

'Til Death Do Us Part: Divorce

My goal is to simply consider the passages, beginning in Genesis through Paul's writings. They seem to be (at least to me) self-explanatory. I believe (based on my studies) that Jesus reiterated the picture of marriage found in the garden (with the exception of divorce because of fornication/adultery). Paul reiterates what Jesus taught (though he himself did not reiterate the one exception of divorce). Brethren, we need to emphasize more than anything, marriage for life.

The Garden:

Genesis 2:23-24 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

- Ultimately, this is where everything begins and ends. We will see Jesus' use of this passage and His interpretation. Take note that no mention of divorce is present, but that of course makes sense: they've just been joined together.

Mosaic Law:

Deuteronomy 22:19 and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife. He may not divorce her all his days.

- Here a husband accuses his wife of being with a man before marriage. If it ends up being true, then the woman was sentenced to death by stoning because of her behavior while in her father's house.
- Vs. 22 commands the death sentence for a man found lying with another man's wife.
- Vs. 23-24 addresses a betrothed woman who lies with another man before marriage. They were both to be stoned.
- Vs. 29 Most take this at face value (a man rapes a girl who is neither married or betrothed) and his penalty is to pay the bride price and marry her without the option of divorce. This seems harsh, I understand, but it seems as though it acted as a deterrent. Some believe the father had the option to deny marriage (**Exodus 22:17**), but I'm not sure this is the same scenario.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

- The thrust of this passage is actually about restricting a woman (who has been with another man) from returning to her first husband because she's considered defiled.
- **Jeremiah 3:1** "If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not that land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? declares the Lord.
- **Jeremiah 3:8** She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.
- **Isaiah 50:1** Thus says the Lord: "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.

Malachi 2:14-16 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.

- He hated how they were treated. He hated divorce.

Jesus' Teaching:

Matthew 5:31-32 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

- The implication is that she becomes guilty of adultery because she'll (more than likely) marry again.
- Jesus did not approve of divorce. He gives one exception (stated here and in chapter 19).

Matthew 19:3-12 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; [and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery]." The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs

by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

- Jesus points to the beginning. He then interprets - therefore, don't separate it.
- Moses wasn't encouraging others to divorce, but allowing it. God was patient with a hard hearted people (apparently no different in Jesus' day). God was allowing it while putting restrictions. That's the thrust of Deut. 24. However, God was not for divorce and Jesus is calling His disciples to a higher standard.
- Jesus gives an exception for divorce. If your spouse has been unfaithful, you have permission to put them away.
- Marrying someone who has been put away puts you in a state of adultery.
- This was difficult for His audience. Jesus' instruction? You can follow God's will or you can stay out of marriage. Going against God's will would be sinful.

Mark 10:1-12 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

- Nothing significantly different from **Matthew 19:3-9**.

Luke 16:18 "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

- All four parties are caught up in adultery.

Paul's teaching:

Ephesians 5:28-33 "In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

- What does Paul go back to? Same things Jesus did - Genesis 2.

Romans 7:1-3 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her

husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

- Take note of what was understood. Married is a bond. It's for life. If you marry again while your spouse lives, it results in adultery.
- **1 Corinthians 7:39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.
- This is consistent with Romans 7:1-3. This is the mentality we need to adopt. Marriage is for life.

1 Corinthians 7:10-16 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

- There is no approval of divorce in this passage. You cannot say, "It's okay to divorce as long as I remain unmarried." If you sinned by divorcing your spouse, then you would need to repent. That means you need to reconcile. What if they refuse to reconcile? Then you remain unmarried.
- Paul addresses a specific question, but it was no different than what Jesus taught.

We don't need to wait until we're in a mess. We need to learn this now. We need to seek those who know the Lord and desire what He does. Brethren, so much heartache could be avoided if we'd trust in the Lord.