

A DESERTED BELIEVER?

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Is the Christian Husband or Wife Who Has Been Maliciously Deserted by an Infidel Partner Free to Marry Again? If not, it would be difficult to see how such "a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases," If they are not any longer bound to these deserting partners, nor in bondage to them, they certainly are free. If they are not free to marry again, then they are not free from this marriage bondage at all, and are, therefore, still bound. If Paul does not mean that the marriage bondage is broken and does not any longer exist, so far as the Christian is concerned, then his language has no meaning at all. To make it mean something else is to destroy his whole point. But someone suggests that he means that the Christian is not bound to live with and to give the marriage privilege to such a deserting partner. That would be a wise statement from an inspired man! Even Christians could live apart, if they so desired. He has already told them to live with these heathen spouses if they can. It would now be absurd to tell them that they are under no obligation to live with those who have deserted them, and refused their companionship. How could they live with such a person? But someone else suggests that he had said in verse 10 that those who depart should remain unmarried, or be reconciled to their mate. Yes, he said that to Christians who might desire to separate. But this is to those who are deserted by heathen partners. And, since they were not able to hold these heathen mates, what would be the sense in telling Christians later to be reconciled to them? The Christian was never other than reconciled. It was the heathen that departed. Did Paul call on these heathen to remain unmarried, or to be reconciled to their Christian companions whom they, because of their religion, had deserted? Absurd!

Then, someone is ready to say, according to that, Paul allowed divorce for desertion, whereas Christ made fornication the only ground for divorce. There is no conflict there. Desertion by a heathen includes or presupposes unfaithfulness to the partner, of course. Could anyone suppose that such a heathen, with no ideas of Christian morality, but who because of opposition to such Christian ideals deserts his partner, would live a chaste and celibate life henceforth? (CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH, pp. 100-101)