dishonest with others. All we have to do is practice this for a while and we can become good at it. When we purposely mislead ourselves, that is one thing; but when we purposely mislead others, it becomes a terrible sin.

Before I lose everyone's interest, it is time for me to give an example of what I have just said. The subject that I want to study is this: DOES GOD BIND A MARRIAGE WHEN NEITHER ONE IS AN OBEDIENT BELIEVER? I am using the word "bind" as meaning, "to be bound as something certain, something that is sure, something destined, or something that can be terminated only in death." There are many elders and preachers who say that they believe God does bind a sinner's marriage. I have before me a church of Christ bulletin with an article written by one of our preachers concerning this subject. Here is word for word what he has written: "The Bible makes it very clear that baptism must be preceded by repentance (without repentance we cannot be saved (Luke 13: 3; Acts 17:30 and 31). Repentance is a change of mind (Godly sorrow) that leads to a change of mind and Life. Biblical repentance demands that one give up any and all sinful practices and/or relationships." What this means is if we decide we want to be baptized, we must first give up our spouse, because true repentance demands it. In other words, if we have been baptized while in this kind of relationship, then we did not truly repent. Therefore, that leaves us outside of the family of God, and we are lost in our sins. In our study, we will refer to this view as "**View #1.**"

Now let us read some scriptures that do not harmonize with this teaching. If we can do this, then it would make View #1 a false doctrine. Wouldn't it? The view that is the opposite of View #1 and shows View #1 to be a false doctrine will be referred to as "**View #2.**"

A Study of I Corinthians Chapter 7

I first want to go to the New Testament that Christians are under today. We will study the entire 7th chapter of I Corinthians to answer questions of different marriage situations. It is very important that we put this chapter in the context in which it is written. In this entire chapter we find Paul answering questions that he had received from what seems to be new converts. They wanted to know if when they became Christians they had to make any changes in their marriage relationships. They also asked him about circumcision and being a slave. So Paul writes this letter and answers all their questions. Before we start our study on this chapter, there is a verse found in II Timothy 3:16 that we need to read and let it get unto our hearts since it will RULE in this discussion. This verse says, "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY THE INSPIRATION OF GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." Question: Why have I brought this verse to our attention at the beginning of this study?" Because it says "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY THE INSPIRATION OF GOD." I have never heard those who teach VIEW #1 use I Corinthians chapter 7 when they are teaching their doctrine on this subject. Why do they purposely over look these verses? Read the rest of this lesson and you will find out. It is very strange for those who teach on marriage, divorce, and remarriage to leave out I Corinthians chapter 7 which deals with this subject in detail and of which Paul says that he teaches in every church. I believe with all my heart that if we will follow Paul's teachings in this chapter, we will be pleasing to God. In this chapter it says, "Abide in the calling in which you were called." Paul uses this word "CALLED" nine times in this chapter: once in verse 17, twice in verse 18, once in verse 20, once in verse 21, twice in verse 22, and once in verse 24.

Now let us read together verse 17 of I Corinthians 7. Listen carefully to what Paul is saying. "But as God has distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." Paul's answer to all these questions must be of the utmost importance for all obedient believers today because of what he says at the end of the verse. Paul says, "So ordain I in all churches." We must do the same thing.

Now let us go back to the first two verses where we read one of the questions and Paul's response to it. The question is: Is it good for a man not to touch a woman? Paul's answer is, "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Notice that the reason why Paul says that every one should have their own spouse is to avoid committing fornication. We will cover I Corinthians 7:3-7 later on in this lesson.

In I Corinthians 7:8 we find the next question that Paul deals with. The question is: What about the unmarried and the widows when they become a Christian? What should they do? Paul answers their question by saying that it would be good for them if they remained single, like he was, but if they could not contain themselves, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn (in their passions for the opposite sex). In the Greek, this word 'unmarried' has only one meaning and that is to be unmarried. So this word would mean ANYONE who is unmarried. Notice, the answer to the first question and the answer to the second question are the same. To the first question Paul says in order to avoid fornication that they should marry. To the second question, Paul's answer is that it is better to marry than to burn in our lust. Remember, under the Old Law a person had to commit the act before it was adultery. But under the new law all we have to do is lust after someone, and we have committed adultery with that person in our heart.

In I Corinthians 7:10 we read the next question: What about two people who are married and they both become Christians? To me, this is a very interesting question. Please give your full attention to what I am going to say. If these two people who are married and they both obey the gospel, why would they have to ask this question if they are still in their first marriage and have never been divorced or remarried? God has never given a command that two of his children should break up their marriage. Then why would they ask this question? The only reason that I can think of is that they both had been in other marriages. Then this question would have been a very good question considering all that God has said about this. Paul does not go into detail describing what the circumstances were that made up this marriage. So, how does he answer their question? We can read his answer in the last half of verse 10 and verse 11. "Let not the wife put away her husband, and let not the husband put away his wife, but if the husband or wife depart, let them remain unmarried, or be reconciled back to their spouse." Please notice to whom Paul is giving these instructions. He is giving these instructions to married couples who both have become obedient believers and not to married couples who were unbelievers. We must remember what Paul is teaching here because it will help us to better understand this subject. If View #1 is true and two people who are married, divorced and remarried become obedient believers, then Paul would have had to give a different answer to them than he gave. Would he not?

Beginning at verse 12 we find the next question that Paul deals with. The question is: If two people are married and one of them becomes a Christian and the other one does not, what should they do? In verses 13 through 16 we find the answer. "If the unbeliever be pleased to dwell with the believer, let the believer not put the unbeliever away." Paul continues in verse 15 by saying, "But if the unbeliever wants to depart, let them depart, because the believer is not under bondage in such cases, for God hath called us to PEACE." There are two very important words in this verse. The first word that we need to study is the word "BONDAGE." The word bondage means, "Being bound by a contract." For example, a slave or a servant is bound to their owner. I believe that Paul is saying here that the believer is not bound to their marriage covenant if the unbeliever chooses to depart. Question: If the believing spouse is free from the contract that bound that marriage together, wouldn't they now be an unmarried believer? I do not know of anything else we could truthfully call them, because a deserted spouse cannot continue in a marriage that does not exist. Now is there anything hard to understand about that? If this be true, and I believe it is, do you see what that would do to View #1? It would make it untrue. Now if, View #1 was true, wouldn't Paul have said they must remain together because God commanded them to do so? IF GOD HAD A COMMANDMENT THAT BOUND SINNERS MARRIAGES, WHY WOULDN'T PAUL HAVE SAID TO THEM THE SAME THING THAT HE SAID TO THOSE IN VERSE 10? If God has commanded that sinners' marriages are bound by Him, why didn't Paul say so?

Now let us read II Corinthians 5:17 where the Holy Spirit says through the writings of the Apostle Paul, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." How can anyone miss what Paul is teaching here? He says, "Old things are passed away, ALL things become NEW." Notice how easy this verse is to understand for those of us who have an open mind. We believe when Paul says, ALL THINGS, he means ALL THINGS. But the critics have to say, "Yes, but ALL THINGS does not include sinners' marriages" as expressed by View # 1. Romans 6:4 is in total agreement that ALL THINGS means ALL THINGS. Romans 6:4 says that when we have been baptized into Christ, we then walk in a new life. How can this be? In baptism we come in contact with Christ's blood and it washes ALL our sins away, never to be remembered again. That is not hard to understand, is it? Now if we believe that this believer has now come to be an unmarried person (and I believe they have) we need to read 1 Corinthians 7:8 and 9 where Paul says to the unmarried that it is better for them to marry than to burn in their lusts.

Did we notice according to these scriptures when God manifests an interest in this marriage? When was it? IT IS WHEN ONE OF THEM BECOMES A CHILD OF GOD'S FAMILY. Question: Why would God have any interest in a marriage among unbelievers? I am very serious when I ask this question. LET US THINK ABOUT IT. When we marry it does not make us an obedient believer. We must become an obedient believer by obeying the Gospel, then we are in God's family and then we are under His commands. The people who teach View #1 are binding some of God's commands on people before they ever become a part of God's family.

Please read Romans 8:7 where Paul says, "THE CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD FOR IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, NEITHER INDEED CAN IT BE." Now read Acts 14:15-16 where it says, "God which made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all things that are therein, who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Paul is saying here that God permitted all nations of the Gentiles to go about living their lives without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own laws. God gave them no written law before the cross. Now please listen to me closely. Those who teach View # 1 do not believe these verses, because they say that God does bind the written law about marriage, divorce, and remarriage on the Gentiles. These verses make it very plain that God does not. If these verses are not plain enough, let's read Romans 2:14. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves." So those who have an open mind to the scriptures can see that the Gentiles were not under the Old Law.

