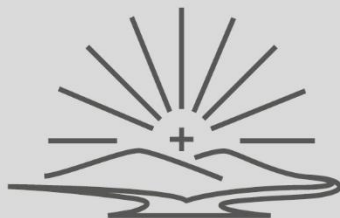




THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

DEALING WITH DIVORCE: HEALING AND HOPE AFTER HEARTHBREAK



AUTHOR: DR. RICHARD PERHAI
EDITOR: DR. LARRY OATS

DEALING WITH DIVORCE: HEALING AND HOPE AFTER HEARTBREAK

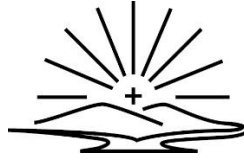


AUTHOR: DR. RICHARD PERHAI

EDITOR: DR. LARRY OATS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
PART I: WHEN THE COVENANT BREAKS	6
PART II: LIVING IN THE RUINS	11
PART III: THE CHURCH AND THE CHASM.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PART IV: THE HARD WORK OF GRACE	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
PART V: THE MASTER'S REPAIR.....	20
CONCLUSION.....	23



INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a funeral without the dignity of a casket. It is the raw, unvarnished wreckage of a life once thought to be anchored in the bedrock of eternity. When the house grows silent and the chairs sit empty, the soul begins to realize that this is not merely a difficult transition or a sharp turn in the road. It is a violent undoing of the self. Dave didn't bother knocking when he came to my porch that night. He just stood there, looking like he'd been hit by a train, his voice thin as paper. He had spent forty-eight hours in a house that was too quiet, and the rooms were mocking him. He felt like a ghost. We live in a culture that tries to sanitize this grief, telling the broken to move on or find a new chapter as if the shattering of a union were a simple administrative error. But the heart knows the truth of the ruin. It feels the pain of a broken covenant like a weight in the very marrow. This is the reality of the fallen world, and there is no quick escape from the dust.

In the ancient paths of our faith, we speak of covenants with a gravity that the modern mind struggles to hold. Marriage is not a contract for mutual satisfaction; it is a sacred architecture built before the face of a holy God. When it snaps, the earth itself seems to crack open. Why does the believer feel such a paralyzing sense of shame when standing in the church lobby with a bare hand? It is because we have often confused the outward appearance of the "perfect family" with the actual state of our souls. We walk into the light of Sunday morning and feel the cold, wide chasm between our own ruin and the perceived perfection of the pews. Shame becomes a second skin, a vanity that tells us we are "damaged goods." But this is a failure to understand the radical reality of Genesis 3. Since the Fall, the ground has been hard, and human hearts have been harder. Divorce is the visceral evidence of a world in rebellion. Sometimes it is the

FIELD GUIDE

result of a massive betrayal, and other times it is the slow erosion of two souls who simply ceased to offer the grace they once received.

And yet, our God rebuilds ruins. He does not avert His gaze from the wreckage or look for a more pristine project to occupy His time. Where is the sovereignty of God when the household collapses? He is in the very center of the disaster. We look at the history of Israel and see a people who broke every promise, who wandered (or sometimes even ran) into the dust of their own desires, and who lost everything. But God did not discard them. He stayed in the wreckage. He worked in the rubble to forge something new from the debris of their rebellion. He is the God of the brokenhearted, not because He enjoys pain, but because only He has the power to redeem the toil.

Does my identity change to "Divorced" in the eyes of the King? Your name is not your marital status. You are a child of God. Your identity is anchored in the unmerited grace of Christ. You belong to Him. He did not die for a curated, perfect version of the family. He died for the real you—the one with the red eyes and the empty bed. None of this takes Him by surprise. Therefore, we must practice good stewardship of our pain. You may not have chosen this season, but you must manage it with rugged honesty. The Master still owns the life that feels like it has been ripped in two. The story is not finished. God is still writing in the margins of the disaster, and He is close to the broken-hearted. This is not a hollow cliché. It's a promise rooted in the character of a God who specializes in resurrection. Let us look squarely at what happens when the covenant breaks.

