

Message #34**Mark 10:1-12**

Years ago a minister in California asked an elderly couple if either one of them had ever thought of getting a divorce in the course of their marriage. The couple said, “No” neither of us has ever thought about getting a divorce, but many times we have thought about murder.

Actually, believe it or not, but to the thinking of some, murder is a better alternative than divorce. There was a minister from the south who is now serving life in prison who actually killed his wife because he said it was not right for him to divorce his wife. That is how bizarre people get when it comes to this subject. But when we come to this passage, we do come to a passage that does deal with the subject of divorce. Jesus did not bring it up; the religious leaders brought it up.

Now let me say at the outset of this that this text does not give us the totality of Biblical teaching on the subject of divorce and remarriage. The Apostle Paul really gives the essence of Grace Age teaching on divorce and remarriage in I Corinthians 7. In fact, this passage does not even give us the totality of Jesus’ teaching on the subject of divorce. This passage leaves out some of Jesus’ teaching that Matthew records. Matthew recorded on at least two occasions that if there has been immorality or infidelity in marriage, divorce is not a violation of Biblical law (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9). But that is not the particular point of this passage. Mark does not bring that out here at all. The point is this:

IF ONE DIVORCES A MATE AND MARRIES SOMEONE ELSE, ONE HAS COMMITTED ADULTERY AND NEEDS THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN ONLY FOUND IN JESUS CHRIST.

In a divorce and remarriage there is sin. We may as well admit this truth, because this is the truth. Now, this is not addressing the matter of forgiveness of sin found in Jesus Christ, which is the subtle point of this very context.

Now let’s set the context for this. Jesus has done all that He has done for over two years to prove that He can save people from their sins (Mark 2:5, 10). In spite of this, the people remained an “unbelieving generation” (Mark 9:19). Jesus called these people an “adulterous and sinful generation” (Mark 8:38). The people would not admit they were sinners and they would not admit Jesus was the Savior. Had these people come to terms with the fact that they were sinners and Jesus was the Savior who could have and would have saved them from “any sin” and from “all sin” (Mark 3:28). Had they just admitted the truth, everything would have been different. But Jesus is on His way to the cross and He is still trying to convince people they are sinners who need Him as their only Savior. He will use the subject of divorce here and then He will use the subject of greed (10:21). The point is to show all have sinned and need Him as Savior.

Verse 1 tells us that Jesus gets up from the comforts of the house He was in and He left Capernaum and went into Judea. He is heading to Jerusalem to die so that sinners might be saved. He has crossed the Jordan and big crowds were gathering around Him again. His reputation had spread and Jesus once again did publicly teach.

Verse 2 informs us that some of the Pharisees came up to Jesus to test Him and try to publicly trap Jesus. They did this by questions. Their questions were not designed to get complete honest answers; their questions were designed to trap Him. This is a set up. They are trying to ruin Jesus Christ publicly and they decided to do it by bringing up the subject of divorce. It was a hot topic in their day and for many it is still a hot topic in our day.

The motive for bringing up this subject is to “test” Him. They are not interested in worshipping Christ, they are not interested in Christ saving them from their sins; but what they want to do is to trap and ensnare Christ. The Greek word means to jab at Him or to probe Him verbally. They want to stir Him up to trap Him.

The reason for the question about divorce here is not to ascertain truth. It is not to know about forgiveness from sin. It is to test and trap Jesus Christ. So they ask Jesus if it were lawful for a man to divorce his wife.

Now keep in mind that the purpose of the O.T. law is to show that we are all sinners. The O.T. law shows us all that we are law breakers who deserve the wrath of God (Rom. 3:19-20; 4:15). The purpose of the O.T. law is to show us all that we need a Savior. This was something these religious leaders had completely overlooked.

Now these Pharisees knew about the main Mosaic divorce passages found in Deuteronomy 21:10-14 and Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

In Deuteronomy 21 Moses said that if a man took a woman for a wife and she displeased him, he could let her go and divorce her.

In Deuteronomy 24, Moses said that if a man married a woman and found some indecency with her, he could divorce her. These Pharisees knew these passages well. It may be some knew Ezra, where God demanded men divorce their wives (Ezra 10:3, 10-12, 18-19, 44).