Now we will return to 1 Corinthians 7:14 and as we read it together it will shed a lot of light on our discussion. Listen to what Paul is saying, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband." Let us stop here for a moment and notice what Paul is saying. We must first know what the word "sanctified" means. If we want the correct meaning of the word, we must go to the Greek word study. The meaning of this word in the Greek is "to make holy, to purify or consecrate, to venerate." Now let us look at these words and see if they pertain to the person or to the marriage relationship. So we learn that a sanctified person is a holy person and a purified person. We know that only an obedient believer can be holy and

purified. So what does this tell us about this unbeliever? Since he is an unbeliever, it tells us he was not made holy and he was not purified. The question now is, "WHAT was sanctified by God? It only leaves one thing and that is the MARRIAGE. That would mean God SANCTIFIES the RELATIONSHIP. How can we be sure this is a correct interpretation? The rest of the verse tells us, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they HOLY."

Now let us explain about the children. Nothing is said about children while the parents were both unbelievers, but in our study we have found that one of them has become an obedient believer. What does this relationship consist of now? We have a child of God that is married to a child of the devil. I believe that God is saying that there is now a problem in this marriage, and here is the way that He will deal with it. He will sanctify this marriage, because if He doesn't, there will be holy seed mixed with unholy seed. That must not be, for that would produce unclean children. Let us read Ezra 9:2 which says, "For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands. Yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." This verse is talking about the Israelites, the chosen children of God. What did the Israelites do that was so wrong? They had married people who were not the children of God (unbelievers). Here we can see clearly why God steps in and solves this problem to His liking.

I can just hear those who hold to View # 1 saying, "If what you have just said is true, then when a believer marries an unbeliever, the children born in that kind of relationship would be unclean". I will share with you why their children would not be unclean. Paul answers this for us. We have already read where Paul says, "If the unbeliever chooses to stay with the believer, God will then sanctify their marriages and their children will NOT be UNCLEAR." When an unbeliever marries a believer, they have manifested that they have chosen to live with this believer, and Paul says now their children are CLEAN. We will now read in verse 15 that God does not bind this marriage. Read with me. "But if the unbeliever chooses to depart, let them depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God had called us to PEACE." Please don't read over the word "BONDAGE," like a lot of people do. Just because they read over this word does not change its meaning. It still means that they are not BOUND to the marriage covenant. We have studied the word BONDAGE. Now let's give a few words about the word "PEACE." In verse 15 it gives the reason why if the unbeliever chooses to leave this marriage to let him leave, and that is because God hath called us to PEACE. Please pay close attention to what I am going to say. If God bound ALL MARRIAGES like a lot of our members teach, then just think of all the pain, misery and heartache that would go along with that marriage. With God's wisdom He says that will not be so with His children, because they have been called into a kingdom of PEACE. Otherwise it would be a marriage of chaos. I can just hear all the critics contesting God's Wisdom in His decision in this matter!

I can just hear someone saying, "Well let me tell you this, I was an unbeliever and I married a believer and they led me to Christ. Now where do you think I would be today if I had not married a believer?" Someone might say, "That sure is a good point." NO, it is not a good point and here is the reason that it is not. The subject Paul is discussing here had absolutely nothing to do with an unbeliever marrying a believer. The discussion here is about two unbelievers who were married and then one of them became an obedient believer and the other one did not. I would like to say this about believers marrying unbelievers. God has never placed His endorsement on this kind of marriage. Those who believe that he does should read II Corinthians 6:14 where the Apostle Paul says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers and what fellowship hath the righteous with the unrighteous, and what communion hath light with darkness." We find in II Corinthians 6:16 why the believer is not to be yoked to an unbeliever. It is because the believer is the temple of the Living God and God says, "Therefore I dwell in them." There is no yoke that is closer than a marriage relationship. Let us all read I Corinthians 7:39 which says, "If a believer's spouse dies, they are at liberty to marry to whom they will, only in the Lord." Now if this command is to the believer whose spouse has died, then why would it not apply to the believer who has never been married? I know there are many who do not believe this and already have their minds set on this subject. I am not writing this lesson just for them. I am writing this lesson to those who still have an open mind to let them know that there is another view instead of just View #1 on this subject. When they read and study this lesson, then they can make up their own mind of what is TRUTH. Truth can bring peace to a lot of people who are living a life of guilt and condemnation because of what others have taught them on this subject.

I was raised in a home where a believer was married to an unbeliever, and I observed this marriage for about 60 years. Take my word for it. It was a living hell for the believer! We have many in the church today who refuse to accept the wisdom of God in this matter. There are many verses in the Bible where God warns believers not to marry unbelievers. Now let us go back to our main subject to see if the Old Testament has anything to say about

whether God binds two unbelievers in marriage. Read Exodus 21:1-6. Verse 1 reads, "Now these are the judgments that shall be set before them." (These instructions were given by God from Mount Sinai through the mouth of Moses to the children of Israel.) Verse 2 continues, "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve, and in the seventh year he shall go out free." Verse 3 says, "If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he was married, then his wife shall go out with him." Now notice verse 4, "If his master hath given him a wife, and she hath born him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her masters, and he shall go out by himself." Verse 5, "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free." In verse 4 remember what God says through Moses that this married servant after seven years can leave his wife if he so desires and his wife then belongs to the master. Question: Does this sound like that God bound this marriage? No it does not.

In Exodus 21:6 it says that this husband can keep her as his wife if he so chooses, but then he must be a slave to his owner forever. Please do not read over these verses, and then purposely forget what they say, because we have just read where God said that this married man can leave his wife if he chooses to. Now I want to ask this question. Is View #1 right, or is it wrong? We have only one guide to what is right and what is wrong, and that is the word of God. We have just read where the word of God says that View # 1 is wrong. Question: Why can't those who teach this see that their view is wrong? There is just one simple answer to this question. They do not want to.

Now we will go to Ezra 10:2-3. If we will read the ninth chapter of Ezra, we will find out that God has told them not to marry any unbelievers from other nations. Verse 2 in Ezra 10 says, "We have trespassed against our God and have taken strange wives of the people of the land. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." Verse 3 continues, "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my Lord and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God and let it be done according to the law." Notice who it was that commanded the children of Israel to put away their unbelieving spouses. It was God. Question: Did God bind these marriages between the believers and the unbelievers? Absolutely not! This leads to another question: Then why will some church members teach that God binds all marriages? I can just hear the critic's saying, "Yes, but they could not marry again." HOW DO WE KNOW THAT? Besides, that has nothing to do with the subject that we are studying. We are studying the bold statement that many of our brethren are teaching: View #1 -- That God binds unbelievers' marriages.

I believe beyond any shadow of doubt that God does not bind unbelievers' marriages. It is because we have just read from the mouth of God where He commanded the children of Israel to abandon their marriage to the unbelievers. I also can hear the open-minded person saying, "Why can't the ones who teach View # 1 see this?" This is a very good question. They have been taught this doctrine by men as they have set at the feet of instructors who have all kind of handles placed before their names. They say these people have read the Bible many times and they know what they are talking about. I DO NOT CARE HOW MANY COLLEGES A MAN HAS ATTENDED, OR HOW MANY DEGREES HE HAS. THOSE THINGS ARE NO FOOLPROOF SIGN THAT HE HAS ALL THE TRUTH. Think of all the different denominations that are in the world today. Their leaders also have handles before their names with all kinds of degrees in the Bible, but we have no problem with disagreeing with them. Do you know our biggest problem in the church today? It seems that most of the members are content with letting others do their studying for them. In doing this we do not have the knowledge to stand up against those who teach things that hurt and destroys marriages.

On this subject let us now read together Luke 12:51-53 which says, "Suppose ye that I have come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay; but rather division. From henceforth, there shall be five in one house divided three against two, two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law." Question: Did we notice that Jesus did not say one word about dividing the husband from the wife? In Genesis 2:18 God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him." It does not take a highly educated person to understand the Bible. What it does take is a person who loves God with all their heart and desires to know the truth, regardless of what others think and teach. This requires us to have an open mind to the word of God.

