

An Exciting New Approach To Understanding

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Cecil Hook

Would you consider a "new" approach?

- 1. Jesus explained Moses' Law to the Jews.**
- 2. Paul taught the Gentiles under grace.**
- 3. Defining Marriage**
- 4. Problems with legal interpretations.**
- 5. Adulterating marriage.**
- 6. Specific laws vs. principles of action.**

We were never under the Law.
Why should we judge marriage by it?

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What This Is All About:

1. Jesus Explained Moses' Law... Page 2

Jesus corrected the traditions of the fathers explaining the Law of Moses. Teaching Gentiles in Corinth, Paul did not repeat Jesus' teaching given to the Jewish audience. Apostolic teaching under the Covenant of Grace differed from that under the Covenant of Law.

2. Paul's Teachings... Page 5

He responded to questions from those in the Greek culture rather than explaining rules of the Law of Moses. The apostolic teaching was decidedly less restrictive in allowing all to have a husband or wife.

3. Defining Marriage... Page 8

Marriage involves a contractual public commitment to live as husband and wife. A contract requires a meeting of minds with no deception and it cannot be fulfilled by only one party.

4. Problems With Legal Interpretation... Page 12

We err in trying to judge marriage by a presumed legal code instead of by principles of grace. Efforts to explain legal answers for all questions about marriage are futile and confusing.

5. Adulterating Marriage... Page 16

Marriages may be adulterated by various things that corrupt, debase, make impure, or destroy them. One may live in an adulterated marriage but none are "living in adultery."

6. Specific Laws and Principles... Page 20

All questions about marriage are not addressed or given lawful answers in the scriptures. We are not under a yoke of law but we must judge by the principles of love, mercy, fidelity, and justice.

Jesus Explained Moses' Law

Perhaps, the best way to introduce this review or restudy is to ask some questions. Jesus gave instructions on the subject recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Later, Paul offered less restrictive teachings to the Corinthians than Jesus had taught. Paul did not suggest that they restudy Jesus' teachings concerning divorce and remarriage, nor did he even mention adultery. Would the Corinthians have sinned in following Paul's teachings which differed from, and did not include, those given by Jesus?

The first response may be that Paul was building on to what Jesus had taught. That would be an assumption at best. By a letter, the Corinthians had asked Paul some questions relating to marriage. Why did not Paul begin his response by telling them to read Jesus' teaching in the gospels to learn their answers? Many scholars date the gospels a decade or more after Paul's letter. Others rightly date them earlier but allowing little time for them to circulate into Greece. The fuller account of Jesus' teachings concerning marriage was written by Matthew for the Jews particularly. Possibly, Paul had not read it and it had not reached Corinth. However, Paul did make one reference to the teaching of "the Lord" possibly referring to Mark 10:11 but his application of it is somewhat ambivalent (1 Cor. 7:10). He had received his message by revelation rather than from other inspired writers (Gal. 1:11-24), and his message differed from the gospels on some significant points. Were the disciples safe in following Paul's teaching?

Jesus' teaching about marriage was to the Jews. He set forth no new laws but was explaining the true meaning of the Law of Moses on the subject in contrast to the traditions of the fathers – "*You have heard that it was said*" While Jesus explained the Law, Paul set forth principles of grace instead of legalities. Many of our confused and perplexing answers have been because we tried to mix the Law of Moses and the grace of Christ.

Early in his ministry Jesus warned, "*Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets,*" but in the very next paragraph we have generally explained that Jesus was setting forth his new teachings which, in effect, would be abolishing the Law by changing it authoritatively! In the second and third paragraphs, we have him giving new regulations concerning adultery, divorce, and marriage! Due to our preconceived notions, we have flatly contradicted what Jesus taught a few lines earlier! Friends and neighbors, boys and girls, that ain't too smart!

Why was Jesus explaining the Law of Moses when the cross was so near? It was because the Jews would be given a period of about forty years in which

to make the complete transition from the Law to grace. Law keeping would extend into the kingdom of heaven during a time of overlapping of the covenants. God did not demand an instant change for it would require years for his message to reach all those who served him. Jesus explained, *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come"* (Matt. 24:14). To accomplish this Jesus gave the "Great Commission" to the eleven apostles, promising, *"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (Matt. 28:19-20). That coming "end" would be the dissolution of their whole system.

For emphasis, let me again repeat this much-misunderstood passage: *"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS AWAY, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then RELAXES one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who DOES them and TEACHES them shall be called great IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"* (Matt. 5:17-19).

As the coming of the Lord (parousia) drew near about thirty-five years later, it was written, *"In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and is growing old is ready to vanish away"* (Heb. 8:13). That system was the "heaven and earth" that would pass away when the Law reached fulfillment. At the end of the age rather than at the cross or Pentecost, John saw *"a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away..."* (Rev. 21:1). That was the new order in which we now live succeeding the old order which was fulfilled. To deny that this transpired at the parousia is to contradict Jesus and/or to affirm that the law has not been fulfilled and has not passed away yet! Why try to evade this truth in order to sustain traditional misunderstandings?

The context of Jesus' statements must be respected. They were not addressed to Gentiles for the law was not given to them. Hence, Jesus' teachings concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage explaining the Law of Moses were never meant for Gentiles then or now.

Some of the thoughts being presented here are repetitious for I have used them in recent essays. I repeat and enlarge on them here in order to relate them to the specific point of study of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Scan the Sermon on the Mount again and see how many topics of the Law he was discussing with Jews rather than giving new laws for us today. It is astounding how we have been so misdirected traditionally.

In this quotation in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was addressing Jews who were living under a combined civil-religious government required by the Law. It was administered by the Levites with added civil laws by Rome. Jewish culture was built around this "church-state" arrangement. Was this system outlawed the day after the crucifixion? Were all Jews throughout the empire in sin who continued to keep their Law the day after Pentecost? Did they sin by continuing their tithe tax supporting the civil-religious system? Such a system and culture could not be changed overnight. Jesus' crucifixion did not nullify the civil laws imposed on Israel in the Law of Moses!

