

God's Dealing with the Divorced

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Matthew 12:7 But if ye had known what [this] meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

A Foundation Already Laid

Our purpose as a people is to stand true to the truths once unfolded to the Advent people. What we want to stand by and uphold is contained in the following words:

The enemy is seeking to divert the minds of our brethren and sisters from the work of preparing a people to stand in these last days. His sophistries are designed to lead minds away from the perils and duties of the hour. They estimate as nothing the light that Christ came from heaven to give to John for His people. They teach that the scenes just before us are not of sufficient importance to receive special attention. They make of no effect the truth of heavenly origin and rob the people of God of their past experience, giving them instead a false science. {8T 296.2}

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." Jeremiah 6:16. {8T 296.3}

Let none seek to tear away the foundations of our faith--the foundations that were laid at the beginning of our work by prayerful study of the word and by revelation. Upon these foundations we have been building for the last fifty years. Men may suppose that they have found a new way and that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid. But this is a great deception. Other foundation can no man lay than that which has been laid. {8T 297.1}

In the past many have undertaken the building of a new faith, the establishment of new principles. But how long did their building stand? It soon fell, for it was not founded upon the Rock. {8T 297.2}

The founding upon the Rock is the truths that have been established over the fifty years prior to 1904.

I am instructed to say that these words [1 John 1:1-10] we may use as appropriate for this time, for the time has come when sin must be called by its

right name. We are hindered in our work by men who are not converted, who seek their own glory. They wish to be thought originators of new theories, which they present claiming that they are truth. But if these theories are received, they will lead to a denial of the truth that for the past fifty years God has been giving to His people, substantiating it by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit.--Letter 329, 1905. {1SM 162.1}

The Spirit of Prophecy is directing our minds to the truths that were established over the fifty years of formation. The pioneers of the Adventist church built upon the original foundation to the point of a structure of doctrinal truth that no one is to destabilise by their own theories and teachings differing from that. The following words in Isaiah give us one of the identification marks of the people who stand upon that platform of those fifty years of formation.

Restorers of the Old Paths

Isaiah 58:12 And [they that shall be] of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

God's people in the last days are identified as repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. This is a very important qualification of God's true preachers today.

Here are given the characteristics of those who shall be reformers, who will bear the banner of the third angel's message, those who avow themselves God's commandment-keeping people, and who honor God, and are earnestly engaged, in the sight of all the universe, in building up the old waste places. Who is it that calls them, The repairers of the breach, The restorers of paths to dwell in? It is God. Their names are registered in heaven as reformers, restorers, as raising the foundations of many generations. {4BC 1151.7}

This is precisely what was done over those fifty years. The foundation that was then laid was the foundation that had been in the past. And the raising of these foundations, the restoring of these paths to dwell in, specifically included the Sabbath; because the Sabbath had become a breach in the law by the fallen churches. What is to be restored to its original position?

Among the Jews a man was permitted to put away his wife for the most trivial offenses, and the woman was then at liberty to marry again. This practice led to great wretchedness and sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. {AH 340.3}

When the Pharisees afterward questioned Him concerning the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. {AH 340.4}

He pointed them back to the foundation at the beginning, that which was *ordained at creation*.

"Because of the hardness of your hearts," He said, Moses "suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." He referred them to the blessed days of Eden when God pronounced all things "very good." Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one," He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man. {Ibid.}

To stand together upon the fifty year foundation, we are to be those who will restore the institutions of the Sabbath and of the marriage. These were the twin institutions which were established at creation. They will restore and raise up the foundations of many generations. Marriage is the one institution which we want to contemplate now.

Marriage

Those who are the true servants raising the foundations of many generations, the true and loyal members of God's true church in the last days, understand that marriage is for life. And if we, as a church, are truly going to restore this institution, as it was done in Sr. White's time, what will the church do with those who are prospective couples at this time of earth's history? This is an important subject which is frequently bypassed. Young people fall in love. And because they have fallen in love, they come to the minister and they want to be married. If it is God's true ministry, what will this ministry that restores the true institution of marriage do for this young couple?

Those professing to be Christians should not enter the marriage relation until the matter has been carefully and prayerfully considered from an elevated standpoint to see if God can be glorified by the union. Then they should duly consider the result of every privilege of the marriage relation, and sanctified principle should be the basis of every action. {2T 380.2}

This is the restoration of the marriage institution. It says that, *whatever God hath joined together, let no man put asunder*. And if the church is God's church and the ministry is God's ministry, what will it do with the new couple that wants to be married? They will take them very carefully through the relation of the marriage *from an elevated standpoint to see if God can be glorified by the union*. This is one of the biggest debacles of modern Christianity today. To go and take these young people through, and even try to help them see by careful study that maybe this uniting together is not the wisest thing to do; this is an embarrassing circumstance today, because many young people come, and they say, We want to be married; and they are not really matched. They are not really going to give glory to God in their marriage. It needs to be *carefully and prayerfully considered from an elevated standpoint* to see if God can be glorified by that union. That is how it is to be done in those fellowships where God's restoration of the marriage institution is taking its course.

