

Message #67 of Scripture Beneath The Surface
"Divorced, Yet Called To The Ministry"

With Randy Smith
(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076

preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, or send messages)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

Broadcast Schedule

WOLY AM 1500 - Battle Creek, Sat. 10am - Sun. 9:30am

WLQV AM 1500 - Detroit, Sun. 10am

Also, Internet Stream - www.am1500wlqv.com

WFPM

99.5 FM in Battle Creek - Fri. 3:30pm

99.9 FM in Albion - Fri. 3:30pm

103.7 FM in Jackson - Fri. 3:30pm

Also, Internet Stream - www.wfpmradio.org

Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to explore another avenue of doctrine which is closely aligned with the concepts of divorce which we have just talked about recently. It deals with the concept of being remarried, and whether or not this disqualifies a man from becoming a pastor of a church. Many of you might not think twice about it, but there are some men who have felt called to the ministry, yet have been turned down by one denomination or another for becoming a licensed minister because they had been divorced and remarried. I have extended this series of messages on divorce because this area of church doctrine is one of the major problem areas for Christians in today's church. If you have not heard the two prior messages concerning the subject of divorce, please consider sending us a request. Just ask for the messages concerning divorce, and we'll send you the three messages in their written transcript form and in the CD form. That's today's message, plus the two previous ones. Remember, these are free. We don't charge anything for our material. And you won't get future mail from us asking for donations. We don't put you on a mailing list, and we don't give your information out to anyone else either. The material is just plain free. Period. We just want you to receive help in any area in which you have need.

And, let me take a minute and give you another alternative. Recently I have received a couple of phone calls from people who have listened to the program and wanted to talk to me. They didn't have my phone number, but were able to track me down through the various white pages listings. This was great, and was a great encouragement for me. I very much enjoy new inquiries into the ministry, or any conversation centered around Bible scriptures. Previously I have not included a

phone number because I didn't feel anyone would really need to call me. But if you would like to talk to me concerning some questions you have, or just general interest, or to request one or more of the messages, here is my number. It's area code, 269-763-2114. And, if you don't remember it, or didn't have time to write it down, you can look it up in the Bellevue phone directory. Please feel free to call me. I enjoy talking to people, at least to the extent I have the time, and to the extent they have a genuine interest for spiritual matters. I can't promise to be available 100% of the time, but I do look forward to opportunities for good spiritual conversation. Anyway, if you missed the number, listen at the end and Kim will give you the number again when she gives you the e-mail and postal addresses.

O.K. So, let's get back to the subject for today. I think the best thing to do to get started is to read the scripture in 1 Timothy 3:2. It says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"

This is the scripture that most often destroys the calling of a man to the ministry if he has been divorced and remarried. Current day church doctrine generally takes this verse as meaning that a man who is a minister cannot be remarried unless the former wife has died. However, the real meaning of this scripture is much more significant than that. The real meaning of this scripture is that a man engaged in the work of the ministry should not be married to two wives at the same time. And the reasoning for this scripture is not based on the concept of adultery, but on the concept that having more than one wife will encumber the work of the ministry by overloading the husband with family responsibilities. In essence, one wife can be beneficial to the ministry, but two wives can be too time and energy intensive, and will hinder the work of the ministry by diverting him from ministerial responsibilities.

I know that in this modern day and age we don't generally find people who have more than one wife. However, it is still fairly common in some foreign countries, but not in our American social environment. But in the Old Testament, we see many instances of God's people having more than one wife. We even see God himself described as having two wives in passages of scripture from Ezekiel where God uses this concept to describe his relationship with the southern kingdom of Judah, and the 10 tribe nation of northern Israel. Scripture does not support the concept of women having multiple husbands, but does support the concept of men having multiple wives. And, interestingly enough, neither does scripture ever condemn the practice of multiple wives, except in the concept of overdoing it to the extent that it takes away the heart of the man from the things of God. In Deuteronomy 17:17, and accompanying verses, multiple wives are given the same context as horses, or gold and silver, in the sense that too much of these things can destroy a person.

But, in today's American society, we have a natural reserve when it comes to men having multiple wives. Therefore, when Bible scholars interpret 1 Timothy 3:2, they tend to be swayed by social conditions in our current society rather than recognizing the true meaning of the scriptures as were implied under the social life which existed at the time when the New Testament church was being established.

But, when God calls a man to ministry, what is the man to do if he has been remarried? I would suggest that the answer to this dilemma is to listen to God rather than men. In a very real sense, the calling of God is just that, the calling of God, and not a calling of men. However, this doesn't mean that you go to a denomination and tell them that God called you, and therefore they have to receive you. Just as you must have a clear understanding of what is right in your own eyes, the men of these denominations also have the responsibility to recognize scripture according to their own eyes.

