

Is A Second “Putting Away” Possible?

by J. T. Smith

In this article I want to answer the above question along with the following question. What is the state of two people who have been married a number of times when they hear the gospel and desire to obey it?

It seems to me that in order to answer the first question it is necessary to review some things that have been stated in earlier lessons.

Definition of “Put Away”

According to Joseph Henry Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon, the words “put away” are from the Greek word *apoluo* and mean, “to dismiss from the house, to repudiate” (Thayer, page 66). W. E. Vine in his Dictionary of New Testament Words (Volume 3, pages 235, 236) defines *apoluo* as, “to put asunder, to send away, Matthew 19*, Mark 1:9.” Sometimes people confuse the “putting away” with the writing of divorcement. Even though both are involved in that which Jesus was discussing, the word “divorce” is a technical term implying the right, according to civil law, to remarry. A writing of divorcement was, in the Old Testament, given to the party being “put away” when she was dismissed from the house. “(1) Legal dissolution of the marriage; (2) Complete separation” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, page 181).

“Scriptural Marriage”

Remember, a marriage consists of a covenant between a man and woman; an agreement, a commitment to fulfill the duties and obligations enjoined upon them by their covenant to each other. Consequently, having taken the above mentioned “vows” and having obeyed civil law, they are joined (bound—yoked) by God having formed a relationship that is to last as long as they both shall live.

What Is Meant By “Put Away”?

A “putting away” means that the above commitment and joint responsibility are forsaken by one or both parties. When the commitment is broken, the relationship is dissolved, the marriage is TERMINATED. Unless it is terminated for fornication (thus with God’s approval) even though the commitment is broken, the relationship dissolved, and the marriage terminated, they are still joined (bound—yoked) by God. Let’s list the elements of a “putting away.”

- 1 The commitment is broken.
- 2 The relationship is dissolved.
- 3 The marriage is terminated.

Now in light of these elements, let’s just ask the question, as many brethren do, “If the one doing the “putting away” remarries, thus committing adultery, why can’t the ‘poor innocent one’ who is left (against whose will all of the has been done) *then* ‘put away’ the adulterous mate for fornication?” Let’s be careful now in answering this question. Before we attempt to answer it, let me ask another question. Of the above elements included in “putting away” a person, which of the elements may the “innocent one” who is left, actively engage in? In other words, what is there left to “put away.”

“Oh,” but someone says, “I am not going to permit anyone to ‘tie God’s hands’ so that He can’t assist a person who is innocent of all wrongdoing.” Now brethren, that sounds

good, and noble and filled with empathy. And actually that is all it is— a statement from a heart that is filled with sympathy for the innocent person. However, I am sorry to say there is not an ounce of Scripture to back it up. I certainly feel sorry for the innocent person who is “put away.” But I also feel sorry for the following person. If the above situation will work, why won’t this one? An ungodly husband goes out and robs a bank and kills a guard. It is against God’s will, his wife’s will, his children’s will, and society. He is caught and receives 30 years in the state penitentiary. The wife can’t remarry with God’s approval so that she might have a husband and the children a father to provide for them. “But,” someone says, “that’s not right. I am not going to permit anyone to ‘tie God’s hands’ so He can’t assist a person who is innocent of all wrongdoing.” Brethren, it won’t work. It is all a matter of human reasoning because we sympathize with the innocent party. But it won’t work—scripturally.

The “Alien” and God’s Law

Now then, let’s turn our attention to the second question. In what state are two people who have divorced and remarried a number of times and then have heard the gospel and desire to obey it?

As we attempt to talk to people about the gospel, we learn that many of them have already been divorced and remarried a number of times. What are we to encourage them to do about their situation? May they just remain with the person to whom they are now “married” (according to the laws of the land)? Are those who are involved in the above situation, living in adultery? If either one or both of them desire to obey the gospel of Christ, can they continue to live together after they are baptized? Regarding this subject, these are some of the most difficult questions with which one has to wrestle. They are also the most awesome that I, or any other gospel preacher, has to face. If we tell people what God’s Word teaches, hearts **will** be broken. If we don’t, souls **will** be lost. So as you can see, there is really not much of a choice to make. We are in business with the Lord to save souls.

