

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Divorce and Remarriage, Part 1**

Scripture: Matthew 5:31-32

Code: 2218

Tonight as I'm sure you're aware we're going to be continuing our series in Matthew's Gospel, and so I invite you to take your Bible if you will and look with me at chapter 5 verses 31 and 32, Matthew chapter 5 verses 31 and 32. We've been having a tremendous time studying the Book of Matthew and we've found that it touches on so many vital areas of life. In our day and age perhaps none anymore central than the issue we'll be speaking to tonight from verses 31 and 32. In these two verses we read, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Let's ask the Lord's blessing as we study this together. Our Father we thank You tonight that we can approach a difficult portion of the Word of God and a difficult subject in our day, with the confidence that the Spirit of God is our teacher. And we pray Lord that You would give us clear understanding in Your Word, as to what it is that You say, and how we apply it in our own lives. Make this especially meaningful to the many who are in the midst of situations related to the problem of divorce. But to all of us Father may we have a greater understanding of Your heart and mind, because we've shared these truths, in Jesus name, Amen.

Let me say at the very beginning that if there's any confusion about the subject of divorce it is not due to the fact that God has given us a confused picture in the Bible it is due to the fact that so much sin has entered into the world that it has confused the simplicity of what God has said. God is very clear in the Bible about the issue of divorce. And I think you're going to find in our study tonight and next week and then perhaps on a third week as well, that it is very simple to understand what God says in the Bible. The confusion comes when you try to fit the standard of God into the lack of standards of our own society. The difficulty is not with God, the difficulty is with man, and we want to understand that from the very beginning.

Now as we look at these two verses it's not enough really for us just to talk about the two verses, uhm, we, we've gotta open up the whole subject because introducing the subject would create a great amount of confusion if we didn't cover all of it and so that's why we're going to spend several weeks doing it, we want to cover all that the Bible has to say about this so that we can get a full grasp of what our Lord is saying.

Now in a book entitled, The Death Of The Family, a British physician has recently suggested that the best thing we could do in human society is to do away with the family altogether. He advocates ah, total extinguishing of the family unit as we know it. He says, "The family is the primary conditioning device for a Western Imperialistic world view, and we have to get rid of that." Kate Millett, who is a well known women's liber, has written a book called, Sexual Politics, and in this book she writes, "That the family unit must go, because it is the family that has oppressed and enslaved women."

Now you know that in our own city and in our own state and around the country homosexuality is on an incredible rise. Our own city council has passed a gay rights bill which is only the beginning of what we're about to see in the city of Los Angeles. What has occurred in the city of San Francisco with an almost 50% homosexual population began with a gay rights bill. And once the door is open the flood begins, another attack upon the family. It doesn't take much of a, of a hard look at the world, even a cursory glance will reveal that Satan is doing everything he can to attack the family. And he does it in many, many ways.

Recently in this last edition of Christianity Today Magazine, there is an article by a Doctor Armond Nicoli the Second, who is a psychiatrist, a Medical Doctor on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. Doctor Nicoli says this, and I want to read you some excerpts from his article. "Certain trends prevalent today will incapacitate the family, destroy its integrity and cause its members to suffer such crippling emotional conflicts that they will become an intolerable burden to society. If any one factor influences the character development and emotional stability an individual, it is the quality of the relationship he or she experiences as a child with both parents." And he underlines the word both. "Conversely if people suffering from severe non-organic emotional illness have one experience in common, it is the absence of a parent through death, divorce, etc. A parent's inaccessibility either physically, emotionally or both can profoundly influence a child's emotional health." And I want to stop right there to say this, what this eminent psychiatrist is saying is, that most people who have non-organic, that is they're not physically uh, induced illness, but who have emotionally induced illness have in common a common denominator and that is a wrong relationship in their childhood to their parents. And Nicoli goes on to suggest that if we come up with a society without families, we will have such mental and emotional monsters in the next generation that there will be no way possible for society to cope with them. He further says, quote, "What has been shown to contribute most to the emotional development of the child is a close, warm, sustained and continuous relationship with both parents. Yet, certain trends in our society make this most difficult." End quote.

Now he goes on to suggest what these trends are, and I want you to notice what he says, and I don't think he's been listening to my sermons lately. But it amazed me how he agreed with what I said. Now when just the average preacher likes ... like me says it, everybody gets upset, when an eminent psychiatrist from Harvard says it everybody listens. But listen to what he says, he lists the trends that are causing the destruction of the family, the trends that are going to cause a generation of emotional

cripples. Number one, in the list that I want to give you, married women with children working outside the home. Interesting. Married women with children working outside the home. Nicoli says, and I quote, "My clinical experience indicates clearly that no women with young children can do both at the same time, without sacrificing either the quality of work or the quality of child care." End quote. That's essentially what I was saying, wasn't I, in Ephesians chapter 5.