1

WHEN THE COVENANT BREAKS

The Weight of the Vow

We live in a world that treats words like cheap plastic—disposable, mass-produced, and easily discarded when the shape no longer fits our immediate desire. But in the Kingdom economy, a vow is made of iron and bone. It is a weight that anchors the soul to a promise made before the face of God. When we look at God's heart toward marriage, we must start with the uncomfortable, jagged reality of the prophet Malachi. The text tells us that God hates divorce. This is not a casual dislike or a preference for stability. It is a visceral, divine mourning over the tearing apart of what He Himself joined together. It is the language of a Creator watching His own handiwork being smashed into the dust by the hands of those who swore to protect it. Marriage is not a mere contract for the mutual exchange of services or an agreement of convenience. It is a covenant, intended for life. It is a one-flesh mystery that reflects the very relationship between Christ and His Church.

What does the Bible say about the true weight of the marriage vow? The answer lies in the marrow of the covenant itself. When a man and a woman stand before the face of God and swear their lives to one another, they are not just making a romantic gesture. They are setting up a signpost of God's own faithfulness. To break that vow is to shatter the signpost. It is to tell the world that promises are temporary and that "until death do us part" is actually "until I get tired." God hates divorce because He loves the covenant. He loves the unity it represents. He hates the violence of the tearing. This is the grit of the theology—we cannot sugarcoat the gravity. To pretend that a broken marriage is just a "life transition" is to commit a secondary violence against the holiness of God. It is a tragedy of cosmic

FIELD GUIDE

proportions because it is a witness to the death of a promise. We must feel the weight of this. The vow is not a light thing. It is a burden of glory that was intended to last until the grave.

The breaking of the covenant also hurts the children who do not understand why mommy and daddy are no longer together. And divorce destabilizes society, like removing rafters from a roof.

Yet, we must be careful not to weaponize the words of Malachi against the one who has been abandoned in the wreckage. God's hatred of divorce is primarily a hatred of the sin that causes it—the hard-heartedness, the betrayal, and the cold indifference that leads to the collapse of a household. He hates the pain it causes the children who now have to live in two different worlds. He hates the way it leaves a woman or a man feeling like a discarded remnant. The weight of the vow is heavy because the prize of the covenant is glorious. We do not honor marriage by pretending divorce is easy; we honor it by admitting that its destruction is a form of spiritual death. It is the friction of the pavement where our high ideals meet the crushing weight of our failures. But we cannot start with grace until we have stood in the shadow of the law. We must acknowledge that breaking the covenant is an affront to the One who never breaks His word. It is a rupture in the created order, a jagged tear in the fabric of the family that leaves a permanent scar on the soul.

The Permission of Mercy

If God hates covenant-breaking, we must ask the hard, bleeding question:

Why did God allow for divorce in a fallen world if He hates it so much?

We find the answer in the dusty streets of Galilee, where the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with questions of law and loopholes. Jesus pointed them back to the beginning—back to the design before the dust of sin settled on the human heart. But Jesus also acknowledged the reality of the pavement. He spoke of the hardness of heart. Divorce was not God's original plan, but a merciful permission He granted because of the presence of sin. In a world where men betray their wives and women abandon their husbands, God provided a legal boundary to protect the vulnerable. The law was not an endorsement of the act, but a protection for the victim of the broken promise.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

The biblical grounds for divorce—sexual immorality and the desertion of an unbelieving spouse—are not "get out of jail free" cards. They are concessions of mercy for the party who has been abandoned in the ruins of their life. Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7 are the guardrails of the soul. When a spouse breaks the "one-flesh" union through adultery, they have already committed a spiritual divorce. The legal decree merely recognizes the wreckage that sin has already created. It is a tragic permission. It is God saying that He will not force the faithful to remain bound to a ghost. The reality is that sometimes, sin is so invasive and so destructive that the union can no longer hold. The permission is a recognition that we live in the "already but not yet," a world where thorns still grow, and hearts still wander.

Does the biblical permission for divorce extend to abuse? God doesn't only hate divorce. He also hates domestic violence (Psalm 11:5). Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and women are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. But would the Lord ever abuse His wife? While Scripture does not mandate divorce for domestic violence, it also doesn't mandate remaining with an abusive spouse. Wives or husbands may need to separate themselves and their children from the abuser and take necessary action (pastoral, counseling, or legal) in order to protect themselves. Elders and pastors should step in to protect the vulnerable with counseling programs, church discipline, counseling of abusers, and then counseling to restore marriages. Long-term separation or divorce may be the only option if restoration proves impossible.