There were two extreme rabbinical schools of interpretation concerning that text:

The Rabbi Hillel took a lenient approach and said that if a wife displeased a husband in any way he could divorce her. Josephus said this system taught that a man could divorce his wife if she burned his food. So if she made bad coffee, or she did not keep the house clean, or she was moody or argumentative and would not cook him a good meal, he could divorce her.

The Rabbi Shammai took a Roman Catholic strict approach and said that there was almost never any reason for divorce. The only exception was if a man found something totally disgraceful. So even if a woman was being abused, she just needed to hang in there and hope it will get better, while she is getting her head bashed in. Or if a husband were an addicted drunk or drug addict, that was no grounds for divorce.

So these Pharisees figure they will trap Christ with this issue. So when they ask Him, He said in **verse 3**, “What did Moses command you?” In other words, “What does the written Word of God say?”

Well the answer the Pharisees give in **verse 4** is that Moses permitted divorce. In the law of God, Moses did permit divorce.

So in **verses 5-9**, Jesus responds to them with five responses:

Response #1 - Moses wrote this command because of the hardness of your heart. **10:5**

This was precisely the point here that the people were not willing to admit. Their hearts were not right with God. God, Himself, has actually divorced Himself from Israel because of the hardness of her heart (Jer. 3:1, 6-8).

Now we know that the purpose of the law is to reveal the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). So one reason why Moses wrote the divorce data in Deuteronomy was to show the fact that people are sinners. Any person who has been divorced should easily admit this; but the fact is most won't.

Whenever and wherever there is a divorce, someone has a hard heart and someone has sinned.

Response #2 - God originally made one man and one woman to be married. **10:6**

Now notice who it is that created a man and woman; it was God. Humans did not evolve from apes as Darwin claims; they were made by God.

Now the fact that God made one man and one woman indicates several things:

- 1) God did not originally make provisions for polygamy.
- 2) God did not originally make provisions for divorce.
- 3) God did not originally make provisions for immorality.
- 4) God did not originally make provisions for homosexuality.

There was one man and one woman and that is the way God designed it.

Response #3 - Marriage is the strongest human relationship in existence. **10:7**

The relationship between a husband and wife is to take precedence over a relationship between any other earthly relationship, including father and mother. Now the Word of God says that we are to honor our father and mother, but a marriage relationship even takes precedence over that.

Response #4 - Marriage is two people becoming one. **10:8**

Notice Jesus brings out the number for the marriage and it is two. It is not three, four, five or six. It is two. The gender is one male and one female joined together to form one unit. This is the will of God.

Now we know this principle was violated many times in Scripture. It was violated by Abraham, by David and by Solomon. The question here is not who has sinned, but what is right before God.

Response #5 - Marriage is a union established by God and is not to be separated by men. **10:9**

God is sovereign even over bizarre marriages, like Samson's marriage to a Philistine woman (Judges 14:1-4). But when you have sinful people, they do sinful things sometimes and divorce does occur.

By the way, this is powerful teaching concerning eternal security. God will not be separated from His people ever. He joins Himself to His people and no man can touch that eternal relationship.

Now according to **verse 10**, when He and His disciples got into a house, they brought up the subject again.

So in **verses 11-12**, Jesus said if a person is divorced and then remarries, there has been adultery committed against the non-married former mate. That is how God sees it.

Matthew says that when Jesus said that, the disciples said well, if a person has been divorced then it is better never to remarry (Matt. 19:10). Jesus said not all men can receive this statement, except to those to whom it has been "given" (Matt. 19:11). Now when we go to Paul's teaching on this in I Corinthians 7, Paul says that the ability of a person to refrain from physical intimacy is in fact a "gift from God" (I Cor. 7:7).

This is the same word Jesus uses to say to whom it has been given.

There are two types of disciples:

- 1) Those who do have a special grace gift to remain unmarried.
- 2) Those who do not have a special grace gift to remain unmarried.

Now having analyzed this, there are several questions we want to ask:

QUESTION #1 – Are there legitimate reasons for divorce?