It is my understanding of the Scriptures that *all* men are amenable to God’s marriage laws

DO GOD’S MARRIAGE LAWS APPLY TO ALIENS?

**Paul said those who were worshiping idols (aliens)
were also guilty of fornication (Romans 1:25, 29).**

**Also, Paul said the Corinthians were fornicators
and adulterers (a violation of God’s Law)
BEFORE (thus aliens) they were washed,
sanctified, justified (I Corinthians 6:9-11).**

BUT

God said He would judge adulterers (Hebrews 13:4)

THUS

God will judge aliens who commit adultery !

regardless of whether they are Christians or non-Christians.

As you can see from the above charts, God’s Law says that those who commit premarital or extra-marital sex are committing fornication, adultery. To commit such is a sin. To commit sin means that we have violated (transgressed) God’s Law (I John 3:4). Thus as you can see from the passages in Romans, these people who were idolaters whom God had “given up” were *committing sin* (adultery, fornication). Also, those at Corinth were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners

(each of these a violation of God's Law) **BEFORE** they were washed, sanctified, justified. There had to be "law," to which they were amenable, or else there would have been no transgression (Romans 4:15). That being the situation, unless the person who is divorced and remarried *put away* his spouse *for fornication*, he did not have a scriptural right to do so according to Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9. So, when he remarries he is *living in adultery*. Can he then obey the gospel and continue to live in this relationship? NO! "Would you," someone asks, "baptize this person who is living, and intends to continue to live, in this relationship?" No! If I learn of this person's condition and also learned that he planned to continue *living in adultery after* he was baptized, I would not immerse him. But let me ask a question. If a worshipper of Buddha wanted to be baptized, would you baptize him even if you learned that he intended to continue worshipping the idol *after* he was baptized?

The Unpardonable Sin?

Are we saying this is "the unpardonable sin" — that there can be no forgiveness for it? Is this a sin that is so different from all other sins that one can not receive forgiveness for it? No! Then what is the problem?

Repentance

We cannot overlook the fact that in order for one to be a proper subject for baptism, he *must repent*. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38).

What Is Meant By The Word "Repent?"

"To change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence one's past sins" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, page 405). "Repentance is the turning from sin" (Hasting's Bible Dictionary, page 790). These definitions (and many others that could be given) set forth clearly that if one is to *repent* of his sins, *he must desist from sin*. An excellent illustration of this is found in the book of Jonah. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:10). Thus the Bible usage of the word "repentance" in this passage (as it refers to the people of Nineveh) is one "turning from his evil ways."

In the New Testament we read of John the Baptist telling the Pharisees and Sadducees that they could not be baptized of his baptism. "He said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:7-8). A similar expression "do works meet for repentance" is found in Acts 16:20 as it relates to those who are under the new covenant.

"But," someone says, "doesn't baptism wash away sins?" Yes, sins of which we are willing to repent (quit). But to say that one can be sorry for his sins" and yet remain in them after baptism (because baptism washes away sins) is to pervert the purpose of baptism. Baptism is not a "marriage ceremony." No, baptism does not change the nature of a sinful act so that when one commits it after baptism it is no longer sinful. If it is a sin *before* one is baptized, it is a sin *after* one is baptized.

DEFINITIONS

Unlawful Intercourse With Another's Spouse = **Adultery**

Telling An Untruth = **Lying**

Worshipping Idols = **Idolatry**

Taking Another's Property = **Stealing**

IF AFTER REPENTANCE

Unlawful Intercourse With Another's Spouse = **Is Not Adultery**

Why Does:

Telling An Untruth Still = **Lying?**

Worshipping Idols Still = **Idolarty?**

Taking Another's Property Still = **Stealing**

What Is One's Position?

