

Revision of Comments on I Timothy 3:2

Upon further study of the Scriptures, I have changed my mind about what I wrote about I Timothy 3:2 in the first and second editions of *Notes on I & II Timothy and Titus*. There follows a revision of this verse,. This is quoted from the third edition of my notes on I Timothy. Those who have previously purchased *Notes on I & II Timothy and Titus* should take note.

3:2

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach. **Then** suggests an inference based upon verse 1. It is used in the sense of *therefore, consequently, or accordingly*. Inasmuch as the position entails a great deal of responsibility, Paul proceeds to list certain qualifications for the office in order to exclude those who are unqualified. Throughout the context, it is obvious that the candidate must be a man. Such is hardly even worthy of mention except that so many churches have begun the unscriptural practice of ordaining women. A **bishop** must, first of all, be **blameless**. He must be *without reproach*. The word translated *blameless* means literally *not to be laid hold of or irreproachable*. Although he may be falsely accused, no one should legitimately be able to point to something in his character that would bring reproach upon Christ or the local church.

Secondly, he is to be **the husband of one wife**. This phrase does not mean that a bishop must be married, but that, if he is married, he must have only one wife. Some have argued that the qualification is aimed only at polygamy, which they claim was common. While *the husband of one wife* certainly disqualifies polygamists, it also disqualifies others. The phrase is literally *a one-woman-sort-of-man* or *a one-wife-sort-of-husband*. Thus, in addition to polygamy, marital infidelity also disqualifies one from the office of pastor; and whatever else it may mean, it includes the idea that the pastor ought not to be a flirtatious individual. Thus, one who has

eyes for the ladies, who carries himself as a ladies' man, or who regards himself as God's gift to women disqualifies himself from the office of bishop.

This passage also disqualifies those who remarry after divorce. Jesus addressed the subject in Mark 10:1-12 and Matthew 19:1-12. They are parallel passages which occurred on the same occasion, and both refer to the same event in the life of Christ. Mark 10:1-12 says,

- (1) And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.
- (2) And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him.
- (3) And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?
- (4) And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away.
- (5) And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.
- (6) But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.
- (7) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;
- (8) **And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.**
- (9) **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**
- (10) **And in the house his disciples**

asked him again of the same *matter*.

(11) **And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.**

(12) **And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery** (emphasis added).

Matthew 19:1-12 says,

(1) And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;

(2) And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

(3) The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

(4) And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female,

(5) And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

(6) **Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**

(7) **They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?**

(8) **He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.**

(9) **And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso**

marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

(10) **His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.**

(11) But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

(12) For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it* (emphasis added).

The Pharisees were tempting Christ, i.e. putting Him to the test, seeking to trap Him, so that they might accuse Him. The purpose of the Pharisees' question is indicated by *tempting*, indicating that they were testing Him in order to use their findings against Him in some way. It suggests that they were setting a trap for Him.

Rather than answering them, Jesus asked them what Moses had commanded them (Mark 10:3).

In response to Jesus' question, the Pharisees in Mark 10:4 used the word *suffered*, meaning *permitted* or *allowed*; whereas, in Matthew 19:7 they used the word *commanded*. They apparently used both terms. *A bill of divorcement*, where *bill* refers to a brief written message, i.e. *a document* or *a certificate*, and where *of divorcement* is a legal technical term meaning *a notice of divorce*, was to be given to the woman for her protection. *To put (her) away* is used in the sense of *to dissolve a marriage relationship (with her)* or *to divorce (her)*. *Jesus answered* the Pharisees. . . , *For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept*. *For* is understood in the sense of *with reference to* or *because of*. *The hardness of your heart* is *your hardness of heart*, (i.e. *your perversity, unyielding frame of mind, coldness, obstinacy, or stubbornness*).

Mark 10:5 says, *And Jesus answered and said*

unto them, *For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.* Mark's use of the word *precept* (i.e. *command* - the noun form of the word translated *command* in Mark 10:3) indicates that Jesus did not reduce Moses' command to the level of *suffer, permit, or allow* used by the Pharisees in Mark 10:4.

