

The wife is bound by law until the husband is dead

(Romans 7:2-3, 1 Cor. 7:39)

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Assertions/Conclusions of this article

In this article we will show that the two passages in question speak of the 'law of the husband' and that even though these verses say that this law is until death, that is is not an unconditional law that cannot be ended before the death of the spouse. The law of the husband is intended to be until the death of one of the spouses, as God created it from the very first marriage, Adam and Eve, but it has never been without condition.

Paul's point in Romans 7 is showing that we cannot enter into a new covenant unless the old covenant became nullified. We cannot be under the first covenant and the second covenant simultaneously. Which is why Paul uses the analogy of a wife who leaves her husband and is taken by another.

While she is still married to this first husband, that law still being in place, she is an adulteress by marrying the second man.

(Rom 7:4) Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another--to Him who was raised from the dead, so that we might bear fruit to God.

With the death of the first man that covenant is ended so she is not an adulteress by entering into a second covenant. This is speaking allegorically about the Mosaic covenant and its being nullified with Christ's death and the ratification of the new covenant.

Because divorce was never meant to be PART of this system of course Paul doesn't speak about it.

So EVEN THOUGH remarriage IS allowed after divorce in this law that Paul speaks about (the Mosaic law), it is NOT relevant to the POINT or the issue he is discussing in Romans 7:1-3.

Supporting Evidence

In Romans Paul was speaking to "those who know the law" (Romans 7:1)

The law reigned over a man all his days. Paul uses this analogy of marriage, the wife being bound to her husband all his days, to represent that it was the same.

What Paul didn't state, and those knowing the law would know this, is that there was provision in the law for a husband to put away his wife while he was alive . (Deut 24:1-4)

This shows conclusively that Paul was not laying out the whole scope of rules on marriage in Romans 7 but was using one aspect of it to explain our relationship to the law and to the new covenant.

This idea is presented again in 1 Corinthians 7:39. The wife is bound to the husband until his death.

We must ask ourselves one question here. 'What law' bound this woman to her husband for life?

Was it the Mosaic law? How then could any wife have been bound at all to her husband from Eve until the Law ?

It is cemented that it is not the Mosaic law when we find no actual law making this commandment.

So, is Paul lying when he says she is 'bound by law' to him until he is dead? By no means.

We are left with one conclusion. That this 'law' is an unwritten law of marriage and had to be put into place in the garden with Adam and Eve. It was set into place as a parameter to be accepted in all marriages from thence forth.

Now, we ask ourselves, why, if this law is for life, did Moses ever permit it to end while the former spouse lived?

We ask ourselves about the wife in Exodus 21:7-11 who was permitted to walk out on her marriage if her husband denied her the basics of marriage, food, clothing and conjugal duty.

Why, if this law that existed from the beginning, was Moses so determined to undermine its supposed finality by ever allowing men or women to end it this side of death? Was Moses a rogue prophet who defied God's will in the matter and even added divorce proceedings to His law? Not at all.

Moses understood God's intent, that marriage is for life, but Moses also knew God's heart and that God wanted mercy over sacrifice and he knew the hearts of evil, hardhearted men who would treat their wives horribly as they wished. And so Moses understood that this 'law' was not unconditional.

If it were unconditional, then it was that way in the beginning and Moses would make himself a heretic by ever going against it.

So we see that when Paul gives his words in 1 Corinthians 7:39, that this is not the whole picture. This 'law' that Jesus presents as being 'from the beginning' was never meant to be unconditional. Jesus' very words 'except for' in Matthew 19 show conclusively that even He does not see it as being without condition.

Paul was asked some questions by the Corinthians as is made apparent in the beginning of chapter 7;

1 Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote"

These believers had asked him some weighty questions about marriage, fornication, virgins, etc, to which he responded with what is written in this chapter.

They clearly had pondered the right of the believer to put away an unbeliever, to which Paul said "no, if the unbeliever is pleased along with the believer, the do not put them away, you might be the catalyst in their salvation". Paul is showing these believers who think they can just walk away from marriage that no, they cannot because it is for life.