We will never learn all the truth if we study the Bible with our minds already made up on what we believe. If we are not careful, we will become followers of those who taught us, rather than followers of the truth. I fully believe that God's word is so simple that we must have help to misunderstand it. We read in Proverbs 14: 15 that the simple

believeth every word of God. Please read Isaiah 35. The message in this chapter is that all who will be traveling the Road of Life will be pure and holy. In other words, there will be no idolater on this road. No one will be traveling on this road except true worshipers of God. This is a holy way, because God will be walking with us. The word "fool" in these verses means those who are unlearned in their schooling, those who are simple minded. This Road of Life is so different, so unlike any other road. There is no danger in mistaking the road of life for those who study God's word in prayer and with an open mind. Most of the friends of God are of the humbler class of life and do not have much learning in the schools of education. What the Holy Spirit is saying here in these verses is that **THE WAY OF SALVATION SHALL BE SO PLAIN THAT NO ONE, HOWEVER IGNORANT OR UNLEARNED THEY MAY BE, NEED NOT TO ERR IN REGARD TO IT.** Jesus said that the gospel would be preached to the poor. In I Corinthians 1:27 Paul says that "God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise." I want to encourage every Christian to study more. We do not have to have a Bible scholar to explain it to us. All we have to do is read and study it out for ourselves. Jesus said in Matt. 15:14, "The blind shall lead the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch together." So let us **OPEN** our **EYES** to **ALL** of the **TRUTH** and not just **PART** of it.

I have had members of the church who teach View #1 say to me, "Your view on this subject would make all children unclean who had one unbelieving parent. Can't we see what their problem is? They are not listening to what Paul is saying. Paul has just said that to keep this from happening God will sanctify the marriage. If God had not done this, then their children would have been unclean. Surely we can understand that. It may be too simple for some people to understand, because it doesn't harmonize with their belief.

I will try one more time to explain this. In these verses that Paul has shared with us he never mentions God as having any interest in unbelievers marrying unbelievers, or the children who are born to these unbelievers. Paul does not say one word about their children being unclean. The children who were already born in such a family would have remained unclean after one of them becomes an obedient believer if God had not stepped in and sanctified that marriage. When an unbeliever marries a believer they show that they have chosen to live with the believer. What does Paul say about the unbeliever who chooses to live with the believer? He says let the believer not leave them, because God will sanctify their marriage.

I want to share something else that has been said to me, because of the statement that Paul makes in I Corinthians 7:17. "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called everyone, so let him walk, and so **ORDAIN** I in all the churches." I believe that this verse applies to all the questions that were written to Paul that he mentions in verse one. He takes these questions and answers each one of them in this chapter.

Here is what some of the members of the church have said to me concerning verse 17. They say that it only applies to the next seven verses which talk about circumcision and servants. Here is my response to that teaching. Notice in verse 17 that it says, "**TO EVERY MAN**" and in the same verse it says, "**TO EVERYONE THAT IS CALLED.**" I believe that **EVERY MAN** and **EVERYONE** clearly mean **EVERYONE** who becomes an **OBEDIENT BELIEVER**.

Notice in verses 12 through 16 that we have been studying from that **ALL** of these verses have been dealing with marriage, but not one time do they mention circumcision or servants. Yet in Verse 15 it says, "But God has **CALLED** us to **PEACE.**" Did we notice the word "**CALLED**" in this verse? One other thing that is noteworthy here is in Verse 16, and it ends with a question mark. Do we believe Paul is going to ask a question and not answer it? Now wouldn't it make sense that the answer he gives would be about the subject that he has been discussing? His answer in Verse 17 says, "Let everyone abide in the calling wherein he is called." Make up your own mind what Paul is teaching here. Please read this lesson and these verses very carefully and with diligence to learn what the word is saying. I can just hear the preacher or teacher who teaches **VIEW #1** saying, "Don't get upset with me because I am just teaching the whole council of God like he has commanded me to do." Question: After studying these scriptures what is your opinion? Have they really taught the whole counsel of God? The whole purpose of this lesson is for each of us to know there is another view to this subject (**View #2**) and to share that view with others. I would like to ask another question here. Instead of teaching **View #1** and upsetting so many families, why can't they just leave it up to Paul's teachings?

In Philippians 2:12 we read, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Some preachers who have graduated from some preaching schools seem to enjoy preaching on **View #1**. When this is done there are more people run off from the church than others can convert. If you don't believe this, just check the growth in the churches that have a steady diet of condemnation lessons. Remember Paul said in verse 17 that he ordains these

teachings in all the churches. Question: Why is it that we have some preachers and teachers who will not preach and teach this? They avoid this chapter like it is a plague. I believe all of us who have an open mind to the scriptures understand why. There is so much more that could be said on this subject, but if this is not sufficient to get our interest stirred up and make us study on our own about this subject, then there is no need to go any further.

The same preachers and the teachers who teach View #1 also teach a “living in ADULTERY doctrine.” This doctrine teaches that a believer that was married, divorced (that is for reasons other than fornication), and remarries prior to becoming a believer, not only committed adultery as an unbeliever, but also continues to “live in adultery” now as a believer. Also, this doctrine teaches that the believer must now divorce or be separated from their present spouse before they can have any hope of SALVATION. This doctrine will still be referred to as VIEW #1. I do not hold this view. I do not believe the Bible teaches that when two UNBELIEVERS marry and divorce and marry again that they are living in ADULTERY. I will call this View # 2.

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Now what must be done to prove which one of these views is correct? There is only one sure way to find out. I have already mentioned it once. It is in Philippians 2:12. We must “Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” We can do that in only one way. We must do what Acts 17:11 says. We must search the scriptures daily and then we will know what TRUTH is. That is the only way I know for each of us to be able to answer for ourselves what truth is. If every believer could not do this, then the Holy Spirit would not have laid this charge upon us. So our only hope to know what is the truth is TO STUDY it out for ourselves and stand on our own two feet, believing what God says, because View #1 JUST MAY BE WRONG. On Judgment Day had we rather stand before God believing all that God has said, or stand before him knowing what man has said? If we don't care enough about this subject to study it out for ourselves, then the blind will lead the blind and both will fall into the ditch together.

Those who teach VIEW #1 also teach that if a believer has been divorced in the past for a reason other than fornication and has remarried prior to believing, then they must separate from their present spouse before they are baptized. They go on to say that if they don't, then they have not truly repented. This would mean that their baptism did not wash away their sins, and they never were even a member of the Lord's church. Question: Can we see that this could come under the heading of “SETTING OURSELVES UP AS GOD'S SPIRITUAL WATCH DOGS, JUDGING THINGS WHICH ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE RIGHTLY?” It seems to me that those who teach VIEW #1 have forgotten what Jesus said in Matthew 7:12: “Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment that you judge, you shall be judged and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Question: Why do they want to do God's work for him and put their own souls in jeopardy, especially when God pleads with us not to do that?

Now let us go back to I Corinthians 7:18 and continue with our study on “ABIDE IN THE CALLING WHEREIN YOU ARE CALLED.” Here Paul talks about circumcision. He says that whether you are circumcised or not, it does not matter when you become a believer. In Verse 20 Paul says again, “Let every man abide in the same calling where in he is called.” In Verse 21 Paul tells the servants that when they become an obedient believer, they can still be a slave and be pleasing to God. And if they are set free, use it to the glory of God. Notice in Verse 24 what Paul again says, “Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.” In Verse 25 Paul continues to answer the questions that he mentioned in Verse 1. Now concerning virgins, Paul gives them his advice. In Verses 27 and 28 there are two very important words that we must read very closely and search for their true meaning. Let us read together. “Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she hath not sinned. Never the less, such shall have trouble in the flesh, but I spare you.” There are two words that we need to know the meaning of in Verse 27. One of those words is “loosed.” The first time that Paul uses this word in this verse it means, “To loosen, break up, destroy, dissolve, to melt, to put off.” Now let's look at the second time he used the word “loosed.” It was when he says if we are loosed from a wife. Here is all that is said about this word in the Greek. It means, “A loosening, especially divorce, to be loosed.” These meanings have been taken from the Strong's Exhaustive Greek Word Study. If the unbeliever is divorced from their spouse when they become an obedient believer, then they can marry and do not sin.

The “Living In Adultery” Doctrine

Are we hearing what Paul is saying? Question: Have we ever heard a teacher who teaches “the living in adultery doctrine” share these verses from I Corinthians Chapter 7 with anyone? There have been very few services of the church that I have missed in the last 50 years. I have heard many sermons and lessons taught on View #1, but I have never heard any of these teachers or preachers ever mention these two verses. Why? It is because it makes their doctrine void. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 7:17, “So ordain I in all the churches.” Why can't those who teach View # 1 ordain this teaching in every church like Paul said he did? I know what is running through our minds right now. We are saying how can this be so?