Matthew 19:8 adds the words *from the beginning it was not so*, which indicates that divorce had no place in God's plans when He ordained marriage. God's plan was marriage for life with one's wife, and this has not changed. Man, however, began to divorce and remarry. To protect the divorced spouse, Moses commanded that a bill of divorcement be given to the wife. Marriage to one partner, followed by divorce, followed by remarriage is not God's will for anyone. People who do this are getting God's second best or worse.

Matthew 19:9 says,

(9) And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, *except it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Other than *except it be for fornication*, the first part of Matthew 19:9 is practically identical with Mark 10:11, which says, *And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.* Mark adds the words *against her*. Also, other than *except it be for fornication*, Matthew 19:9 is practically identical with Luke 16:18 which says,

(18) Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

Except it be for fornication, though not identical in wording with Matthew 5:32 (*saving for the*

cause of fornication), means the same thing. *Fornication* is used of various kinds of *unsanctioned sexual intercourse*. It is defined as 1) unlawful sexual intercourse – *prostitution, unchastity, fornication*; 2) participation in prohibited degrees of marriage in the sense of *incest*.

If fornication is limited in its meaning to an incestuous marriage (i.e. a marriage to too close a relative), it makes the matter of divorce and remarriage fairly simple. Divorce is forbidden, and so is remarriage. People attempting to use the *except* clause to justify their remarriage, are typically not being divorced because of having married too close a relative.

If fornication is used in a more general sense – including all illicit sexual relationships, meaning premarital sex, extramarital sex or adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, pornography, bestiality, incest, etc. – the individual should still not seek to remarry. There is a better way – forgiveness and reconciliation. Divorce followed by remarriage is still not God's will for the people involved. Though permitted, it is only because of the hardness of hearts, i.e. the obstinacy of the people involved. The individual should stay single or be reconciled to the original partner if possible.

In Mark 10:6 Jesus indicated that God made Adam and Eve, male and female. This suggests that God's plan was for eventual marriage between male and female, not between female and female or between male and male. His making them male and female also expresses that marriage is God's will for most men and for most women.

Mark 10:7 speaks of marriage. The man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. Although the term for man is the generic one, it is obviously a reference to the male because of *his* and because of cleaving to *his wife*. *Shall . . . leave* is a future tense, which means at the time of his marriage, which is pictured as being yet future. Leaving father and mother suggests *leaving home* or *leaving home behind* where his father and mother live. Not only does it imply leaving them

physically but also emotionally, financially, etc. The wife is also going to have to leave her home, and together they are to set up their own home. *Leave* has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *Because of this* (i.e. because God made them male and female) *shall leave, a man, his father and mother.* (*Shall*) *cleave* is likewise a future tense. It is a future passive used metaphorically in human relationships, meaning to *adhere to closely, be faithfully devoted to, or be joined to.* The implication of this is that it will go on for the remainder of their lives, i.e. until parted by the death of one of the spouses. By stating *to his wife*, rather than *to his wives*, God made it clear that He never intended for there to be polygamy.

Twain in verse 8 is *two* – not *three, four, five, six*, etc. It likewise shows that God's intent was for one man to have one wife for life – until death separates them. The result of the marriage of a man and a woman is that they become one flesh. They are no more *twain* (two) but one. They are united, not only physically, but also socially, spiritually, emotionally, etc. Their children evidence their oneness, some taking more after the husband and some more after the wife, but being a combination of the two. As husband and wife grow and mature spiritually, their oneness grows more and more over the years of their marriage.

Jesus, therefore, states in Mark 10:9, *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* God is said to be the One Who has *joined* the man and the woman together in marriage. *Hath joined together* is literally *yoked together*, meaning generally *made a pair, joined together, or paired*; and it has been translated in a way which emphasizes the result of its action. Jesus went on to say, *Let not man put asunder*, where *man* is the generic term for human being and refers to any human being, the husband, the wife, the in-laws, or anyone else. Furthermore, *the* does not appear before *man* in the Greek text, which indicates that no human being may do this. In the Greek text, *Let . . . put asunder* is a third person imperative (for which English has no

equivalent) with a present tense. When negated, it implies that an action already going on must be stopped. As an imperative, it is a command rather than a suggestion and means, *No human being may be putting asunder, no human being may continue putting asunder, or a human being must stop putting asunder* what God has joined together. *Put asunder* means to *cause separation through use of space between*, in the sense of to *divide or separate*. It is the opposite of the word translated *hath joined together*. Neither the husband, nor the wife, nor anyone else may separate a married couple. Jesus is stating that divorce is wrong.