Does the biblical permission for divorce mean that remarriage is always an option for the believer? This is where the friction of the law meets reality. In the Christian tradition, we recognize that where there are biblical grounds for the dissolution of a marriage, the innocent party is generally free to remarry in the Lord. But this is never a fully celebratory occasion. It is a somber recognition that the original covenant has been irrevocably shattered. Remarriage is a gift of common grace, a way for the Master to provide companionship and order amid a fallen world. But it must be approached with fear and trembling. It is not a way to "start over" as if the first vow never happened; it is a new path built on top of the debris of the old one. We do not look for loopholes; we look for the mercy of the King who knows that His children are made of dust. The permission of mercy is

FIELD GUIDE

not a license to be reckless; it is a refuge for those who have been crushed by the hardness of another's heart.

The Friction of the Fall

We cannot understand the chasm of divorce without returning to the thorns and thistles of Genesis 3. The Fall did not just ruin our relationship with the dirt; it ruined our relationship with the person sleeping next to us. The "one-flesh" union became a site of power struggles, manipulation, and the cold desire for dominion. Divorce is the ultimate fruit of the Fall. It is the hard, cruel evidence that the serpent is still whispering in the garden. When we see a household collapse, we are looking at the same decay that makes the body fail and the mind wander. It is the friction of the pavement. It is the reality that even our most sacred unions are susceptible to the rot of total depravity. We are not as good as we think we are. We are capable of killing those we love. We are capable of being so consumed by our own vanity that we burn down the house just to feel the heat or watch the flames.

Every divorce is a reminder of the toil of the human condition. It is a jagged piece of evidence that the world is not as it should be. But in the middle of this wreckage, the soul often cries out with a terrifying fear. Is divorce the unforgivable sin that permanently stains the believer in the eyes of God? There are men and women who have sat in the back pews for twenty years, convinced that the ink on their divorce decree is a permanent brand of shame that even the blood of Christ cannot wash away. They feel like damaged goods, forever excluded from the "real" life of the church. This is a lie from the pit. There is only one unforgivable sin, and it is not the failure of a marriage. The cross of Jesus Christ is bigger than your divorce. It is deeper than the chasm of your failure.

If we confess our sins—including the sins that led to the collapse of a home—He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The blood of the Lamb was shed for the adulterer, the abandoned, the hard-hearted, and the broken. Your name is not "Divorced"; your name is "Bought with a Price." The wreckage of your covenant is a tragedy, yes. It is a result of the Fall, yes. But it is not a territory where the grace of God cannot reach. Grace is not a "hack" for a better life; it is a rugged, violent mercy that picks us up out of the dust of

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

our own making. If your marriage has died, you must mourn it. You must own your part in the debris. But you must not worship your failure. You are a steward of a broken life, and the Master is still interested in the ruins. He is the God of the resurrection. While He may not resurrect your marriage, He is absolutely committed to resurrecting you. The pavement is hard, and the thorns are sharp, but the ancient path leads through the wreckage to the foot of the Cross, where every sin is buried and every soul is made new by His grace.

The weight of the vow remains, the permission of mercy stands, and the friction of the fall persists. Yet, above all, the sovereignty of God governs the wreckage. He is not surprised by the empty chair at your table. He is not repulsed by the red eyes or the thin voice. He stands in the ruins with you, not as a spectator, but as the Master of the house who knows exactly how to build from the rubble. We must leave the shame at the altar and take up the calling of the new day, walking the ancient path with a limp, but walking it nonetheless.

2

LIVING IN THE RUINS

The Chasm of Shame

There is a particular silence that greets the newly divorced in the sanctuary. It is the silence of those who do not know where to look. Walking into the church lobby with a bare hand feels like wearing a scarlet letter stitched into the very marrow of your soul. You see the stable, coordinated families, and the chasm between their wholeness and your wreckage feels like a thousand miles of jagged glass. The pews, once a refuge, feel like a courtroom where you have been found wanting. You deal with this paralyzing shame by realizing it is the vanity of the ego trying to save itself through performance. We often mourn our reputation more than the loss of the covenant.