I want to share with you some things that have been said to me by some who teach View #1:

1. “Well, you just cannot believe the meaning of all those Greek words.” If we cannot, then why should we ever go to the Greek for the meaning of any word? Question: How could we ever know the true meaning of the words that are in the New Testament if we did not have a Greek Lexicon? I think that we all know that the New Testament was written in Greek and then translated into English by translators. I believe every Christian should have a Greek word study in his library.
2. Another thing that they have said to me is, “That is just your interpretation.” It is time then to say, “No, it is not. This is exactly how this word is defined in the Greek word study.”
3. Here is another statement that those who hold to View #1 have said to me. “I Corinthians 7:27 does not apply to the verse where Paul says to abide in the calling wherein you are called.” Paul explains what he means. The situation that Paul is referring to is when you become an obedient believer and you are loosed from a spouse (you do not have to have a spouse to be a Christian), but if you marry, you have not sinned. Now remember who Paul is talking to here. He is saying this to someone who is LOOSED (divorced) from a spouse. Paul uses this word “CALLED” nine times in this chapter. I will leave it up to you to judge if Paul was referring this statement to ALL of the questions in this chapter, or to just two of them, circumcision and servants.

Well, I am going to believe what Paul said instead of listening to what men say. Do these things that were said to me sound like cries of desperation from those who already have their minds made up that View #1 is right? They are not interested in any further study. Now we must make up our own minds. Does what Paul teach in these two verses harmonize with the View #1 doctrine? Again, we must study these scriptures and make up our own mind. If we are too lazy to study this out for ourselves, then God help us. Now let us read View #1 again to see if it sounds like Paul's teachings which we have just read. “Those who are in their second marriage (for reasons other than fornication) are to rid themselves of the second spouse before they can become an obedient believer. And that means to live the rest of their lives without a spouse.”

When I heard a preacher preach on View #1 of this subject, I ask him if he knew what Paul taught on this subject in I Corinthians 7:27 and 28. He said, “No, I don't.” So I shared with him what I have just shared with you. He did not have one word to say about it. I then asked him, “Now you knew that these two verses are in the Bible, how can you continue to teach on this subject without sharing these two verses with your listeners?” I further said to him that I could see he already had his mind made up, and he did not care whether his view harmonized with the other scriptures on this subject or not. To prove to him what I was saying about him was true, I told him that I would be listening to see if he would share these two verses with his listeners the next time he taught on this subject. I did not have to wait long to prove that what I said to him was true. He taught View #1 just like he did before we had studied these verses. He never did share any of these verses that Paul said that he ordained in all the churches. Question: Would any honest truth-seeking Christian be guilty of doing this? Surely I need not to answer this question. We can answer it for ourselves.

Question: Did we notice that the Holy Spirit did not say a word about, “If they married again, then they would be living in adultery?” But to the contrary, the Holy Spirit said that they would not sin if they married again. How can anyone misunderstand Paul's teaching?

Now, let's approach this subject from a different angle. Remember that I said at the very beginning of this lesson that we would come back to I Corinthians 7:1-5. Let us read these verses together, beginning with Verse 1. “Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every wife have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence and likewise also, the wife unto her husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband and likewise also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one another, except it be with consent for a time that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and then come together again that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” Let's read these verses until we understand what Paul is saying. Paul has said to let every man have his own wife and every wife have her own husband. Can we see what View #1 does to this verse? It totally destroys it. It teaches that every wife and every husband does not have to have their own spouse.

Now let us look back at the doctrine that we are calling View #1. They are teaching that those who are in their second marriage (for any other reason than fornication) are “living in adultery,” and they must rid themselves of their present spouse or they will be lost. Question: What kind of condition would that leave these two believers in concerning their sexual desires? We have just read where the Holy Spirit has said that it is good for believers to have their own spouse. Why is this such a good idea? It says here that it will keep them from having illegal sexual relationships. Now let us notice something else that the Holy Spirit said. He said that the believer does not have power over his or her own body. Surely that does not need any explanation. So according to these verses why would God dissolve a marriage and place the believer in a situation where the Holy Spirit says that they do not have the power over their own bodies, which means that they will have sexual relations with someone else? Question: Why would God put someone in this condition when he knows that they do not have power over their own bodies? Does this sound like a wise God to you?

How does God solve this situation? In God's wisdom it is very simple. We find the answer in Hebrew 10:17 where the Holy Spirit said to the obedient believer, “Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. Read Hebrews 8:12 which says, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” And in Acts 22:16 it says, “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins.” I believe that this is what Paul is talking about in I Corinthians 7:14 where God says, “I will sanctify the obedient believer's marriage by forgiving them of all their sins and remembering them no more, because I have done away with the old covenant and have brought in a new one.” (Also, see Hebrews 8:13). Did we notice in these verses that God did not say that He will forgive you of all your sins but one? Do we believe that we serve a God who would not tell us that if we are a believer and are in our second marriage that He will not forgive that sin? If he would not, that would cause us to wonder what other mistakes have we made that he will not forgive. God has made it so plain that even a wayfaring person can understand it. Just like the Holy Spirit says in the verses that we have already studied. So the question is: Does “all sins” mean ALL sins? I believe that God forgives ALL sins that we have repented of just like the Holy Spirit says. What does the Holy Spirit say in Romans 3:4 on this kind of situation? It says, “LET GOD BE TRUE AND EVERY MAN A LIAR.”

Some Examples to Consider

The ones who teach View #1 say that those who are in their second marriage (for other reasons than fornication) must dissolve that marriage or the church must withdraw fellowship from them. Now I would like to give us an example to think about. Let us suppose that we have two believers who are married and one of them commits fornication. The other spouse finds out about it and is going to divorce the guilty spouse. So the guilty spouse goes to the innocent spouse and in tears begs them for their forgiveness. The innocent spouse refuses to forgive them and goes right ahead and divorces them. We all know what Jesus says about refusing to forgive one another. He says that if we don't forgive, He will not forgive us of our trespasses. So here is the situation that we now have. We have a believer who will not forgive their guilty spouse, so they divorce them. The guilty spouse is now unmarried, but still loves their innocent spouse. Here is the situation as it now stands. We have one believer who refuses to forgive. We have another believer who has repented to God and to their spouse. Question: Which one of these

believers now stands justified before God? The answer is the one who has repented, not the one who will not forgive. Those who teach View #1 do not know the truth, because they have no problem in passing their sentence against the believer who now stands JUSTIFIED before God. And then when the unforgiving spouse marries again they extend to them the right hand of fellowship. But if the justified one marries again, they will refuse fellowship to them.

We do not know all the circumstances that are involved in a divorce. Neither do those who hold to View #1. Only God knows the hearts of other people. Question: What does Jesus say about casting people out of the church? Let us read it in Matthew 13:28 and 29 where some people wanted to cast others from the kingdom. Jesus said, "Leave them alone, lest you uproot some of the good. Let both of them stay in the kingdom and at the harvest time I will send my reapers into my fields and they will separate the good from the bad." I hope we can see when it comes to matters of the hearts of the people that God is the only one who can render true judgement. I want to quiet the critics before they start giving examples where we can withdraw from others. I would like to say to them that the examples where we can withdraw from others are sins that are open for all to see and not things that are hidden in the heart that no one can see but God.

Another example: There were two deacons who were unhappy with their marriage. They were talking about it one day and one of them said, "I have a plan on how we can solve our marriage problem. Let us loosen the brake hose on our cars so the brakes will fail and when our spouses go over this very steep mountain they will be killed. No one will know what happened. We can then marry again, still be deacons and remain in full fellowship with the church. But one of the deacons did not agree. So here is what happened. The one deacon who chose to divorce his wife and marry another was disfellowshipped by the church. The other deacon loosened the brake hose on their car and his wife was killed while going down the mountain road. He then married again and remained a deacon in full fellowship with the church. Can't we see how wrong that we can be in our judgments when it comes to the hearts of people? There is no positive way to know what is right in such cases where we do not know all of the facts. Now here is the serious part. When we go ahead and make our own judgment about these kinds of issues and root up some good believers just like Jesus said that we would do, then in doing this we could offend a weak brother and cause them to fall. Question: What did Jesus say about those who do this? Jesus said, "It would be better for a millstone to be tied around their neck and cast into the deepest part of the sea." Question: Are we truth-seekers or are we tradition-seekers? I have seen souls and homes destroyed by those who let TRADITION be their guide instead of letting TRUTH be their guide. It seems that they find more pleasure in pleasing men rather than studying and harmonizing the scriptures.

I want to share an example that happened to me while I was serving as an elder in Lindsay, Oklahoma. One of the members was married to an unbeliever. The unbelieving husband became unfaithful to his wife and wanted a divorce. She agreed to the divorce if he would write on the divorce papers that adultery was the cause of the divorce. He would not agree to this. He wanted to write down "incompatibility" on the divorce papers. He told her if she would do this, he would give everything that she requested in the settlement. She wanted my wife and me to go with her to talk to a lawyer. The lawyer whom she chose was a member of the church of Christ. I will never forget what his advice was to her. He told her that it makes no difference in the sight of God whether you write on those divorce papers, adultery or incompatibility. God knows the real reason for this divorce. So go along with his offer and you will be better off financially. The reason that I chose to share this is to give another example that God is the only one who knows all of the things that can cause a divorce. I want to give all those who teach View # 1 a true example of the results of their teaching on the subject that we are studying.

