

28. Til death do us part

2/8/2004

The religious leaders who were against Jesus had already tried to ensnare Him with questions about the Sabbath and signs, and they had failed. They tried again, this time with a most controversial issue—divorce.

This subject is still both important and controversial today. Divorce is such an epidemic in our country right now. One out of every 1.8 marriage ends up in divorce court. That is 55% rate. According to George Barna's survey, Christians are not much better than the divorce rate of the world. Someone has commented that couples "are married for better or for worse, but not for long." We need to examine again what Jesus taught about this subject.

A Woman, married thirty years, was asked, "In your many years of marriage did you ever consider divorce?" She said, "No, I never considered divorce... murder, maybe."

In a few weeks, we are going to study extensively about marriage during our studies of 1 Peter at our Midweek Bible Study on Thursday nights. If you have a good marriage, come. So it can be better. If you have a bad marriage, come. So God can make it better. If your spouse doesn't want to come, bang his head or her head and drag them to the Bible study.

A. NO DIVORCE

Matt 19:1-6 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave (Leaving) his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh (Cleaving)'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

While they were asking Jesus about the ground for divorce, Jesus answered them with the biblical principle of marriage. While their hearts were in an easy way out, Jesus was teaching them how to stay at it.

It is the same in eternal security of salvation. Many people want to know and argue their heads off until somebody get mad about what constitute to lose one's salvation. I say that is the most stupid question any Christian to ask. Why do we want to know how far we can walk away from God? The question should be how close I can be with Jesus. Then we don't have to know whether we can lose our salvation or not.

God ordained marriage as the strongest bond in all human relationship.

Four things we must understand about marriage are:

1) It is a divinely appointed union.

God established marriage and therefore only God can control its character and laws.

Gen 2:18 And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

2) It is a physical union.

The man and woman become "one flesh." While it is important that a husband and wife be of one mind and heart, the basic union in marriage is physical.

Gen 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

That means a husband and a wife leave their parents and they cleave to one another in physical sense, emotional and spiritual sense. So, don't run to mommy and daddy each time there is a problem.

3) It is a permanent union.

God's original law knows nothing of "trial marriages." God's law requires that the husband and wife enter into marriage without reservations.

Divorce cannot be seen as an option when things are hard. Marriage is like a mirror, it reflects what we put into it. If one has divorce readily in their mind as a convenient option, divorce will be much more likely to happen.

We heard very rich people have pre-nuptial agreements before their marriage. What that means, "When we divorce, I get to keep what I brought into this marriage and whatever I earned." From the beginning, they are walking into marriage with divorce in mind. No wonder, every marriage with that idea ends up in divorce.

4) It is a union between one man and one woman.

God did not create "Group marriages," nor "gay marriages." They are against the will of God. Anyone condones or encourages these kinds of marriages will face their severe consequences.

I asked you to underline "*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*" I don't believe that people in general, whether they are Christians or not, are taking this seriously. What they often forget is that they made their vows in the presence of God and the witnesses. When they go against this vow other than a few biblical exceptions, they become liars.

B. EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Matt 19:7-9 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted 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 her who is divorced commits adultery."

Jesus pointed out that Moses never commanded divorce, he only permitted it in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Like many people who "argue religion," these Pharisees were not interested in discovering truth. They were interested only in defending themselves and what they believed. God's original idea was that married couples would not divorce.

Divorce is never commanded, but permitted by God in certain circumstances, and God permits it because of the hardness of human hearts.

Sometimes the heart of the offending party is hard, and they will not do what must be done to reconcile the relationship. Sometimes the heart of the offended party is hard, and they refuse to reconcile and get past the offense even with there is contrition and repentance.

What are those exceptions? Jesus said, "sexual immorality." A Greek word for this is "porneia" where we get the word 'pornography.' Sexual immorality mentioned here has a rather broad definition:

1 Cor 7:10-16 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

- 1) **Adultery** - Sexual relationship outside of marriage
- 2) **Fornication** - Sexual relationship before marriage
- 3) **Homosexuality, bestiality and prostitution**
- 4) **Husband who gets into pornography without any repentance for time after time.**

Because in God's eyes, he already committed adultery in his heart without repentance.

5) **A non-believer who wants divorce.**

6) **A believing husband or wife who wants to divorce for whatever reason he or she may come up with.**

You may consider him or her as a non-believer and let him or her go. I know you might think that I am speaking a heresy. Before you pick up a rock to stone me, hear me this, please.

