

# DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE: An Approach to Biblical Theology

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*Submitted: 5 October 2022 Revision: 3 May 2023 Accepted: 12 June 2023*

## **Abstract**

Divorce and remarriage are issues that are not easily resolved. Differences in theological views on divorce and remarriage, as well as disagreements among local church leaders regarding divorce and remarriage as adultery, add to the uncertainty as well as the opportunities for divorce and remarriage. Based on that, this article aims to find and explain the problems of divorce and remarriage in Christianity. The research method used by the author is the study of biblical theology, which raises and analyzes biblical texts related to divorce and remarriage. The results of this study are the first, whatever the reason, divorce is not permitted. Second, remarriage is not permitted, however, if remarriage is considered a way, then remarriage can be carried out with strict and thorough pastoral conditions and care.

**Keywords:** marriage, divorce, adultery, remarriage, pastoral.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Divorce and remarriage are complex issues and are not easily resolved through a church doctrinal approach without considering the social and psychological cases of divorced husband and wife.

Divorce and remarriage are inevitable as part of the paradigm shift and way of thinking of today's free and completely open human beings, who always prioritize personal rights as the main priority over considerations of faith and

ethics that have long been upheld and valid. hereditary.

The Bible has prophesied, that in the last days humans will no longer be able to honor marriage. Getting married and then divorcing, then remarrying seems to have become commonplace and is no longer considered a sin and a serious violation of the sanctity of marriage. "And just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will also be in the days of the Son of Man: they ate and drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, then the

flood came and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-27; cf. Matthew 24:37-39; cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-9).

According to statistical data in 2022, divorce cases in Indonesia have increased from 2021, namely 53.50%.<sup>1</sup>In 2021 there were 291,677 divorce cases while in 2022 it rose to 447,743 cases. A total of 337,343 (75.34%) divorce cases were decided in court because of divorce claims from wives to husbands.<sup>2</sup>The reason is because wives are more vulnerable to violence than husbands.<sup>3</sup>

The weakness of church leaders in providing basic teaching about the Christian family in the formation of church members, especially for those who are about to marry, is often one of the triggers for various cases of divorce and remarriage to easily occur among church members.

A hermeneutical approach to the verses that are the subject matter of divorce and remarriage will be the focus of this research so that a conclusion that is expected and can be ethically justified

theologically and does not conflict with biblical truth can be obtained.

In the sub-focus of this research, several basic hermeneutical studies on divorce and remarriage will be developed, such as (1) What limits divorce and remarriage are not permitted. (2) A husband and wife who have been divorced and remarried are considered as sinners who will never be forgiven because they are considered to be living in adultery. (3) God's forgiveness and grace for couples who remarry?

Based on the research sub-focus above, the formulation of the problem in this study rests on three questions, as follows: (1) How does the Bible provide important data and information about Christian marriage? (2) What is the church's view on adultery laws for divorced and remarried couples? (3) How does the church provide a solution for married couples who are divorced and intend to remarry based on God's grace that forgives sin?

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<sup>1</sup> Cindy Mutia Annur. "Kasus Perceraian Meningkat 53%, Mayoritas karena Pertengkaran." *databoks*, 28 Februari 2022. <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/02/28/kasus-perceraian-meningkat-53-mayoritas-karena-pertengkaran>.

<sup>2</sup> Stefanus Yulli Sapto Ajie, Ana Lestari Uriptiningsih, & Tri Endah Astuti. "Fenomena Tren Perceraian dan Perkawinan Kembali Menjelang Kedatangan Anak Manusia." *Syntax Literate: Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia* 7, no.5 (2022): 5350-5369. <https://doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v7i5.6696>.

<sup>3</sup>According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three women worldwide has been a victim of violence, both physical and sexual, perpetrated by their partner. That is, about 30 percent of women have experienced this unpleasant event. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection noted that throughout 2021 there were around 18,000 cases, and 79.5% or around 16,604 of the victims were women.

The method used in this study uses qualitative methods, with a hermeneutic research approach developed by Paul Ricoeur<sup>4</sup> so that an interpretation will be obtained<sup>5</sup> and constructive understanding of differences of opinion in interpreting divorce and remarriage.