Once there was a young man who was an unbeliever. He knew nothing about the Bible and its teachings on this subject. He used drugs and alcohol. He married a woman and had a child by her. They only lived together a few years and they divorced. A few years later he married again and had children by that marriage. The children are still very small and a friend teaches them about the love of God and what they need to do to become a Christian. They both became obedient believers and began to worship God on a regular basis. They are studying their Bibles, praying to God, attending Bible classes and growing in their faith. He no longer is using drugs or alcohol and then it happens. They are told by someone who believes View #1 (which we have been discussing in this lesson) that they were living in adultery and were lost. Also, they were told that they had not truly repented, because if they had, they would have gotten rid of their second spouse. They were told that their baptisms were void. This meant that they had never been forgiven of their sins and they were never in the family of God. To me this is the cruelest doctrine that I have ever heard in my life. Why? Because of what the end results are.

Now I am going to give you the end results of this true story and not telling how many of these stories could be told. They were robbed of all their hopes. This alone brings the greatest hurt and loneliness that can be known to man. This brings into question the prayers that they had prayed to God. They had believed their prayers had been answered by God because they had been delivered from all of their bad habits, and were now living a life of happiness and praise. Then just like a bolt of lightning everything was all taken away from them. In a matter of minutes all of their hopes were gone. All of their future plans for their home and family were gone. What happens now? They quit coming to services and the bad habits returned. Joy was replaced with sorrow. This is why I say that forcing View #1 on others is the cruelest thing that one believer can do to another believer. I would like to ask each of us a question: Wasn't this family's spiritual condition much better before they heard this doctrine than it was after they heard this doctrine? Another question: Does this sound like something that a God of love would do or does it sound like something that man would do?

Teaching The Whole Counsel of God

You may be wondering how people who teach this doctrine live with their conscience? They smile and say, "All that I did was to preach the whole counsel of God. They were the ones who got themselves in this condition. It wasn't me. They will have to get themselves out of it." Question: Does this doctrine work for the betterment of the people's souls? I can only speak for myself. I have never known of a single instance where people in their second marriage followed this advice. Then why do people keep on preaching it? I am going to give you some of the reasons. Clearly they want to keep their fellowship with other brethren who teach this same doctrine. The reason that I say this is that they have the same Bible that I have, which means they have all these scriptures in their Bible that I have shared with us.

I want to share something else and see if we can figure this one out. Now the ones who have been married, divorced and remarried (for reasons other than fornication) do not always quit attending the services of the church after they hear this doctrine. Those who hold View #1 go right on fellowshiping them by continuing to use them in saying prayers and serving at the Lord's Table. I have seen some who are even allowed to teach by those who View #1. Now remember those who teach View #1 believe that those who are guilty of View #1 are not even Christians. They are still using them in the services just like nothing has happened. Now would someone explain that to me? Question: What happened to their doctrine? In this matter they do not practice what they preach.

What does the Bible call people who do not practice what they preach? We read in Acts 2:47 where the Lord adds to the church those who are being saved. And Jesus says in John 10:28, "I am the one who gives them eternal life, and they will never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. I and my father are one." Now notice who has the power to say who is a church member and who is not. These verses say that God adds to the church so He would be the only one who has the authority to pass judgment upon them. Jesus says that no one can pluck them from my Father's hand. Yet the ones who hold to View #1 have no problem telling believers who are in their second marriage (for reasons other than fornication) that God never did add them to His family, so they are going to pluck them right out. We must make up our own mind about who can make a right judgment in this matter, GOD or man? I hope we are beginning to get the true picture of our study. My true feelings, based on the scriptures we have just read, are, "I would not want to be in their shoes on judgment day for all the money in this world." I have been in the church long enough that I have had just about everything said to me that you can think of. Probably the one thing that is said to me the most often is, "That is just your interpretation." Do we really know what the true meaning of that phrase is? It means that your interpretation of the scriptures does not mean anything to them. In other words it is worthless. This would mean that "their" interpretation of the scriptures on View # 1 is true and cannot be wrong. Question: Where do they get their perfect understanding of the scriptures? They just look like normal human beings to me. Why don't we have the same right to say the same thing to them that they say to us? "It is just your interpretation."

Harmonizing The Scriptures

How do we determine who is right? The answer is the one that harmonizes ALL of the scriptures. I was taught the View #1 doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage many years ago. I believed it back then, because I had not

taken the time to study it out for myself. When I was about thirty years old I started teaching Bible classes. God blessed me with a desire to teach nothing but the truth, so I was a diligent Bible reader. I was always reading scripture that did not harmonize in my mind with View # 1. I would then find myself having to skip over certain verses in my teaching on this subject. I finally convinced myself that I was not being honest with myself or with those that I was teaching. So I did not teach View #1 any longer, because it would not harmonize with other scriptures that I was reading. I knew that all the scriptures had to harmonize or I did not have the truth. I have read the Bible many times trying to write down all the verses that talked about this subject and then I studied all the verses trying to harmonize them. When I started sharing some of these particular verses with the brethren most would not listen to what the scriptures were saying on this subject. Most elders will not let me share View #2 with a congregation so they can make up their own minds which view they think is the truth. I do not believe that this is right on the elders' part, because they will let others teach View #1 to the congregation anytime that they chose without any permission from the church leaders. Question: Does this sound like that they might be afraid of what the members might believe if all these scriptures that I am sharing with you are shared with them? Question: If these scriptures that I am presenting in this lesson were not true, they would not have any problem in showing that to the members would they? Something to think about isn't it?

Question: Why do some people today still try to bind some Old Testament teachings on Christians? Thank God that we have been delivered from the Old Law. So we can see there is no problem in harmonizing these verses with what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40.

Now let us go back before the cross and look at some verses on this subject that we are studying. In Genesis 2:24 it says, "Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh." In Matthew 19:6 when Jesus quotes this verse from Genesis Chapter 2 He adds to it and says "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." In Genesis 2:23 and 24 it says that God is talking about Adam and Eve; they are His created children. In Matthew 19:3 - 6 Jesus is talking to the Israelites, the chosen Children of God. This was a good and holy law. Paul said this in Romans 7:12. So what was wrong with this good and holy law? Paul tells us in Romans 8:3, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." The Old Law could not forgive sin. We all know that no man ever kept the Old Law perfectly. Then God sent His Son and He was the only one who ever kept the law perfectly. In Romans 8:1, the Apostle Paul says, "There is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Thank God that through His grace and mercy in sending us Jesus, we can now be delivered from the Old Law. I really don't understand why some people want to bind the law of marriage from the Old Testament on people today. This takes away the power in the blood of Jesus to take away all of our sins and remember them no more. Where is God's grace and mercy in View #1?

Spirit of Condemnation

I believe that View #2 needs some serious thought before people just keep on condemning others to hell. I have never seen any sympathetic emotions on the face of anyone when they are teaching on View #1 and condemning people, but to the contrary, they get very emphatic. Think about this on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 souls were saved. Read any Jewish history that you want to and it will tell you that during this period of time marriage, divorce and remarriage was at its highest point. When people cried out "what must we do to be saved," Peter's answer was "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Question: Do we believe that Peter said all that was needed to be said on how to be saved? The Holy Spirit thought so. What are the odds that out of the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost there was no one who was guilty of View #1? The Holy Spirit knows everything. If there had been just one soul out of the 3,000 who was in his or her second marriage and it was true that no one can go to heaven who is in their second marriage (for any other reason than fornication), don't we believe that the Holy Spirit would have revealed that to Peter? One time I was giving this example to someone who teaches View #1 and here is what they said, "One thing that you can be sure of that sometime or another Peter told them that they were lost." Since they know there is no way that it can be proved, why not just believe the scripture like it reads? Then they will not have to give this kind of answer.

