

1 Corinthian Series #17
"Marriage & Divorce" - 1 Cor. 7:10-16

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The World's View of Marriage

1. "Men - Do you know what it means to come home at night to a woman who'll give you a little love, a little attention and affection, a little tenderness? — it means you're in the wrong house." - Henny Youngman
2. "Some people ask the secret of our long marriage. We take time to go to a restaurant two times a week. A little candlelight, dinner, soft music and dancing. — She goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays." - Henny Youngman
3. Marriage and divorce provide comedians with an endless number of jokes and gags —
4. But nearly every joke reveals the low regard the world has for marriage
5. Contrast that with the word's of Christ in Matthew 19 .
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B. RR

C. Ever Get The Feeling The Preacher Is Talking To YOU?

1. Couple months ago—man called
 - a. angry
 - b. accused me of singling him out of everyone
 - c. looked at him, gestured toward him
 - d. I didn't even know him!
2. The Spirit was speaking to him, not me
 - a. he was uncomfortable
 - b. under heavy conviction
 - c. so he reacted to what he thought was the source of his discomfort—me
3. Undoubtedly, the passage before us today is going to cause many of us some discomfort
4. It deals with the subject of marriage and divorce
 - a. and because marriage and divorce are treated with such a casual attitude today —
 - b. when we are confronted with how special marriage is to God, we may find our values being challenged
5. So, let me lay down 3 quick guidelines as we get into our study today . . .

- 1) I'm not preaching to anyone in particular.
- 2) Our goal is to lay a foundation of truth upon which we can build our lives.
 - a) we can either build on the world's wisdom
 - b) or we can build on the wisdom of God
- 3) If after having looked at these things, you realize you have fallen far short of them, remember that there is no condemnation in Christ.
 - a) rather, there is grace to forgive, cleanse, heal and restore

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 10-11

10 "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband.

11 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.

1. Remember that Paul is writing in response to a letter he had received from them
2. All of ch. 7 deals with questions about marriage
3. One of the questions — should a Christian who was married to an unbeliever, leave him or her.
4. Easy to understand where this question had come from
 - a. Paul had already told them that Christians were not to join themselves to harlots
 - b. for they would have been making themselves one-flesh with evil
 - c. was it not the same thing in a mixed marriage?
5. Paul says, "No - It's not the same."

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord

6. Paul knew well the teaching of both the OT and Jesus on the subject of marriage
 - a. his words were not merely his own
 - b. they were the very instructions of God
7. Now, let's take these things in parallel here so we can follow the thought better . . .
 - a. v. 10 - **A wife is not to depart from *her* husband**
 - b. v. 11 - **And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.**
 - c. the word "depart" means to leave the place of, and means divorce
 - d. this is what Jesus said in Matthew 19:6 "What God has joined together, let not man separate."

8. Then Paul adds this, "**But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband.**"
 - a. married people are not to divorce
 - b. but if they do, they are not to remarry
 - c. why? because they would be committing adultery.
 - d. notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:9 - "**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.**"
9. Jesus is saying that there is only one case in which God grants a divorce - adultery.
 - a. otherwise a couple is still married
 - b. sure they may have a paper from the court that states they are divorced
 - c. but in God's eyes, they are still married
 - d. so, if they remarry someone else, they are in fact now committing adultery
10. So, for those who divorce, for any reason other than adultery - Paul says they have two options . . .
 - a. stay divorced
 - b. be reconciled to their mate
11. Now, this seems very hard—and it is
 - a. but the whole point is that people must realize how sacred marriage is
 - b. it is not merely a social convention two people enter into for convenience
 - c. or back out of when they grow disinterested or problems arise
12. There is very little the Bible says God hates but divorce is in the list.
13. **Mal 2:16 "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."**

B. Vs. 12-13,15

12 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.

13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

1. Vs. 10 & 11 were Paul's repeating of the words and command of God

2. Now in v. 12 it seems he is merely offering his own wisdom
 - a. some have read this and thought they could disregard it because it is merely Paul's opinion
 - b. but that is not the case
3. The fact that it is included in our bibles is sufficient proof that while Paul did not attribute it to the direct revelation of God, it is nevertheless something God endorses, and the HS saw fit to preserve it for our instruction
4. What Paul is doing here is extending the principle of the sanctity of marriage into the specific situation there in Corinth.
5. There were many who had become Christians after getting married
 - a. their mates were still unbelievers
 - b. the question was, "Should the believer leave?"
 - c. Paul explains why in vs. 14 & 16
 - d. but first, take a look at v. 15 . . .

15 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.

