

WHAT DOES "REPENTANCE" ENTAIL IN A SINFUL MARITAL UNION?

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Biblically and simply put, marriage is the union of a man and a woman to become and remain husband and wife to each other till death do them part. By sinful marital union, we mean a marriage that is contracted contrary to the law or command of God. To repent is to change one's attitude and conduct; to meditate and act righteously concerning a matter rather than sinfully as one had previously been doing.

Anyone who is married to another unlawfully commits fornication/adultery. **Which of the two statements below connote true repentance?**

1. 'I will not do such again but will continue in this marriage; my prayer or baptism has made it lawful.'
2. 'I have to end this relationship and put the unlawful partner away and never do such again.'

Can one be involved in a sinful/illegitimate marriage and claim that prayer or baptism has legitimized the union? (e.g. married to another person's spouse -Mk 6:17-20, Lk 16:18)

At baptism [by alien sinner] or upon prayer [by erring Christian], God forgave that sin and one is expected to 'go and sin no more.' Neither the baptism nor prayer changed the illegitimacy of the union. The same principle is applicable to a whoremonger or prostitute not married unto anyone; such person cannot continue in that lifestyle after repentance. One cannot remain in an illicit marriage or relationship, committing same sin all over again and assume it is now lawful. To remain in the calling in which you are called unto Christ is about legal social/professional status not illegal or immoral state. You are not to remain a sinner e.g. robber, fornicator or adulterer upon coming to Christ but may choose to remain uncircumcised, etc. We cannot continue in sin that grace may abound (Rm 6:1-2). Penitent people must be told to demonstrate fruit of repentance as seen in Ezra 9:10-10:19, Lk 3:8-14.

1 Corinthians 6:9 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Note in verse 11, Paul was inspired to write 'such WERE some of you' implying they NO LONGER are. If a marital union is acceptable (sanctified) by God at its onset then it is not sinful but any that is otherwise should be put away. Christ's statement in Mt 19:4b "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" IMPLIES a corollary that '**let man only put asunder what therefore God hath NOT joined together.**'

Beloved, "judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" -John 7:24. We should be careful before we label any marriage as sinful, for that is tantamount to calling the couple 'adulterers or fornicators' who SHALL not inherit heaven. Hebrews 13:4 says: "*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*" Those who are unmarried in God's sight who engage in sex are fornicators irrespective of whether they are married or not by civil law. The church is not to fellowship with fornicators or retain such members but is commanded "therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" -1 Corinthians 5:13. True repentance is required of such for restoration into the fold/faith. **No amount of prayer or baptism may change the designation of a thief who continues to steal (Eph 4:28) because of the definition of the terms and continual action.**

Do you think otherwise for:

1. An adulteress who remains in marriage to another while her first valid husband is alive? (Rm 7:2-3)
2. An homosexual or gay marriage partner who continues in that union? (Rm 1:28-32)
3. Any other person involved in another form of sinful marriage?