Question: Who are these people trying to please, God or the brethren? Please let's use our common sense and think about what we have just studied. In Acts chapter 2 we have the first gospel sermon preached after Jesus ascended back to heaven. This was the day that the church Jesus built had its beginning. This sermon and this invitation were

to be our true guide for the saving of souls until the end of time. Do we really believe that the Holy Spirit speaking through Peter would make this big mistake and leave out such an important ingredient to our salvation as View #1 teaches? Why can't we speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent? The preachers and teachers of View #1 say this is exactly what they are doing. Question: In view of what we have just studied is this really what they are doing? No wonder James says in James 3:1, "Brethren, be ye not many masters (which means teachers), knowing that ye shall receive the greater condemnation." I think about this verse when I hear those who teach View #1 condemning people to hell, when I know that they are purposely withholding scriptures from us that will not support their doctrine. Also in Luke 17:1-2 it says, "Then said Jesus to his disciples, 'Offenses will come, but woe to him through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about their neck and be cast into the sea than to offend one of these little ones'." These are the strongest words that we will ever read from the mouth of Jesus. But these words seem to fall on deaf ears of those who teach View #1. My plea to them is, "You are offending many new converts and many who want to become obedient believers with your doctrine. Most of the new converts that you have offended leave the church and never return." The only response that we can see from those who teach View #1 is hear them say, "All that I did was to proclaim the whole counsel of God." But did they? How about the ones who want to become obedient believers, and there are some preachers and teachers telling them that before they can be saved they must get rid of their second marriage partner. I have never known of anyone who was told this that responded to it in a positive way. On the other hand, I have known several that responded in a negative way.

How would View #1 harmonize with the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 where He says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." There are not any words written that are more beautiful or more comforting than the words of Jesus in these verses. To those who hold to View #1 how are those who are in their second marriage going to believe these words? Please share with us how their burden has been lifted, how easy it is for them to be yoked to Jesus, and how they can have complete peace and rest to their souls? To the hearer who believes that View #1 is correct, they will not believe these words of Jesus to be true for them. Why? It is because to them it has brought only heartache, tears and a burden too heavy to bear. So they turn their back on Jesus and walk away with a broken spirit and their hopes are gone. Is this what Jesus came to this earth to accomplish? In these verses He says that he came to bring complete peace to the soul of man and to relieve us of all our burdens. If View #1 is correct, then what Jesus is saying in these verses cannot be true because they have an opposite effect on those whose marriages are not in harmony with those who teach View #1. One thing that we know for sure, when Jesus says, "Come unto me ALL YE", He means ALL YE without man's limitations. Today in this world 60% of the population has been married, divorced and remarried or living with someone other than their spouse. Don't these words of Jesus apply to these people when they become obedient believers? If they do not, surely Jesus would have told us. There is one thing that I know for sure, they're counseling does not bring about the same results as the counseling that the words of Jesus bring. Can't we see that when we study with our minds made up on what we believe that it is impossible for us to learn any more on that subject and our hearts can become hard and cold towards others who do not agree with our views?

The "Live-In" Arrangement

There is something else that I need to share. Our young people are very intelligent on a lot of things, especially on things which will profit them if it will out smart the system. I want to prove my point by showing us how they have solved this teaching of being disfellowshipped by the elders. If they are living in their second marriage (for reasons other than fornication), here is how they have out smarted the teachers. Please listen closely. Instead of marrying someone they just move in with someone on a trial basis for a period of time to see if they can get along with one another. After a few months or a few years of living together they may then decide they cannot make it in a marriage relationship, so they then depart from one another and find someone else to move in with them on another trial system. On and on this can go until they find someone who they believe they can live with and then they get married. Question: Do you know what the ones who hold to View #1 will do with these marriages? They extend unto them the full fellowship of the church, since after all this is their first married spouse. BUT, View #1 believers withdraw their fellowship from those who do not chose to live in these adulterous relationships, but rather chose instead to get married and then later on find that they can not get along for some reason or another and choose to divorce and marry someone else. Does this reaction of View #1 believers make any sense at all? It does not make any sense to me in this kind of situation. I would like to ask those who teach View #1, "What is the difference in

living with a spouse and marrying a spouse in the eyes of God?" The two that live together without the marriage license sleep in the same bed, buy groceries together, and pay bills. In other words, they do exactly what the two that are married do. We can see the only difference is that little piece of paper that is called a marriage license.

Conclusion: It seems to me that those who hold to View #1 would have to believe that when the "live-ins" finally choose someone to marry, then their little piece of paper cleanses them of all their past sins, because it is then that they give them full fellowship in the church. Now don't forget that we are talking about two believers who have been "live-ins" and then they marry. Why can't we see that we cannot out-smart God's Word? But the Word can sure out-smart man's teaching. Just because someone has been to a school of preaching, it does not give him perfect understanding. The reason that we need to leave these marriage situations up to God is that God knows the heart of every person. Those who hold to View #1 do not know the circumstances in all of the different marriages. So how can they make judgments on the souls of people when they do not know anything about other people's hearts? Instead of making these judgments for God, it looks to me like they would be thanking God that He will be making these judgments and not them. But as we know, this is not the case. They seem to be very content in making this judgment for God.

Lessons From The Selection of Elders

Now let us turn to Titus 1:4-6 where Paul sends Titus to ordain elders in every church. In Verse 6 Paul tells Titus that the men that he ordains must be the husband of one wife. This is a very important verse concerning the subject we are studying. Question: Doesn't this verse teach us that there were men in all of these churches that had been married, divorced and remarried? Yes. Question: Were there believers saved that were in these churches who had been married more than one time? Sure there were. Question: Does Paul believe that these people were members of the church? Yes. If we have an open mind on these verses, we will know beyond any shadow of doubt that there were men in all of these churches where Titus was to ordain elders that had been married to more than one wife. They were saved because they were members of the church. Question: How do we know that they were members of the church? Where else would Titus be looking for men to serve as elder, but in the church?

Now let us notice why the Holy Spirit had Paul to select men who had only one wife. We can find the answer in I Timothy 3:2-5. Let's read Verse 5, "For if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" We can see that God wanted someone who had proved to the world that he knew how to handle all the problems that can come up in a family situation.

How had this person prove this?

1. He ruled his own house well.
2. His children were in subjection to him.
3. He had believing children.

These qualifications show that he can handle the same circumstances in the church as he has already handled in his own home.

So what can we learn from these verses that we have just read?

1. To be a qualified elder we cannot have an unsuccessful marriage, be divorced and then be married to another.
2. But we can have an unsuccessful marriage, be divorced and then marry again and still be a member of the church. But, he can not be an overseer of the church. These verses teach that there are those in the body of Christ who have been married, divorced and remarried. And, there are those in the body of Christ who are married and have not put away their spouse.

Now Titus with the help of the Holy Spirit is able to pick from those who are members of the church those who have had just one wife and ordain them as elders, overseers of the church affairs. Here is something for us to think about. If all the members in these churches where Titus was to select elders were men who had just one wife, why would the Holy Spirit have to tell Titus to choose those men who have had just one wife? Because if the teachers are right who teach that those who have had more than one wife cannot be a member of the church until they put away the second wife, then there would be no married men present except those who had one wife. Isn't that true? Then the Holy Spirit would have no need to say to choose men with only one wife, because if those who teach View # 1 be right, then every man in those churches would be qualified.

As far as having one wife, please pay close attention to what I am going to say. If those who teach View #1 will pay attention to what this verse is saying, they too will be able to understand that this is another example of believers who are members of the church that have had more than one wife. There is something else to think about. If the ones who hold to View #1 are correct, there would have never been a better time for Paul to have straightened those people out on this subject of marriage, and divorce, and remarriage than at this time, but he does not mention it. Just think about how some of our preachers and elders would have handled this situation. When they got through condemning the members of these churches about their second marriages, there probably would not have been anyone left in the church to need an overseer.

Where Is The Mercy?

I believe that the single most important thing that we forget is that Jesus gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all of our sins, such as stated in scriptures like Titus 2:14. Also in Hebrews 8:12 where it says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins will I remember no more." We find the same teaching in Hebrews 10:17. Also, Hebrews 10:2 says that when someone is purged by the blood of Jesus and becomes a worshipper of God, they should have no more conscience of sin.

Question: How do those who hold to View #1 harmonize this scripture with their doctrine, because that is exactly what they do. They put a guilt trip back upon the conscience of the obedient believer? In Hebrews 9:14 it says that the blood of Jesus purges our conscience from dead works. I would like for each of us to ask ourselves this question: If there was no forgiveness of sin under the Old Law concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage (and we have those who teach that there is no forgiveness under the Law of Christ for those who will not put away their second spouse), WHERE IS THE MERCY that the Hebrew writer talks about in Hebrews 8:12 that was promised under the law of Christ? We can hear the critic saying, "Mercy and forgiveness is extended to everyone, but not to those who will not put away their second spouse."