Were disciples in error for continuing to circumcise their sons, for refusing to eat pork, for being cautious to leave the gleanings when reaping, for women to refuse to wear men's clothing and visa-versa, for abstaining from eating blood, for demanding a multiplicity of witnesses in trials, and for not mixing breeds of cattle, the seeds in their fields, and fabrics in their clothing? Since the Law contained civil regulations as well as religious, were the disciples suddenly without civil law after Pentecost? The gospel of salvation was preached on Pentecost but the gospel imposed no civil regulations.

The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) forbade the BINDING of circumcision on Gentiles, but there was no indication that Jewish believers should forsake it. After that, Paul circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3). On his last trip to Jerusalem he "*cut his hair, for he had a vow*" (Acts 18:18). During this period Judean disciples continued to keep the law (Acts 21:17-26), but they were not doing it as a means of justification. Paul was adamant that no one could look to the Law for salvation for that would have made Christ's role unnecessary. That would make salvation by law instead of grace. But law-keeping as a matter of devotion, respect for their heritage, and obeying civil regulations was not forbidden. In fact, Jesus had urged that very thing in his sermon on the mountain.

Paul argued that keeping of days, food regulations, and circumcision were matters of indifference as far as salvation and fellowship were concerned (Rom. 14; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 8:8; etc.). But he would permit no thought of salvation through the keeping of those things. Disciples today may circumcise, tithe, and observe special days and food restrictions if they do not look upon them as necessary to their salvation. Many of their governmental regulations were in the same category as those of our government. We sin if we refuse to pay taxes, ignore traffic regulations, or violate laws pertaining to business. But if we keep all those things perfectly, we still cannot claim salvation through them. Law can bring sin but it cannot offer salvation.

There are many other contextual passages relating to this subject which you may wish to study. I am going to work to make these lessons brief rather than flooding your carburetor with more information than is needed. Exciting concepts are ahead as we look again at Paul's teaching about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. []

Paul's Teaching

In the previous essay I asked if the Corinthian disciples would have been safe in following Paul's instructions concerning marriage. His teachings differed from those of Jesus and were much less restrictive. Rather than taking space here for the entire Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians, I will give brief quotations and urge you to keep your Bible open at that chapter for fuller checking out the contexts.

Away from the Jewish setting of Jesus' teachings, Paul offered apostolic instruction to the disciples of Greek culture in Corinth (1 Cor. 7). Yet he did not refer to Jesus' teachings or to the Law that Jesus was explaining in his Sermon on the Mount. Some today will not baptize a person or accept him in their fellowship without first passing judgment on his marriage status. Paul did not follow that procedure! He had not indoctrinated the converts in Corinth about marriage relationships, else they would have already known his teachings and their letter would have been unnecessary. He encouraged, *"Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called"* (v. 20).

"Dear Paul, In the new relationship into which you have led us women, we readily repudiate the local religion served by prostitute priestesses in the temple of Venus. We recognize the degrading nature of such sexual experiences for both women and men, but how are we to look upon marriage and conjugality now? May we continue in these sexual relationships while belonging to Christ?"

Some such questions were asked the apostle by the Corinthians. If we had the exact questions, we might better understand his answers. I propose the above questions in view of Paul's preface to his answers, that preface being in I Corinthians 6. Commonly, a gap is left between the sixth and seventh chapters, but let us consider the possibility that Paul is laying some ground work in the sixth chapter for his answers in the seventh.

But let us repeat this observation before we proceed. Why were they inquiring of Paul? They did not have copies of the Gospels to tell of Jesus' teachings on the subject, and those who had preached to them had not taught them, else they would not be needing answers from Paul. In view of this, it may be startling to learn that Paul never quoted Jesus' statements

from the Gospels in giving his answers! Neither did he say, "In a few years I will be writing to Timothy, Titus, the Ephesians, and the Colossians, so check them out for additional teachings about all this."

In Chapter 6:9, Paul lists sexual sins with idolatry, no doubt, because they were very much a part of the religion in their community with their temple supported by a thousand prostitute priestesses. Although some Corinthians might have argued that God made both our passionate sexual nature and also the means of satisfying it, hence "*all things are lawful*," Paul countered that "*The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.*" They had become members of Christ who must not make themselves members of a prostitute, lest they become one with her and the temple that sponsored her. They had become one with Christ. Never could the Christian female be a priestess of their temple nor could the male become joined with the prostitute and what her temple represented for they themselves had become temples — temples in which the Spirit of God lived. To become one with a prostitute would be a sin against one's own body which had become a temple of God.

Could sexual expression have any place in these new temples? Yes, for God intended that each should have a conjugal partner. One spouse was not to refuse the other on the grounds that he or she was now joined to Christ making it inappropriate to become joined to another person. The unmarried, having no rightful sexual fulfillment, tend to be aflame with passion. God recognizes this, and he does not deny any person the right of a spouse. So, Paul says that the unmarried may marry. "*To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. **But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry.** For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.*" Agreed, sexual fulfillment is not the loftiest motivation for marriage, but Paul was dealing with the point raised by their questions rather than the broader scope of marriage. Are divorced persons immune from being aflame with passion?

Who are these unmarried ones? There are three kinds of unmarried persons: (1) those who have never been married, (2) widows, and (3) divorced persons (Compare the use of *agamos*, unmarried/single, in 7:8--11). Now, wait a minute, Paul! You don't mean that divorced people may marry; you must mean "they should marry, except for the divorced!" Paul makes no exceptions. Let the unmarried marry.

Paul continues, "*To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) – and that the husband should not divorce his wife*" (v. 10-11). Whether Paul learned the Lord's will from

Mark 10:11 or by revelation is uncertain. It is an ambivalent statement: "*she should not separate – but if she does.*" So he was making no dogmatic rule against separation.