Divorce is never the ideal, but sometimes it really does occur. Now there are some hard line ministers who will probably disagree with what I am about to teach, but I will offer Biblical data for my position. I would suggest that there are five reasons where a divorce may be an option:

Biblical Reason #1 - Adultery.

Jesus specifically mentions this two times in Matthew. Matt. 5:32; 19:9

Biblical Reason #2 - Abandonment.

Paul specifically mentions this reason in I Corinthians 7:15. If an unbelieving mate abandons the marriage, the believer has a right to be married, but only in the Lord (I Corinthians 7:39).

People can actually live together in a house and have abandoned their marriage in many ways: A wife could refuse to cook, clean or have physical intimacy with her husband. I know of one case in which a wife refused to move when her husband was to be relocated for his job. She abandoned him for others. A husband could refuse to work, refuse to provide, refuse to help meet needs.

Principle Reason #3 - Abuse.

I do not believe it is God's will for a mate to stay in a relationship that is a threat to the mate or the children. In fact, the Bible sets forth many principles that the weak are to be protected, not abused. Jesus just taught that if anyone does something to harm a "little one" it will lead to severe judgment. We have a responsibility to protect little ones and sometimes that could mean divorce (Mark 9:42).

Principle Reason #4 - Addiction.

When a person is addicted to drugs or alcohol and becomes a threat to the mate or children, it is time for drastic action. In one of our churches, a husband was a drug addict stealing and using all money for drugs and the wife and children were starving. The only way she could gain control of finances was through a legal court divorce situation.

Principle Reason #5 - Abomination.

If someone were to persist in something God says is an abomination to Him, there is no way He expects a mate to stay in that relationship. Let me cite a couple of examples. In Leviticus 18:22, if one mate got involved in a homosexual or lesbian relationship, it is an abomination to God and divorce would be an option.

In Proverbs 12:22, lying lips are an abomination to God. So if a mate were married to one who constantly lied, we are of the opinion that God does not expect the mate to stay in that relationship forever.

The man responsible for the casinos in Las Vegas was a Jewish-American mobster who was known as Bugsy Siegel. He was married and had two daughters. His wife caught him in so many lies that finally she divorced him in 1946.

He lied about women, he lied about murder and his wife could not take it anymore. He was shot and killed in 1947 and there is a synagogue on the lower east side of New York that has a plaque written in English and Hebrew that remembers him. But frankly his marriage ended because he was an abominable liar. There are times when a divorce does occur and it is not the end of life.

QUESTION #2 – If one has been divorced and has committed adultery, is it forgivable?

The answer is absolutely Yes! Jesus taught in Mark that He would forgive “all sin” (3:28). This is the very point that Jesus was trying to communicate here. These Pharisees were not interested in having their sins forgiven, but in trapping Christ.

Abraham was forgiven of adultery–Gen. 16:2; 17:1.

David was forgiven of adultery–Ps. 32:1-5.

A woman taken in adultery was forgiven by Jesus Christ–John 8:4-11.

A woman who had been married five times and was living with a man was forgiven–
John 4:18, 39.

Many of the Corinthians had committed adultery and they were forgiven–I Cor. 6:9-11.

God is in the business of cleaning up messes. But before He will forgive, one must admit the truth about the sin.

QUESTION #3 – If one has been divorced, has there been sin?

The answer is “Yes.” No ifs ands or buts. There has been sin. Actually if we could see it from God’s perspective, there probably has been hard-hearted sin with each and every person. Now just what the sin is in each case, God will have to sort that out.

To know exactly what sin led to other sin is God’s business. If, for example, one mate refuses conjugal activity to his or her mate and the mate gets involved with someone else, who sinned? It has been my observation that generally speaking, when you have a divorce there is usually some sinful culpability on both sides.

QUESTION #4 – If a person has been divorced, does he/she have to remain single all the rest of their life?

The answer is “No.” Paul specifically answers that very question in I Corinthians 7:27-28. You have not sinned if you remarry. Marriage is still a good thing.

These religious leaders were not interested in having their sins forgiven because they did not admit they had sinned and they were not about to admit that Jesus Christ was their only Savior, who could save them from their sins.

Will you? Will you admit you have sinned? Will you believe on Jesus Christ and be saved?