But Paul's words also show condition. What if this unbeliever isn't 'pleased' along with the believer, but is abusive, hateful, adulterating...then what does Paul's condition show?

Also see;

<http://assembly-ministries.org/studies/divorceremarriage/DoestheBiblepermitputtingawayaspouseforabuse.pdf>

<http://assembly-ministries.org/studies/divorceremarriage/Arevowsalwaysunbreakable.pdf>

When you've finished there, I believe you will see that there is condition in Paul's words. A condition that is perfectly harmonized with the heart of other scriptures such as Exodus 21 where the wife can leave over nonsupport, Jeremiah 3:8 where even God the Father issued a bill of divorce for harlotry, and Matthew 19 where Jesus shows that the same harlotry is just cause for ending this marriage.

Another point with Romans 7:1-4 or so is that at no time does this passage show that there was ever any divorce as permitted by Mosaic law. If we take it 'as written' it shows that this woman has only left her husband and gone to join with another. Without a divorce as presented by the law Paul speaks of, without the breaking of that marriage covenant, then of course she would be called an adulteress by joining herself to some man not her husband.

Paul's words in Romans 7 and 1 Corinthians 7 are true. They are just harmonized with the whole of Gods word. If we fail to harmonize correctly, then we end up with absurd teachings such as ones that say that we "cannot sin" because the literal reading of 1 John 3:9 would seem to show as much when taken alone and not properly harmonized with the whole.

Without ALL of the facts we can end up drawing very wrong conclusions from very CLEAR scriptures, such as presented here:

We hope that this has been helpful in showing you the truth, dear reader, and how to harmonize the whole of God's word so that you understand the whole truth.

Discussion About Romans 7 and the 'law of the husband'

Forum Poster:

"It's (Romans 7) an analogy using marriage as a pretext to teach about Christ's death. An analogy is where you take a well known fact and use it to teach about something else, but it only works if that pretext is fully true an well known. If marriage wasn't a lifelong covenant and remarriage while a spouse lives adultery, the analogy would have failed to make the point it was intended to make, and we would not conclude that Christ's death was necessary to free us. Both ideas are married together in the analogy so both must be fully true if he's going to make his point.

The fact is that the Mosaic Law DID give method for divorce.

That being the case, I'll repeat again that *IF* Paul were actually using the the RULES for marriage laid out in the law of Moses that he is comparing the law of the husband to, Paul would have been being deceptive by not presenting the fact that there WAS manner spoken of in that law to put away a WIFE without death of the HUSBAND.

Again, I know some get around this problem by creating this 'premarital divorce' concept, but that has no biblical support.

And once more, Romans 7 NEVER mentions that this woman had been divorced by her husband. Without that being the case, then it just like with David and Michal who also had not been divorced when she was given to Phalti, she WAS still David's wife whom he simply reclaimed.

Romans 7 there shows agreement with that case.

Romans 7 uses the lifelong aspect of marriage to explain mans transition from the old covenant to the new....it didn't need to get into divorce law to do so.

One has to stop for a closed train crossing-gate in the same manner one has to stop for a red traffic signal.

While the statement is absolutely true, ONE of these allows for going ahead into the intersection and turning right while that light is still red, yet the other does not include any exception. While the gate is down and the light is on, the law says do not go into that intersection and altho many do anyway, the law forbids it.

In one case we CAN go thru the light anyway. In the other case we cannot.

I compared two lights (similar items) because Paul is using two 'laws' (also similar) in Romans 7.

The analogy deals with the rule, it does not have to account for the exception or all the variables.

Romans 7 is based on the RULE that marriage is for life. It does not go into the variable of divorce because it does not need to in order to show the point Paul is trying to make.

The FACT is again, and there really isn't any way around this but to disregard the actual definitions words presented, is that the Mosaic law DOES show manner of putting away a wife without the death of the husband. *IF* Paul's analogy HAD to bring up every possible variable in order to work, since Paul is speaking to those who 'know the law', then Paul would have HAD to have mentioned that pesky little problem of Deut 24:1-4 where Moses laid out regulation for putting away a wife with the death of the husband.