But to walk into church in the ruins is to stand on the ancient path of humility. It is to admit you are exactly what the Bible says: a beggar in need of bread. This friction is a gift—the stripping away of your "domestic righteousness." You never belonged in the church because you were a "good spouse," but because you are a redeemed sinner. If the church is a hospital, your presence in the ruins is the point. You do not need to hide the scar. The Master of the house was "despised and rejected," a man of sorrows acquainted with the grief of rejection. Look past the pews to His cross. The only opinion that matters comes from Him, who says your debt is paid. You walk in not to prove you are whole, but to declare that God is faithful even when you are not. The chasm is bridged by His blood, not your marital status. You walk in to worship that merciful God.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

The Identity Crisis

When the papers are signed and the boxes moved, a terrifying void opens. For years, your identity was tethered to a role—husband or wife. Now that the tether is cut, you find yourself drifting in an unlit space. This is a violent crisis of being; you look in the mirror and see a stranger once defined by the presence of another. But who are you in Christ? You are exactly who you were before the "I do." You are a child of the King and a citizen of the final City with no need of marriage. In our tradition, we anchor into the sovereignty of God's election. Your identity was never "Married"; it was "Chosen."

The world may treat you like a fragment or a broken machine that has lost its function. But, sadly, the church can be worse in this regard. The church has historically treated divorcees more harshly. They placed a painful—sometimes judgmental—stigma upon divorced Christians, without graciously seeking to understand the causes of one's divorce.

Thankfully, this pattern is changing. The world tends to accept divorce as inevitable. (This is one reason some never marry.) But even conservative churches that historically judged all divorce harshly are changing. They are starting to see that all believers are broken in some way and waking up to the reality that the church is a hospital.

This is leading to Christian communities being more inclusive of divorced people as "normal" members of church life. This is a healthy step towards maintaining separated and divorced people in church life, where acceptance as brothers and sisters in Christ allows them to heal.

Divorce is not the unforgivable sin that removes "Christian" from one's identity. Even divorced believers can be united to Christ and belong to Christ. God provides forgiveness of past failure, power for present change, and hope for the future.

To think otherwise is a lie from the pit. The powerful grace of the Gospel tells us that our union with Christ is the only marriage that truly and finally defines us. Earthly unions are merely shadows, temporary signposts that point to the wedding of the Lamb. When the signpost is knocked down, the reality remains. You must find your pulse in the Word rather than in the

FIELD GUIDE

eyes of a spouse. You are a priest, a saint, and a soldier. "Husband" or "wife" was a role for a season, but "redeemed" is who you are forever. This feels like an amputation, but it is a refining fire. The Master is stripping away your self-reliance so you can stand on the bedrock of His unmerited favor. You are not "half" of anything. You are a soul bought with a price, and the Owner still has a high calling for the life that remains.

The Idol of the Perfect Family

We have a habit in our modern pews of worshipping the "Domestic Dream" more than we worship the God who sustains it. We have turned the happy, nuclear family into an idol of wood and stone. We believe that if we follow the right "biblical principles" and say the right prayers, we are guaranteed a life of soft edges and stable households. We treat the "God-honoring home" like a vending machine: put in the effort, get out the perfect family. When divorce happens, it shatters this idol, and the dust is often blinding. We are devastated not just because we lost a partner, but because our "god"—the dream of the white picket fence—has failed us.

How do I stop worshipping the image of a happy home and start worshipping the God who stays in the mess? You start by admitting that your "perfect family" was never your source of life; it was a gift on loan, and perhaps one you had come to rely on more than the Giver. We often value the image of wholeness more than the reality of holiness. Holiness is often forged in the furnace of a broken home. It is in this fussy mess—the shared custody battles, the thin finances, and the empty beds—that we finally stop looking for a "heaven on earth" and start looking for the King.

The God of the Bible is not a God who only exists in pristine, stable environments. He is the God who moved into a tent in the wilderness. He is the God who walked through the dust of a colonized, occupied land. He is the God who was born in a stable and died on a garbage heap. He is comfortable in the ruins. If you are waiting for your life to be "whole" again before you can worship Him, you are worshipping your own comfort. Stewardship in the ruins means honoring God right now, in the middle of the shrapnel. It means realizing that a broken person in a broken house can offer a sacrifice of praise that is more precious to God than the rehearsed prayers of those who have never known loss.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

We must deconstruct the idol of the "perfect home" and replace it with the rugged hope of the Cross. The Cross is not a neat and tidy symbol. It's a violent, bloody, and "failed" moment in the eyes of the world that became the source of all life. Your life may look like a failure to the world and to the "perfect" families in the pews, but in the hands of the Master, it is the raw material for a masterpiece of grace. You are finally in a position to see that God is enough. Not God plus a stable marriage. Not God plus a respected reputation. Just God. When the idol falls, the true God is finally revealed. He stays when everyone else leaves. He builds from the dust. And He is leading you, one painful step at a time, toward a New City where every tear will be wiped away and every ruin will be restored.

