

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Unmarried but Bound

(Jerry Fite)

thians 7:11). If she is divorced and unmarried, how can this same man be her husband?

Some explain that she is divorced, but still “*married in God’s eyes*”. Therefore, he is still her “*husband*”. From God’s perspective, has He not told us in this verse that she is “*unmarried*”? A better explanation is that she is still “*bound*” by God’s law to him as his wife, and he to her as her husband. Her action of divorcing him has not changed this fact.

The word “*bound*” is emphasizing the restriction of law that God has placed upon the husband and wife relationship. The wife is “*bound by law to the husband while he liveth*” (*Romans 7:3a*). Only if he dies is she free to be married or joined to another man. “. . . *but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man*” (*Romans 7:3b*). Death therefore frees one from the restriction of law that is placed upon the husband and wife for life. Paul emphasizes this to his Corinthian readers:

“A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (I Corinthians 7:39).

Because the wife is bound by God’s law to her husband, if after a divorce she is joined to or marries another man, she is guilty of adultery. A divorce leaving one in an unmarried state does not free one from the sin of adultery when marrying another. Though now unmarried, they are still bound by God’s law to one another. The only exception is when one divorces their mate for “*the cause of fornication*” (*Matthew 19:9*). When a marriage relationship ends by one divorcing his or her mate for the cause of fornication, the one innocent of fornication is free according to God’s law to marry another.

Paul has these facts in mind when he exhorts the wife to “*remain unmarried*”. Do not enter another marriage. It would be adultery. According to God and His law, she is “*unmarried*” but still “*bound*” to her living husband.

Paul exhorts married couples in Corinth to not leave or divorce their mate. The husband is not to leave his wife, and the wife is not to depart from her husband. Boxed between these mutual responsibilities lies the following statement: “. . . *but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband*” (*I Corinthians 7:11*).

This departure was not speaking about a wife going to the market place or of an out of town visit to her mother’s house, but such action that leaves one in an “*unmarried*” state. The wife is not to “*chorizo*”, or “*leave*” her husband. It is referring to a separation or divorce while complying with Jesus’ command: “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (chorizo)*” (*Matthew 19:6*).

The question arises if the wife is now in an “*unmarried*” state, how is the man she has divorced still her “*husband*”? The only other option she has to the unmarried state is to “*be reconciled to her husband*” (*I Corin-*