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the research has 3 objectives, namely first, through this research it is expected that every believer has a firm belief in the Bible as a source of truth and values that are fundamental to Christian marriage.

Second, through true and biblical hermeneutical research on the status of those who have been divorced and remarried, it is hoped that a new concept of thinking will be obtained so that there is a solution for married couples who have been divorced and intend to remarry.

Third, through this research it is hoped that the issue of divorce and remarriage can be properly addressed, in line with true Christian values, based on God's grace towards those who have fallen

into divorce and failed marriages in the past.

## **FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

As the oldest official institution established by God since the creation of man (Genesis 1:26-28), marriage must still be respected. Because of that the church should not be careless in marrying couples who want to get married. There is a counseling and learning process that must be passed to test, strengthen and direct the couple who will marry. This process must be carried out and cannot be ignored, bearing in mind that Christian marriage has the main goal of bringing salvation and eternal life (Colossians 2:7).

### **Marriage is United by God**

This is the basic concept of a Christian marriage, that every man and woman who are bound by marriage have been "united" by God. That unity is to be regarded as the will of God. Therefore no one has the right to separate it. To separate

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<sup>4</sup> Abdul Wachid BS. "Hermeneutika dalam Sistem Interpretasi Paul Ricoeur." *Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi*, 23 Januari 2022. <https://badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id/artikel-detail/881/hermeneutika-dalam-sistem-interpretasi-paul-ricoeur>. Paul Ricoeur in his book *The Rule of Metaphore* (1978) states that an understanding and interpretation is not merely an activity related to language, but also an act of meaning and interpretation. No one reads a text with the

intention of understanding its contents without interpreting and interpreting it during the reading process (Hadi WM, 2014:55-56). Paul Ricoeur refers to hermeneutics as interpretation or interpretation and understanding of the text (textual exegesis).

<sup>5</sup> Yusuf A. Muri, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan Penelitian Gabungan* (Kencana: Perpustakaan Nasional-KDT, 2014), 329.

this unity is to divide the body in two (Gen. 2:23-24 cf. Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:7-8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31).

The clause which says that a man "unites with his wife" (Matthew 19:5b) comes from the word *proskollethesetai* (cf. Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31), which means, "glued together or strengthened, fixed, or welded", indicating the highest level of strength in an attachment and attachment. The oneness (oneness) of men and women is then clarified by the phrase "the two become one flesh".

Based on this understanding, every form and attempt to divorce a husband and wife relationship is considered as an opposition to the will and all of God's plan in the family (Malachi 2:16; Mark 10:8b-9).

The sentence in the verse does not read, "whom Allah has united", but "what Allah has united". This shows that Jesus was not talking about "who", but on "what" that God put together. What did God put together? What Allah has united is the relationship of union between a man and a woman - referring to the one bond of the marriage relationship. It is the bond of the marriage relationship that is united by God, therefore no one can break or separate it.

It is based on this notion of "relationship" that all of Jesus' teaching on

marriage was built. So, through marriage, husband and wife are bound in a relationship that is united by God as long as they live (Romans 7:2). Thus, every effort and effort to break the bond of marriage union - which ends in a divorce - is considered as adultery before God (Matthew 5:12; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).

### **Marriage is One Flesh**

There is no stronger union in a Christian marriage than by making the marriage happen "*one meat*". By quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus said that "*the two became one flesh*" (Matthew 19:5c) but then a statement follows "*So they are no longer two, but one.*" The emphasis on the initial sentence is more likely to be interpreted as a unity of sexuality. This connotation of sexuality is emphasized in the Greek by the use of the word *eis*, 'into', so that the clause can sound "*both will enter or become into (eis) one flesh.*" This interpretation is in accordance with the existence of constructions in the papyrus regarding the expansion of the use of the word *eis* that emphasizes goals.<sup>6</sup>

However, the inner unity "*one meat*" not only understood as the single act of initiating intercourse. Say "*two*" in the

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<sup>6</sup>J.H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek Vol.1*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906/1967);

see, Vincent Taylor, *St. Mark*. (London: Macmillan, 1952/1966).