Another tendency, he says, in our society that is going to cripple the next generation is the tendency for families to move frequently. He says 50% of the U. S. population lived at a different address 5 years ago. Consequently young people have no sense of roots, have no concept of extended friendships." Another one, he says, "Another trend that is going to destroy the family as we know it and cause emotional cripples is the invasion of television into the home. One fifth of the lifetime of the next generation will be spent watching television." If you live to be 80 years of age and you're average, you will have watched television a total of four thousand days of your life. Creating a tremendous impact, and since as we know television is part of the system and the system is to tear down the family, you will have a total of four thousand days of anti-family propaganda at one level or another.

Another, Nicoli says, there is another trend that has the same effect and it is, "The lack of controls in our society." And what he means by this is that we don't have any moral standards. And when a society has no moral standards what invariably results is deep moral confusion. And when you have deep moral confusion in the life of an individual you will have a tremendous amount of guilt, and a tremendous amount of guilt leads people to, to compensate for it by aberrant behavior. He further points out that no standards in a society will cause people to be unable to control their impulses, there will be a rise in violent crimes, there will be a wildness to our sex activities, homosexuality and perversion will literally go crazy in the next generation.

Further, he says, "Another trend that is doing the same thing is a lack of communication in the home." A study in a small town in the United States indicated that the average father spent an average of 37 seconds a day with his young sons. No communication. Well there are some trends that Nicoli pointed out. Married women with children working outside the home, the tendencies for families to move frequently, the invasion of television, the lack of controls in our society, a lack of communication in the home, all of those contribute to the break down of the family which will create a generation of emotionally misfit people.

But the first one in his list I haven't mentioned yet. The number one cause of emotional problems in the lives of the next generation is divorce, divorce. Nicoli says this, "The trend toward quick and easy divorce, and the ever increasing divorce rate subjects more and more children to physically and emotionally absent parents. The divorce rate has risen 700% in this century, and it continues to rise. There is now one divorce for every 1 point 8 marriages. Over 1 million children a year are involved in divorce cases, and 13 million children under 18 now have one or (borth) both parents missing." End

quote. He sees divorce as the first problem in his list.

And he goes on to conclude this, what about the future, what can we expect if these trends continue? And here's his answer, "First, the quality of family life will continue to deteriorate, producing a society with a higher incidence of mental illness than ever before. 95% of our hospital beds will be taken up by mentally ill people. This illness will be characterized primarily by a lack of self-control. We can expect the assassination of people in authority to be frequent occurrences. Crimes of violence will increase, even those within the family, the suicide rate will rise. As sexuality becomes more unlimited more separated from family and emotionally commitment the deadening effect will cause more bizarre experimenting and widespread perversion." End quote.

Now I don't know about you but that's a frightening picture to me, but that's where we're going. And divorce is the major contributor, now what can we do about this? What is the answer? How do we get a handle on all of this disaster that faces us? Well most importantly, and you know I would say this, we must return to the principles of the Word of God. What does God say? People are defending divorce on all kinds of grounds. People are trying to defend the working mother with children in the home on all kinds of grounds. People are defending television, people are defending the mobility of our society, people want to live the way they want to live, so they do anything they can to justify that manner. But if you go back to the Bible as we've been trying to in the last few months and you see how the family is to be ordered as God lays it out, it is the only way we'll solve our problems.

Now it's fine to be concerned about divorce because of its societal effects, and that's what Nicoli is saying, he's saying we've got to do something about divorce, because look what it does. Now as important as that is it isn't the most important reason. And I'm not here to tell you we need to do something about divorce because it messes up the next generation, it does do that, but I'm here to tell you we have to do something about divorce because it violates God's Word. That's why it messes up the next generation. The bottom line on this is not how it affects society; the bottom line is not a relativistic morality. We don't say it's wrong because it does this, it's wrong because God says it's wrong, see? And so we don't want to get into a societal argument, we don't want to get into sociological ah, structure and sociological factors, we believe that this is something that must be dealt with at the very core with the Word of God. And unfortunately that's not what the church is doing in the most, in the most cases today.

Churches today give little or no or even wrong guidelines for marriage and divorce. There are many churches and pastors who will marry anybody, anybody who comes along. I remember when I first came to Grace Church 10 years ago; the first thing I ever faced in this church was a...people who were rather leading folks in the church, a very wonderful family who wanted me to marry their daughter to an unsaved person. That was the first crisis I ever faced in the ministry here. I wouldn't do it, so the suggestion came, all right uh, you don't have to do it if it's against your conscience, we'll have it in the church and have somebody else do it, and I said, if it's wrong, it's wrong and I won't do it

and it shouldn't be done in the church, if this is Christ's Church. But not all churches are like that, and the elders took a stand on that, and they've taken a stand like that all along. But not all churches do that, there are plenty of churches and plenty of pastors who'll marry anybody to anybody under any circumstances. They are many young people who marry the wrong people for the fulfillment of fleshly desire with little or no thought about its real consequence. And lust for the forbidden partner, I heard recently about a church not far from here where two elders uh, were involved with their oth...each other's wives, and they decided to do nothing about it because it might disturb people in the church. Flippancy about sex, sex is a topic of discussion in the pulpit and, and in the pew and around the church in a very flippant way that is less than the dignified manner in which God speaks of it in the Bible and I think this kind of flippancy in the name of honesty simply creates a bigger problem than it ever solves. So it is not a problem that's being dealt with honestly and objectively in, in many churches, some are and I thank God for the ones that are.