3

THE CHURCH AND THE CHASM

The Loneliness of the Pew

There is a cold, sharpening friction that occurs in the weeks and months following the collapse of a marriage. You walk into the same sanctuary where you were half of a pair, and you suddenly realize that you have become a living reminder that even the most solid-looking unions can disintegrate. You notice the subtle, almost imperceptible shift in your social circle. The invitations to dinner parties begin to dry up. The married friends who once shared your life now seem to pull away, their eyes darting toward the exit when you approach. It is easy to interpret this as judgment on your character, a silent condemnation of your failure to keep the covenant. But more often, the withdrawal of friends is born of a visceral fear. They look at your ruins and see their own potential for wreckage. Your presence makes them uncomfortable because it proves that the "thorns and thistles" can penetrate even the most guarded domestic sanctuaries.

How do I handle the deep hurt and isolation when my Christian community seems to retreat from me in my moment of greatest need?

You must handle it with the courage of a soul that has already survived the worst. You have to realize that most people are ill-equipped for the weight of another person's tragedy. They want to fix things, and when they realize your life cannot be "fixed" with a few verses and a casserole, they don't know what to do with their own helplessness. Handling this hurt requires you to stop expecting the pews to provide the comfort that only the Master can give. You must forgive your friends for their fear, realizing that their retreat is a symptom of their own fragility, not a measure of your worth.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

The loneliness of the pew is a refining fire. It forces you to move past the superficial community of social convenience and seek out the "ancient paths" of fellowship where people are not afraid to sit in the dust. This is the time to find the few who will stand in the chasm with you—not those who want to explain the wreckage away, but those who are willing to get the mud of your life on their own hands.

The Vocation of the Single Parent

For many, the transition into single parenthood feels like being permanently relegated to "Plan B." You look at your life and see a jagged, second-rate version of the family you intended to build. You feel the crushing weight of being the sole provider, the sole disciplinarian, and the sole emotional anchor for children who are themselves grieving a tectonic shift. The culture—and sometimes the church—speaks of the "broken home" as if it were a territory where God's presence is somehow diminished or diluted. You wake up exhausted before the day has even begun, wondering if you are doing anything more than just surviving the fallout.

How can I see my life as a single parent not as a tragic "Plan B," but as a specific, high calling for this season of my life?

You must reject the vanity of the "perfect home" and embrace the rugged reality of your current vocation. In the economy of God's sovereignty, there are no "Plan Bs." There is only the path He has laid before you, and right now, that path involves the sacred labor of raising children in the shadow of the Cross. Being a single parent is a high-stakes stewardship. You are an ambassador of God's faithfulness in a household that has experienced the violence of the Fall. When you provide for your children, you are reflecting the Fatherhood of God. When you comfort them, you are mirroring the Comforter Himself. This is not a "lesser" calling, but a more intense one. It requires the tenacity of a soldier and the heart of a saint. You are teaching your children that the presence of God is not dependent on the presence of a spouse. You are showing them that the Master can build a kingdom from a ruin. Every meal you cook, every tear you wipe, and every prayer you whisper in the dark is an act of spiritual warfare. You are not "just" a single parent; you are assigned to a difficult post for a holy purpose—a steward of the Master's most precious assets.

FIELD GUIDE

Grace in the Assembly

The search for a church home after a divorce can feel like navigating a minefield. On one side, you find congregations that have sacrificed the "Weight of the Vow" on the altar of a soft, therapeutic gospel—places where sin is never mentioned and the wreckage of a marriage is treated as a minor inconvenience. On the other side, you find places of rigid, cold legalism where the "Permission of Mercy" is never extended, and you are treated as a permanent outcast whose presence taints the holiness of the gathering. Neither of these reflects the heart of the King. The soul in the ruins needs a community that is rugged enough to name the sin and gracious enough to cover the sinner.

What should I look for in a local church that offers the necessary balance of biblical truth and radical mercy?