Do not verses 10-11 deny what I have just written about verses 8-9? No. We must go back to the context and the questions that were asked. This convert to Christ feels that, since she is joined to Christ as one with him, even as a sexual partner in a symbolic sense, she cannot be joined conjugally with her husband also. She feels strongly that she should refuse him sexually or even separate from him. Paul discourages that but, if she should separate on that ground, she must not use it as a pious excuse to rid herself of her husband in order to take another. To prove her sincerity of purpose she must remain single or be reconciled to her husband.

Paul's instructions here are not concerning failed marriages, abused partners, desertions, or the tragic mistakes of young people in which cases the unity of marriage is already destroyed except for the legal divorcing. The destroying of the union of two whom God joined together by contract vows is the sin but neither marriage nor remarriage is the sin.

Paul assured them of the sanctity of their marriages even though they might be joined to unbelievers. Sexual relations with a spouse were not immoral or idolatrous even though the spouse might be a pagan. If the unbelieving partner, in retaliation to the companion's acceptance of Christ, chose to separate from the believer, the brother or sister was not bound. That would put such a disciple back into the unmarried state covered in verses 8-9 where he or she would be free to marry again.

In this teaching, **Paul does not call upon anyone to divorce a mate.** They were to remain in the state in which they were called. They did not have to try to change their circumcised- uncircumcised, slave-free, or married-unmarried state in order to be joined with Christ as a temple of the Spirit. "*So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.*" None were "living in adultery." To our surprise, Paul does not even mention adultery in his teaching about marriage and divorce in this context.

In verses 27-28 Paul further advises: "*Are you **bound** to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you **released** from a wife? Do not seek a wife. **But if you should marry, you have not sinned;** and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned*" (NASV). Paul, you really can't be saying that, can you?

We miss the impact of that passage because of pre-set ideas and vague translations. The word that Paul uses is not **free**, but the Greek *luo* which

Vine defines as *to loose, unbind, release*. In order for a man to be loosed, unbound, or released from a wife, he must necessarily have been bound to one previously and then **loosed by divorce or her death**.

This passage is expressed clearly in the NEB: "*Are you bound in marriage? Do not seek a dissolution. Has your marriage been dissolved? Do not seek a wife. If, however, you do marry, there is nothing wrong with it; and if a virgin marries, she has done no wrong.*" The virgin cannot be the "loosed" person to whom Paul refers. Marriages are dissolved by death and divorce. Paul makes no distinction here in granting the privilege of marriage.

Jesus' explanations concerning marriage and divorce were an elaboration of the meanings of a legal code, the Law of Moses. Paul does not mention that legal code. Paul's teachings were to Gentile disciples who had accepted the grace of God in Christ. Even though he does not seek to bind the Law upon them, his teachings would foster the same principles upholding the sanctity of marriage that the Law was intended to promote.

God hates divorce. God also hates lying, slander, fornication, murder, and all other sins. He surely hates any sin that brings about divorce even as he hates malice that causes murder and lust that causes fornication. God's willingness to forgive the penitent of the sins which developed into divorce give no more approval or license to divorce than his willingness to forgive lust gives approval or license for fornication, or his willingness to forgive malice gives approval or license to murder.

Although any failed marriage brings trauma and distress, I do not believe that it carries a lifelong irreversible sentence of celibacy, loneliness, guilt, and despair. Paul did not teach that. Sincerely pious men may bind heavy burdens of guilt and despair which they are reluctant to lift with their little finger, but Jesus has promised, "*My yoke is easy, and my burden is light!*" To the penitent, God's grace offers forgiveness, new beginnings, and opportunity for new-found happiness. Otherwise, none of us would have any hope! []

Defining Marriage

Because it is such an integral factor of our society, we assume that everyone knows what marriage is. When a man and a woman agree before witnesses to accept each other as spouses and sign the license before witnesses, they are married. How could there be questions about that?

In an e-mail note to me a reader posed several questions. What constitutes "being married"? Is not a private commitment a marriage? Is a ceremony

needed? Is a sexual relationship marriage, as some claim? Does the Bible teach us how to become married? Each of you has probably pondered these questions as you recognize the vagueness of the Scriptures on the subject.

The Scriptures offer no precedent or instruction for any sort of formal ceremony in which a man and woman are "pronounced husband and wife." Among the Hebrews and Semitic people, and in a greater part of the world (still common today), marriage was a family affair with strong societal implications. It included negotiations between the families involved through their family head (patriarch) which would include payment to the bride's father. In our transient culture we have lost most of that sense of family, tribe, and societal relationship.

Acceptance of the terms of contract before witnesses amounted to a betrothal which was perhaps the nearest to a modern licensing, but the consummation of the marriage might be months or years in the future. This commitment was taken much more seriously than the present-day "engagement." Among the Jews, it was common to build additional living quarters on to the father's house. Jesus alluded to this when he promised to prepare a place for his disciples in his Father's house of many rooms (John 14:1-3).

At the time for the wedding male friends of the groom, carrying lamps or torches, escorted him in procession to the wedding feast. After the supper the finalizing of the wedding was the entrance of the groom into the "tent," or chamber with his bride. Whether all these traditions were followed or not in each case, it seems that when a man would go into the tent or room of his intended wife in view and approval of others, the marriage was recognized.

None of those customs are specified or bound by Christian writers. There is no indication that the wedding is a "religious service" though spiritual principles should influence it, as well as all aspects of our lives. Our concept of a "church wedding" came from the Catholic Church who defined "Holy Matrimony" as a sacrament administered by the Church only, that is, by the priesthood. Thus, a "church wedding" was one "blessed by the Catholic Church." A civil ceremony of marriage lacked that official blessing.

Although non-Catholics do not accept that theology, they have adapted the "church wedding" idea into a tradition of a formal wedding ceremony in a "church building" with a preacher officiating with no thought of meeting "church approval." For many it has become a purely social tradition for ceremonial display of a pretentious "church wedding" even by those not spiritually inclined. The white wedding gown symbolizing virginal purity is now worn with impunity by pregnant brides and by those who were "live-in

partners” up until the wedding. So for the most part, the “church wedding” is for the pageantry and a status symbol. The holiness and spirituality are determined by the hearts of the groom and bride rather than by the building or ceremony or whether it was officiated by a minister or a civil authority.

