

**Mark 10: 1-12; “What God has joined together”, Sermon # 81 in
the series – “Astonished at His Teaching”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on January 23rd, 2011,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

I think that you and I need to understand, this morning, that there are people in this world who love to test true Christians with difficult questions. They do this, in many cases, not because they are sincerely looking for the Biblical answer to their difficult questions; but because they want to be able to put us into a corner spiritually, so that their own view of God, and religion, and the important issues of life can be established. And for them; they want it to be established in a perfectly selfish way; irrespective of what God has said upon the subject. When we encounter such people, our best defense is to do what our Lord Jesus did on this occasion. He let the Scriptures themselves answer the Pharisees’ question. It was not a matter of opinion. It was a matter of what God had said was true. He gave them explanation where it was required, and then He made application of that truth to destroy their false view of this subject. And thus, He went on to establish the truth of what was good and right in relation to marriage. This is what I would like to do this morning, as well. We cannot always please all people. In fact, the Lord Jesus said on one occasion in Luke 6, verse 26 – “Woe unto you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” I do not want to be a false teacher to you. So I will, this morning, try to undertake to present to you the true meaning and intent of Jesus’ declarations here concerning marriage and divorce. I want you to know, that in relation to Jesus’ statements on divorce that there always has been, down through the history of the Church disagreements between godly men over His statements in verses 11 and 12. I may not be able to resolve these difficulties, but I will attempt to shed some light on them so that God will be glorified by us here in this church in the way that I hope, we will together, come to view this difficult subject. The real and essential truth that I believe that the Lord Jesus was trying to establish in His interaction with the Pharisees is found in verses 8 and 9. In marriage, “the two (one man and one woman) shall become one flesh.” “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” We will look first at the fact that many men’s hearts are hard in relation to the subject of marriage. 2ndly, we will look at God’s original intention from the beginning of the creation. And 3rdly, we will look at the sins which can occur in relation to divorce and re-marriage. May the Lord Himself give us a right heart and a right spirit as I teach, and as you listen to these things.

1st – We want to look at the fact that many men’s hearts are hard in relation to the subject of marriage. (Verses 1-5)

This is a whole new and different teaching session from the one found in Chapter 9, verses 33-50. Jesus had been at Capernaum when he taught those

things. Now, it says, “He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan.” “And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.” We can see from this that those who are truly interested in following Jesus will “gather to Him.” It is the same today. The work of a pastor is preaching and teaching and prayer. Those who are truly interested to follow Jesus will gather at the stated times of the services to hear the Word preached. Those who are interested in fighting and disputing will only come in at certain times; and that not to really listen and to learn; but rather to test or to argue, or both. “The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him.” Now, this was not a good time for them to come into the midst of an assembly like this, and to ask such a question. But some persons, who have hard hearts, do not care about public decorum. They simply want to test and to judge. This is how these Pharisees were. They were interested in binding people up under their own rules, and forcing people to their own conclusions in regard to the loopholes which they would like to make for themselves to have, in regard to their being exempt from really keeping the commandments of God. Besides that; they wanted to make Jesus take sides in relation to a very controversial question that was being debated by two of their rabbinical schools. Matthew 19: 3 relates something more of what was said than the question in Mark. It states that the Pharisees said, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” The school of Hillel thought that divorce should be permitted for any reason, even the slightest of reasons. The school of Shammai said that this was wrong, and that only for the cause of adultery, should divorce be permitted. So these men are testing Jesus to find out whether he was strict or permissive on this issue of divorce. They would seek to blame him in either case.

Jesus did not answer their question directly, but rather He tested them on their knowledge of the Scripture. He asked them a question in response to their question. He said, “What did Moses command you?” “They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” “And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. (Or “this command”.) We need to see, first of all, that the Pharisee’s answer was true in the technical sense. But Jesus would get beyond the technicalities. Moses had permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss his wife. We can see this if we will turn over to Deuteronomy Chapter 24, and verse 1. “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she