Septuagint underlines the exclusive nature of the relationship of the unity of the flesh – namely the special relationship between husband and wife, in which there is no room at all for a third party. That is, continuous sexual union will strengthen the husband-wife unitary relationship to a much broader level, which covers all aspects of life. This is what Jesus taught when He quoted Genesis 2:24 by adding the sentence, "*So they were no longer two, but one.*" This is in line with the thinking of the Hebrews, that the word "*meat*" not just in a physical sense, but refers to the whole human person, both soul and body, thought, emotion, and will.

### **Marriage is Sanctified by God**

God is holy. Therefore He wants His people to live holy lives (1 Thessalonians 4:7 cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16; Leviticus 20:7; 20:26). God sanctifies the marriages of His people. This is what forms the character of a Christian marriage. This is a way for husbands and wives to live in all God's will (Colossians 3:12-17).

Holiness is an absolute requirement to be able to see God's presence in the family (Hebrews 12:14). This is in line with God's nature which is holy. It is God's presence in the midst of the family that allows husband and wife to build a beautiful fellowship through the prayer altar in the family (Matthew 18:20). By maintaining the sanctity of marriage,

husband and wife are able to avoid all contamination that defiles marriage. Therefore, every form of fornication must be considered as a sin that can damage and pollute the sanctity of marriage (1 Corinthians 6:15-18).

### **Marriage Has a Purpose in Eternity**

The Christian home must be built on an eternal purpose. This is the end of all ideals in the Christian home. Only with this perspective can husband and wife maximize their lives for real and eternal life (Colossians 3:1-6).

Prioritizing married life in eternity absolutely must be done in building a Christian marriage. This is a form of Christian partner's responsibility to God (Romans 14:12 cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Bible warns emphatically that, husbands and wives who do not respect their marriage will be judged by God (Hebrews 13:4).

A marriage built on worldly desires is mortal and will never achieve true happiness except for endless disappointment. There is no point in the pride and success of a marriage if in the end it does not bring all family members to safety and eternal life.

### **DIVORCE IN CHRISTIANITY**

Divorce for any reason is not permitted in Christianity. CS Lewis in his

book, *Mere Christianity*, explains that the Christian view of marriage is based on the teachings of Christ, namely that husband and wife are a single organism, and divorce is considered like an amputation.<sup>7</sup> So the answer is not permissible or not permissible, permissible or not permissible for divorce but should "mutilating the body" be the only solution?

In carrying out the hermeneutics of the verses in Matthew 5:31-32; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:6, 9; Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:8; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15 is not easy, it needs to be done carefully and thoroughly, considering the dilemmas and controversies that arise.

When Jesus quoted the book of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, it seemed as if divorce was permitted with a divorce certificate.<sup>8</sup> In this part, actually Jesus did not only see divorce in a formal sense through a divorce certificate, but more than that what Jesus forbade was divorce in the sense of a divided marriage relationship.

The word used is *chorizo*, meaning "to divide, to separate, to cut, to split, to break, to break."<sup>9</sup> So, when a marriage no longer has the satisfaction of a fleshly union relationship, without the need for a formal legal divorce, then a divorce (*chorizo*) is considered to have occurred.

In the Talmud Mishnah Gittin 9:10 there are three views of interpretation regarding the reasons for divorce.<sup>10</sup> By quoting Deuteronomy 24:1-3, Rabbi Akiba's opinion shows how easy it is for a husband to divorce his wife, just because he is attracted to another woman who is prettier than his wife.<sup>11</sup> It is this opinion that Jesus strongly opposes, that a man who divorces his wife and then marries another woman (author: it is possible that the woman has also been divorced by her husband because she was caught for adultery - *porneia*) then the relationship

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<sup>7</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (*Kekristenan Asali*). (Bandung: Pionir Jaya, 2006), 151.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:31, "It was also said: He who divorces (*ἀπολύση* - *apoluse*) his wife must give her a letter of divorce" (TB)

<sup>9</sup> B. Ward Powers, *Perceraian dan Perkawinan Kembali – Pendekatan hukum dan anugerah Allah dalam Alkitab*. (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2011), 46.