“A piece of paper cannot make a marriage,” is heard from some who wish to live together without a license of marriage. That claim has validity. I became a driver of a car before Texas required that we have a license. Later, when I got my license, the piece of paper did not make me a driver or affect my driving, but I would have become a violator without it. I became a law-abiding driver with less culpability in future problems that might arise. The same principle applies to having a marriage license.

If a couple agrees to live together without a wedding, are they married? How long would they have to live together to distinguish it from fornication? Would the relationship begin as fornication and develop into a holy union? If a couple pledge their love to each other and privately commit themselves to each other for life, would that not be a marriage? Though it would involve the most basic element of marriage, it still would not fill all the requirements.

The followers of Jesus are taught to obey the laws of the land and to live honorably in accordance with society. Our law specifies that spouses be a male and a female who have signed a witnessed contract to live as husband and wife. Why would any couple balk at signing such a contract? Variations of *common law marriage* are recognized in different states. However, civil laws usually require a period of time of co-habitation before it is accepted as marriage. Can continued fornication become holy matrimony?

Some avoid a signed contract because they want temporary companionship and sexual license without commitment to each other. They refuse the most basic expression of love and marriage – commitment. They want companionship of a person as long as it satisfies their selfish desires. Without commitment each partner, like a commissioned salesman, is on trial for pleasing performance every day of life. Think of living with someone who does not love and trust you enough to make a commitment to continue to love you after the heat of passion has cooled and real-life problems begin to develop. The shadow of rejection and loneliness always looms ahead. Those taught in the Word will also be living with guilty conscience knowing that their sexual immorality condemns them. No, a piece of paper cannot create love but signing one may express unqualified love. Where that kind of love exists, there is no hesitancy in signing a legal attestation of it. In true commitment each partner is signing a blank check knowing not what demands will be injected in the blank in the years ahead – whether it be

sickness, sorrow, or poverty – the contract is “until death do us part.” Is that scary? No, it is a confirmation of love. That most assuring love contract was confirming, satisfying, and comforting for Lea and me for 57 years.

A social crusade in our generation has had a devastating effect on this basic social and spiritual institution of our culture. Living together has replaced marriage by a great segment. Women boast unashamedly of having children out of wedlock thus undermining the family and home which is the foundation of civilized society. In their conceit and rebellion, they think they have greater wisdom than God who created and upholds the family, and they seek to prove the wisdom of all previous civilizations outdated.

It is true that neither the laws of our land nor the Scriptures prescribe a ritual or ceremony of marriage. The judge, Justice of the Peace, priest, or preacher acts as one authorized by the State to witness the contract of marriage. In some states additional witnesses are required. Thus it becomes a legal contract.

Previous to the legal contract, each party has already agreed to the contract, and in that sense, they are married except for the legality of it. A contract involves a meeting of minds. Questions of the binding nature of the witnessed contract arise when it may be revealed later that one partner deceived the other in the contract or that there was some legal violation such as lying about age. There is no true meeting of minds where there is deliberate deception. If a person pledges love where there is none, promises lifelong commitment without intention, or promises to be a true husband without revealing his sexual impotence, there is serious question as to whether a valid contract has been formed. When such deception has been revealed later, it may be reason for annulment of an invalid contract rather than “grounds for divorce.”

Since a contract, whether a legal contract or an exchange of vows, is between two parties, it cannot be kept unilaterally. Both parties must live up to the contract. When one spouse violates and destroys the contract, the other can no longer be bound by it. If a wife leaves her husband, he cannot remain faithful to her for the rest of his life for the contracted marriage no longer exists. Look for more concerning adulterating marriage in a future lesson.

In speaking of a legal contract, we are referring to conforming to civil law, yet even civil laws may be intended to promote the spiritual principles of love, commitment, and fidelity which are the principles upon which marriage are based.

Jesus was explaining a legal code. Our efforts to define and explain the principles governing marriage in legal terms have left many questions without answer. Paul's letter to the Corinthians dealt with the principles rather than a legal code. Let's look further into this in the next lesson.

(Some points in this piece were adapted from *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, pages 1996-1999. Some related references: Gen. 24:8; 26:34; 29:20; 34:3; Exo. 2:21; Dt. 22:23; Judges 14:1-20; 1 Sam. 18:19f; Jer. 7:34; Matt. 1:19; 9:15; John 2:1-11; 3:29; Rev. 18:23) []

Problems with Legal Interpretation

Perplexing questions about divorce and remarriage bring unending debate. Conclusions reached and judgments imposed are the cause of much pain, uncertainty, and crippling discouragement. Extreme convictions allow some to pass severe judgment on others. Some congregations demand conformity to their authoritarian pronouncements, and they publicly denounce congregations that allow individual freedom. However, many who have sought to bind their severe, unbending convictions begin to open their minds to further study and search for grace when they or their children become victims of divorce. Proud finger-pointing becomes humbling when they must point to themselves.

I am proposing to you that a big part of the problem of our interpretation of scriptures relating to divorce and remarriage is our old entrapment in legalism. We have allowed Jesus' explanations of the Law of Moses to lead us to think he was giving NEW LAWS IN A NEW LEGAL CODE regulating marriage and divorce. This has led some of us almost to ignore the major source of apostolic teaching on the subject in 1 Corinthians 7 where Paul's teachings reflect gracious principle rather than rigid law.

To you who adhere to the concept of law, let me ask some questions for, in order to keep law, specific answers are of vital importance.

What is *legal scriptural marriage* (an invented term)? Is it a contract where a man and woman agree to live together as husband and wife to the exclusion of all other parties? Most of us will agree that marriage involves a contract between a man and a woman. A contract is based upon a meeting of minds without deception. But is it based upon law or principle? We discussed this in the last lesson.

