

"The Bond of Marriage"

Matthew 5:31-32

Introduction: Last week in our study of the Sermon on the Mount we looked at Matthew 5:31-32 and in these verses Jesus explained to us God's standards for the family. Last week I told you there are many ideas about the subjects of divorce and remarriage. In the verses we looked at last week Jesus only needed two verses to teach His listeners what God's standards are for marriage and divorce.

Before we consider the subject of marriage tonight I want to review a little of what we considered last week.

Notice Matthew 5:31

Here in this verse Jesus referenced the teaching of the rabbis in His day. They had taken the teaching of Moses from the book of Deuteronomy and completely twisted it to fit their lives. Here was the teaching of Moses:

Deuteronomy 24:1-2

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

² *And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.*

³ *And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;*

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⁴ Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

The reason Moses permitted them to divorce was to bring under control that which was out of control among the people of Israel. Broken marriages were a major problem in the days of Moses and therefore Moses permitted them to divorce for a number of reasons. But the main reason for these verses was to put a stop to divorce. That may seem odd but let me explain, in order to divorce under the Law of Moses there had to be a writing of a bill of divorcement and the bill of divorcement had to be an official document. In order to get the official document written up it would take some time and the purpose was to give the man time to consider exactly what he was about to do. The writing of a bill of divorcement was to put a stop to a man, who just on the spur of the moment, would decide to put away his wife. The forbidden remarriage to the first husband (Notice 24:3-4) was intended to make the man thoroughly think through what he was about to do. Once it was done it was not reversible.

That is the history behind the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 24.

Over the years this portion of Scripture was taken out of context and it was used by the religious leaders of Jesus day in an attempt to justify a man divorcing his wife. You see the religious leaders taught it was ok for a man to put away his wife for a multitude of reasons.

This is the very teaching that Jesus addresses in Matthew 5:31. The reason Jesus addresses this teaching of religious leaders was because it was never God's plan for divorce to be a part of the family.

Matthew 19:3-9

³ *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

⁴ *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

⁵ *And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

⁶ *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

⁷ *They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

⁸ *He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

Mark 10:2-12

² *And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.*

³ *And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?*

⁴ *And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.*

⁵ *And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.*

⁶ *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.*

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⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

⁸ And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

⁹ What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

In these two passages we can see that it was never the plan of God for a man and his wife to divorce.

Notice Matthew 5:32

Here in this verse Jesus corrects the teaching of the religious leaders. He says that whosoever divorces his wife for any reason except for fornication (unfaithfulness) causes her to commit adultery.

You see the idea was this, when a woman was put away and given a bill of divorcement she would then go and marry another man and so she would then be guilty of adultery. The husband was therefore guilty of causing her to commit the sin. He was not guilty of causing her to commit adultery however if she had been unfaithful before the divorce because she was already guilty.

There are two points that we must gather from this verse that we did not thoroughly gather last week.

1. Jesus is not permitting divorce in this verse even for the reason of unfaithfulness.

There are many people who use this verse and teach it is ok for a man or a woman to divorce their spouse if the spouse has been proven to be unfaithful. That is not in this verse at all. Jesus is using this verse to show why divorce is so wrong and that is because it leads to adultery

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because the people who get the divorce almost always enter into another relationship or marriage.

The Bible is clear that God hates divorce. He does not hate those who are divorced but He hates the divorce itself.

Let me show you the words of the prophet Malachi when he addressed the sin of Judah, starting in Malachi 2:11 Malachi addresses the very subject of illegal intermarriage and he then gives some details of how the intermarriages came about and the consequences of the sin committed.

Malachi 2:11-16

A. The intermarriage

¹¹ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

B. The consequences

¹² The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

¹³ And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

C. The sin

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14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

The words "putting away" in verse 16 refer to "divorce". The men of Judah were divorcing their wives and then joining in marriage with the women who worship false gods and these were women of the land of Canaan. Malachi reminded the people in 2:16 that God hated divorce or putting away as it is called here.

So as we look at Matthew 5:32 we can conclude that Jesus was not giving permission to divorce for if that were the case He would be giving permission to do something the Father despised.

2. Jesus Words make it very clear that divorce does not in any way dissolve a marriage.

Now I know that we spoke of this last week but there are a few more thoughts that time would not allow us to consider last week.

Notice Matthew 5:32

If we look at the last part of the verse we can clearly see that a divorce does not dissolve a marriage for if it did then the man who married the woman who was divorced would not be guilty of adultery.

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Now there are people who teach that it is ok to divorce for the reason of unfaithfulness and then remarry. Let me just say that is not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible is very clear that once a man and a woman are joined in marriage the only way that bond is broken is by death. A divorce will not dissolve the marriage. In the eyes of God remarriage is never an option and it is actually a sin.

Mark 10:11-12

¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

¹² And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Now let me show you how the Bible shows us the bond of marriage is until death.

a. Marriage is a picture of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:23-25

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Now since the marriage is an earthly picture of our spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ then there cannot be even **one** thing

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that can dissolve the marriage for if the marriage can be dissolved then it would be a picture of the believer losing his or her salvation. But we know that we cannot lose our salvation for our relationship with Jesus is secure because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Hebrews 10:14

¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

To teach that divorce will dissolve the marriage is to ruin an earthly picture of salvation.

b. The disciples made a statement that speaks clearly on the bond of marriage.

Matthew 19:9

⁹ And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Verse 9 does not give an exception for remarriage for if it does it then contradicts a list of other verses.

Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18, Romans 7:2-3, I Corinthians 7:10-11, I Corinthians 7:39

Thus the exception clause ("except it be for fornication") is not an exception enabling remarriage (while one's spouse is living) but an exception permitting divorce: "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*"

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But we need to notice what the disciples said in response for their words confirm the lifetime bond of marriage.

Matthew 19:10

¹⁰ His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

They are simply stating that since there is no way out of marriage it is better never for a man to enter into the bond of marriage. They clearly understood that marriage was a lifetime commitment.

Conclusion:

There is yet one more way the Bible helps us to see the lifetime bond of marriage.

Genesis 2:24

²⁴ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The word "cleave" in this verse means "to join together to make one". It would be seen in the process of gluing two boards together. The two boards would become one board and that is exactly what happens when a man and a woman join in marriage.