Isn't it embarrassing to teach a doctrine that does not harmonize with other scriptures? By far the most terrible thing about View #1 is that it has eternal consequences. There will be many souls that miss heaven because they believe what these people are teaching. So instead of putting away their second spouse, they put away Jesus their Savior because they have had all of their hope, peace and happiness taken away. Then the critic soothes his conscience (while he watches them walk away) saying, "All I did was declare unto them the whole counsel of God." But the question still remains: Did he declare unto them the whole counsel of God or just his view on the subject? Answer: **NO HE DID NOT GIVE THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD**, because we have read verse after verse that they do not ever read to their hearers. Now this question must arise: Are all of the other verses that we have just read and studied the counsel of God? Sure they are. We read them from God's Word. This brings up another question: When the critics say, "I have declared unto you the whole counsel of God" and we have proved that they have not, now what are they guilty of? Here is another question that should be addressed: Why don't the critics share these verses that we have just studied from the counsel of God with those to whom they teach? It is because it will destroy their doctrine and they will lose a lot of their popularity with other brethren. The reason I say this is because they refuse to share all of these verses with the church and let the people choose which view they believe to be the truth. It seems to me that they are afraid there are too many open minded members in the church that just might believe VIEW #2. Question: If this is not the truth, then why do they refuse to give equal time for the church to hear View #2? If the church ever gets to hear View #2, it will have to be done in each individual home and that would take forever. I can just hear those who hold to View #1 saying, "You have left out all those verses in the gospels that Jesus teaches on this subject and how are you going to harmonize what you have already taught with

what Jesus taught?" This is a very good question. Now if we have an open mind and understand, I don't believe we will have any problem in harmonizing what Jesus taught with what Paul taught on this subject.

Harmonizing Jesus' and Paul's Teachings

Let's read Matthew 14:3,4 where it says, "Herod had laid hold on John, bound him and put him in prison for Herodias sake, his brother Phillip's wife." John had said unto him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Those who teach View #1 use this verse to prove that their "living in adultery" doctrine is true. Let us examine this verse carefully. First, let us notice that this verse does not say that they were "living in adultery." John tells Herod that it is "not lawful" for him to have her. Question: What law did Herod break? Remember now this has all happened under the Old Law. We must go back to the Old Law to find the answer to what law Herod broke. The answer is in Leviticus 18:16 where it says, "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife." And, in Leviticus 20:21 it says that if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing for he has uncovered his brother's nakedness and they shall be childless. Question: What law do these verses say that Herod had broken? Answer: "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife." Why was this act such a terrible sin? In Leviticus 20:21 it says that it is an "unclean thing." In Leviticus 18:16 it says that it is "thy brother's nakedness." I hope we can see that when we use Matthew 14:3 and 4 as an example to prove the doctrine of "living in adultery" to be true, we do not understand the specific law that they had broken. It had nothing to do with living in adultery. We can read in Leviticus 18:6 about the law that they had broken. Here is the way it reads, "None of you shall approach any that is near of kin to him to uncover their nakedness. I am the Lord." If we will read Leviticus chapters 18, 19 and 20, we will have no problem in understanding that Matthew 14:3 and 4 is not talking about living in adultery. It is talking about uncovering the nakedness of thy brother's wife.

I would like to ask a very important question here: In Colossians 2:14 we read, "Blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Does that include Leviticus chapters 18, 19 and 20? I believe all of us would answer, "Yes." This would mean that the law that Herod broke has been done away with. Someone may be saying that the word "uncovering" here means to commit adultery. Let us go to the Hebrew word study and see if it does. The definition of "uncover" in these verses means to "denude, strip one's clothes off, exile, reveal, advertise, appear, discover, be gone, open up, publish, remove, show, or uncover." These are all of the meanings of this word as given in Strong's Exhaustive Hebrew Word Study. Please notice there is no hint that the word "uncover" in these verses means to commit adultery.

Now read in the same chapter what God says about committing adultery. In Leviticus 20:10 it reads, "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Now notice here in these verses what we should learn. To uncover one's nakedness does not mean committing adultery. Notice the penalty for committing adultery is that they were both to be put to death. This death penalty was not pronounced upon someone who had uncovered the nakedness of his brother's wife. The penalty for this sin was that they would have no children (Leviticus 20:21). Here is a fact that will help us to harmonize the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul. I do not believe that we should have the attitude that an ex-elder had when we were discussing View #1. He was unable to prove his view in light of what Paul says in I Corinthians 7. Here is what he had to say, "Well, I had rather believe what Jesus says than what Paul says." Question: What does this tell you about View #1? It tells us that it will not harmonize with all the other scriptures on this subject.

The Old Versus The New Law

Now read Galatians 4:4 where the apostle Paul says, "But when the fullness of time did come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Verse 5 continues, "To redeem those that were under the law that we might receive the Adoption of Sons." What do we learn from these verses?

1. Jesus lived and died under the Old Law.
2. Everyone was lost who lived and died under the Old Law without the blood of Christ.

3. Jesus came to redeem all people from the curse of the Old Law. Question: What was the curse under the Old Law? There was no forgiveness of sins provided for under this law.
4. Gentiles were never under the Old Law. Question: In all of Jesus' teachings who was in His audience? Answer: Only the Israelites, because they were the chosen people of God. Another question: Who did Jesus send His 12 disciples to so they could teach them Jesus' message? Let us read it in Matthew 10:5 which says, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles or into any city of the Samaritans." Verse 6 continues, "But you go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now notice in Matthew 5:31-32. Who was Jesus speaking to personally? It was the Israelites, God's chosen people. This also is true in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18.

Let us read Luke 10:25 and 26 where it says, "A certain lawyer stood up and tempted Jesus saying, 'Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus then said to him, 'What is written in the Law? Have you not read it?'" Here is a man who desires to have eternal life. What does Jesus tell him? He tells him to keep the Old Law. It seems to me that those who teach View #1 do not believe that all of the Old Law was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross. Now let us compare what Paul teaches in Romans 7:1-4 with what Jesus teaches in these scriptures that we have just mentioned. Let us begin reading at Verse 1, "Know you not my brethren (for I speak to them who know the Law) how that the Law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law of her husband as long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if the husband be dead, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress though she be married to another man."

Question: Now isn't this in perfect harmony with what Jesus taught in the gospels on this subject? The first thing that I would like to say about these verses is that Paul's intention was not to give us a permanent guide to go by today concerning the marriage law. Question: How do we know this? Answer: By reading the rest of the chapter. Paul is trying to convince the Jews that they are no longer under the Old Law. If you do not believe this, then let us read Verse 4 which says, "Wherefore my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead. Now let us notice in Verse 1 to whom Paul is writing. He says the he is writing to those who know the Law. Question: Who was the Old Law written to? Answer: Only to the Jews. Who then is supposed to know the Law? Answer: The Israelites, the chosen people of God. Who was Jesus discussing the marriage law with in the gospels? Answer: The Israelites, the chosen people of God. So we can see that Paul is writing to the same people in these verses that Jesus was speaking to. Now we can again see that Paul and Jesus completely agree on that subject.

Notice now how this law affects the Israelites after the cross. We have just read it. Paul says that they have now become dead to the Old Law. Question: How does Paul say they have become dead to the Old Law? Answer: By the body of Christ. Let us now answer another question that may arise. Why should a woman be called an adulteress under the Old Law if she was living in her second marriage? To answer this we must remember that the Old Law did not provide any forgiveness for sin. We read this in Hebrews 10:4, "For it was impossible that the blood of bull and goats could take away sin." AFTER THE CROSS THERE WAS A MAJOR CHANGE MADE! We can now get forgiveness by the shed blood of Jesus at the same moment that obedient believers are baptized. Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ, never to be remembered again (see Hebrews 8:12 and Hebrews 10:17). PRAISE GOD FOR THE NEW COVENANT!

We need to remember what Peter said in Acts 15:10 where he said, "Now therefore why tempt ye God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciple which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Question: Why can't those who teach View #1 see what they are doing? I believe that they are doing exactly what Peter is saying in this verse: They are binding a yoke upon the obedient believer that they cannot bear. Question: What is the yoke that they are putting on the obedient believer? Answer: That after the cross they cannot get forgiveness for marriage, divorce and remarriage (for any reason other than fornication). This would be exactly like it was under the Old Law. This means that they believe that this law was carried over into the New Law of Christ. Try harmonizing this with what Paul teaches in II Corinthians 3:6 where it says that the Old Law killeth. Verse 7 says the Old Law was a ministration of death. Verse 9 says the Old Law was a law of condemnation. Verse 13 says the Old Law was abolished. Verse 14 says the Old Law was done away with. And then read in Colossians 2:14 which says, "When

this was done, Jesus took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” So now we live under the blood covenant that forgives us of all our sins, including the sins suggested by View #1.