But where you have self-centered, where you have sinful carnal people who cannot sustain right relationships, and where you have a society with toleration for divorce you're gonna have divorce on a rampant pandemic level, and that's what we have in our society. Frankly, I'll tell ya it would be a welcome day when I didn't have to at least one time hear about some kind of marital problems, some kind of divorce situation, you know I didn't have to be embroiled in some complications associated with divorce, separation or remarriage. It goes on adinfinitem, adnauseam, it is incessant in the church.

Now we're not saying that ah, we reject all the people in these circumstances, we're simply saying it is something we must deal with from the Word of God. And I don't believe there's much reason for confusion, I don't think God has a tough time getting His point across, I just don't think people look for it, rather they want to justify what they do so they try to find something to support that.

But I want us to go to the Word of God in these studies and I want us to see what God really has to say. Now I hate divorce, I hate it, and that's okay for me to hate it because the Bible says God hates it, so I'm in agreement with Him. And I, I hate divorce for what it does to society, I hate to think of the next generation of, of emotionally imbalanced people, I hate to think of all of these little children in broken homes that are going to grow up and have no sense of security, no concept of authority, no sense of morality, no standards to live by, etc, etc. I hate to think of the societal effects of divorce. But that's down the line for me, what I really hate to think of is the fact that divorce and remarriage is a violation in many cases of the Word of God, and that's even a more important issue to me.

Now let me go a step further in just introducing this, many people apparently are needlessly confused as to what the Bible teaches, and I hope when we're done that you won't need to be confused anymore. Let me give you the options. Some people are teaching no divorce for any reason, under any circumstances, for anything at all. Now that's what some people teach, no divorce at all for anybody under any circumstance. Other people teach, yes, divorce under certain circumstances but

no remarriage, no time, never, ever for anything. And then another group says, yes, divorce and remarriage anytime for anything at all. And others are saying, divorce and remarriage, yes, but not for anything at all only under certain circumstances. So there you have the four views. No divorce ever. Two, divorce but no remarriage ever. Three, divorce and remarriage whatever and whenever. Four, divorce and remarriage possibly only under certain limited circumstances. Those are the few views there are, there are no more than that, that's it. And people sort of land here, there and everywhere in those four.

Now the question we want to find out is which is Biblical. There are people going around the country saying the Bible teaches no divorce, there are other people going around the country saying the Bible teaches divorce but no remarriage, and others are saying the Bible teaches divorce and remarriage and you're free to do as you will and so forth, and others the fourth view, we must find out what the Bible says.

Now by the way, in trying to discover what the Bible really says we find ourselves exactly where the Pharisees are in Matthew 5:31, this is exactly where they are. They had trumped up an erroneous view of divorce and remarriage, and Jesus confronts them with their error and sets the record straight. So that in these two verses, just takes two verses, that's how simple it is, Jesus Christ sets the whole record straight, and I want you to see that. "It hath been said, (verse 31) Whosoever shall put away his wife, (or divorce his wife) let him give her a writing of divorcement; But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Now let me set the context for you, and I want you to stay with me because this is really important. Jesus is still facing the sins of the Pharisees, and He is unmasking their hypocrisy. You see here's what they did, they believed that you could be righteous by your works, but they couldn't keep God's standard so they invented their own and then called it God's standard. Now God had a very high view of marriage, God had a very clear command regarding marriage and divorce, the attitude of God was never in question about it but they couldn't live by that standard, so they invented a new standard, called it God's standard and said, look we can keep this one, we're alright. They dragged God down to their level, they invented their own code of ethics, and He unmask them, and then to make it worse they misinterpreted the Bible to fit their own view. Which is what anybody does who wants to do that, you make up your own view and you find a verse to go with it. And it's exactly what they did, they decided that you ought to be able to shed your wife whenever you want, you ought to be able to have a divorce whenever you got the whim and the will to do it, and so they just twisted around the Scripture to fit that. And the Scripture they twisted around was Deuteronomy 24:1 to 4 and we'll get to that later tonight. They invented their view to justify their sin and then they misinterpreted a verse to fit their, their justification. And so what you have in verse 31 is their view and what you have in verse 32 is His view. Verse 31, "It has been said." Verse 32, "But I say." Now, it has been said, beloved, does not refer to the Old Testament law, it refers to what these people had been taught by the rabbis. And

if you go back to verse 21, "You have heard that it was said by them of old." In other words it was the, it was the traditional Jewish view passed down by certain rabbinical teachers, not the view of God, not the Old Testament, not the Pentateuch, but their own misinterpretation of it, and that's what Jesus is presenting in this entire section here. So He says, you have heard, but I'm telling you, in other words what you have heard is wrong, what I'm telling you is right. He is correcting their traditional misinterpretation.