You look for a church that is comfortable with the "pavement." You look for a pulpit that doesn't shy away from the gravity of Malachi but speaks with the tears of Christ over Jerusalem. A church that truly understands the reality of sin will not be surprised by your brokenness because they know that every person in the building is a wreck of total depravity held together by unmerited grace. You are looking for a community that doesn't just have a "recovery program," but one that lives out a recovery theology—where the elders are not afraid to walk through the dust of your divorce with you.

Avoid the places that want to "rebrand" your failure or hide your scars. Seek out the assembly that treats you like a fellow traveler who has taken a hard fall on a jagged road. You need a place where the Word is preached with authority and where the sacraments are administered with a tenderness that recognizes the hunger of the destitute. The right church will not demand that you "fix" your life before you can belong. They will understand that only the Master does the fixing, and He often does it through the messy, imperfect hands of the congregation. In such a place, the chasm is not a barrier to fellowship, but the very ground where the grace of God is most clearly seen. You aren't looking for a "perfect" family, but a family of beggars who have found the Bread of Life and are eager to share it with anyone standing in the ruins.

4

THE HARD WORK OF GRACE

The Grit of Shared Custody

The true edge of a person's sanctification isn't found in a climate-controlled sanctuary while singing psalms. It is found on a humid Sunday afternoon, standing at the end of a gravel driveway, waiting for a car you no longer own to deliver children you no longer see every day. This is the unglamorous, bone-weary reality of the "hand-off." It is the friction of the pavement where high theology meets the visceral reality of seeing an ex-spouse—the person who may have shredded your trust or treated your life like a disposable wrapper.

Shared custody is a stewardship of the mundane. You are not just managing a schedule, but the spiritual climate of the souls God placed in your care. The Master requires you to be the adult on the driveway, even when your heart screams for vindication. This supernatural civility is rooted in Romans 12:18, which commands us, as far as it depends on us, to live at peace with everyone. You are responsible for the peace on your side of the driveway. Refusing to turn the hand-off into a battlefield is not weakness. It's the labor of a steward who knows that God is the only righteous Judge. Your children are watching to see if the God you worship is big enough to handle a Sunday afternoon without a civil war.

Biblical Coparenting: Narrating Faithfulness in the Ruins

The most agonizing task for a divorced parent is narrating God's character to children whose world has ended in a pile of ash. When a household feels like a disaster zone, shallow hacks and religious platitudes will not do. Biblical coparenting requires heavy, honest transparency. You do not protect God's reputation by lying about the "thorns and thistles" of the Fall.

FIELD GUIDE

You protect it by showing how a believer conducts themselves in the storm.

Point them to Psalm 27:10: "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." This is the ultimate anchor. You are teaching them that God's presence is not dependent on a spouse in the house. But this narration demands your own silence regarding the other parent's failures. Every time you badmouth your ex, you poison the well from which your children drink. Instead, model the "steadfast love" of Lamentations 3:22-23. You are building a new home made of "living stones"—truth and mercy—rather than the hay of a domestic dream that didn't survive the collapse.

The Trap of Bitterness: The High Cost of the Gavel

The desire to "win" the divorce is a seductive vanity. We want the narrative, the loyalty of friends, and the satisfaction of seeing our ex-flounder. But bitterness is a slow-acting poison you drink while hoping the other person dies. It consumes your strength and blinds you to the work the Master is doing in your own marrow. In Matthew 18, we see ourselves as the unmerciful servant—forgiven a cosmic debt we could never repay, yet grabbing our ex-spouse by the throat over a debt of emotional wreckage.

Bitterness is the refusal to accept a fallen world. It is the attempt to snatch the gavel from the hand of the King. Forgiving an unfaithful spouse is not saying the betrayal was "okay"; it is handing the debt to the Master and refusing to let it rot in your own basement. Your soul is too precious to be tethered to their sins forever. You drop the charges because your King dropped the charges against you. This is the hard work of grace. It is the only path out of the ruins. You cannot walk toward the New City if you are still trying to set fire to the bridge behind you.

