

### **Why False Teachers Mock the Truth, Part 3**

Scripture: Luke 16:16-18

Code: 42-211

What a privilege it is to turn to the Word of God together, the 16th chapter of Luke for the ministry of the Spirit of God through the Word of God to our hearts this morning. Luke chapter 16, we are looking at a brief passage but we're finding it fairly dense and thick and it's taking us three weeks to work our way through it. It's one of those that is packed with significance that we need to address. I want to read it for you, verses 14-18, and then we'll continue our look at this text.

Beginning in Luke 16:14, "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and they were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men but God knows your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. Since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.'" First reading, it seems like a strange assortment of thoughts, all of which are, to one degree or another, somewhat familiar to those of us who know the Word of God because these kinds of things appear in several places in the gospels, but this is really a very cohesive portion of Scripture. It is going down a very set, fixed path intended to confront the Pharisees and to instruct us about the destructive components of false religion...the destructive components of false religion.

The assumption is, the conventional wisdom is, that religious people are close to God. Religious people honor God. Religious people are appreciated by God. Just being religious somehow increases your favor with God. It makes God like you more. It guarantees that you're going to end up in God's heaven if you're a religious person and, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The hottest hell is reserved for the people who rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ and accepted any other false substitute. Hell is most severe on the people who were the purveyors of false religion and the rejecters and antagonists of the gospel. That certainly puts the Pharisees at the head of that list. The conventional wisdom would say they were well intended Jews. They were good people. They were trying to uphold the law as they understood it. They were basically the architects of popular kind of Jewish religion of the time and they are to be revered and honored for their efforts and certainly God was pleased with those efforts. The truth of the matter is that is exactly opposite of how they are to be viewed. In fact it is enough to take you to the end of verse 14 and remind you of the very important theme of this whole section. "They were scoffing at Him."

The Pharisees are the God-mockers. They sneer at God incarnate. They sneer at Jesus Christ. They mock Him openly and publicly. They treat Him with derision and scorn and ridicule. They do everything they can to show Him disrespect, to demean Him in the public view. They assault Him and because they scoff at Him, end of verse 15, "...they are detestable in the sight of God." What you have in false religion is not people loving God and God loving them back. You have people hating God and God hating them back. You have people mocking God with their false religion and God viewing them as detestable. This is the hatred of false religion toward the truth and the hatred of God toward false religion. There is no way that we can make an alliance between the true gospel and any false religion including Judaism. The message of this text is that these people were the leaders of Judaism and they were the mockers of God incarnate, God in flesh, God standing right there in their presence, having manifested who He was both by His own confession and by His works and His words and His impact. The message of Christianity is that salvation is found in Christ alone and any who reject Christ therefore forfeit any hope of salvation, any hope of heaven. The natural man on his own does not end up pleasing God. Romans 1 says that when man rejects the truth, when he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness and develops a religion of his own and then thinks himself wise, he is in fact a fool and he is subject to the wrath of God.

In 1 Corinthians 1, it says that the best of human reason, the best of human wisdom, the best of human religion, cannot save. Man by wisdom does not know God, does not know salvation. 1 Corinthians 2 says truth is available only through the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture and natural man cannot understand the things of God. Acts 17, Paul on Mars Hill, confronts Greek religionists and points out that human reason, human speculation, human philosophy, human religion, lead only to an unknown God and the God that they do not know and cannot know being the true and living God will hold them responsible and accountable in the day that He judges the world by the man that He has appointed even the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 10 says false religion is demon worship, not at all the worship of God. It is a sacrifice to demons and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 says that fiery, horrific, eternal judgment falls on all who obey not the gospel. The point of all of that is to show that there's only one way to salvation, one way to heaven, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ and anything else is the enemy of God, including Judaism if it does not embrace Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord and Savior and God. And so the Pharisees were scoffing at Him, public sneering, public repudiation, public mockery and that is the attitude of all who reject Christ and His gospel. They mock God no matter how religious they may appear and, in this passage, our Lord leaves us...through His own words and through the brief writing of Luke in the 14th and the beginning of the 15th verse...He leaves us with a characterization of false religious leaders.

Here is a look at the destructive components of false religion. Number 1...we have learned this already...people who are false religionists, people who are against the true gospel of Christ, therefore outside the kingdom of God, have corrupt motives. Verse 14, "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money"...enough said. Verse 13, Jesus was teaching. At the end of the verse, "You cannot serve

God and money." You can't love God and love money. They are mutually exclusive because "...you can't serve two masters. You will hate one and love the other. You will hold to one and despise the other. You can't have both," and they in fact hated God and loved money. This is always the case with people in false religion. They see it as a way to aggrandize themselves. Oh, they might think it's a path to heaven but they're in it for the money, for personal gain, for personal aggrandizement.