It's exactly what he did in verse 21, go back to it, "You have heard that it was said by them of old," and then He quotes that problem, verse 22, "But I say unto you." Verse 27, "You have heard that it was said," verse 28, "But I say unto you." Verse 33, "You have heard that it was said," verse 34, "But I say unto you." In other words, in the Sermon on the Mount in order to lay these people bare and naked as sinners before God He says to them, your interpretations of God's Truth are all wrong, they are biased, they are opinionated, they are self-justifications that twist and pervert the Word of God, and I want to set the record straight. And you see in so doing He forces them to recognize their sinfulness, they can't get by with the game they're playing, they can't get by with reducing the law of God to a level that they can attain, and say-ing they are therefore just.

Now, basically what verse 31 is saying is that they tolerated divorce for any reason. Jesus then says, I'm just the opposite, I don't tolerate it for any reason. And these are the two truths that I want you to see. They tolerated divorce for any and all reasons, and tolerated remarriage for any and all reasons, and on the other hand Jesus did not. And by the way what He said here is still in view right now today in 1979. So we have to come to Scripture then for our answer.

Now let me add a footnote at this point. We've got to be honest with the Bible. Sometimes people say to me, you know uhm, we've got to stop divorce in America. Somebody said this to me recently. We must stop divorce, in America, especially in the churches, we must stop Christians from being divorced, we've got to put a halt to it, what would be the best way to do that? And I would answer ... simply this, I answered, well the best way to do it would be to say the Bible teaches no divorce, no time, for no reason. Never allowed, if you could just find a verse that said that we'd be okay. Do you want to know something? It doesn't say that. Now it'd be very comfortable to take that view, and there are some who do, and they say that we must deny divorce and remarriage because of what it leads to. If we can just stop divorce and remarriage we can clean up the church, if we allow divorce and remarriage we got problems, social problems, guilt problems, the floodgates of sin open up and all this. And that's right, and it does do that. But you cannot invent a viewpoint in the Bible to solve a social problem; you have to deal with it as the Bible deals with it. Sure it would be convenient if the Bible just said no divorce and no remarriage under any condition. But no one yet has been able to find that verse. People say, well we've got to stop it because of what it leads to, to, we must have an absolute moral standard not a relative one, if we start making up new doctrine to fit the problems that come in our world we're going to be inventing another Bible. We must deal with what the Scripture says as it says it.

Now to understand this, and, and I know you're wondering when we're going to get to these two verses, just relax. By the time you're done I'll promise you'll understand what these two verses mean. But to begin with I want you to go back to Genesis, and let's see it how it all began. And don't be in a hurry anywhere ... to go anywhere tonight cause it's really hot out there. And this is the coolest place in town believe me. But I want you to see what the Bible says and my heart is really exercised over this issue, because there is so much confusion about it.

Now in Genesis 2:23 we find that God has made Adam and Eve, first making Adam and then Eve, putting them together in this wonderful union, and this is what happens, Adam meets his wife and 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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh."

Now this is where you have the beginning of God's view of divorce, in God's view of marriage. You cannot understand divorce unless you understand marriage; you will never understand how God views a separation until you understand how He defines the union itself.

Now here we find that God has brought together a man and a woman, and it is definitely God who does this. I believe that since marriage is an institution of God any marriage is in a sense God bringing two people together. It doesn't have to be spiritual it can only be physical but nonetheless it is in the purview and the plan of God. So it is God who brings man and woman together, the two become one. In what sense? Well, it is a physical oneness, and I think the sexual physical part is true ah, and, and maybe the truest form of oneness because when the two come together in a physical relationship it issues in one life, the life of that child manifesting the marvelous oneness of that physical union. And so there is that element of the physical oneness, but beyond that there is certainly also a spiritual oneness, and by that I mean there is the blending together of the spirits of these two people.

Now what God is ordaining here, and you have to know this, the very beginning is monogamous, that is one partner in a female and one partner male, monogamous life long marriage between a man and a woman. Notice it, "A man shall leave his father and his mother, cleave unto his wife; they shall be one flesh." There is no termination to that, there is no ending to that, they continue to be that one flesh.

Now notice the words, "cleave unto," "he shall cleave unto his wife." These are very important words because they reveal I think the nature of the marriage bond, the way God intended it to be. And the term has the idea of being glued to something. A man and a woman become stuck, as it were. Not in the sense that you say, I'm stuck with her, but in the sense that God has stuck you together, you are glued. When two people are glued together they become one single individual, and so it says, "they



shall be one flesh." And surely that refers to the sexual union but much more. He unites a man and a woman in a unique and profound biological and spiritual bond that reaches to the very depths of their soul. And so marriage as God designed it is to be the perfect welding of two people together into one, they're not just two anymore they're one, they're one, and one is an indivisible number. They are one. It is the commitment of two wills, it is the blending of two minds, it is the mutual expression of two sets of God given emotions, so that the two become one, and the goal is a perfect oneness, both in the intimacy of the physical and the intimacy of the spiritual and the sharing of those things in life that cannot be shared and are not shared with any other human being. God created sex and God created procreation to be the fullness of expression of that oneness. But, if all there is there is the sexual and there's not the oneness of spirit then believe me the physical act is meaningless, self-centered and exploitative.

