

19:1-3 The Confrontation

When Jesus came into the region of Judea, some Pharisees confronted Him with a theological powderkeg: They wanted Him to comment publicly on His opinion regarding divorce.

This was a contentious issue because the two major rabbinical schools had sounded forth on the subject. The liberal school overseen by Rabbi Hillel had concluded that divorce was justified if a wife did anything offensive or disagreeable to her husband. This included cooking dinner badly, or even not being as good as a woman that her husband liked better.

The more conservative school, overseen by Rabbi Shammai, had stated that divorce was only necessary when there had been an act of adultery.

19:4-6 Marriage Created By God

I love the way Jesus answers tough issues: "Have you not read?" The answers we give must always come from the Scriptures.

He answers that God is the ultimate authority on marriage, since He is the One Who created man and marriage in the first place. Quoting from Genesis one and two, He says that when a man and a woman are joined together in marriage, they are made one by God. And so if God has made them one, then who is man to divide them?

19:7-8 Moses Commanded Or Permitted?

The Pharisees didn't like Jesus' answer. They thought that it contradicted the Law of Moses. They quoted a piece of Deuteronomy 24, saying that Moses commanded men to give their wives a certificate of divorce.

But because Jesus knows the Word of God, He is able to correct their quote. Moses hadn't commanded, he had permitted. And, as Jesus pointed out, even that was only because of their great sinfulness.

19:9 Except For Immorality

Jesus goes on to say that the only allowable reason for divorcing your wife is because of immorality. That word is "por-NI-ah," from which

we get our English word, "pornography." However, the Greek word's definition means "illicit sexual intercourse." I have heard people over the years say things like, "My wife reads immoral books. I want to divorce her." "My husband looks at pornography, so I have biblical grounds to divorce him." You cannot define a word backwards. "por-NI-ah" does not mean pornography. It means that your spouse physically cheated on you with someone else.

If they did cheat on you, do you have to divorce them? No. The provision has only been made "because of your hardness of heart." In other words, if your heart is too hard to forgive your spouse for cheating on you, then divorce is allowable.

And notice that Jesus says this is the ONLY grounds you could possibly have for divorcing your spouse. Now, a divorce is allowable in one more case, but it is not you divorcing them. It is if your spouse is an unbeliever and chooses to leave the marriage, divorcing you. That is covered in detail in 1 Corinthians chapter seven.

Adultery

If there is a divorce for any other reason, Jesus authoritatively says that the destruction of that marriage followed by a remarriage is adulterous. To commit this action is to commit adultery. That's a very strong statement. So strong in fact that many Christians have decided that it results in making the person a permanent adulterer, unable to be forgiven. Truly, adultery is a terrible sin. And yet, we must not forget that Jesus said in chapter five,

Matt. 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

If you have judged someone for the adultery of marrying a divorced person, saying that there is no hope for their forgiveness, have you ever looked upon another person with lust? Do you believe that God can forgive you, but not them?

Jesus did say that marrying the divorced person was committing

adultery. And yet, is that being condemned to live in a constant, unchangeable, and unforgivable state of adultery? Or is it to be dealt with the same way as so many other terrible sins which we commit?

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Preconceived Sin And Repentance

Now, some people may try to look at this as an "out" for divorce. "I can divorce my wife, marry another woman, more beautiful, much younger, more pleasant to be around. I know it'll be adultery, but all I need to do is confess my sin, and I'm off scott-free, but with a better wife!"

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

People tried to play this trick on God before. He addressed it in the book of Malachi. You see, many of the men in Israel were divorcing their wives, marrying foreign women, and then going to the altar in repentance. But the Lord's response was,

Mal. 2:13-15 "...you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 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..."

They knew that divorcing their wives and marrying others was sin, but did it anyway, expecting forgiveness. Someone who does this doesn't have a remnant of the Spirit, and God wouldn't accept their sacrifice or tears of repentance. He said,

Mal. 2:16 "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."

So the ultimate conclusion is: if you have committed adultery through a divorce which wasn't biblically justified, and then married someone else, then you and your spouse need to get on your knees before God and repent, confessing your sin.

But if you are considering this action in advance, expecting to repent later, the Bible questions whether you have the Spirit in you at all, and you'd better reconsider your actions because God isn't mocked. You will reap what you sow.

19:10-12 It Is Better Not To Marry

After hearing the terrible results of divorce, the disciples concluded that it was probably safer not to get married at all. Jesus points out that there are certainly benefits to remaining unmarried, but only to a certain group called "eunuchs."

Not All Men Can Accept This Statement

Eunuchs are those who have no sex drive. This can be a person's condition from birth, or through physical means, either willingly or unwillingly. Though we might think of that as a terrible curse, Paul the apostle wrote,

1Cor. 7:7-9 ...I wish that all men were even as I myself am.

However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

If you are single today, and are thinking, "Singleness is a bummer. I'm looking for my soul-mate. I can't hardly stand life being so alone," then dare I say that you have not been made a eunuch by God! You haven't been granted the gift of singleness. Certainly, Jesus said that

Matt. 19:11 ...“Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.”

If you can't accept it, it wasn't meant for you. God would say of you the same as He said of Adam:

Gen. 2:18 ...“It is not good for the man to be alone...”

Adam wasn't created to be single, and maybe He hasn't created you to be single either.

Made Eunuchs By God

But notice that Jesus said that God DOES create some people that way - they are "born that way from their mother's womb." Why? Paul went on to say,

1Cor. 7:32-35 ...I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

It is my belief that when God creates a person with a gift of singleness, it is often by creating them without the burning desire for the opposite sex that most of us experience.

God creates a person in this way for the purpose of serving Him unburdened with the responsibility of marriage. Unfortunately, our society has largely rejected the knowledge of God, and the idea of serving Him. And so I believe that there are those who were created for this purpose that are being convinced by the world that because they don't have a desire for the opposite sex, they must have been born homosexual, and they must pursue that lifestyle.

This is what the book of Romans speaks of when it says that when the truth of God is suppressed in unrighteousness: all kinds of impurity will result. People are given...

Rom. 1:26-28 ...over to degrading passions; for their women

exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper

Homosexuals have been largely written off by the Christian church. Their sinful practice seems to be uniquely offensive to us, more than any other.

But can I challenge you today to begin to view them as people to whom God desires to demonstrate His love? That they may have even been uniquely selected by the Lord as His chosen instruments, yet the world has led them astray?

Someone in town said recently, "My church has made it clear that if you've been divorced, we're here for you. If you've had issues with drugs, we want to help. But if you're a homosexual, you're going to hell."

I had a strange experience in San Francisco this January. As I had two layovers there, I found myself surrounded by gay couples and people who were quite obviously "out of the closet." But I wasn't disgusted and repulsed. I was heartbroken, and filled with God's love for these poor lost people who have been deceived by the world. My heart and mind haven't been the same since.

Saints, are you willing to let God love these people through you, to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to them through you, and lead them to a knowledge of the truth through you?