Then there is a statement for this last time of earth's history that really puts a blunting effect on the romantic mentality that surrounds the marriage institution today.

In this age of the world, as the scenes of earth's history are soon to close and we are about to enter upon the time of trouble such as never was, the fewer the marriages contracted, the better for all, both men and women. {5T 366.1}

This was written in Sister White's time. How is it now?

Above all, when Satan is working with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, let Christians beware of connecting themselves with unbelievers. God has spoken. All who fear Him will submit to His wise injunctions. Our feelings, impulses, and affections must flow heavenward, not earthward, not in the low, base channel of sensual thought and indulgence. It is time now that every soul should stand as in the sight of the heart-searching God. {Ibid.}

Marriage should only be contracted in God's church for God's faithful people when it is done with careful consideration and prayer and it is evident that it will be beneficial for those living in the last days; not just for the sake of having children and a relationship in marriage; because we are living so close to the end. If we are going to restore the marriage institution, these are the considerations that will be brought into focus. To the church that is guided by these principles, marriage is held in its true standard. And what is the true standard?

Matthew 19:4 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

This is the stand of those who will restore the foundations of the past. They understand that when it comes to marriage, this must be done with God joining them together, by prayer and deep consideration whether it is God's will for them or not. When that is done in God's church, carefully and prayerfully, then let no man put that asunder. This couple is married for life. No such thing as divorce and remarriage. This is the case in God's church. That is the standard.

Coming Out of Desecration

But those that are not of the Israel of God are not guided by this standard. Like its twin institution the Sabbath, marriage has been desecrated by the churches. And while God's people stand absolutely full square on this subject of the marriage and the Sabbath institutions, which have been desecrated, those who would become part of this faithful body of people, who would join the bridal party, are coming out of desecration; they come out of Sabbath-breaking and they come from a background of their marriage not being entered into very carefully. This is the problem in today's society: They fall in love; and they will fall *out of* love as quickly as they fell *into* love. They get married, and then they discover that they are not matched, and there is a misery. So there is a desecration of the marriage institution, as with the Sabbath. And to come out of desecration, Sunday-keeping must be discarded, true Sabbath-keeping must be adopted, and the past ways of life that have been wrongly entered into must be restored. This covers a very serious situation when you discover, as an individual, that you want to be part of this company that stands one hundred percent on the truth, and yet your marriage is on the rocks. You discover, Oh, we didn't go to God for this; we just fell in love; and we went into a passion together, and we decided we wanted to marry. This was a faulty approach to the marriage institution.

And as people come out of the desecration of the Sabbath, and out of the desecration of their marriage bond, how does God respond to this debacle?

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

The time of the ignorance, for instance, of Sabbath.

In the heart of the law is the commandment enjoining upon man the observance of the Sabbath of Jehovah, which the world and the church have

trodden under their feet. For centuries men have walked in blindness concerning the true Sabbath, and the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now is the day of reformation, and he calls upon men everywhere to repent. When the light of God's disregarded commandment shone upon the path of those who sincerely loved God, they delayed not to keep his statutes. They realized that they must come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean, that they might claim the promise, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." They became the repairers of the breach that has been made in the law of God, because they turned away their feet from the Sabbath, from doing their pleasure on God's holy day, and called the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and did honor him, not speaking their own words or finding their own pleasure. {ST, February 3, 1888 par. 5}

There is an upheaval in the lives of those who have been used, under the false teachings of the churches, to keep the Sunday instead of the Sabbath; and it becomes an upheaval to keep the Sabbath absolutely the way that the word of God teaches. After this crooked path that they have been walking in reference to the Sabbath, breaking the Sabbath over the years, they come to the light of this reformation and the need to restore, and there is a crooked way of living that has to be straightened out.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all [is] vanity and vexation of spirit. 15 [That which is] crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

With all the wisdom that God gave him, Solomon could see how many people's lives had become twisted up and crooked; and to make these crooked things straight looked like an impossibility. People are locked into certain aspects of life which look as though they cannot be corrected. And the times of their ignorance God winked at; but now He calls them to restore, to reform.

If you have become married without the due counsel and care of God in the restoration of the marriage institution, and you are locked into this marriage state, how can you correct it? One party may want to follow Jesus, and the other party says, I don't want to follow that; so how can you make straight what has been mucked? It is crooked.

If both parties in that marriage realise that they have not joined together with God's care but now they come and become converted together, a baptism becomes like a marriage. I have conducted marriages in which the baptism and the marriage was one event, so that they would both unite together intelligently and understandingly in a marriage that was carefully considered in the light of

the restoration of their lives. But that doesn't always happen; sometimes one person wants to follow Jesus and the other one doesn't go all the way. So how can that be straightened? God declares that He can do it.