A woman said to George C. Scott, in an interview, the actor, "To you sex means very little, so you don't participate very often. To me it means very much, so it doesn't matter with whom I indulge in it." Now that's a woman who doesn't have any conception of what God ever intended in the two becoming one. In God's definition there were only two and the two became one, in every sense. And when husbands and wives realize that this is God's definition of marriage they would realize that a divorce would be like a man cutting off his leg because he had a splinter in it. Instead of dealing somehow to get the splinter out he amputates the whole leg. Husbands and wives who realize that God has joined them into a single entity wouldn't be so foolish as to hurt the other because they know they hurt themselves. And so when God brings a man and a woman together it is to be in a permanent relationship.

Now that is why Matthew 19:6 says this, "No man may divorce what God has joined together." You may remember it as, "What God hath joined together, let no man (what?) put asunder." The word is divorce.

END SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO.

The word is, "put asunder," chrizit's the very same word translated in First Corinthians 7 as divorce. And so "What God has joined together, let no man divorce." Jesus says in Matthew 19, that's the way it was from the beginning. And since marriage is an institution of God, now listen to me, since marriage in itself is an institution of God then any marriage is God in that sense joining two people, so that any marriage is a default against God's law when divorce enters in... I believe that all marriages God joining those two people together, it isn't always a spiritual union if they're not Christians but it is always the institution of God, for marriage is God's invention, and "What God has joined together, let no man divorce."

God never intended for divorce. Yet people enter into a marriage today you know, with the idea if it doesn't work out we'll end it. If it doesn't make it we'll forget it. And they look at people who work hard at their marriage and they wonder why they invest so much time and effort into making a right relationship and they figure it'd be so much easier to just call it quits, walk out and find somebody else, and that's the way it is in our world today.

But if we see marriage the way God sees it we know that it is a monogamous life long oneness that God has desired and divorce as I said is like amputating your leg when you have a splinter, instead of that why don't you deal with the splinter, instead of dumping your partner why don't you deal with the issue that's causing the problem? So sacred is marriage, so absolutely sacred is this oneness, that any violation of that marriage union was so serious that the penalty for it was death. And the seventh commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." And adultery is a sexual involvement outside marriage. Disobedience to that by the way was punishable by death. And that was the initial institution that God gave to show the sacredness of it.

In Leviticus 20 verse 10, "The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, even he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Listen, God so hated anything that defiled marriage that the penalty was death, in those early years, in those early times when God was establishing the highest possible law for the instruction of man. And God's attitude hasn't changed. Did you know this? That adultery is sexual activity with a married person. Fornication, in the Old Testament sense was sexual activity not involving a married person, and fornication is an evil thing, fornication is a sin. Illicit sexual relationships apart from marriage, that is two single people who aren't married, that's a sin and it's a defiling thing, and it's an evil thing, but do you know that the Old Testament did not require the death penalty for that? For fornication there was less than the death penalty. In fact in Leviticus 19:20, "Whosoever lies carnally with a woman, shall be scourged." It says. So when the...when there wasn't marriage involved, even though the woman apparently was engaged at that time, when there wasn't a marriage involved there was a scourging, but boy when you defiled a marriage it was death, it was death.

And so this gives us some insight into how God feels about marriage. You know something? God had such a high view of this marriage that in the, the last of the Ten Commandments He said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." And what He meant there was even for a married person to desire another partner was so evil that it was one of the ten major sins.

And by the way, Jesus pointed it out, didn't He right in this same passage in Matthew, where He said, "If anybody looks on a woman to lust after her he's committed adultery in his heart." That it's so serious that not only is it forbidden to engage in it, it's forbidden to even think about it, why? Because God has such a high view that marriage is monogamous, life long, permanent, relationship between one and another person.

You want to know how concerned God was about this? He wanted to remove even any temptation so that people wouldn't even be tempted to have these thoughts toward persons they were not married to, and God went to great lengths, for example just an illustration, in Exodus 20:26 it seems so very obscure and let ... yet to me it's profound. It talks about coming to make a sacrifice, coming to make an offering, and apparently the altar was up a series of steps, you had to go up a series of steps to get to the altar. And in talking about the altar and how you approach the altar Exodus 20:26 says, "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto my altar," the pagan altars had the steps, God says, I don't want any steps up to My altar, why? "That thy nakedness be not exposed thereon." It would be indiscreet for somebody standing at the bottom to see any exposure of a person ascending the steps to an offering to the Lord. God says the pagans may do it that way; I want My altar on flat ground. Amazing. A far cry from the way that we conduct ourselves today. But that was the way they did then.

Let me show you another illustration, Second Samuel, very interesting, chapter 10, Second Samuel chapter 10 verse 4, "Wherefore Hannun took David's servants, (Second Samuel 10:4) shaved off one half of their beards," and of course since a beard was a mark of manliness and a point of great pride and honor in the east this would be a humiliation. He cut off half their beards, "and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away." Now this is doubly humiliating. "When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed; and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return." You know something? The men were ashamed, ashamed to reveal that part of their anatomy. Yeah, every once in awhile you hear some ding bat come along and say he belongs to a nudist colony because that's the way God made us. Listen, I want you to know that when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden the first thing the Lord did was cover them up. Man is meant to be covered up, because once sin had entered the world the temptation or the perversion of the marriage relationship could be induced in many ways by how people dress. Take that to your heart, it's very important. We need to be very sensitive in those areas.

