

Minister's Message – June 2011

Holy Matrimony

God made human beings in his own image. He made us male and female. He has given the gift of marriage to most but not all. God said '*a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined/united to his wife and they shall become one flesh*' (Genesis 2:24). Marriage as ordained by God is between one man and one woman. God intended a marriage to continue for the duration of the person's life.

There is no place for same-sex marriage in God's created order. In no way can same-sex marriage fulfil the Creator's design and purpose for marriage. Homosexuality is not new. Abraham saw God destroy the city of Sodom because the inhabitants were '*exceedingly wicked and sinful against God*' (Genesis 13:13). That wickedness included rampant homosexuality.

'Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, and for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue' (Westminster Confession of Faith (WFC) chapter 24). To have legitimate children it is necessary to be legitimately married. In all societies the coming together of a man and woman in marriage is authorised and celebrated publicly. Cohabitation is not sanctioned in the Bible.

The term 'holy matrimony' is rarely heard these days. Even the term 'marriage' is being pushed aside in favour of the word 'partnership' – except by those who want homosexual marriage. One is not sure these days if a 'partner' is a husband or wife, a work partner or a drinking partner! Efforts to undermine the sanctity of marriage are not new, and will continue as long as Satan is active. Satan and his agents oppose all that God says is good for humanity.

What about divorce? *The Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce* (Malachi 2:16). When answering a question about divorce Jesus said '*what God has joined together let not man separate*' (Mathew 19:6). That means no person within the marriage or outside of the marriage. If God hates divorce he will not be pleased with anyone who promotes it for any reason.

Jesus said '*whoever divorces his wife except for fornication/sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery*' (Mathew 19:9). The WFC chapter 24 states 'in the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce'. Adultery is grounds for divorce; although in God's grace sin repented of can be forgiven.

Our civil law since 1975 makes no provision for an innocent party in a divorce. It states only one ground for divorce, that being irretrievable breakdown of a marriage, which means living apart for 12 months. We see many innocent people hurt by such divorce, not the least being children.

Are there other grounds for divorce in the Bible? A second ground for divorce is permitted in I Corinthians 7:15. It is very specific. It relates to an unbelieving husband or wife. A believer should only marry a fellow believer. Yet the case of 'unequal yoking' is addressed by the apostle Paul. After explaining how the marriage is sanctified by the believer he says '*but if the unbeliever departs, let them depart*'. The WCF refers to 'wilful desertion', along with adultery, as being sufficient grounds for dissolving the bond of marriage.

Jesus, like Moses, recognised that we live in a sinful world. He understood just how hard human hearts can become. He knew about temptation. So did the apostle Paul. Paul urged proper respect and commitment in marriages in the area of sexuality, *lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control* (I Corinthians 7:5). Marriage should be honoured by everyone. This means we should be praying, and doing all we can to strengthen our marriage, and all other God – ordained marriages.

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