If the parents arrange the marriage as is the custom in so many societies, is there a contract between the man and woman? She might have detested the repulsive man to whom she was being given from her first sight of him.

Could she be bound to “love, honor, and obey” him when she did not and could not contract to do that? Would the old-fashioned “shotgun wedding” lacking in love be valid? If, after the wedding, one partner revealed his/her homosexuality, would theirs be a marriage? Can an impotent man having no sexual desires fulfill a contract of marriage? If, after a time together, the man revealed that he had no intention of making the marriage permanent when they married, would there be a valid contract, a meeting of minds? If, without love or sincere commitment, a woman accepted a man for his money and/or prestige, would that be a valid contract in good faith? If an under-age boy and girl lied about their age in order to get a license, would that be a legal marriage? In order to judge marriage by legality, answers to these questions would be of utmost importance, but where do we find the answers defined in law? They must be judged by principles of what is just.

Must a woman live with a husband who comes home drunk and beats her regularly while refusing to mend his ways? Must she continue to “love, honor, and obey?” Or maybe he is a deadbeat, or verbally abuses her constantly. Can she divorce him though fornication is not involved? May she separate from him, no longer feeling that she must submit to him as the scriptures teach a wife to do? If he is a Vietnam MIA, is she still married to him? If he abandons her and the children and can no longer be found, is there a valid marriage? If a boy and girl, each escaping an abusive home life, marry hastily, only to learn that they are from different planets, as it were, and can develop no loving relationship, are they obligated to spend the rest of their lives in that miserable situation? If they divorce, and law demands that they remain celibate, how can they ever be convinced that “*my yoke is easy and my burden is light*”? Where everything that makes a true marriage between two people has long since died, must they continue the demeaning farce of living together under the guise of marriage? Would lawful marriage be affected if one partner to it changed his/her sexual orientation?

Even Jesus did not answer all of them – that is, unless you interpret that Jesus made unbending laws where “one size fits all.”

Now, let us ask about “*except for fornication (porneia)*.” If that word denotes sexual relations of the unmarried, as may be the case, then one’s spouse cannot be guilty of it! If it includes sexual relations of married people outside of their marriage, then it was not a cause for divorce according to the Law of Moses which Jesus was explaining, but it was cause for stoning to death. Jesus was not countermanding the Law! So there is question about the meaning of *fornication*. That word is translated as *indecent* in Deut. 24:1 in the Septuagint.

Further, granting that *fornication* means a sexual violation of the marriage contract, how sure must one be about the offense? Must the spouse be caught in the act? May one depend upon hearsay or the word of others? Suppose a wife confesses to adultery in order that her husband will give her a divorce, but she is actually lying? Must the act be fully consummated? Is one violation sufficient grounds for divorce? If the violator is penitent and wants the marriage to continue, is the "ground for divorce" still valid? If a man has proved himself to be a loving husband, yet it is learned that twenty years earlier, he violated his marriage, may his wife still properly put him away? If your spouse divorces you because of incompatibility, is celibate for several years, and then marries, can you honestly claim that fornication was the "grounds" for the divorce?

Is every man who has had illicit sexual contacts a fornicator? Admittedly, once he was, but is he still a fornicator? Yes, you say? It is not that simple. Look at this one familiar passage: "*Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). They had changed (yes, even homosexuals). They were no longer sinners! The penitent were forgiven! Will God forgive all those sins except adultery?

If an adulterer is penitent, asking God and his wife to forgive him, may she rightly claim his former guilt as a basis for divorce? In the spirit of Christ, she will not, but if she is looking for legal loopholes in order to rid herself of him, she can still find one there enabled by her unforgiving emotion.

If Jesus had demanded that, without the grounds of fornication, no one could divorce and then remarry, he would have been annulling God's law through Moses (Deut. 24:1-4). But instead of Jesus destroying tenets of the Law, which he denied doing, he was insisting on a greater respect for it. Jesus did not address every situation and involvement of problem marriages. He did not give lawful answers to all the questions we have raised.

Some laws stated specifically are meant to be applied in principle. For instance, "*You shall not kill*" is meant to teach the principle of respect for human life rather than forbidding all killing. Although "*You shall not kill*" sounds very specific and inclusive, by reading further in the Law, we find at least four instances where manslaughter is justified, or even recommended or required by the same Law.

Yes, God hates divorce as well as other sins (Malachi 2:16). In spite of his detestation, but with sorrow he divorced his people, Israel (Jer. 3:8). The cause of divorce always brings sorrow. God hates divorce but he does not hate marriage which is his own idea. Divorce results from sin but marriage is not a sin. Some principles supporting marriage are the filling of a void in our lives through love and companionship, the fulfillment of sexual desires, procreation, the provision of a secure, loving, and nurturing environment for children, and helping to maintain a stable society. If an unfaithful divorced disciple remarries, nurtures a happy family with children with the new spouse, and then returns like the prodigal to the Lord, must that marriage be dissolved? Which principle or purpose of marriage would be enhanced or promoted by such a drastic action? Are the regulations of marriage meant to be protective or punitive? A demanded dissolution of the happy marriage would protect nothing! It would only be a cruelly destructive punishment.

The principles set high ideals for marriage. However, God knows that errant mankind cannot always live by the ideal principles, and he knows that one partner cannot force the other to respect their marriage. A contract cannot be kept unilaterally. Even so, God has provided for the happiness of less than perfect people. He offers grace and forgiveness for the struggling penitent. Even though from the beginning it was not his ideal, God has allowed divorce and remarriage in some instances (Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 5:31-32; 1 Cor. 7). However, if we are self-righteous enough and are blessed with a tolerant spouse, we can feel that the divorced person should bear a life-long penalty of humiliation and celibacy, banned from God's kingdom, or made a second-rate citizen in it at best.