But you can see God's high view of marriage. God says, you violate that marriage in a sexual way, death is the penalty, you desire another person and you've broken the 10th Commandment. In order to help prevent this I want bodily covering to be employed in such a way that no one will be indecently exposed.

In Leviticus 18:18 God went a step further and said, and no polygamy is allowed either, you can only have one partner, that's it. Now the point of all of this is to show you beyond a shadow of a doubt that God established marriage as a spiritual, sexual, social union for one man and one woman never to be violated in deed and never to be violated in thought, and He condemned in a wholesale manner every violation of it and every indulgence ... inducing of a violation of it. And that is exactly God's view of marriage. God has a view of marriage that marriage is a monogamous, life long, permanent union between two people. It is an indivisible oneness.

And that is exactly what Jesus says when you get to the New Testament, look at Matthew 19 verse 8, we've already mentioned to you Matthew 19 I just want to reiterate it, Matthew 19 verse 8, "He said unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." This is never God's intention. No place in the Bible is divorce ever commanded. And this is where they were out of line. In verse 7 they said to Jesus, Matthew 19, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement." You want to know something? Moses never did command it, that's how twisted they were. And Jesus says, "Moses, because of the hardness of your heart's permitted it." But never did he command it. And we'll see the distinction further as we move ahead in our study.

In Mark chapter 10 our Lord says essentially the same thing, Mark chapter 10 and verse 5, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, 'For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept; But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they two shall be one flesh; so then they are no more two, but one flesh. And what, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man divorce.'" Do you see? Now I'm just trying to get you to see God's original intention.

So the first truth, in our study, the first reality we must be committed to is the uniqueness and permanence of marriage, two becoming one for life, never violating that oneness in thought or in deed.

Now to solidify in our minds the absoluteness of this principle I want you to go to another Old Testament passage, it's the last Book of the Old Testament the Book of Malachi, and it's chapter 2 and verse 14, a fascinating text, Malachi 2 and verse 14, and in this text God reiterates His view of marriage and divorce. And this is just the beginning folks but I want to move slowly to lay the foundation.

Malachi 2:13 let's start there. And God indicts the people of Israel in the Book of Malachi and they never agreed to it, they ... He always says, you did this, and they said, well how did we do that, what do You mean we did that? Sounds like our kids, you know? They always have an excuse, wh-when did we ever do that? What do you mean we did that? And so essentially exactly what they say here. Verse 13, "And this have you done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand." In other words, oh you come so religiously and you come to the altar and you weep and you cry and you put the fire out with your tears. You're just carryin' on bawlin' your head off so repentant. And you know what? God doesn't even receive what you're offering. God doesn't even accept the offering. God isn't even interested in your worship. God could care less about your, your sacrifice. Verse 14, "And you say, Why?" Well what did we do? Why does God turn us away, why doesn't He accept our worship? "Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of

thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." You know why God doesn't hear you, do you know why God doesn't want your worship, do you know why God doesn't receive your offering? Because you don't do right by your wife. You know what they had done? They had divorced their Jewish wives and married pagan women.

A lady came to me this morning and she said, my husband comes to church with me every week to keep up the facade, but all week long he's living with another woman. You want to know what God thinks about his worship? Nothing. Just like this one. Because he's done treacherously against the wife of his youth to whom he's been married over 30 years. God isn't interested in his worship, it's a mockery, it's a mockery. God was displeased with them because they had divorced their wives and married foreign women. Their wives had been rejected after years of faithfulness, the wife of your youth, He says, she is your companion, a beautiful word. It's often used for a close friend in the Old Testament; this is the only place it's ever used for a wife. But it does indicate that your wife should be your closest friend. You've done treacherously against her.

And then you come to verse 15 and frankly folks I just want to admit right now this is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the whole Bible. The Hebrew here is so obscure that at best I can give you a good guess, okay? And I'm not going to give you just my own guess I'll try to share with you some options and you can make up your own mind. But the verse is very difficult, the reason it's difficult is because the Hebrew words as far as we put them together don't seem to make sense, we don't know whether a scribe has changed a letter or something, we don't know whether uhm, we can't really recover a colloquialism or a, a, a phrase that they would have used ah, as sort of a, uhm, geographical lingo that we can't reconstruct, we don't know what it is but the verse is just very difficult.

Let me give you the first option. The N.A.S. translates it this way, "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit." And if that's the way to translate the first part of the verse, what he's saying is, I just want to acknowledge that people who really have the Holy Spirit don't do this, people who are true worshipers don't get divorced, people who really are worshiping Me in spirit don't do this. And then the next line, "And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring?" You see the Jews knew that one of the reasons God gave marriage was to produce a godly line, right? Deuteronomy 6, they knew that, they knew the great Shema was to be passed on from generation to generation, and he is saying if you divorce your wife, you're obviously not led of the Spirit and secondly what are you going to do to produce a godly seed when you're hitched up with a pagan woman? "Take heed then, to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously against the wife of your youth." Now that's one possible translation, that's one possible rendering, that what he's really saying is the people who have the remnant of the Spirit don't do this. Because then what are they going to do to produce a godly seed?