has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.” So, here we find that indeed permission was given by Moses, the inspired writer of the Pentateuch, that if a man takes a wife and finds some “uncleanness”, some “indecent”, some “nakedness of a thing” (the literal translation of “uncleanness”) in relation to her, then he has permission to write her a bill of divorcement (a certificate of divorce); a legally binding document; that will be, and should be respected in the sight of all men. He “puts it in her hand” (he delivers it personally to her), and then he sends her out of his house. I think that it is the clause in that first verse which seems to allow permission for divorce, “for just any reason”. It is the phrase, “and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes.” You couple this phrase with the use of words later on, “if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, and it seems to be saying that if a husband didn’t care for some aspect of her personal appearance or the way that she spoke to him on a particular occasion; that he had every right to divorce her. This was not true, because her “not finding favor” was specifically related to the sin of uncleanness. But this supposed greater “permission” came to be expanded by the loose teaching of some of their rabbis to mean that a man could divorce his wife for just about any reason; even the smallest of reasons. He could divorce her even if she had bad breath! John Gill says, “He could put her away for very trifling things; such as if she spoiled her husband’s food by over roasting it, or over salting it; and, as one of the doctors say, if he found another woman that was more beautiful than her.”

We see from Jesus’ own words that He does not deny that Moses had a precept which permitted divorce. But He goes on to say that Moses’ motive for including this precept in the law was that there were some men who had “hardness of heart” in relation to this. Indeed, when Jesus said this, He seemed to be including the men who were standing in front of Him asking the question. It is “because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.” He is calling it “a precept”, or “commandment”, but it is not a commandment which must be kept like a moral law (at all times and in every situation and place), but it is rather a permission to divorce under certain circumstances. And it was given, He says, because of the hardness of your hearts. It is a hard-hearted man who will divorce his wife over just any issue. It is a hard-hearted man who divorces his wife over issues of incompatibility. It is a hard-hearted man who expects that his wife will have to submit to his attempts to manipulate and control her so that she will be, not his helper, but his servant and his slave in everything he thinks and does. It will not take that kind of a hard-hearted man very long before he will find something in her which does not meet up to his selfish standards and she will not find favor in his eyes. If she does not measure up or comply with his wishes and his commands, then he will divorce her and send her away. And Jesus is certainly acknowledging, here, that there were many hard-hearted men in the day that this law was given,

and the day in which He lived. No doubt there are many also in our day whom the school of Hillel would probably approve of their actions. The hardness of heart which Jesus refers to, is a man's not being willing to be patient and kind to his wife, when he finds that she doesn't meet up to his expectations in certain particular ways. He doesn't want to take the time to learn; to really learn, to communicate with her. As he thinks about her, he can't really prove anything against her. But he is bothered by her words and her behavior. He doesn't understand why she can't show him affection in the way that he wants. He is always suspicious of her, wondering about the way that she looks at other men, and talks to them. He thinks that he knows that she doesn't seem to want him any more, as her lover. The way that she thinks and the way that she acts frustrates him and makes him angry. So, he adds it all up like a mathematical calculation, and it leads him to conclude that he will divorce her. But Jesus says that this is hardness of heart. Will you not see, men, that there is much more to marriage and the woman whom God has given you, than what you think? There is much more to learn about your wife that God has given to you, than what is obvious. Ask yourself if you are willing to take the time to learn? Or is your heart too hard to try? But Jesus will give you the grace to learn and the grace to try, if you will ask Him. We will speak more about the meaning of Deuteronomy 24 in our last point.

2ndly, we want to look at God's original intention in instituting marriage. in the beginning of the creation. (Verses 6-9)

Jesus says, "But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh." "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." This was God's original intention in the Beginning; to make them male and female. This is the nature of marriage; a man and a woman joined together by God in holy matrimony; the two become one flesh. As someone has astutely observed, "In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve; not Adam and Steve. And from this we can easily deduce that there is no such thing as homosexual marriage. It should never be recognized by any of us, even if the state decides to recognize it. The attempt to do so is a perversion of God's original intention. It is an abomination to the Lord as it says in Leviticus 18: 20. But let us not go there. Instead, let us look at the beauty of what God did in the beginning in the creation of the woman. Let us speak about God's joining a man and a woman together. We read in Genesis 2, verse 18, "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'" In marriage a man would find a helper. She (for God made them male and female) would be special kind of helper. She would be his counter-part. She would be his opposite in a good sense; she would complete him and bring balance to his life because she was not exactly like him. She is very different physically and mentally and emotionally. Someone asked my wife the other day, "Do you know why women are not interested in being football

players?” The answer was this. “Do you know how hard it would be to get 11 women to all wear the same outfit?” Yes, there are many differences between men and women. And it is not just in the area of wanting to play football. It is more in the area of wearing the uniform. There are many differences between a husband and his wife. But my friends, that is what makes marriage so very wonderful, and so very interesting. It is these opposites being joined together.