5

THE MASTER'S REPAIR

The God of the Scars

We often crave a sterile Resurrection—a bleached-white victory where the jagged ink of our failures simply vanishes. We want the pain erased from the memory of the marrow. But that is not the Christ of the upper room. In John's Gospel, the resurrected Master shows His hands and His side. He invites the doubter to touch the very holes that broke Him. Christ kept His scars. They are the eternal credentials of His love and the visceral evidence that the war for the soul was real. The holes remained, but the agony was gone. They were no longer open wounds; they were the transfigured evidence of a victory won in the grit of the pavement.

For the believer standing in the wreckage of a broken covenant, this is the only theology with enough weight to matter. You fear your divorce will define you as a casualty, the jagged edges of rejection marking every morning in a quiet house. But look at the God of the Scars. He does not build from "perfect" materials. He specializes in ruins. In our tradition, providence is not a cold, detached management of a clockwork universe. It is a rugged, hands-on repurposing of our disasters. Your divorce is a ruin, a site of trauma. Yet, the Master is not repulsed. He works in the salvage yard of the human heart.

He takes the shards of your trust and the splinters of a shattered dream to forge a new architecture of the soul. He doesn't erase the hurt; He incorporates the scar into the design. The scars tell the truth about the Fall, but they no longer have the power to bleed you dry. God uses the ruins to build a heart more dependent and more intimately acquainted with grace

FIELD GUIDE

than a "perfect" life ever could. The scar is the place where the light of His mercy now enters.

The Long View of Redemption

The primary lie the enemy whispers in the quiet hours after the decree is signed is that the period has been placed on the sentence of your life. You feel like the credits have rolled while you were still sitting in the theater, way before the movie is over. You look at the empty chair or the divided bank account, and you convince yourself that you are now a "post-script" in the Kingdom—a remnant of a story that ended in a catastrophic failure. But this is the vanity of the short-sighted heart. We worship the God who works in centuries and generations, not in fiscal quarters. Redemption is a long, slow-cooked mercy. It is the reality of the "already but not yet." And we find our courage to keep walking only by looking at the ancient paths of the saints who were broken before us.

Look at Joseph in the pit, sold by his own blood into a foreign silence. Look at Israel sitting in the dust of Babylon, wondering if the promises of God had expired in the heat of their rebellion. In the moment of their displacement, it looked like the end of the world. But Providence was merely moving the pieces for a resolution they couldn't yet imagine. Your divorce is a catastrophic chapter, but it is not the book. The Master's pen has not run dry. He is still writing. And He is an author who loves a plot twist that highlights His unmerited favor. The long view of redemption requires you to stop staring at the wreckage of yesterday and start resting in the eternal decree of the King.

Romans 8:28 is not a Hallmark card meant to soothe a temporary sting. It's a rugged, ironclad promise that for those who love God, all things—including the betrayals, the legal fees, the shared custody, and the crushing loneliness—are being worked together for a good that you cannot yet see. This "good" is not necessarily a return to your old life or the arrival of a new spouse. It is much heavier. It is your transformation into the likeness of Christ. The "long game" means realizing that God is more interested in your holiness than your domestic comfort. He is taking the long way around to bring you to a place of spiritual fruitfulness that you never could have reached while sitting in the safety of an idolized

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

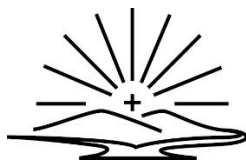
marriage. The story isn't over. The Master is simply turning the page to a chapter where His strength is made perfect in your obvious weakness.

Resting in the Provider

Abandonment is the most visceral echo of the Fall that a human being can experience. To be rejected by the one person who swore a covenant to stay is a blow that strikes the very center of your identity. It leaves a chasm of silence in the house that no noise can truly drown out. You feel abandoned by your spouse, perhaps by the friends who didn't know what to say, and in the dark, cold hours of the night, you might even feel abandoned by the Master Himself. You wonder if God has moved on to families that aren't a wreck, leaving you to manage the thorns and the thistles on your own. But peace is not found in the absence of the mess. It is found in the presence of the Provider. You must find your rest in the rugged truth of Isaiah 54:5: "For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name."

This is not a sentimental metaphor for the lonely. It is a legal and spiritual declaration for the abandoned soul. When the earthly provider walks away, the Heavenly Provider moves in closer. The empty house is not a sign of God's absence; it is an invitation to a deeper, more exclusive intimacy with the One who will never leave nor forsake. Stewardship in this season means managing the "quiet" as a holy space. It means refusing to fill the void with the dross of distractions or the vanity of new, frantic relationships. It is the labor of resting in the sovereignty of the One who feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies. If He can sustain the universe, He can sustain a soul with a thin bank account and a heavy heart.