There's another possibility that I thought was kind of interesting also. A lady who's a Hebrew scholar by the name of Joyce Baldwin did some research in this and her perspective is interesting, you notice

the word "residue"? It's also translated as remnant in the New American Standard, the word residue is shear, okay? Shear. The word flesh is sheer, not much difference only a vowel pointing which means a couple of dots under the letter. Shear, sheer. And it may well be that a scribe has just ah, put down a dot or so and it got kind of lost on a manuscript and we got a shear instead of a sheer, because if it said flesh it could read this way, "Did he not make one that has flesh and spirit." In other words, when he made you one, he meant you to stay one so that divorce is a violation of your oneness. That's another possibility. He made you one with the specific purpose of producing a godly offspring, so that it is your unity as one that must be maintained. So in option number one, he is referring to the spirituality of the person, and saying a person who has the Spirit wouldn't do it. In option two, he is simply saying that since God made you one in flesh and in spirit to produce a godly seed this is how He expects you to remain. Either way the point is obvious.

What he is saying in general is this, you've gotten a divorce and that violates God's intention in marriage. That's what he's saying, His intention, if you had the Spirit you wouldn't do it, if you realized the oneness of marriage you wouldn't do it. Now the result is in verse 16, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, says that He hates divorce." Putting away is simply divorce; it ought to be translated divorce. God hates divorce. The man who puts away his wife does something God hates. He willingly ignores her tears; he willingly ignores her wounded feeling. He covers his garment, it says with the violence of sin. Notice it, "for one covereth violence with his garment." Literally, covers his garment with violence. Boy that is so vivid, you know what it's re-referring to? It's a figurative expression for gross sin, it's like saying you can't ride through a mud puddle without getting mud all over your clothes. It's, it's like a man who murders somebody and he's caught because the blood of his victim is splattered all over his robe. And that's exactly what God is saying, He's saying when you divorce your wife, you have a sin splattered garment, that's what He's saying. It's a strong word, I hate divorce, why? Because one who does it splatters his garments with the blood of his victim. So the sin of divorce is really laid on the one who does it.

And then in the end of verse 16 he says, "Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and deal not treacherously." You see what this verse is saying? Divorce is sin, and God hates it, God hates it. Now sometime you may hate it too, and you may be a victim of somebody else's evil, and God will understand. But God hates divorce all the way around. If there had never been a fall there would have been a curse, if there had never been a curse there would have never been a divorce. So we can say divorce is a result of sin, which is a result of the fall, which is all apart of the curse. Therefore, God hates divorce.

You say, has God always hated it? Yeah, that's what I've been trying to show you, from Genesis 2 right on. You say, well if God hates it so much how did it get to be so prevalent? Go back to Genesis 3, let's review and I'll close. Next time we're going to interpret Deuteronomy 24 and our text, and then in the time after we'll go on to some other New Testament text.

But I want you to see what we saw a few months ago and, and I want to just review it briefly because it fits in this and, and it'll tie together. Genesis 3:16, man and woman have sinned and they have fallen, now as soon as they have fallen into sin marriage is going to be cursed, like every other human relationship you're gonna have trouble, because you're gonna have two vile sinners separated from God, everything is going to be chaotic, and so here comes the curse, verse 16, to the woman, for sinning, "I will multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow shall you bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Now backing up verse 16 is what I want you to see. There were several elements to the curse, separation from God, a separation from man and nature, and a separation from man and his wife. And you'll notice at the end of verse 16 the statement, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And in that one statement you have the basic problem in marriage, two sinners cursed, trying to get along. God's design originally was an indissoluble union, that's the way it was from the beginning. God's design was two together as one through all of life, but when sin entered in and passed on the human race it resulted in a terrible conflict in marriage. The marriage ideal was shattered, chaos enters the home and divorce inevitably becomes the result.

Now prior to the fall marriage was pure bliss, the man was the head, the woman was the help meet. The man's headship was a loving, caring provision of understanding. The woman's being a help meet was a loving, caring submissiveness to the one who was given as her leader. It was beautiful, her heart was totally devoted to him, his heart was totally devoted to her, and according to Genesis 1:27 and 28, they ruled together, they ruled together. But that ended, that ended. And you'll notice what happened, at the end of verse 16 woman is cursed and her desire is to her husband, her desire is to her husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Let's take that second phrase, the word rule here is mashal, it means to rule or to reign, it means to be set in an elevated position or an elevated office, and literally what happened was in the fall man was elevated to rule in the house, to rule in the home. He'd had a soft kind of dominance before, he'd had a loving, caring approach before but now he is set in a place of ruling with authority. It is a different word than the word for rule in Genesis 1:28, completely different word, completely different concept. A new dimension of his rule has come about. The woman then is made immediately subordinate to the man.

