

The Permanence of Marriage

Part 3

God's Position

- Marriage is a sacred covenant that should not be broken
- But there are circumstances under which divorce does not bring His judgment
- There are 3 (possibly 4) passages that deal with this

Deuteronomy 24.1-4

- If a man finds uncleanness in his wife, then he may divorce her
- And then she may go and remarry
- But she may not remarry her first husband
- The challenging—and unanswerable question is, “what does Moses mean by ‘uncleanness?’”

- The word is used 54 times in the OT
- Most of the time, “nakedness”
- Isaiah 20.4 “shame”
- Deut. 23.14 “unclean”
- The word suggests lewdness
- Under the law, if it was adultery, she should be executed, not divorced
- This is the passage referred to by the Pharisees in Matthew 19

- Whatever the uncleanness was, God made a provision for divorce, for remarriage, without that divorce and remarriage being sinful

Matthew 5.31-32

- Once again, there are many questions about exactly what is “excepted”
- But something was—there was some form of divorce (and remarriage) that didn’t incur God’s judgment

I Corinthians 7.1-17

- One of the most dominant features of this passage is the way in which it equalizes men and women
- 7.1-6 deal with marriage and marital rights (to defraud is to withhold something that rightfully belongs to another—see I Cor. 6.7)

- 7.6-9 deal with widows. Paul may mean men and women who are widowed, or he may mean widows and those not married
- 7.10-11: believers are to remain married. If one departs, they are to remain unmarried or reconciled

7.12-16 address what is called the “Pauline Privilege”

- 7.12-13 if one partner is not saved, but content to stay in the marriage, remain married
- 7.14: there is some “setting aside or apart” even if only 1 household member is saved. It is completed, I think, by 7.16

- If the unbeliever leaves, let them go. There is no bondage
- This phrase raises many questions—what does Paul mean?
- I think the context insists that the bondage/peace are referring to extraordinary attempts to maintain the marriage
- Is this person free to remarry?

- Once again, there is no unity of position
- But it should be noted that many times, the departing spouse enters another relationship, which then refers the issue back to Matthew 5.31-32

Those are the 3 Biblical scenarios

- We want to remember that God treasures and values marriage, and that it should never be ended lightly
- We want to remember that Jesus said that divorce is a heart issue, not a circumstance issue: Matthew 19.8
- We want to be careful about cancelling a permission that God Himself granted

- IOW, to say that because God values marriage, there can never be divorce or remarriage is to contradict what He Himself said
- On the other hand, we must be incredibly careful about turning God's very narrow permissions into large loopholes

For instance

- The Pauline Privilege is most certainly designed to protect those who are deserted BECAUSE of Christianity.
- It isn't really designed to make a provision for two people who end up hating each other ending the marriage and accusing each other of not being saved

Exodus 21.1-11

- 21.1-6 deal with male slaves
- 21.7-8 deal with female slaves who don't please their master
- 21.9-11 deal with female slaves give to the owner's son
- If he fails to honor 21.10, he must let her go, 21.11
- Which some are calling defense of divorce for abuse