Dear husband, do you appreciate the differences between you and your wife? You should. Because God has given her to you to complete you in every way; this means that she will not think the way that you think in everything. She will not approach doing things in the same way that you would do them. But God has designed her in this wonderful way, so that there are these things that are not like you in her, for you good, and to be a blessing to you. I am saying that there will be a mystery in your marital relationship; a mystery which you will not ever completely figure out. You are not meant to figure it all out. You are meant to appreciate, admire, and to come to love the differences. It is not meant to lead you to frustration and anger. Your wife is given to you so that you will slow down and take a closer look at the work of God in your life. Do not run away from it. Do not spend all your time with your male buddies, because you have found out that your wife is different from you. Spend time with your wife. Listen to her. Talk with her. Get to know her. Watch some of the movies that she wants to watch. Read out of books together; books which she likes. Learn to observe the way that she thinks and don't be trying to always make her accept your thoughts, ideas, or conclusions on every subject. Appreciate the differences between you and her. See those differences as something that will add strength to your marriage, and learn that your wife is meant to be a complement to you. Where you are bold and aggressive; she is cautious and careful. Where you think that things are obvious; you are saying that this is the way that you ought to proceed as a couple; she doesn't necessarily see it that way. Remember, that this is God's design. He is wiser than you are. God has made you one flesh. You have been joined together by Him. And in God's joining you together, a man and a woman in this one-flesh relationship; He has meant it to be a permanent joining, for as long as you both shall live. “What God has joined together; let no man separate.” Let no one suggest to you, if you are having marital troubles, that divorce is the answer, unless immorality is involved. Let no one say that God our Father or our Lord Jesus Christ has given you permission to go ahead and get divorced. No, God says that He hates divorce in Malachi Chapter 2, verse 16. “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts.” “Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.” “The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, if you have dealt treacherously with her.” “Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” “But did He not make you one?” “Let none deal treacherously with the wife of their youth.

No, the answer to marital troubles is for the man and his wife to take a look at the way that Christ loves the Church, and the way that the Church loves Christ. All of your difficulties can be resolved if these things are considered and done. In Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 25 it says this to husbands. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." Let me ask husbands who might be having marital difficulties; have you consciously given yourself for your wife? Have you said to yourself, in relation to her; I will give my life to see her established and built up; I love her so much that my strength and my time, my thoughts and my prayers are all directed to establishing her welfare; spiritually, temporally, and eternally? Am I glorifying God in this holy way? Try thinking this way; Because I am consciously trying to give myself for her, I realize that things don't always have to be done my way. She has thoughts and feelings too. What are they? Do I know her thoughts and feelings and could I tell them to her if she asked me? Let me remember, Lord; she wants to be treated kindly and patiently; in gentleness and love. Lord, let me love her in this holy way. Ask yourself, dear husband; is this you?

And in verse 22, the Apostle Paul says this to wives. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." "For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body." Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." How is it, wives, that you submit to the Lord? Is it not in all humility, saying, "What is it that would please you, my Lord, today? That I shall try to be and do. Do you not submit to your Lord completely? And so, in relation to your husband, can you not think of him and act toward him in this way; as the man whom you love? You will think to yourself; how I can respect him today, and love him today, and forward his interests today, by the things that I say and do this day? I will respect him even when I disagree with him, and I will respect him in the presence of other people in what I say about him. I will not argue and fight with him continually, trying to take the lead in the decisions we make. I will try to study to see how I can wisely make suggestions and ask questions in a way that shows that I am for him, and want to support him in whatever he happens to be doing each day. I would say that if these things were remembered put into practice, that counseling will not probably not be much needed. "Let each one of you in particular," Paul says, "so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Oh joyful home! O what marital bliss is found, when these things are remembered!