People say, oh there's too much male chauvinism in the world, and they're exactly right and this is why. Because of the curse and because woman led in the sin God set man over her to control her, to subdue her as it were, to be her head. And frankly without Jesus Christ it can be very abusive, I agree, sinful man has been chauvinistic, I'm the first one to agree, only in Christ, only in the Spirit can a right kind of headship be restored and that's the meaning of Ephesians chapter 5. Only in Christ, apart from that there will be oppressiveness. On the other hand, man is installed in this case as a ruler and woman, it says, her desire shall be to her husband.

Now what does this mean? And commentators as I pointed out some months ago have said, this means that she will desire, her husband physically, this means that she will desire him to be the head emotionally. The problem with that is that just isn't true. Of the two in the marriage the male has the stronger sex drive, and frankly women today don't desire the headship of a man at all for the most part they despise it. That's not what it means. In fact prior to the fall and prior to the curse woman was submissive, woman's desire in a sense was to her husband, so how can this be a curse, unless we understand it in a different way. We do as we look at the word desire, now I told you before and I tell you again that the word is teshuqah, it is used only one other time in the Pentateuch, just one other time, 15 verses later in the 4th chapter verse 7. And verse 7 of chapter 4 you don't need to, to read it but what it means is, it's talking about Cain and it says, sin desires you, but you must rule over it. Now beloved it is the same construction in Hebrew. It is a parallel to verse 16 of chapter 3. "Your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you." Sin desired Cain but he had the rule over it. And the point of the word is this, that sin desired to dominate Cain and he had to suppress it, and that is exactly what the curse was. The curse was this, woman would desire to usurp the role of a man and take the authority and man would have to suppress it. And so from Genesis 3:16 on you have the battle of the sexes.

Why is there a woman's lib movement? There has been since Genesis 3:16. Why is there male chauvinism? There has been since Genesis 3:16. The word teshuqah does not come from the root, that means some kind of an exciting desire, some kind of a loving romantic desire, it comes from a Arabic root that means a desire or an urge or an impelling to accomplish something. And so woman desires to control man, just like sin desires to control Cain. And in a sense you know, when Adam let Eve lead him into sin he was stuck with having to fight her leadership the rest of his days. And so we have the battle of the sexes, woman seeking supremacy, man trying to stay on the throne and marriage turns out to be king of the mountain. That's why we have problems. In Eve's sin she took over the leadership, and that became the sinful tendency of woman ever since. In Adam's sin he abandoned his leadership and that he has to struggle to maintain for the rest of the time that man lives on earth. So marital conflict exists all around us, because of the curse, and it's king of the mountain in most homes, and people fight it one way or another.

What does it lead to? Divorce, divorce. And so naturally Moses says, because of the hardness of your heart we have to face the fact that divorce is a reality. It doesn't change God's view; it doesn't change



how God feels. It's apart of the curse, it's apart of sin, and God hates the curse and God hates sin and God hates divorce. It is a symptom of man's vile sinfulness.

The conclusion then for tonight, divorce is a destructive element, never a righteous act under any circumstance, under any, and we'll get to the circumstances next time. It hurts everybody involved; it does irreparable damage to everybody. But most of all it goes against God, who never ever planned that as apart of human life.

Now the question is as we close, does the rest of Scripture uphold this same perspective? People say, what about the exception clause in Matthew 5, what about the exception clause in Matthew 19, what about the exception in First Corinthians 7, does the rest of the Bible uphold this view? For the answer to that you'll have to come next time. Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father we, we trust that in our stumbling way we've been able to communicate Your heart in this most important matter. You hate divorce. You never commanded it, You knew it would happen, and You've given us Word to deal with the consequence, but You hate it. And from the beginning it was never so.

God help us to realize that it's always an issue of sin. But help us also to realize it doesn't have to happen if two people walk in the Spirit, because as we're filled with the Spirit husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church and wives will submit to their husbands in a beautiful humble way. Help us follow... to follow Your ideal Lord, not to buy the bill the world is selling, not to give into the curse, not to give into sin. Help us not to amputate a leg because we have a splinter in it, help us to deal with that irritation, to work it out, because we know that Your perfect will is that two become one permanently.

God bless the marriages here. God bless the people who aren't married but are contemplating it, may they have those kinds of marriages that fulfill Your expectations. May we honor You with our individual lives and with our relationships with our spouse. God we know what divorce does to a society, we know as we see the encroachment on our society from divorces and parents that are not even in the home and homosexuality, all of the things coming in, what a terrible tragic future is on the horizon. God help us to be people of the Word not just those that know it but those that follow it. Help us to do all we can to stay in the center of the best thing, the best plan. And Lord, I thank You too that when folks make a mistake in this area, when they sin a sin, or fall victim to a divorce they don't want, You're there in grace, and You're there in mercy, and You're there in love to bind up a broken heart, to forgive and to cleanse, and to set their feet back on the path that is straight and narrow. Lord, fulfill all the good pleasure of Your will in our lives, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

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