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it] together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it].

When the Lord speaks something, things can be straightened when it looks like it's impossible. The crooked ways *shall be made straight, and the rough places plain*. What is this referring to? The Sabbath, restoring that institution, and also marriage that has become *rough* and is on the rocks. The rough places *can* be made plain; crooked things *can* be made straight, because the glory of the Lord and His word is operative.

Isaiah 42:16 And I will bring the blind by a way [that] they knew not; I will lead them in paths [that] they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

God has spoken, and He says He will do this. And although God cannot force any human being, if people come in their broken state of marriage union, He says, Here is the way, walk ye in it. He doesn't just say, Your marriage is for life and you've got to put up with each other; but He actually shows them the wonderful way in which their marriage can be restored.

The grace of Christ, and this alone, can make this institution what God designed it should be—an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. And thus the families of earth, in their unity and peace and love, may represent the family of heaven. {MB 65.1}

Now, as in Christ's day, the condition of society presents a sad comment upon heaven's ideal of this sacred relation. Yet even for those who have found bitterness and disappointment where they had hoped for companionship and joy, the gospel of Christ offers a solace. The patience and gentleness which His Spirit can impart will sweeten the bitter lot. The heart in which Christ dwells will be so filled, so satisfied, with His love that it will not be consumed with longing to attract sympathy and attention to itself. And through the surrender of the soul to God, His wisdom can accomplish what human wisdom fails to do. Through the revelation of His grace, hearts that were

once indifferent or estranged may be united in bonds that are firmer and more enduring than those of earth—the golden bonds of a love that will bear the test of trial. {MB 65.2}

Here is what God can do. He can restore the marriage institution in the lives of those whose marriage has been wrongly entered into. But while this is what God can do, God meets situations where people will not yield to this. So what God says is still to be our study in such circumstances. What happens to the wrongly contracted marriages, those that God never joined together (because they didn't have that marriage institution restoration), that which God winked at? God's counsel was not adopted in their marriage union. And as individuals with such a background respond to the call of Christ, what does Jesus say? What happens to those who want to follow Him but the marriage partner doesn't?

Meeting a Problem in the Latter Rain

Mark 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Here is an interesting declaration of Jesus. In seeking to follow Jesus, some have left their families; and the list includes those who have left their wives, or the wives who have left their husbands. In today's experience, under the power of the latter rain, we meet a very serious problem:

I heard those clothed with the armor speak forth the truth in great power. It had effect. I saw those who had been bound; some wives had been bound by their husbands, and some children had been bound by their parents. The honest who had been held or prevented from hearing the truth, now eagerly laid hold of the truth spoken. All fear of their relatives was gone. The truth alone was exalted to them. It was dearer and more precious than life. They had been hungering and thirsting for truth. I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, It is the latter rain; the refreshing from the presence of the Lord; the loud cry of the third angel. {1SG 186.2}

Under this message of the three angels' messages, the church that is to restore every institution, and under the outpouring of the latter rain, people will be separated. And it mentions here those who have been bound – some wives by their

husbands, or vice versa, as Jesus described in Mark. And when, under this extremely important experience, one decides to join the company in the light and the wife or the husband rejects and leaves them because they don't want to go and follow Jesus as the other does under the latter rain, and they leave and marry another (because they can't continue to live what that person); or another example, if in a couple who dwells in the light, one apostatises and rejects the outpouring of the latter rain, and they regard the other who is following that as someone going to extremes, and they depart never to return, and go and marry another, what is God's illumination to those kinds of circumstances? Does God illuminate the understanding for these kinds of debacles that happen because a choice of the marriage partner make the marriage relationship so crooked that it cannot be straightened? Is there counsel in God's word upon this very issue?

Remember, it says, *Until death do us part*. How was it in Israel of old when a marriage partner did not want to follow the God of the Hebrews and wanted to influence the other marriage partner with the pagan ways of the world? What is written? This is the counsel God gave when one marriage partner turned the heart of the other away from God:

Deuteronomy 13:6 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which [is] as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; 7 [Namely], of the gods of the people which [are] round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the [one] end of the earth even unto the [other] end of the earth; 8 Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: 9 But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

What does this say? If *the wife of thy bosom* turns you away from the pure path of Jesus, or attempts to secretly, what should be done? They were to be stoned. Now death has separated them. Is that correct? The dealing with these kinds of situations in the Old Testament was this:

Deuteronomy 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; [but] at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

They were to examine closely this kind of behaviour, and they were to stone the person, but only at the mouth of two or three witnesses. We are living today in the time of the gospel period, in the New Testament, where the procedure is repeated but not with stoning.