Let’s read John 8:1-11. In Verses 1-3 the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who was taken in the act of adultery. In Verse 4 we read that they say unto Jesus, “This woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.” In Verse 5 they continue, “Now Moses says in the law that she must be stoned, but what sayest thou?” In Verse 7 Jesus said unto them, “He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.” Continuing, “Then those who had brought her to Jesus, their conscience being convicted, they all left, leaving Jesus and the woman alone.” Now let us notice what Jesus says to the woman when he stood up from writing on the ground. In Verse 10 he says, “Woman, where are those who have accused you? Hath no man condemned thee?” In Verse 11, “She answered Jesus and said, ‘No man Lord.’ And Jesus said unto her, ‘Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.’” Now what should we learn from these verses? We learn that Jesus changed the law of adultery. How do we know this? The Law of Moses said to stone the adulterer. Jesus did not command it. So we see Jesus changed the law of adultery that was given to the Israelites who were the chosen people of God.

The proof of what I have just said is in Matthew 8:11. Let us read this verse together. Jesus says, “Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Question: How did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob get into heaven? We have read where there was no forgiveness of sin under the Old Law. According to View #1 it would be impossible for this to happen. For example, Abraham had a wife and he also had Hagar. He fathered children by both of these women. How about Jacob? He had two wives and two “live-ins” and had children by all four of them. We have no record where God told him that he was living in adultery, must repent and put away all his wives but one. But, we have just read where he will be in heaven. Question: How can this be? We find the answer in Hebrews 9:14-15. Let us read it together: “How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament that by means of death for the redemption of the transgression that were under the first Testament they that are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” Question: How can it be put any plainer than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob gets into heaven by their faith and by the blood of Jesus. This is called the grace and mercy of God being poured out to all mankind.

Another question: If the blood of Jesus can cleanse these men of their marital sins without putting away their second wife, why want it still do that today? What further proof do we need to believe that Jesus' blood removes all of man's sins, never to be remembered again? The Bible teaches it and I believe it. However, there is no grace or mercy shown by View #1. Maybe someone is asking if there are any more examples that we can share? Yes, there is. What about David? He broke more marriage laws than any of these men did. He had more wives than Jacob had and at one time in his life he even took a wife back after another man had married her! One day David decided he wanted her back to be his wife again, so he sent and took her for his wife again. This is an abomination to God to do this, so the scriptures say. However, David will also be in heaven. Question: How do we know this? Because Hebrews 11:12-33 says he will. Again we can ask, “How can that be?” The answer is the same as it is for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Conclusion

My prayer is that those who teach View #1 will give some serious thought to the scriptures that are presented in this lesson and instill some doubt in you about View #1. Then please join me in sharing this lesson with others. I want to encourage all of us to leave these matters which have eternal consequence up to the judgment of God. Question: What if those who hold to View #1 are mistaken? How will they explain this to God on Judgment Day? Think about it.

The material that is in this lesson has not been obtained from anyone's notes or commentaries, or any such like. It came from many hours of prayer in asking God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to guide me in my meditations on this subject and also on what I have learned in all my years of studying the scriptures. I must say that I don't care what people may think about me for writing this lesson. God is the only one that I want to please. What I have tried to do in this lesson is to present the whole counsel of God so people can have the opportunity to make up their own minds about what is TRUTH. If you believe View #2 that I have presented in this lesson is correct, please feel free

to copy off as many copies as you want and pass them out to your friends. I have not purposely avoided any scriptures on this subject.

Thank you for taking the time to read this lesson.

In Christian Love,

Herb Trout

Note: Please read the thoughts on the next few pages along with this lesson. Thank you.

What Has Stopped The Growth of The Church?

I remember back some forty or fifty years ago when the church of Christ was the fastest growing church in the United States. But at this present time the church of Christ is on such a steady decline. It doesn't even get an honorable mention in church growth. Question: What went wrong? I was there and I know exactly what went wrong. When we were growing in numbers by leaps and bounds we were "soul winners." There were Bible studies going on with our friends and neighbors. I remember in just one gospel meeting we baptized 40 people. Our local attendance went from just a few to over 400 in just a few short years. So what happened to stop the growth in the churches of Christ? It was gradual, but it was sure. I can tell us exactly what happened.

First, I want to share the first qualification a preacher had to have back during that time. His past reputation must be that his number one intent was saving souls. He did not have to be a well-educated person, but he and his wife must have an outgoing personality and both work together as a team. He was never asked about his Bible knowledge. We judged that when he spoke to the congregation in his try-out sermon. If we were undecided on the lesson, we would have him back for a second lesson. As long as this method was the rule the church grew, but as the years went by this method did a complete turn around. No longer is the preacher hired because of his soul saving record, not by his personality or his wife's personality. Do you know what is on the top of the list today for hiring a preacher? They have to be from a preaching school and the more handles that they have before their name the better their resume looks and the more likely they will be hired. I will address this again in a little while.

So what was it that brought about this gradual change in the church? A lot of men wanted to preach for a living, but not do the personal work that the elders required. So these preachers started writing books and even writing commentaries on books of the Bible, so that we "common folks" could understand what God wanted us to know without studying the Bible. Now remember that God has already told us in His word that His words are so simple that the wayfaring man need not err there in. Everywhere these preachers could get a job holding gospel meetings they would sell their books. They began setting up schools of preaching where they could teach their doctrine to many young men who also wanted to preach. So now they are not only making money from the books that they were writing to explain the Bible to the rest of us, they are making money from the doctrine that they are teaching in their own schools of preaching.

Did you know that there are problems with these schools of preaching? Do you know that back when the church had its greatest growth the Christian men who stood before their classes had nothing in their hands but the Bible and their notes. I can also remember when some church members begin writing commentaries and some teachers who had the money to purchase these commentaries starting bringing them to class, teaching out of them instead of teaching from the Bible. This was frowned on at first by many people in the church because of all of the strange doctrines that were being taught from these commentaries. Then these so called "professionals" started writing more manuals and quarterlies with question and answers in them so that a teacher and the pupils could study their lessons and never open their Bibles. Now these so called "professionals" are making more money than they have ever made before. Look at what happens today. Our preachers and teachers carry all kind of books with them to class, teaching from them and quoting the writings of these men to prove what they are teaching is true. Question: So what is the end result of all of this? The so called "professionals" have succeeded in spreading their thinking to

all of the students that they have taught. Today we will hear far more lessons on straightening up the church members than we do in how to be a successful soul winner. Today we hardly ever hear of a gospel meeting. We call them lectureships or seminars. The purpose is usually not centered on saving souls, but is centered on subjects like marriage, divorce and remarriage, playing the lottery, buying stock, gambling, attendance, and on and on it goes. When we bring visitors to hear these kinds of lessons they will not come back. Can we blame them?

To prove my point, when was the last time that we have read in the church bulletin or heard it announced from the pulpit to not forget our personal work class? Thirty years ago this kind of announcement would be in every church bulletin and on every church announcement sheet. I carry a burden in my heart because of this. I will share with you what happened in the church of Christ where I attended just three years ago. Our minister had just passed away. We had no elders so the men of the congregation had the responsibility of hiring a preacher. One of these men had a personal friend who was an elder in a rather large congregation in Oklahoma City. He was known as one of the so-called "professionals" that had all kinds of degrees and handles before his name. He was invited to come down and meet with the men and tell us the qualifications that we should look for in hiring a preacher. He put ten different qualifications on the board, but he did not have soul winning anywhere on that list. I held up my hand and when he gave permission to speak I said, "In my opinion you have left the most important qualification that a preacher must have from your list," and then I said, "A soul winner." Do I need to say any more on this subject to get my point across?

The most unpopular person in most of the churches today is the soul winner. If you don't believe this is true, all you have to do is to become one and then you will know that this is the truth. If you need more evidence, then just look at the facts. The local preacher only reaches one percent of the conversions today. Three percent of the members reach all the other converts. That means that 96% of the church members never reach a soul outside their own family in their entire lifetime. We just keep on having lectureships, bringing in the professional teachers so they can straighten out the members, then go back to their homes and leave it up to the elders to solve all the problems that they have caused. Instead of gaining members and strengthening the church, their condemnation lessons cause some to forsake the Lord and some to start forsaking the assembly because they are confused and unhappy. Now think about this. We then reward them with a sizeable check for all the problems that the professionals have caused.

In John 3:17 God said, "I did not send my son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. I believe we have many preachers and teachers who need to learn from this verse. There are members of some churches who are fed up with condemnation lessons. They would drive long distances to attend somewhere else, if they knew where to go. The church can never grow under these kinds of lessons. It can only become smaller and weaker. If you have a problem believing this, just look at the attendance five years ago and then look at it today. What do you see? If we will look closely, most all of our new members are members who have moved into our community.

I could write many more pages on this subject, but offer these for your consideration.

Thank you,

Herb Trout