Although Jesus said, "*Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her,*" that is not an all-inclusive statement. That statement in Mark 10:11 would conflict with Matthew 5:31-32 where Jesus included "*except for fornication/unchastity*". The conjunction AND is often used to state purpose. For example, when I say, "I went to the airport **and** picked up my friend," I am also meaning, "I went to the airport **in order to** pick up my friend." In view of this common usage of the conjunction, and in harmony with Jesus' explaining the Law, is he not reinforcing, "*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife?*" Is there not evidence to indicate that he was saying, "*Every one who divorces his wife **in order to** marry another commits adultery?*" This would greatly restrict its application, for Jesus was not addressing all the complications of failed marriages that are no longer fulfilling the principles of marriage that God was protecting by his regulations. When a marriage is dead except for the legal paperwork, why should it be preserved and depicted as God's idea of a marriage? It does nothing to indicate the honorable nature of a marriage.

Away from the Jewish setting of Jesus' teachings, Paul offered apostolic instruction to the disciples of Greek culture in Corinth. Since the Greeks had not been under the Law of Moses, Paul does not allude to it in his approach to questions about marriage. They were not taught to judge their marriage situations by a code of law. []

Adulterating Marriage

Several years ago I introduced a concept about adultery that I had never heard before. I expected some reaction to it but received none that I recall. I would like to expand on that concept here.

The concept of *adultery* or *adulteration* is not just related to religion or sexual relations. In common usage, to adulterate means to corrupt, debase, or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance. We have federal agencies to protect the public against the adulteration of our food and drugs. The scriptures give us guidelines to prevent adulteration of marriages.

If a pharmacist adulterates the medication he sells, he is an adulterer but it is the medication that is adulterated. He is not adulterated. In similar thought, a person who slanders is a slanderer but not the one slandered. Another person is slandered. One who robs is a robber but not the one robbed.

In these examples, the action of each is unlawful and sinful. But we do not say the pharmacist is living in adultery, the slanderer is living in slander, or the robber is living in robbery. Neither do we say that the pharmacist and his victims are living in adultery, or the slanderer and the one he slandered are living in slander, or the robber and the one robbed are living in robbery. Why cannot we apply such good sense to marriage?

While it is true that the person may become the adulterer and sexual relations outside the marriage by a married person may be the adulterant, the people involved are not adulterated. The marriage, rather than the people, is adulterated. Our invented term "living in adultery" is not found in the scriptures. Only the Lord knows, however, how many persons are unknowingly in an adulterated marriage because of the secret affairs of their spouses. Who will contend that such an innocent mate would be condemned because of it? An adulterous man cannot be "living in adultery" while his innocent wife is not!

Even if a woman knows her husband has adulterated their marriage, there is no law or reason demanding that she divorce him. If he repents, asks for

forgiveness, and is forgiven, he is no longer an adulterer and their marriage is pure again (Consider 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous" (Heb.13:4). While we recognize that marriage without love and trust is defective, we also know that without sexuality there would be no marriage. It is the nature God put within us to bring about the propagation of the race and to help hold the family unit together for the nurturing and protection of the offspring. So sexual activity by a marriage partner outside the marriage corrupts-destroys-adulterates the purity of God's happy arrangement.

Paul certainly emphasized the love that should exist between husband and wife, but he also recognized their sexual needs. *"But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband"* but he did not add "and each homosexual person should have his/her own same-sex partner" (1 Cor. 7:2). Then he further advises husbands and wives to respect conjugal rights.

Although homosexual activity is condemned in the scriptures, same-sex partners do not commit adultery for there is no marriage to adulterate. Their sexual activities are not for procreation or for the maintaining of the nurturing situation for their offspring, hence there can be no valid marriage. The same can be said of heterosexual persons living together out of wedlock.

Adulterine children are those born of adultery, though it is not "politically correct" to refer to them as bastards in our licentious society. Paul corrected an evident misconception among some Corinthian disciples, explaining, *"For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy"* (7:14). For a believer to have children with an unbelieving spouse was not adultery, nor did it produce adulterine children. Both the marriage and the children were consecrated / holy.

Throughout the centuries, the sincerest of scholars have wrestled with some of Jesus' statements regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In one of the more difficult passages Jesus states, *"Everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"* (Matt. 5:31f). We must question the possibility that the action of a husband can make his wife a sinner. Jesus was commenting on Deut. 24:1-4 which specifically allowed a divorced woman to be remarried, but she could not later return to her first husband because she had been *defiled* by his action. Her marriage with the

first husband had been adulterated but not so with the second. It seems that she had been made the victim of adulteration rather than bearing the guilt of it.

There is a more feasible approach to understanding Jesus' statements, however. Jesus was dealing with their legal code of law, the Law of Moses, and their Talmudic interpretations. In this very setting, Jesus declared that he was not changing the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:17-20). We are not under that legal code for justification or for continued sanctification, for we are under a Covenant of Grace rather than the Covenant of Law. Yet, we have consistently tried to regulate marriage relationships under the covenant of grace by precepts of a code of law!

We have been known to argue properly that we are not under the Law of Moses and then proceed to judge our marriages by it. To those who would bind the Law upon disciples, Peter asked, "*Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a YOKE upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear ?*" (Acts 15:10). Why bind that yoke when Jesus promised, "*For MY YOKE is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matt. 11:30)?

This realization becomes stronger when we consider that none of the writers of the Epistles quote Jesus' pronouncements when they write about marriage. We look to 1 Corinthians 7 for the most comprehensive apostolic discussion of the subject, and there Paul neither mentions Jesus' teachings in the Gospels nor uses the term "adultery!" He does not lay down the same restrictions and stipulations taught by Jesus and the Law.

