

MARRIAGE & DIVORCE—WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY? (5)

BY KEITH GREER

Whenever the subject of divorce and remarriage is discussed by brethren, 1 Corinthians 7:15 is always a center of controversy. Why? Many suppose that they have found another cause authorized by God for divorce and remarriage, but does that agree with what we know about God's law concerning divorce and remarriage?

In studying the scriptures, one point must remain true. When all of the passages dealing with these matters are read (Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7) and applications are made, there **cannot be any contradictions of scriptures!**

Some of our brethren have reached the conclusion that the marriage law in the New Testament is not applicable to the unbeliever. If that be true, why does the rest of the law apply to them? (Please read 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 and John 12:48-49) Others contend that since Jesus never dealt with this subject Himself, 1 Corinthians 7 is simply "Paul's advice."

When the apostle Paul wrote, **“BUT TO THE REST SPEAK I NOT THE LORD ... ”** (1 Corinthians 7:12), who are "the rest?" Searching the context it clearly teaches that it was the marriages between a Christian and an unbeliever that was being considered by Paul.

When the Pharisees came tempting Jesus, He didn't give them a law that only applies to Christians. (Matthew 19:3-9) We know that the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit in their teachings and writings (2 Peter 1:19-21), and there is no contradiction in 1 Corinthians 7 with "other" information that the Lord gave.

In 1 Corinthians 7:12-14, the text clearly shows that the Christian is commanded to stay with the unbelieving spouse.

"But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy." Surely one can affirm the command is to stay together.

Next, Paul went on to say that "But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace." (1 Corinthians 7:15)

Does the believer, deserted by an unbeliever, have some privileges which the unbeliever deserted by a believer does not have? If so, why? Some brethren teach that the believer deserted by an unbeliever has the authority to put away his mate and remarry, but the believer deserted by the believer would be unable to scripturally put away his mate and remarry. Sound confusing? (1 Corinthians 14:33)

The authority that we have for anything must be given by direct statement, approved example, or necessary inference. In 1 Corinthians 7:15, we do not have any "necessary inferences" that allow desertion as "another" cause for remarriage.

Another point of debate is the word "bondage". **"BONDAGE"** comes from a Greek verb, "dedoulotai" (root word "douloo") meaning "to make a slave of, reduce to bondage". (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament) Thayer further defines it as "to be under bondage, held by constraint of law or necessity, in some matter." When the word is used to describe the marriage relationship, it is used twice: Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. In a debate some years ago, one in the debate made this statement, "IT IS NEVER TRANSLATED TO MEAN SLAVERY IN THAYER'S. AND IF YOU LOOK IN THAYER'S YOU WILL SEE MARRIAGE BOND, is how it can be translated. (cont.) ***