Matthew 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. **16** But if he will not hear [thee, then] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. **17** And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. **18** Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The equivalent of the stoning is the dealing with two or three witnesses to solve the problem. But if these people remain dogged and immovable and cannot accept to be corrected, ultimately they will be disfellowshipped in the Christian era, while they were stoned in the Hebrew era. So what has happened to the marriage vow in such cases? Death has separated them. And is the disfellowshipment (according to Matthew 18) the parallel? It is. It is the selfsame thing.

Divorce

Here then are the written instructions on how to deal with the divorced faithful one:

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. "Every one," He said, "that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." {AH 340.3}

There is no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness. As you have a couple where one becomes unfaithful while the other one wants to follow the Lord faithfully, then the marriage vow is dissolved.

Nothing but the violation of the marriage bed can either break or annul the marriage vow. {AH 341.3}

What is the marriage vow? We will remain loyal to each other until death do us part. And when this situation comes as described here, there is a breaking of the relationship with each other because one wants to follow God and the other does not follow exactly anymore and separates from the partner. The Old Tes-

tament and the New Testament way of dealing with this was a separation, because the person was disobeying God's directions. They were stoned in the Old Testament; they are disfellowshipped in the New. In the situation that is described here, where the unfaithful party will go and marry another, or will marry Satan, whatever happens, there is such a separation where God is saying that this breaking of the marriage vow releases them from their vow. It annuls it.

I Will Have Mercy

But we have experienced, and I have experienced in the ministry for many years now, that there are those who rigidly and legalistically denounce the remarriage at all costs. To them, if the person has gone and married another, then the other who is faithful and loyal to God's true ways is now to stay single for the rest of their life. But this is different to the way that the Spirit of God in the Testimony of Jesus has declared it. How does Jesus view this rigidity? There are situations which appear as a violation of God's commandments, but Jesus is the one who judges. Here the disciples were plucking the ears of corn of the Sabbath day,

Matthew 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw [it], they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. 3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

And that circumstance was a terrible one because, by David doing that, the poor high priest lost his life along with the other priests.

Matthew 12:5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? 6 But I say unto you, That in this place is [one] greater than the temple. 7 But if ye had known what [this] meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

In the ranks of rigidity, any person who has been divorced and remarried, because their own partner themselves had remarried, has been rigidly put into a position of guilt. This Jesus is referring to. What attitude does Jesus have to the divorced person who has tried to follow the Lord and has lost his marriage over that?

I saw that Sister Johnson as yet has no right to marry another man, but if she or any other woman should obtain a divorce legally on the ground that her

husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses. {17MR 156.2}

She is free to remarry, according to the Testimony of Jesus. *I saw*, she says under inspiration. The mercy that is here extended is also written of in the following statement:

J did not put his wife away. She left him, and put him away, and married another man. I see nothing in the Scripture that forbids him to marry again in the Lord. He has a right to the affection of a woman. {2SM 340.1}

Here is mercy. This is what Jesus said. "I want you to think on what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." With their rigidity in the law of God, there are some claiming to be restorers of paths to dwell in, and yet not even guiding their people correctly into marriage, and then denouncing them as guilty if they remarry, although the other party has gone and married another already. This is not God's view.

A Little Proviso

But there is one little proviso here; because as we near the end, as it says in *Testimonies Vol. 5, the fewer the marriages contracted, the better*. But according to God's mercy, if they can marry in the Lord, then that is okay because they will help each other and strengthen each other in the last days. However here is the proviso: Don't just get married because you have the right to get married again; be careful; the fewer the marriages the better.

Then the matter was presented in another light. If there were no difficulties and Albert could marry her according to the laws of the land and not violate God's law, yet he ought not to do so if by so doing he injures the cause of present truth. That cause should be dearer to him than life itself; and if by marrying he should bring one stain upon the cause of God, his wife is dearly purchased, and he cannot be happy, for God's blessing will not attend him. {17MR 156.4}

This is another aspect of the restoration of the marriage institution with the debacle. Be careful; enter it with great care and consider carefully what are the pros and cons in these last days.

By God's grace I have sought to let Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy lay the matter out as it really is. Let us firmly grasp the work of restoration of the marriage institution, and, within the platform of truth, remain loyal to the principles of "until death do us part". That is to be the platform upon which we are to stand. But in so doing, let God's mercy rule, not to condemn the guiltless who

have married again within the confines of the word of God that we have considered in this meditation. I hope and pray that this correct alignment of the statements as they are seen under inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Testimony of Jesus will alleviate some of the confusions that are raised when people misquote the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

May God help us to appreciate that *God's free mercy* is to be brought in. And when people have sinned and made a mistake in the past and they come as they are in a broken state, let the mercy of God rule them; let the mercy of God rule the church, so that it will no longer condemn the guiltless.

Amen.