Peace comes when you finally stop trying to "fix" the abandonment and start resting in the fact that you are fully known and perfectly loved by the Creator. You are a steward of this loneliness. You are a manager of this silence. And the Owner is using this time to prove to you that He is enough. Not He plus a spouse. Not He plus a respected reputation. Just He. When you finally reach the end of your own strength, you find the everlasting arms that have been holding you all along. The pavement is hard, and the ruins are real, but the Master is standing in the middle of it all, building something that the fire cannot touch. Rest there. The morning is coming.



CONCLUSION

There is a hard, necessary grace in a winter that refuses to end. We treat the frost as an enemy of the garden, a cold hand that seeks only to stifle the life beneath the dirt. But the soil knows a different truth. A mild winter is a curse; it allows the ground to remain compacted, the clay heavy and impenetrable, the shallow-rooted weeds left to fester in the dark. It is only the deep, bone-cracking frost—the kind that reaches down into the heart of the earth—that has the power to break the grip of the old year. The ice expands in the hidden fissures of the clay, shattering the hardness that no plow could ever touch. And when the thaw finally comes, the wreckage of that winter becomes the very opening that the new life requires.

The garden that survives such a freeze does not emerge with the thin, fragile beauty of a hothouse flower. It emerges stronger. The stalks are thicker because they had to push through soil that was violently rearranged. The colors are deeper because the roots were forced to go further into the dark to find the sustenance the surface could no longer provide. This is the mystery of the pavement. The very thing we thought would kill the life of the spirit—the shattering of the house, the silence of the rooms, the friction of the broken covenant—is the very instrument the Master uses to till the soul. He is not a gardener who is surprised by the frost. He governs the winter, knowing exactly how much pressure the dirt can stand before it breaks open to receive the seed of a new morning. You look at the blackened remains of your domestic dream and see a graveyard. But the Master looks at the same ground and sees a field that is finally, for the first time, ready for the harvest.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

We are prone to a vanity that believes our failures are more powerful than God's decree. We sit in the ruins and measure the chasm between our sin and His holiness, convinced that we have finally found the limit of His unmerited favor. But grace is not a shallow pool that dries up when the heat of our own rebellion intensifies. It is a tectonic force. It is the blood of a Covenant that was signed before the foundations of the world were laid. If your heart is broken tonight, it is not because God has abandoned the estate; it is because He is doing a work in the deep places. His grace is not a "hack" to make you feel better about the wreckage. It is the rugged mercy that stays in the dust with you, refusing to let the winter have the final word. The Cross was the ultimate winter, a moment where the light seemed to go out forever, yet it was the very soil in which the Resurrection took root. Your heartbreak is a dark chapter, but it is being written by a hand that has already conquered the grave.

Prayer

Master of the Ruins, look upon the one sitting in the quiet tonight. The house is still, and the weight of the empty chair is more than they can carry. The shame of the broken vow whispers in the hallway, and the fear of the future is a cold wind against the glass. We ask that You would meet them in the dust. Break the compacted clay of their heart and remind them that You are the God who specializes in the resurrection of things that are truly dead. Grant them the grace to wait for the thaw. Do not let them worship their failure, but lead them back to the ancient path where the blood of Christ speaks a better word than their own regret. Give them the peace that comes from knowing that their name is written in the palms of a King who keeps His scars. We do not pray for a return to the old life, but for the strength to walk toward the New City, where every tear will be transfigured and every ruin will be restored by Your sovereign grace.

Amen.



DR. RICHARD JOHN PERHAI serves as Vice President and Academic Dean at Kyiv Theological Seminary, where he has been a professor of Bible and Theology since 2003. He holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology (magna cum laude) from Baptist Bible Seminary, a Th.M. in Bible Exposition from Dallas Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Antiochene Theōria in the Writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus* (Fortress Press, 2015).

DR. LARRY OATS is a longtime Bible professor and former Dean of Maranatha Baptist Seminary (2009-2019) with over 40 years of service at Maranatha Baptist University in Watertown, Wisconsin. A graduate of MBU, he holds a PhD in Systematic Theology and specializes in Fundamentalism and Baptist history.