Yet, many times, men receive a calling to become ministers, and have truly sought the Lord for confirmation and understanding, and are still denied opportunity to enter into ministerial work. The answer, as I have just said, is not to try to force yourself on the denominational hierarchy of a certain religious affiliation, but rather to seek God for the open door which will allow you to minister according to the calling which God has placed on your life.

But, all too often, men who feel that God has called them to the ministry, give up their quest for the ministry because denominational leaders have convinced them that they weren't really called in the first place. This is a disservice to God, but, one that can be overcome simply by listening to God and trusting in him, rather than trusting in other men's understanding. Here are some simple guidelines which may help.

First of all, you must remember that it is God who calls you, and not religious leaders. Secondly, you must remember that it is also God, and not religious leaders, who establishes you in the ministry. Thirdly, and this is very important, you must not be swayed from your purpose just because other men do not recognize your calling. To do so is to put more trust in men as your authority than you do in God. The validity of your calling is not based on someone else's understanding. Your calling is valid when it comes from God. It only becomes invalid if God does not confirm it.

If you are convinced that God has called you to the ministry, then you cannot ignore your convictions, for, one day you will stand before God, and he will ask you why you didn't answer his call. I would suggest that trying to explain to him that others would not let you do it won't be very helpful.

I think you can realize as well as I do that God is all powerful. He can do anything and everything that he decides to do. In fact, he is so powerful that he can even use you and me, in spite of our simplistic human nature. He can even use you and me if we have been remarried. In fact, he may even be able to use you better than some others because you have more of an understanding concerning the difficulties connected with divorce and remarriage.

But, let's cover another aspect of the remarriage doctrine. One of the current doctrinal arguments against a remarried person becoming a minister is through the suggestion that if a man is remarried, and his former wife is still living, that he is continuing in the act of adultery toward

his first wife. If you have listened to my previous messages on the topic of divorce, you will remember that a marriage is only adulterated at the initial point when unfaithfulness occurs. Just as a reminder, adultery is the act of making something impure. Once something is impure it cannot then be made impure, because it is already impure. Therefore, continuing in a second marriage does not continually create the act of adultery because it is not continuing in the act of making the marriage impure. In fact, the second marriage is pure. It is unadulterated, which is the reason why God gave the command through Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, that a previous wife who has since been married to another man cannot be taken back in marriage by the first husband. To do so would be equivalent to the woman entering into an act of adultery with the first husband.

Sometimes you hear of religious counselors telling a woman that she needs to divorce her second husband and return to the marriage of the first husband in order to stop the act of adultery. This is directly contrary to these scriptures in Deuteronomy 24. Not that we are under the Law of Moses in this current day and age, but, the principles of God's word still apply, and by these Old Testament scriptures we can better understand the mind of God concerning our modern day New Testament doctrines. As I said before, we covered some of the concepts of divorce in the other two messages. Please don't hesitate to ask for them.

As we approach the time of our Lord's return, it is absolutely essential that every man answers God's calling. It is absolutely essential that we not be swayed from our purpose by other men's scriptural interpretation. If God has called you to the Ministry, then your reply should be the same as the child Samuel replied, which was, "Speak Lord, for your servant hears." Or, as it says in Isaiah 6:8, "Here am I, send me." It is absolutely necessary to the body of Christ that the needs of the body are met. God will meet those needs, but he will only meet those needs through his chosen workers. It is important to understand the scriptures in order that you might be a help to others.

I don't have the answers for you of how to specifically go forward in the work God has called you to do. What I do want for you is that you be encouraged to seek God for an open door. It is God who calls, and it is God who qualifies. In 1 Timothy 1:12, the apostle Paul states that it was Jesus Christ our Lord who enabled him, and who placed him in the ministry. If Paul had depended on denominational structure in order to become a minister of Jesus Christ, he never would have entered into Christian ministry. But, you have been called when God calls you. And, you can be certain you are called by the confirmation both in your spirit and by the open door to that ministry. When God calls someone to the ministry, Satan immediately attempts to destroy that calling. He will use whatever technique he can to deter you from your purpose. But you cannot blame the denominational structure for refusing your request for ministerial licensing. This is an error of looking to man for your authority. But man can only give authority if they have it to give. The question is, what authority do you need?