Later, in the house, i.e. in a private setting, the disciples asked Jesus regarding His answer to the Pharisees. His answer was, *Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.* Every man putting away (i.e. divorcing) his wife, when marrying another, commits adultery against her, i.e. against the wife he divorced, not against the new wife. He is not able to commit adultery against his wife unless he is still married to her in spite of a legal divorce. The fact that he commits adultery against the wife he divorced indicates that, in God's eyes, he must still be married to the wife he has divorced in man's eyes. This is not overridden by the use of *her former husband* in Deuteronomy 24:4, which distinguishes her first husband from her second husband. It does not change the fact that, in God's sight, she is still married to the first husband. Although he would be committing adultery *with* his new wife, He would not be committing adultery *against* her. The one against whom he commits adultery has to be the wife he divorces. Adultery is committed when the man who divorces his wife marries someone else. If he wishes to avoid committing adultery, his alternatives are to be reconciled to his wife or to remain single.

Verse 12 indicates that any woman who divorces her husband and marries another commits adultery in the process. The only way she could commit adultery by marrying another is if

she is still married to the one she divorced. In God's sight, she is still married to the man she divorced. Although she may be legally divorced in man's eyes, she is not divorced in God's eyes. The only thing which ends her marriage in God's eyes is death. Divorcing one's spouse does not constitute adultery, but divorcing one's spouse may lead to adultery. Adultery is committed with the marriage to another person. The divorced couple could remarry each other (legally) without committing adultery as long as there has been no intervening marriage to someone else. Her alternatives are to be reconciled to her husband or to remain single.

The disciples reaction to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:10 suggests that they understood that Jesus was not allowing for divorce or for remarriage. Matthew 19:10 says, *His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.*

In Mark 10:1-12 Jesus argues that divorce is wrong in God's sight, that no human being is to separate what God has joined, and that divorce does not end the marriage in God's sight. Thus, a man, who has been divorced and has remarried, has two living wives in God's sight and is disqualified as a pastor because he is not *the husband of one wife*. Other Scriptures do not contradict this teaching, including the ones in Matthew with the *except* clause.

Luke 16:18 reinforces this teaching. It says,

(18) Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

Not only does the woman who is divorced in man's sight commit adultery by remarrying, but the man who marries her commits adultery because, in God's sight, she is still married to her first husband. She would then have two living husbands. If her husband were to die prior to her second marriage, she would not be committing

adultery by remarrying because death ended the marriage in God's sight. So in God's sight, a pastor who has married a divorced woman whose first husband is still alive, is guilty of having committed adultery by marrying her and is, therefore, an adulterer and is married to an adulteress. He is, therefore, disqualified from being a pastor. He is not blameless.

Matthew 5:31-32 introduces an exception and is very similar to Matthew 19. It must be remembered that this exception does not in any way contradict Mark 10:1-12 or Luke 16:18. Matthew 5:31 says, *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.* Jesus is the speaker, and He is quoting something which had been said. In Matthew 5:32, Jesus states,

(32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Causeth is *makes* or *brings it about that*. *To commit adultery* is the same term used in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12. Apparently, the idea is that she will likely remarry and commit adultery in doing so. However, if she is guilty of fornication, he does not cause her to commit adultery by divorcing her. In context, *whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery* means that the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery, regardless of the reason she was divorced.

I Corinthians 7:15 is cited by some as permitting divorce and remarriage, but does it really permit remarriage? It is dealing with a situation where a saved person is abandoned by an unbelieving spouse. It says,

(15) But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath

called us to peace.