<sup>10</sup> The Talmud Mishnah Gittin 9:10 explains three views of interpretation regarding the reasons for divorce: (1) The Shammai group says, that a person may not divorce his wife unless he finds her unfaithful, as it is said, "because he finds something indecent in her" (Deuteronomy 24:1). (2) The Hillel group says that a husband may

divorce his wife if the wife makes spoiled food for her husband, because it says: "impurity is a serious matter." (3) The group of Rabbis Akiba who say that a husband may divorce his wife if he finds another woman more beautiful than his wife, having said, "then he no longer likes her" (Deuteronomy 24:1).

<sup>11</sup> "Suppose a man marries a girl, and then doesn't want her anymore because he finds something embarrassing about her. Then the man handed him divorce papers and threw him out of his house; Then the woman married another man; But after some time the man didn't like her anymore, so he handed her divorce papers and kicked her out. Or maybe the second husband died" (TB).

between the two, both the man and the woman are in adultery.<sup>12</sup>

Normatively Jesus' words about divorce were actually meant to denounce the Jews who divorced their spouses to marry someone else.<sup>13</sup> Given that in Jewish culture, women do not have the power and right to file for divorce,<sup>14</sup> then through a divorce certificate, a woman has guaranteed protection to clarify her status as a woman who has been divorced from her husband so that she is allowed to marry another man.<sup>15</sup>

Again, that divorce is permitted only on the grounds that adultery has occurred (πορνεία, 'porneia'). Grammatically the words *me epi porneia* begin with a phrase *me* which means "no".<sup>16</sup> (See grammatical parallels with Matthew 26:5; Mark 14:2; Luke 13:14;

John 13:9; 18:40 which LAI often translates as "not" not "except").<sup>17</sup> Based on this grammatical, Matthew 19:9 should be translated with the word "no".<sup>18</sup>

The NT uses the Greek word πορνεία, 'porneia' to denote a sexual perversion, namely fornication (Acts 21:25; 1 Cor. 6:13, 18; 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Porneia is also translated as adultery<sup>19</sup> (Matthew 5:32 and 19:9). The OT uses the Hebrew word זָנָה, 'zana' which means: fornication before marriage (Genesis 38:24; Leviticus 19:29; 21:7, 9, 14; Hosea 1:2; Nahum 3:4); prostitution after entering into a covenant (Jeremiah 13:27; Ezekiel 16:41); prostitution before and after entering into a covenant (Ezekiel 23:29; Hosea 2:3; 6:11;

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<sup>12</sup> H. Roger Crook, *An Open Book to the Christian Divorce*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1976), 144.

<sup>13</sup> In the Jewish context, a wife can be divorced by her husband but a wife cannot apply for divorce against her husband. Another man can take the woman as his wife, but a divorced wife cannot take the man as her husband. Thus the divorced wife lives in an illegitimate marriage with her new husband. This was not because of his will or decision, but because of the circumstances that befell him (Stassen and Gushee, 359-360).

<sup>14</sup> Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Masa Kini*. (Surabaya: Momentum, 2008), 356.

<sup>15</sup> Pniel CD Maiaweng. "Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali." *Jurnal Jaffray* 15, no.1 (April 2017): 97-101.

<sup>16</sup> According to the Greek to English Index Lexicon in The NIV Exhaustive Concordance, the word *me* occurs more than a thousand times in the NT, and is never translated as "except" (Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). In the Greek text, published by

Erasmus, the word *ei* is inserted before the word *me*, thus changing the word "not" to "except".

<sup>17</sup> The words of Jesus, *me epi porneia*, are often misinterpreted by translators and interpreters as "except for adultery". According to Greek texts, such as *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, (eds), (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982) and *the Byzantine text, The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, (Southborough: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005), and editions of Nestle-Alland and The United Bible Society, all agree that the Greek text reads *me epi porneia*, without the preposition *ei*, so the correct translation should be "not because of adultery" not "except because of adultery".