1 Tim 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

What does it mean? If a believer deserts his or her own family and defies against the Word of God, he or she is denying the faith. The Greek word 'deny' means 'denounce.' That means that person is walking away from God and denouncing Him. To make the matter even worse, the Word says that he or she is worse than an unbeliever. So according to 1 Tim 5:8 and 1 Cor 7:15, if he or she wants to leave, let them. You are not obligated with that person any more and you have a permission to go on with your life from the Lord.

You may ask, "What about the husband who beats up his wife? Can she divorce that jerk?" No, but you may pick up a baseball bat and bash his head. Just kidding. No, you don't have a biblical ground to divorce him, but you may separate from him to have safety for yourself and your children.

If anyone of you guys are beating your spouse, I command you in the authority of Jesus to stop. In my opinion, anyone who beats his wife is not a real man. As a matter of fact, I call you a coward and wimp without an apology. Because you know that she cannot fight back physically. If you are looking for a sparring partner who can actually fight back, come see me. I will take you on.

C. DIVORCE IS NOT AN EASY WAY OUT

Malachi 2:14-16 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "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."

Surrendering is not an option if you plan to win a war or succeed in a marriage. I firmly agree with a San Francisco attorney whom I heard say, "There are two processes that must never be started prematurely: embalming and divorce."

I believe divorce can be more traumatic than death. Because death has closure, it's over. With divorce, it's never over.

When divorce happens between the husband and wife, in most cases, it becomes a bitter major battles between them. Because they feel betrayal from their own spouse. By human instinct, they would do anything possible to hurt and to irritate each others.

Somehow, people think that it would be easier and better to divorce and start it over with someone else. They don't realize that divorce will be extremely messy. A typical idea of theirs is "The grass greener on the other side of the fence." You are right, especially around a cesspool.

You may come up with a few excuses, such as:

1) I don't love that person any more. - Here is God's answer for you, "Stop that excuse. Love that person as I have loved you." If you love God, you will do what He says. What He says should override what you want.

2) That person irritates me. - Have you ever thought you might irritate that person, too?

You might even quote a Bible verse such as

Prov 21:9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

3) We started our relationship wrong.

Such as, they had sex before their marriage, or they committed adultery while they were spouses of someone else. Yes, it was wrong for them to do that. But God honors the current marriage even though it started with an adulterous relationship.

The wrong start of the marriage does not give anyone the biblical ground to divorce the current marriage. It is nothing more than an excuse to get out.

As a believer in Christ Jesus, if you say you love God, then you must do what God says. Stay in the marriage. Your love for that person will return if you choose to love that person. It is you who choose not to love whatever your lame excuses are.

Marriage is not to find that perfect one for your life, but becoming a perfect for your spouse.

D. NOW WHAT?

If you divorced your previous spouse and now you are married to your godly spouse, stay at it. God's blessing is upon you. Learn from the mistakes you've made before and make your marriage better.

E. THE CHURCH NEEDS TO APOLOGIZE

The church in general must repent from treating some of divorcees in wrong ways. It is not unusual to see the victim of divorce get victimized again by the church, because the congregation treat her or him like a second class citizen. If you've been hurt by any church, on behalf of the church, I apologize.

Nobody walks into marriage with divorce in mind other than Britney Spears. There is always an idiot in the crowd. You are welcomed here in our fellowship.

F. REGARDING CELIBACY

Matt 19:10-12 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

Some people do not marry because they were born with no sex drive. Others do not marry because they were castrated. Still others forgo marriage for the sake of serving God. Some have been given the spiritual gift of celibacy from God in order to do this according to 1 Cor 7:7. This cannot be done by church rules and regulations.

G. LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

Matt 19:13-15 Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

It is fitting that our Lord's teaching about marriage should be followed by His blessing of the children for children are the happy heritage of those who are married. Jesus did not look on the children as a curse or a burden.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) Instead of thinking that divorce is better than living in marriage, look for ways to improve your marriage together from the Word.

You might say, "We tried. It doesn't work." Try harder. You might say, "I no longer love this person." If you do that, you are sinning against God.

2) If you've divorced without the biblical reasons we talked about, I urge you to return to your spouse or remain pure and unmarried until your ex-spouse get married to someone else or get involved with someone sexually.

Then you have a biblical ground to remarry and you have God's blessing in your life.

3) If you are single after your divorce, wait upon God.

He will bring just a right person for you. Just don't jump into a relationship without biblical guidelines and without His permission from the Word.

4) Before we judge others for their material problems, let's check ours.