



not a condemnation of lawful marriage or remarriage, but offer advice allowing believers **“to be without care”** (1 Cor. 7:32). The widow **“is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes”** (1 Cor. 7:39) and she is not in adultery if she does so.

ture. He wrote, “We honor monogamy and the sanctity of one marriage” arguing from Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 7:9, “concerning second marriage the apostle says, ‘If you burn, marry’” (*Stromata*, Book 3.1). Paul’s words to **“the unmarried and widows”** (1 Cor. 7:8) are

Compared to the loose attitudes that our generation has regarding divorce and remarriage we certainly appreciate the great respect for the permanence of marriage that was fostered in these years. At the same time, we must reject the more extreme views of these early writers in those areas in which they go beyond the clear teaching of God’s word.



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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

March 20
2011



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia

Divorce and Remarriage in Second Century Writings By Kyle Pope

After the New Testament was revealed, believers in Jesus (just as today) utilized the written word to teach the gospel as they understood it. While time has preserved only a small sampling of such written material, surviving documents offer a glimpse of how early believers understood Scripture and where they began to move beyond the revealed word. Second century writings allow us such a glimpse regarding the subject of divorce and remarriage.

While our generation has devoted more attention to the exception **“for sexual immorality”** (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) it is evident that the generations immediately after the New Testament understood the Lord’s teaching to emphasize the permanence of marriage. In a letter written to the em-

peror, Justin Martyr (ca. 103-165) after quoting Matthew 5:28-29 and 19:9b explained:

...With our Teacher, both those twice-married by the law of man and those looking to a woman to desire her are making themselves sinners. For not only the one committing adultery in deed is cast out by Him, but also the one wishing to commit adultery, since it is not



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the deeds alone that appear to God, but also the thoughts (*First Apology* 15.11-16, Pope).

He then goes on to declare that in his day many disciples “sixty or seventy” years of age in all nations, had kept themselves “uncorrupted” in order to obey the Lord’s commands (ibid. 15:17-20).

This is not to suggest that Jesus’ teaching on the exception “for sexual immorality” was unknown in the second century. Justin records an example of a woman married to an unbelieving man who lived in immorality but was unwilling to change. After much patience and repeated attempts to convert the man, when his immorality grew worse, the woman “was separated from him” giving him a bill of divorcement which the Romans called a *repudium* (*Second Apology* 2). In this example remarriage was not addressed. However, it is clear that some in the second century did not see a right to remarry in the Lord’s teaching on the exception “for sexual immorality.” A work known as the *Shepherd of Hermas* records a rhetorical discussion about the rights and responsibilities of a Christian in the event that his mate committed sexual immorality. When asked what should be done after learning of such infidelity, the answer was given:

...Let the man put her away and remain to himself. But if, having put the woman away he should marry another, he himself commits adultery (Mandate 4.1.6, Pope).

Both Justin and the *Shepherd of Hermas* stress the role a Christian can play in the repentance of an adulterous mate. The *Shepherd of Hermas* argued that a Christian must refrain from remarriage to allow an adulterous “put away” mate the opportunity to repent and be reconciled (Mandate 4.1.7-11). While the New Testament certainly teaches this as an option (1 Cor. 7:11) to teach that an innocent mate must remain unmarried or be guilty of adultery in remarriage moves beyond the Lord’s teaching. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 Jesus interrupts the phrase “**divorces his wife...and marries another**” with the exception “**except for sexual immorality.**” The clear inference is that the one who “marries another” for this cause does not commit adultery.

The view that any remarriage was sinful appears in other writers as well. A writer named Athenagoras (ca. 133-190), after warning against carnality, writes:

Either someone should remain as he was born, or in one marriage. For a second is only good-looking

adultery, for He says, “Whoever should put away his wife and marry another commits adultery.” Neither allowing to put away someone whose virginity he has ended, nor to marry again (*A Plea to Christians* 33.4-5, Pope).

He goes further to argue that a widower who remarries, even when divorce has not been involved becomes a “veiled adulterer” (ibid. 33.6). This clearly goes beyond the teaching of Scripture. Jesus taught that the marriage covenant is severed by death (Matt. 22:23-33). One who remarries after the death of a mate is not an adulterer (Rom. 7:3).

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215) well summarizes the view of many in the second cen-