Let him depart is not a suggestion, but a third person imperative for which English has no equivalent. It means *he/she must depart*. In the context, *a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases* means that the brother or sister is not under bondage to continue the marriage. It stops short of granting permission to remarry. It is not valid to assume that it permits remarriage.

In I Corinthians 7:10-11 Paul wrote,

(10) And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

(11) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

Inasmuch as Paul instructs the one who departs from her husband to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to her husband, it does not seem reasonable that, in the same context, Paul would suggest that the one abandoned by an unbelieving spouse would be free to remarry. The believing spouse is not to compromise his (or her) faith in order to keep her (or him). As a third person imperative, the believing spouse is not being commanded to grant permission for the divorce as *let him depart* might imply in English; rather, the unbelieving spouse is being commanded to go. It means that the unbelieving spouse must certainly depart. The believing spouse is going to have no choice in the matter except to stop living for the Lord and go back to a life of sin, but he (or she) cannot really do this. There is really nothing he (or she) can do about continuing the marriage if the unbelieving spouse determines to pursue a divorce. Although the believing spouse should always do all that is in his or her power to continue the marriage to the unbelieving spouse, there may come a time when it is beyond his (or her) ability to dissuade the unbeliever from divorcing him (or her). *A brother or a sister* refers

to the believing spouse who is married to an unbeliever. *The* appears before both *brother* and *sister* in the Greek text indicating that they are used generically to refer to any believing husband or believing wife whose unbelieving spouse has opted for divorce. *Is not under bondage* is *has not been enslaved*, and it has been translated in a way which emphasizes the result of its action. They were never put in bondage in the past; and as a result, they are still not under bondage. *In such cases* is *in cases (or situations) such as these*, i.e. where unbelieving spouses choose to divorce believing spouses because of their salvation and subsequent Christian lives. Their marriages have changed because of the salvation of their mates, and they may not like the changes. In other families, the unbelieving spouses may like the changes in their saved spouses.

The question naturally arises, How far does *is not under bondage* go? Some believe that it extends no farther than not stopping the unbelieving spouse from departing; whereas, others believe it permits divorce but stops short of remarriage. Still other Bible students believe that it not only permits divorce but that it also permits remarriage without committing adultery. The reader should note that nothing is said about remarriage. It is not wise to go beyond what the Scripture says, *Let him depart* – and nothing more. Therefore, the believer should *let him (or her) depart* and not seek a divorce or remarriage. Although a divorce may eventually occur after the departure of the unsaved spouse, it should not be the believer who seeks the divorce.

But is used to indicate a statement in mild contrast to what has preceded. *God* is God the Father. The tense of *has called* indicates activity completed in the past whose result has continued. He called believers in the past, and they remain in a state of having been called. *Us* indicates the ones whom God has called and refers to believers, including the believing spouses who have unsaved mates pursuing divorce. *To peace* indicates how God has called believers. Does it mean that God has not called them to the turmoil-filled situations

where the unbelieving spouses are pursuing divorce from their believing spouses because of Christianity? Or, does it mean that the believing spouse should do everything possible to maintain peace within the family while attempting to hold the marriage together? The context favors doing everything possible to hold the marriage together. Paul is not in any way seeking to encourage divorce. The Corinthian believers did not need this. *To peace* has been placed in a position of emphasis in the Greek text, which reads literally, *But to peace (or in peace) He has called us, i.e. God.*

Romans 7:1-3 is pertinent to the discussion,

(1) Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

(2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

(3) So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

As a general principle, Paul states that the law is in effect for a man as long as he is alive. As an illustration, Paul cites the example of a married woman who is bound by the law to remain married to her husband as long as he is alive; but if he dies, she is freed from this law. It indicates that marriage is a lifelong matter, severed only by the death of one of the spouses. If her husband dies, a woman may marry another man without committing adultery.

This writer believes that divorce is Scripturally wrong under all circumstances and that those who have been divorced and remarried to a different woman, no matter when or under

what circumstances this divorce occurred, are disqualified from being pastors. Certain scars in one's life come as a result of sin, and these scars are not removed by salvation. For example, someone may ruin his liver by alcoholism; but salvation will not restore his liver to a healthy state. The sin of divorce and remarriage is one of these scars. Although sin is forgiven, some sins have continuing consequences in this life; and sexual sins often fall into this category with consequences such as pregnancy, venereal disease, AIDS, etc. In spite of the fact that a man has been forgiven, he is still disqualified from the pastorate.