Our marriage relationships are not governed by a legal code but by higher principles of love, moral ethics, justice, honor, trust, and commitment. Abandonment of either of these in the marriage relationship spoils the purity and sanctity of a marriage. Consider the one who abandons his family. "*If any does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever*" (1 Tim. 5:8). Is a sexual infraction of the husband a greater sin than denial of the faith? Has not the absentee father destroyed his marriage even as adultery would? Is the man who habitually beats his wife or constantly demeans her on better terms than the adulterer? Are those marital relations devoid of love, morality, and commitment — the elements that constitute marriage — still sanctified marriages? There can be unions that fulfill none of the purposes of marriage. Does not grace offer a key to unlock the dungeon of hopeless marriages, or is a wife compelled for a lifetime to "love, honor, and submit" to the man who gave her all the promises but turned out to be a ruthless

tyrant? I use the man as a generic example, but the wife can be equally destructive.

Adultery may take on a different character in such cases. A breach of spiritual relationship with God is referred to as adultery (See Jas. 4:4; Ezek. 16:15; Matt. 15:19; 16:4; Mark 8:38; 2 Pet. 2:14). Since our marriage is based on love and commitment instead of legal statute, it is well to ponder if the concept of adultery is wider than just sexual infractions.

Loopholes are sought in law. Our president demonstrated the hypocrisy of seeking loopholes in legal definitions. Although it is not given as a just cause for divorce, Jesus indicated that adultery can be in the heart without accompanying action. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* *But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:27). The adulterant is in the man's intention though not yet acted upon.

While we are here, let us look at this abused passage more closely. These words have been used to induce guilt where Jesus did not intend it. Because lust is defined as a strong desire, and every normal youth and man is attracted strongly to females, sincere men of all ages have been made to feel unavoidable guilt. Without strong sexual attraction, a man is not likely ever to marry. But let us look at Jesus' words and meaning. **Lust** and **covet** are translated from the same word. It means a strong desire of any kind, either good or bad. According to the judgment of translators, the word **aner** is rendered **man** or **husband**, and **gune** is rendered **woman** or **wife**. These are the words Jesus used.

He says there is adultery, not fornication, in the heart. Married people commit adultery whereas sexual activity by two unmarried persons is generally called fornication. So, either the man who is lusting or the woman he is looking at, or both, is married. Jesus was actually only reinforcing the Tenth Commandment, *"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife"* (Exo.20:17). That had nothing to do with a youth looking over the prospective dates or finding one to be sexually appealing. Jesus was saying that in coveting / lusting for another man's wife / woman, the plans for adulterating one or two marriages were in his mind already. The man and woman involved could adulterate two marriages in one act. However, since the Seventh Commandment had already stated, *"You shall not commit adultery"* (20:14), the Tenth evidently anticipates that one or both involved would be married.

Luke records Jesus' words, *"Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery"* (Luke 16:18). How could he say that when he

had already given the permissive “except for fornication” clause? It is commonly understood in our speaking, that when a second action is coupled with a former one, the second action indicates the purpose of the first. To illustrate: “I went to the bank and deposited my check.” *AND* couples two actions with the second action stating the purpose of the first one. So we understand it as “I went to the bank *in order to* deposit my check.” That is a very common usage, and evidently it was used by Jesus in the above quotation. It should be understood, “Every one who divorces his wife **IN ORDER TO** marry another.” His looking was more than a gawking or fantasizing but evidently it was a developed intention to take the woman. So he divorces his wife to marry the coveted woman.

I mean to encourage further study. I would like to relieve some of the doubts, uncertainties, and paralyzing fears while remaining true to the Word. I want you to consider that the holiness / sanctity of marriage is based on the higher principles of love, honor, and commitment rather than just upon keeping a legal contract.

For those who may have been sentenced to doom and hopelessness by well-meaning brethren, I point to the hope Paul offered those formerly mired in adulterous relationships, “*And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor. 6:11). []

Specific Laws and Principles

Do you agree that each of the Ten Commandments is about as specific, absolute, and unbending as any law could possibly be? “Do not kill.” “Honor your father and mother.” Who could argue with those laws? These universal laws apply to everyone equally. Right?

So, it is sinful to kill a cockroach, a tree, a chicken, or another human. Well, no, it only refers to human beings, we deduce, though it does not say that. It is a universally specific law against killing a human, we deduce also though no penalty is specified.

The very code of law delivered through Moses allowed for killing of humans by accident, in self-defense, in warfare, and stoning offenders to death. We can all agree that the law demanded the honoring of one’s father and mother, but that law did not define how they were to be honored. It makes no checklist of all the things that would dishonor a parent. Must a daughter honor her mother who deserted her as a child? Must a daughter honor her father who was sexually abusing her? And what was the penalty for dishonoring one’s parents?

Similar conditions, exceptions, and clarifications apply to most all other laws which may seem to be universal, specific, and unbending as statutes. Just laws are based upon principles though those principles may not be defined in the laws themselves. The general principle may be the purpose of the law but the statute may not enumerate and expand on specifications, limitations, exceptions, or penalties in application. The legal statute must not over-ride other principles – like the weightier principles of love, mercy, and justice (see Matt. 23:23f). When we interpret a teaching or command to be contrary to love, mercy, or justice — the highest of principles — wisdom will demand that we re-study our conclusion. Yet, there is no legal code that specifies the most loving, merciful, and just course for each situation that arises in our lives. Our judgment is involved. God fearing disciples will be looking for mercy while less sincere ones may look for loopholes. As we apply our judgment we must ask for wisdom and remember that Jesus promised that his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

How does this apply to this study concerning marriage? In every way! The Jews had the statutes of Moses for fifteen hundred years and were still divided in their understanding of those laws relating to marriage. Shammah and Hillel represented diverse schools of thought prevalent in Jesus' time. If they, with prophetic guidance through the centuries, had not learned to interpret their legal code, how could we be expected to do it?

Let us consider this statement of Jesus with the same logic and lack of emotion as we have applied to the two illustrations above. *"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery"* (Mark 10:11). Is this an iron-clad, unbending statute to be applied universally in all situations? Does it deal with all limitations, exceptions, and conditions that arise within marriage any more than "You shall not kill" was a universal prohibition? Does it encompass all of the weightier principles of love, mercy, and justice? What of all the adulterating causes that I have enumerated in the two previous lessons which neither the Law of Moses nor Jesus in his explanations touched on? We must discern the higher principles rather than seeking to enforce a general statement of law.