6. While Jesus granted divorce under only one circumstance, that being adultery—
7. Paul extends the list to include abandonment by an unbeliever
8. This makes perfect sense, and Paul is drawing from his expert understanding of what marriage is
 - a. marriage is a covenant of companionship
 - b. adultery breaks this covenant for obvious reasons
 - a person attempts to become the intimate companion of more than one person at a time,
 - this is simply an impossibility
 - so the covenant is dealt a serious and often fatal blow
 - c. in like manner, abandonment breaks the covenant of companionship
 - if a person is not present, there is no companionship
 - so they have left the marriage
9. When Paul says that the believer is "not under bondage in such cases," he means that they are

- released from the marriage
- a. that means they are free to remarry
 - b. of course as we saw last week,
 - c. in v. 8, Paul encouraged those who were divorced to stay single
 - d. but he recognized that not all can or should.
10. The reason Paul gives for permitting divorce in the case of abandonment by an unbelieving spouse is, "**God has called us to peace.**"
- a. just before that, in the same verse he said,
 - b. **if the unbeliever departs, let him depart**
 - c. it comes as a bit of a shock to realize that that phrase, **let him depart** means to offer no opposition
11. Marriage was a sacred bond to Paul
- a. he had a very high view of it
 - b. but he had a profound understanding of the Christian life as well
 - c. and he knew that a believer cannot make an unbeliever live the life of faith if they don't want to
 - d. so Paul commands believers to let unbelieving mates go if they want out of the marriage
 - e. they are to offer no resistance
 - they are not to fight, bicker, kick, scream
 - they are to let them go
 - f. why? because God has called us to peace
 - g. and there can be no peace in the home if there is anger and resentment between a husband and wife where the one who is lost wants out
12. The unbeliever may depart, but in vs. 14 & 16, Paul gives the reason why Christians are not to leave a mixed marriage themselves

C. Vs. 14 & 16

14 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.

16 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. These verses have caused some people considerable problems
 - a. can a Christian wife or husband act as the spiritual guarantee of their lost mates salvation?

- b. the Mormons believe that the only way for a woman to get in to heaven is if she is married to a good Mormon man
 - c. that is not what Paul is saying here
- 2. We know that the only way for a person to be saved is through personal faith in Jesus Christ - (gospel)
- 3. When he says the unbelieving mate is "sanctified" he means the word in its most basic meaning - to be set apart
- 4. If an unbeliever is married to a Christian, God has special access into his or her life
 - a. certainly the believing spouse is going to be praying for them
 - b. there is the opportunity for the witness of Christian growth
 - c. the touch of God's grace and Spirit in the believers life is sure to affect the unbeliever
 - d. God will bring blessing in special ways into the home because of the presence of one of His sons or daughters
- 5. But I've noticed something else in mixed marriages
 - a. they are often some of the most troubled marriages I have ever seen
 - b. not in that there is a lot of tension or fighting between the husband and wife
 - c. but that there just seem to be a lot of problems to come up that they have to deal with together
 - d. I have come to see this as the work of God, trying to shake the unbelieving mate out of the fairy tale fiction they live in
 - e. it's like God is dragging a plow across their lives, preparing them for planting and harvest
 - f. He seems to allow trouble to come, just so that he can deliver them and confront the unbeliever with the reality of their mate's faith and the intensity of His love
- 6. While there are several mixed marriage I have seen where the mate isn't saved yet, there are many more I've seen where the husband or wife has come to Christ
- 7. Paul also says that the believing parent provides a spiritual covering for the children
 - a. they too are set apart for God to do a work in their lives
 - b. again, a parent's faith does not "stand in" for a child

- c. but it does provide an example and witness to Christ

III. CONCLUSION

A. Our Time

1. As we consider marriage and divorce today in light of what's revealed here
2. We realize there is a vast gap
3. Our time seems to have lost sight of the purpose and meaning of marriage
4. And yet, I detect in the people I speak to, that there is a deep longing for something more than the world has to offer in its view of marriage
5. That something more is the promise and hope of a Christian marriage . . .
 - a. a man and woman, who make a covenant of companionship
 - b. a commitment to love and serve one another for the rest of their lives
 - c. they trust not in themselves to make it, but in God who has promised that if they will but look to Him, He will give them all the grace and strength they need to not only make it - but to be fulfilled in the making of it
6. The world wants to see such marriages — May they see them in us

B. To Those Who Hurt

1. Maybe you realize that you've gone about marriage and divorce all wrong
2. Feeling very condemned
3. There is plenty of grace from God to forgive and cleanse you; and to heal the hurts of your past
4. What's done is done
5. Really, there is nothing you can do to change the past
6. But you can change the present and tomorrow
7. You can change them by determining to do what is right as revealed here
 - a. while that may be hard
 - b. there is also a great promise attached
 - c. that promise is this - if you do what God directs, He will not let you down
 - d. Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and everything else will be added unto you
8. The simple fact is, left to ourselves, we do not know how to live

- a. we have never done this before
 - b. we cannot see tomorrow, let alone next year, or ten years from now
 - c. so how can we trust in our own puny wisdom?
9. Instead, we should live by the word and counsel of God, who knows the end from the beginning and how to get there