<sup>18</sup> The phrase *me*, is not to state an exception, but is just a negative phrase, "no for porneia, zina".

<sup>19</sup> These meanings are used based on the translation owned by the Indonesian Bible Society TB. The word "adultery" is translated from the word πορνεία-porneia." The word porneia has many meanings and generally OT and NT linguists have each meaning.

Micah 1:7); and prostitution as a way of life (Hosea 1:2; Nahum 3:4).

Based on that understanding, the divorce mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:1 can only be done because of *πορνεία*, 'porneia'.<sup>20</sup> Porneia is a sexual offense for which divorce is permitted to end a marriage bond.<sup>21</sup>

Looking at the death penalty for those caught in adultery for a moment (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22), it seems that it is not an easy matter for those who commit adultery to be freed from death, let alone to gain social status in society by remarrying. The divorce certificate referred to in Deuteronomy 24:1 refers to cases of women who were divorced by their husbands without clear reasons and not because of adultery. Jesus

emphasized that divorce would make the status of the woman clearer. So, Jesus wanted to protect women against the unilateral actions of their husbands that harmed them.

## REMARRIAGE IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The difference in views among theologians reflects the diversity of opinions on divorce and remarriage.<sup>22</sup> With such a variety of opinions, of course, it has theological implications for churches that agree to adhere to one of the same understandings. It's as if the church just has to choose one of the theological lines it agrees to adhere to.

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<sup>20</sup> *πορνεία* 'porneia' is a Greek term that generally means sexual misconduct which in Deuteronomy 24:1 uses the Hebrew word 'ervath dabhar.

<sup>21</sup> Philip R. Leineweber, "The Greek Word Porneia in the Matthean Exception Clauses," (Thesis Honor Program, Liberty University, Fall 2008), 12, accessed December 27, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1072&context=honors>

<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther stated that divorce is permissible if it has a strong and justifiable biblical basis, while remarriage is permissible if the divorce has been legally recognized, Glen H. Stassen dan David P. Gushee, *Etika Kerajaan: Mengikut Yesus dalam Konteks Masa Kini*. (Surabaya: Momentum, 2008), 361. John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg absolutely do not allow divorce and remarriage, John S. Feinberg dan Paul D Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1993), 306-307.) Norman Geisler who said that divorce cannot be justified morally, but remarriage is permissible if there has been proper repentance and has been acknowledged in front of the

congregation, Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1999), 287. William Heth and Gordon Wenham morally, divorce is permissible but on grounds of adultery, only remarriage is not permissible, William A. Heth dan Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 52. Joe Trull divorce and remarriage are permitted on grounds of adultery, including for those left by unbelieving spouses, Joe Trull, *Walking in the Way*. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 313-314. Craig S. Keener allows divorce and remarriage in cases of adultery, separation, physical abuse, and other forms of gross immorality, Craig S. Keener, *And Marries Another*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 104-110. Stanley Grenz sees divorce and remarriage from the perspective of sin and failure, Stanley Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*. (Nashville: Word, 1990), 109. Lewis Smedes views divorce legally and morally as when a marriage is dead and can no longer be maintained, Lewis B. Smedes, *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), 178-182.



## Remarriage Not Permitted Due to Adultery

For Jesus, the issue of divorce and remarriage is no different from that of adultery.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the reason, Jesus did not condone divorce and remarriage. Jesus still held to His words, "Therefore, what God has joined together, no man must separate."<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis on the word *apoluo*, 'divorce' in Matthew 5:23 can only occur if it is caused by an act of adultery (*porneia*).<sup>25</sup> Divorce that occurs because of adultery places the divorced husband or wife in the status of being adulterous (*μοιχάομαι*—*moiksaomai*- present, midel, deponent), and any man who marries a woman who is divorced because of adultery causes that man to be adulterated (*μοιχάομαι*— *moiksaomai*- present, passive deponent, indicative).<sup>26</sup>

So, it's clear that Jesus was against divorce because it was seen as going against God's will. Any divorce caused by adultery with various forms of reasons, remarriage will still be considered as adultery. That is, every man or woman who is married and then divorced because of

adultery with another man or woman, then the party who committed adultery cannot remarry. Remarriage does not eliminate his status as an adulterer.