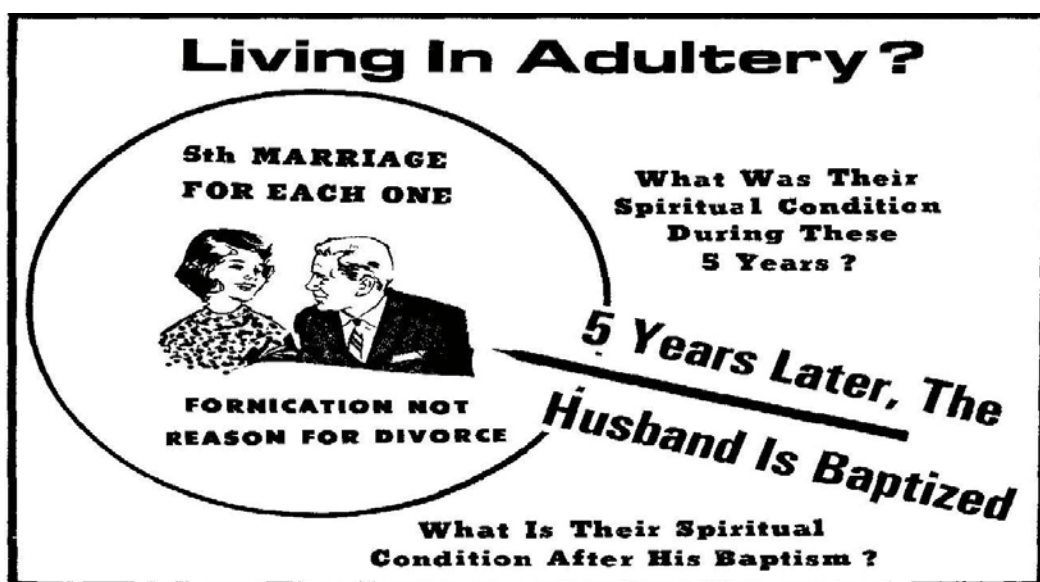
This is a good and pertinent question, and one that needs to be answered. Just what is the position of one who has been divorced and remarried one or more times, hears the gospel and desires to obey it?

In order to illustrate this, let's notice the subject of *polygamy*. We read in I Corinthians 7:2 that "...every man is to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband." Thus polygamy is sinful. It is a violation of God's covenant for man today whether he is a Christian or non-Christian. Now, if one is practicing polygamy and is desirous of being a Christian may he keep all of his wives *after* he is baptized? After all, baptism washes away sins. "Yes," one would say, "but baptism doesn't wash away wives." That is exactly right. It doesn't wash away the polygamist's wives, and it doesn't wash away the adulterer's wives. For, you see, if one is married to someone else's wife *before* he is baptized, he is still married to someone else's wife *after* he is baptized.

Baptism doesn't change a marriage relationship.

“But,” someone says, “here is a couple who wants to be baptized even though both of them have been married five times. They are getting along just fine after five years, have two children, and after hearing the gospel they want to be baptized. Do you mean to tell me that they would be living in adultery if they were *both* baptized?” Yes, they would be. As you can see from the chart, I have depicted the very situation spoken of above *except for the fact* that *only one* of these persons desires to be baptized. Now then what is their situation? Is one living in adultery and the other, who has been baptized, *not living in adultery*? Surely you can see this cannot be a scriptural situation anyway we fix it.

“Are you saying then that this family would have to break up and that they can no longer live as husband and wife?” Yes, that is exactly what I am saying. The fact of the matter is, they have never been husband and wife (bound) in the sight of God. They have only been practicing legalized adultery as far as God is concerned. “But what about those poor little children?” one is heard to say. My heart certainly goes out to the children. It seems like they



are the ones who suffer the most. But what about the chil

dren in their other eight marriages? (For you will recall that both had been married four times each before they contracted this marriage?) Aren't they to be pitied just as much? No, my friends, pitying the children won't make it a scriptural marriage. Obeying God's Word is the only thing that will make people what they ought to be. One cannot be what he ought to be without repentance. And as difficult as it is to do, one can repent if he wants to go to Heaven badly enough. In fact, if one find's himself living in adultery it must be done!

What About Pentecost?

“But what about people on Pentecost? They were not told to give up their spouses.” It has been argued, and perhaps rightly so, that those things that God allowed *before* Christ's Law came into effect were not sinful, because God allowed them, and therefore would not have to be corrected. In other words, Christ's Law was not retroactive on the people who lived in another dispensation of time. However, that is not the case today. *All men* are amenable to Christ's Law today as we have abundantly shown from the above charts. So whatever happened on Pentecost to those people who lived under another Law of God would have no affect on what we must do today.