Then 3rdly and finally - we will look at the sins which can occur in relation to divorce and re-marriage. (Verses 10-12)

"In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter." "So He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.' "And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord Jesus spoke these

words to the Pharisees who were trying to justify easy divorce; divorce for any reason. We are indeed plagued as a society with this sinful mindset in relation to divorce. But the words of the Lord Jesus in this passage of Scripture are unequivocal. They are clear; they leave no doubt. “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” And vice-versa. They have sinned against their husband or their wife. And a serious sin it is; separating what God has joined together; not to mention the implications to any children who might be involved. Let us then ask; Are there any legitimate grounds for divorce mentioned in the Scriptures? There is only one given us by our Lord Jesus. And that is immorality. Jesus says in Matthew 5: 31 – “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” These words are spoken in order to startle, and they are meant to prevent people from seeking a divorce as the solution to their marital problems; except in the case of sexual immorality. To seek a divorce for any other cause than immorality will involve your committing the sin of adultery. In the case where there has been sexual immorality, the marriage covenant has been broken; the one-flesh aspect of the marriage vows have been violated. And it is on that basis that Biblical permission from Christ is given to end the marriage. There is not a command, even in this; but rather permission.

So let us go back now and think about Deuteronomy 24 in closing. I believe that the correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 is this. When a man takes a wife and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes, (not for just any reason, but for a particular reason) because he has found some “uncleanness” in her, it says; then he could divorce her. Now the uncleanness mentioned in that passage is not a provable adulterous relationship. For under the law, she could have been put to death for that. You will remember that in John Chapter 8, some scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman caught in adultery, in the very act.” They said to Him, “Moses in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned.” “But what do you say?” And Jesus, after He had stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear;(did the writing say – “You men have hard hearts?”) when they kept asking Him, “He raised Himself up and said to them, ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her.’” The scribes and Pharisees were referring to Leviticus Chapter 20, verse 10. “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” So Deuteronomy 24 cannot be referring to the physical act of adultery. What, then, is it referring to? I believe that it is referring to some sexual indecency, or some “nakedness of a thing” that the husband finds in her. She is immodest in her dress and immoral in the way that she acts around men, but that lewdness does not lead to a provable act of adultery. She flirts with men and may even go so far to go out

with other men, but she says that she is not committing adultery. Deuteronomy 24 proves that there is still a grounds for divorce, however, because it relates to the category of doing things which involves adultery of the mind, and which may lead to the greater sexual immorality of fornication or open adultery or some other act of sexual sin. Porneia is the word in the Greek that Jesus used in Matthew 5: 32. Sexual immorality is the only reason given by Jesus for which a legitimate divorce can take place. It may include fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, or any other perverse sexual behavior. It may indeed take in an unrepented-of lewdness or immodesty, or affair which does not go so far as fornication. Divorce would therefore be an option unless things changed. But a man ought not to be so hard of heart that he would conclude that he had to do such a thing quickly. He should search his own soul and ask himself if there are things that he might done or said which might have led to his wife to act-out these behaviors in this strange and sinful way that she is doing? Perhaps there is nothing that the husband has done. But immorality in the mind and heart; not addressed and dealt with through the powerful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will eventually come out in the actions of that person; either husband or wife. And it will destroy the marriage.

So let us see and understand the connection of Deuteronomy 24 with this passage that we are studying. Let us see that the reason that divorce was permitted by Moses; even though fornication and adultery had not taken place in the outward acts of the wife; that it no doubt was being committed in the heart, and it manifested itself in the dress of suggestiveness and the looks of seduction to others besides her husband. The husband saw this and could not take it; he would not take it. Divorce was permitted for the same cause as Jesus states in Matthew 5: 32; sexual immorality. Or, think of another case scenario; a married woman may have really engaged in some immoral act and the husband might not be able to prove the unfaithfulness of his wife, but with the evidence of her becoming pregnant, and his knowing that it was not his child, it could lead to his righteously putting her away. This is exactly what occurred to Joseph in relation to the virgin Mary being with child, except for the grand fact that Mary had not committed immorality. Joseph could not understand what had taken place, or Mary's explanation of it. So in Matthew 1: 19 it says, "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." He was minded to divorce her. They were betrothed. They were engaged to be married, and legally considered to be married in the society of that day. So he thought that he would follow the injunction of Deuteronomy 24. He thought that he had found some indecency in her. He thought there might have been uncleanness in her. And he would have gone through with what his mind was telling him to do in the fear of God, and divorced Mary had the angel of the Lord not appeared to him in a dream. But God had done something in Mary's womb that was much too wonderful to reject. He placed the Holy Lord Jesus Christ in her womb, and in doing so He made the way for us to be spiritually

married forever to Him. “He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” Marriage is permanent in this life; until death do us part. “What God has joined together, let no man separate.” But marriage to Christ is forever; and from Him we shall never part.