Other Bible believers believe that someone who has been divorced and remarried *prior to salvation* is not disqualified. They view all sin as having been forgiven under the blood of Christ, and it has; but some consequences of sin may continue during this life. Inasmuch as they conclude that all *other* qualifications for the office of pastor apply only *after* salvation, they conclude the same thing about this qualification also. Their position does not deal with the fact that in God's sight a divorced, remarried man has two living spouses and is, therefore, disqualified by the requirement to be *the husband of one wife*.

It should be pointed out that many falsely assume that this passage in I Timothy has to do with divorce exclusively. The fact that some preachers have used this text to beat divorced people over the head does not make them correct in their views. From this writer's viewpoint, the majority of divorced men who have remarried are disqualified from becoming bishops for reasons other than just this one; and their divorces are merely symptomatic of other and bigger problems in their lives.

Some excellent expositors have even taken the position that the qualification *the husband of one wife* means married only once in his entire lifetime. This would eliminate widowers who remarry. Others object, saying that the marriage relation ends with death and that a man is then free to remarry. Objections such as this one are answered by stating that a bishop is expected to

live by a higher standard than those who are not bishops. Similarly, support is claimed for this position by the fact that, although Paul advised the younger widows to remarry, he limited those eligible for the role of widows to those *having been the wife of one man* only (cf. I Timothy 5:9, 11). They, therefore, conclude that, although an ordinary widower may be permitted to remarry, a bishop may be required to be married only once in his lifetime. Of course, this view would automatically exclude from the office of bishop a divorcee who had remarried.

For several reasons, this writer rejects the view that a widower disqualifies himself from the office of bishop if he remarries. First, it seems that the emphasis in the text is on the pastor's being a one-woman-sort-of-man or a one-wife-sort-of-husband, which means that he is to be faithful to the wife God has given him. He does not have eyes for other women. He does not flirt with other women. He does not do anything which might in any way lead him into moral sin. Secondly, the appeal to I Timothy 5 (where those eligible for the role of widows is limited to those who have been the wife of only one man) makes no difference. It really has nothing to do with this passage. The reason for that limitation is that widows who have been married more than once will likely have more family to care for them so that their care should not fall upon the church. Thirdly, had Paul really intended to say that a pastor may be married only once in his lifetime, he could have done so very explicitly in language that is incapable of being misunderstood. Thus, the case simply is not strong enough to assert dogmatically that a pastor

whose first wife dies is disqualified from the pastoral ministry if he chooses to remarry. Since remarriage for widowed pastors is not explicitly forbidden in the text, this writer rejects the idea that the text means that a pastor may be married only once in his lifetime and understands this text to mean that a pastor must be faithful to his wife as long as she lives. If she dies and God gives him another wife, he is to be faithful to her also.

Furthermore, the bishop is to be **vigilant** which means *temperate (in the use of wine)*. This same word is translated *sober* in verse 11. He is to be **sober**, i.e. *prudent, thoughtful, or self-controlled*. He is to be **of good behavior**. In other words he is to be *respectable, honorable, or orderly*. He is also to be **given to hospitality** or *hospitable*. This is not the sort of hospitality which invites the people of the church over for cookies and ice cream after a Sunday evening service. The hospitality mentioned in this text was necessary due to the fact that many believers were poor or even homeless as a result of persecution. They needed a place of shelter. Furthermore, traveling preachers or teachers needed places to stay. The inns of the day were not safe, and the traveling preachers or teachers likely had very little money. Also, churches met in homes, and someone would have to make his home available in spite of the inconvenience. A man who is not willing to use his home for these reasons is not qualified to be a bishop. Next, the bishop must be **apt to teach**. In other words, he must be *skillful in teaching*. One of his primary functions will be that of a teacher; therefore, he must be willing and able to teach.