As with the law against killing, the Law of Moses itself made an exception allowing divorce and remarriage (Deut. 24:1-4). And Jesus nullified the universality of his statement above by allowing *"except on the ground of unchastity"* (Matt. 5:32) without clarifying all the definitions of unchastity that would adulterate a marriage. Jesus was not dealing with the whole scope of marriage but was explaining points of their law to the Jews. And, as we have already covered, we were never under the Law of Moses that he was explaining.

How does this relate to Paul's instructions to those in a covenant of grace instead of law?

Some make Paul's statement that "*a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives*" an affirmation of an unbending, universal statute (Rom. 7:1f). Note, however, that he was speaking to those Jews who knew the law, using their law to illustrate a point. He was not teaching about marriage but about the duration of the Law of Moses. And we have already noted that the law itself allowed for her divorce and remarriage.

With this background, it would be good to read Paul's chapter (1 Cor. 7) again in its entirety. Note that he does not lay down dogmatic rules, universal statutes, or unbending regulations. "*I say this by way of concession, not of command.*" "*I wish.*" "*I say.*" "*I give my opinion.*" "*In my judgment.*" These many personal expressions indicate that Paul is appealing to our judgment of what is just, merciful, and right rather than judging by specific statutes of universal law.

You may be pointing to verse 10, "*To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband*" as a rigid law Paul was imposing, but Paul invalidates such a concept as he injects "*but if she does... .*" His exception indicated lack of rigidity. Besides, putting this in the context of the questions Paul was dealing with, it is evident that he is warning a woman against using the piety of devotion to Christ as an excuse to separate from her husband so she could marry another. Because she became devoted to Christ did not give her license to leave her husband, but if she did leave him, she had to prove her sincerity by refraining from marriage to someone else.

Again, Paul seems to lay down an absolute rule in verse 39: "*A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives.*" But he had already established that a wife might rightly separate from her husband in verses 10 through 16. So Paul is affirming the principles of marriage instead of enforcing tenets of a rigid law.

For centuries Paul has been trying to get us to comprehend, "*The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**" (Rom. 13:9-10). It is only confusing and entangling to try to define all aspects of those commandments. **Simply follow the most loving course!** That means that we must judge what the most loving course is since all details are not specified. Horrors! That leaves it up to us to judge what the

weightier matters are! We cannot follow such a licentious course! We will be casting all standards aside! Everybody will just do what is right in their own eyes! We need specific laws to define everything!

It is regrettable that I was schooled and nurtured in that spirit of bondage to law and it is even more regrettable that I taught it most of my career! You probably were tutored in the same dependence upon legality as I was. I surely understand why you would shrink back from what I am writing here. Paul definitely did not bind us to law – but to the principles which law fosters. Principles can only be applied through our discernment, and we may not always reach the same conclusions in exercising our judgment. Each must give account to God rather than to fellow-disciples, elders, congregations, or systems of religion with their written or unwritten creeds (Read Romans 14 again).

If you pray for wisdom, you may find much of your answer in Paul's concessions and advice which point to the higher principles of action. He offered advice instead of law to the person whose spouse was not a believer (v. 12-16). He did not call for change of marital status in the process of conversion (v. 17-24). He offered his opinion about the advisability of marriage in view of the impending distress which was developing as the "*parousia*" drew near (v. 25-31). He offered advice about the distractions of marriage – advice with which you and I may disagree and are free to do so! – (v. 32-40).

Still skeptical, you are pointing to verse 39, where Paul lays down an absolute rule that a widow is restricted in marriage to a spouse "only in the Lord." But does Paul tell us what he means by "only in the Lord"? Assuming that he means a fellow-disciple, does that mean one serving in one's own fragmented division of believers only? Can party lines be crossed? Does being a nominal member of a group suffice? How dedicated must one be? What if she marries a pagan, does God demand an annulment? If so, is she free to marry again because God did not recognize the marriage to a pagan? If she sinned in marrying a pagan and he was later converted as Paul suggested might happen (v. 16), would that automatically remedy her sin?

Looking at Paul's sensible advice as an absolute law puts one back in the confused tangle of trying to determine all the legal implications. Paul did not entangle them in law again. All can agree that it is better for spouses to be in harmony religiously. Isn't that what Paul was advising? That wisdom would apply to all marriages, not just those of widows.

In concluding this series (until I learn more!), let us review the premise of my discussion. Jesus' explanations about marriage and other matters were

not new laws over-riding the Law of Moses. He was explaining their true meaning to Jews, some of whom would be keeping them until AD 70. We have never been under that Law. Paul was answering questions about marriage from disciples in Greece. They had not been indoctrinated in regulations about marriage by Paul or others, else they would already have known the answers to their questions. Paul did not instruct them to read the Gospels for themselves for those documents, if written at the time, had not circulated to Corinth. In answering their questions, Paul did not review Jesus' teachings with them. His answers differed from Jesus' teachings about law and were much less restrictive. Would the Corinthian disciples have erred in following Paul's advice and instructions? No. Paul did not bind a yoke of law but pointed to the higher principles of justice, mercy, and love in making their decisions and he offered advice of expediency instead of dogmatic laws. He taught that penitent sinners of various ugly descriptions could be washed and cleansed so as to no longer bear the guilt of those sins. He sentenced no one to a life of celibacy. In these lessons we have seen more clearly the difference in serving God under the Covenant of Law and the Covenant of Grace.

Yes, God hates divorce but he himself sorrowfully put away Israel (Mal. 2:16; Jer. 3:8). I suspect that most all who have gone through the trauma of divorce hate it. It is no picnic. Failures in life bring pain and sorrow but not hopelessness to the person who seeks a better life offered through the grace of God.

"Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (Acts 15:10-11).

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-29). []