When God calls, he not only calls you to ministry in the general sense, but he calls you to a specific ministry. He does not call you and then turn you over to some other person to determine

how you will or will not minister. The calling of God is specific, not only as to whether you will be prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher, but also as to specifics of that calling. One of the greatest mistakes men have ever made has been looking to the church for their direction in ministry. Many men accept the call to ministry because they feel called of the Lord, and then immediately turn their attention to the denominational hierarchy in order to receive from them specific assignments. But God not only knows that you have a heart for ministry, but he also knows exactly what kind of ministry he has qualified you for. God will not put you into a ministry for which you are unqualified. He will only call you to a work for which he intends to empower you. Many men have made the mistake of launching a career in the ministry at the direction of other overseers, and then found that they had no heart for what they were doing. I believe that many times men could be delivered from failure in ministry if they would only do the work that God calls them to do instead of doing work that other men have assigned to them.

But what about you? If you're listening to me today, you may very well have felt the calling of God on your life. And you also may have been rejected by the current doctrine of the American church. But God is greater than the church, and the keys to the kingdom were never intended to be given only to Simon Peter. God's promise of giving the keys to the kingdom of heaven applies to you as well as to Simon Peter, as well as to all others who have faith in God. God wants to use you to meet the needs of the body of Christ. He doesn't want you to be discouraged by others. He wants you to go forth as you are led by his Holy Spirit and by the word of God. God is seeking you to fulfill his will, and he will open the necessary doors for you to accomplish that which he has called you to do.

If you truly believe God has called you to ministry, and you have been rejected by your current religious denomination, or your current religious denomination has suggested an alternative ministry for you, then I have some advice for you. First of all, stop listening to men, get on your knees and ask God to show you the truth. Then, continue in prayer until you receive the necessary confirmation from God. One way or another, God will answer you. He will either confirm your calling, or will give you greater understanding. The next thing you need to consider, if you have been divorced and remarried, is whether or not you are willing to answer God's call by stepping out of your denominational comfort zone. Are you ready to let God use you in other ways than are generally accepted by mainline organizations? No, I'm not trying to undermine the churches. I'm trying to help those who have been called by God to reach their full potential instead of becoming subservient to men. We certainly do honor those ministers who have been placed over us, but we should never give them more authority over our lives than we give to God.

We must remember at all costs that God is the final authority. Through the years the church has suffered greatly at the hands of church leaders. Some of the greatest abuse against Christians has been perpetrated by the very leaders who should have been concerned for their welfare. I'm not suggesting that denominational leaders are evil, just because they reject your plea for ministerial licensing, but that they very well can be misled by church affiliation and structure. The only one you can trust explicitly is God. If you trust God, you will never go wrong. But if you trust men,

you're setting yourself up for a fall. To honor men is good, but to follow them is bad. We must remember the scripture of Romans 8:14, which says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Just as we do not accomplish anything in our own strength, neither can we accomplish anything by going in the strength of others. It is only through God's strength that we will prevail against evil.

You are the husband of one wife even if you are remarried, as long as you have established a permanent separation between you and your first wife. I am in no way suggesting that divorce, in itself, is a good thing. But I am saying that the husband of one wife, as it says in 1 Timothy 3:2, means that a man does not have two or more wives that he is currently married to. And just to make a point, consider this. There is only one unpardonable sin, and that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Divorce and remarriage is not an unpardonable sin. Therefore, if you have repented from your hardness of heart for the destruction of your first marriage, then you have done every thing you could possibly do. Yes, you could stay single for the rest of your life, but here again the scripture plainly tells us that it is better to be married than to burn. Just because you sinned with hardness of heart and thereby helped to destroy your first marriage, does not mean that you must now be tempted above that which you are able because you can never be married again.

Today's church is quite similar in many ways to the religious establishment at the time Jesus was on earth. The scribes and Pharisees of today still lay excessive religious burdens on men, but only because they don't have to carry that burden themselves. We see this described in Matthew 23:4, where it says, "For they bind heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Yes, it may be very easy for a denominational leader to interpret 1 Timothy 3:2 as meaning that a remarried man cannot be a minister. But, what happens when that same leader has a failed marriage? It's not unusual for that minister to rethink the meaning of 1 Timothy 3:2, and realize that the true meaning refers to priorities in life rather than an assumed unpardonable sin of divorce.

Yes, I realize that what I'm saying will not be readily received by most established denominational organizations. But, my real concern is that you let God determine whether or not you are committing the unpardonable sin by being remarried. My greatest concern is for you to let God determine whether you are called or not, and also to let God determine what manner of ministry he is calling you to. It may not be a ministry that conforms to acceptable denominational standards. But, it may be comparable to the ministry performed by the disciples of Jesus Christ in the days of the early church before the denominational hierarchy was established. Trust God. If he has called you, he will establish you. Only, don't be swayed by the doctrine of men, but only be swayed by God's Spirit as he guides you into all truth. If you persist in prayer, God will answer. And, if you're called, God will make the way.