## Remarriage as a Path of Repentance

Does a divorced person have unpardonable sins? Will that sin continue to stick throughout his life? If these sins can be forgiven, why is there no opportunity for those who have failed in marriage and are divorced to remarry?

Rubel Shelly states that by grace, those who have failed in marriages for various reasons can be redeemed from their mistakes. What law cannot do, grace can do. What the law cannot do, can be forgiven by the blood of Jesus. What our legalistic interpretations have obscured, can be sanctified by the redeeming presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

The next most fundamental question in divorce and remarriage cases is: Can those who are divorced find forgiveness again? If so, then remarriage should be considered as a form of life renewal for those who have failed in their past marriages. The task of the church is to

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<sup>23</sup> Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Etika Kerajaan: Mengikut Yesus dalam Konteks Masa Kini*. (Surabaya: Momentum, 2008), 364.

<sup>24</sup> LAI, TB Bible, Matthew 19:6

<sup>25</sup> LAI, TB Bible, Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18

<sup>26</sup> BGT. BibleWorks LXX/BNT Morphology. BibleWorks 8. Matthew 5:23 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι

πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπομελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

<sup>27</sup> Rubel Shelly, *Divorce and Remarriage: A Redemptive Theology*. Abilene, Texas: Leafwood Publishers, 2007.

proclaim repentance, a new future and God's grace. More than that, an ethical-pastoral decision to bless and strengthen remarriage is not an easy decision. It is always possible for the church to make a mistake, just as it is always possible for the church to go wrong with the blessing and confirmation of remarriage. However, even if the church errs, it should err because it is on the side of grace, not on the side of judgment.<sup>28</sup>

Sydney Cave in *The Christian Way* says that Christian marriage is a unity that cannot be canceled. But hard to understand on what basis failure in marriage can be considered the only failure by which a person who repents of his failure to preserve his marriage cannot be forgiven.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus' attitude about adultery is implicitly seen in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John 4:13-15), and explicitly in the case of the woman who was caught in adultery (John 8:11). Even though society views adultery as a very serious sin that is punishable by death, it can still be forgiven (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). They were happy to hear Jesus teach (Luke 15:1-2) and receive forgiveness from Him (Luke 7:47-48; Matthew 21:31).

There is no unpardonable sin (1 John 1:9). God's forgiveness is total and perfect, He will wipe away sins like a passing cloud (Isaiah 44:22); cast our sins away from Him (Isaiah 38:17); distance our transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12); forgetting our rebellion from His memory (Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34). No matter how great our sins, He cleanses them perfectly (Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 1:18; Colossians 2:13; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5). The only unpardonable sin is recorded in Matthew 12:31 and Mark 3:28-29, "all sins...men will be forgiven, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

Pointing to Paul's words, "if she is scorched with lust, let her marry", Clement of Alexandria recommended a second marriage<sup>30</sup> with reason if there is sexual tension that is and continues to run. For this case William Barclay once said "they have to get married". Remarriage is not a sin (1 Corinthians 7:28-29) in the exact same context as 1 Corinthians 7:7-9, but it is still recommended not to remarry – like Paul.

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<sup>28</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 66.

<sup>29</sup> Sydney Cave, *The Christian Way*. (London: Nisbet, 1949/1961).

<sup>30</sup> Judith L. Kovacs. *1 Corinthians Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 114.

## CONCLUSION

Whatever the reason, divorce is not permitted, even if it is based on adultery and sexual deviation that violate Bible norms and doctrines, the church still does not approve of divorce. Remarriage is not permitted. However, if remarriage is considered as a solution to past divorces and the person concerned faithfully shows the fruit of repentance, then remarriage can be carried out with strict and thorough pastoral requirements and care. Between church leaders need to improve good communication so that the authority of the church as guardian of the people can be effective and carried out with ethical principles, especially in remarrying divorced couples.

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