Secondly, we learn they are antagonistic to God's demands. The reason they were scoffing is because they were listening to all these things, verse 14 says. Everything that Jesus said irritated them. Everything He said made them angry. Everything that He said, they resisted; evidence that they didn't know God. If they knew God, they would honor His word and He said it over and over again. "He who hears My Word is the one who believes in the one who sent Me. If you reject My Word then you reject Me and you reject God." You can't honor God and not honor the Son. If you honor the Son, you honor God. You dishonor the Son; you dishonor God and the issue was they did not like what He taught. They had no receptivity to truth. Their eyes were blind. Their ears were deaf. Their hearts were fat. They could not understand. They would not understand. They hated the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no eagerness on their part to obey the demands of God. This is true of false religion. They hate the truth. The only way you can along with somebody in false religion is to hold the truth back. If you want to make a nice alliance with people who are in false religion, who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, then you've got to pull back what is the truth that offends them. There is no other way because if you speak the absolute pure truth of the gospel and of the Bible to someone in false religion, they are antagonistic to it. They have no capacity to receive the truth but rather because they love their sin, they resent the light that shines through the truth.

Thirdly, another element of this kind of false religion that mocks the truth, they have corrupt motives. They are antagonistic to God's demands. They are self-justifying always. Verse 15, He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves." All false religious systems have an element of works in them. You earn your way. You get there by your own righteous deeds and ceremonies and human goodness. This is self-justifying. You make yourself righteous. You do what you need to do to become righteous and therefore be acceptable. All false religious systems are systems of self-righteousness works. Fourthly, they seek human approval. Verse 15, "You justify yourselves in the sight of men." It's all about looking good. It's all about being important in society, being thought to be virtuous and godly and to have the secret knowledge and to know God and to be elevated. It's all for human approval. Fifthly, we learned they are evil at heart, "...but God knows your hearts for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." God knows the truth. Your motives are corrupt. You're antagonist to the truth. You are self-justifying for human approval and God knows it because He knows your hearts. The hearts of people in false religion are detestable. They are known to God to be corrupt and perverse and sinful and wretched and detestable. That is, as we pointed out last time, something that stinks. They are a stench in the nostrils of God. They may walk around appearing to be very godly. They may go through religious machinations and emotions appearing to be very holy. The truth of the matter is they are a noxious odor in the nostrils

of Holy God.

Number 6, we saw that people in false religion reject the gospel of the kingdom and this, of course, is what's pointed out in verse 16. "The law and the prophets," meaning the Old Testament. That's what they called it. The Jews called it the law and the prophets. The Old Testament wasn't old to them because there was no new so they called it the law and the prophets "were proclaimed until John," John the Baptist. "Since then...that's a very important time marker...since the coming of John the Baptist, you have the ending of the old and the beginning of the new." And John the Baptist, as we pointed out last time, is the bridge. "Since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached." And the gospel of the kingdom is that the door to the kingdom of God is none other than Jesus Christ. He is the only way into the kingdom. That is the good news. The kingdom of God is available. It is open and the way in is Jesus Christ and there is no other way. Acknowledging Jesus as Messiah, as Lord, as Savior, is the good news of entrance into the kingdom. You have never crossed into that reality. You have rejected the gospel of the kingdom. The law and the prophets, that's until John the Baptist. Since then, the gospel of the kingdom is preached and you're stuck in the past and even in an apostate form of the past and not a true kind of Judaism at all. And then at the end of verse 16, He gives us this important statement: "...and everyone is forcing his way into it." You're on the outside. You have no interest in it and yet there are many who are forcing their way into it. In fact, anyone who comes into the kingdom realizes that it's a struggle. It is hard. It is difficult and I think the way to understand this is Jesus is simply pointing out the door is open. The gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached and it takes a magnificent effort for you to come into this kingdom. This is not just a human work but there are components that involve the human will. It never happens apart from the human will and the price is profound. He is saying, "Look the sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes, the riff raff, the social scum, they're coming into the kingdom and they're making the effort, the struggle, that's so difficult. It takes the force of will to make that commitment that you won't make."

Now we understand what He's talking about here and I'll show you. Just in review, go back to Luke 9 and this will all be familiar to you but it's a good point to review it. Luke 9:23, "If anyone wishes to come after Me...that is, if you want to follow Christ; you want to come into the kingdom...let him deny himself." First of all, deny yourself...self denial. This is hating your own life. John calls it hating your own life. Self-denial, complete abandonment of all your own dreams, ambitions, hopes, desires, refusing to associate with the wretched sinful person you are any longer. This is the self-denial of true and genuine repentance. This is the beating on your chest. Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner and save me. And take up your cross. That means on a daily basis you're willing to die. Salvation is so important for you that if it costs you your life, your actual physical life, that's a small price to pay and follow me and then He defines what He means in verse 24, "Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it." It's the end of you. It's over. You have to completely give up all your own personal self will, ambition and self-righteousness. Realize you are a wretched sinner. Abandon all hope of saving yourself. This is called losing your life. If you wish to save your life, you'll lose it. "Whoever loses his

life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." You have to come to the point where you reject yourself and that was so hard for the self-righteous to do.

In the 13th chapter of Luke's gospel, we learn a little bit more about what this means. Verse 3, Luke 13:3, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." We're talking about repentance here. That is you come recognizing your sinfulness, your wretchedness. This is what it means to deny yourself. This is what it means to lose your life. Let go of all that you are as a sinner. Unless you do that, you will all likewise perish. He says it again in verse 5. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." And the language even stronger, verse 26 of chapter 14, "If anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." It's about hating and loathing the sinful person that you are and then being willing to carry your cross and come after Me. It's like building a tower. You don't want to do it until you've counted the cost and decided whether you're willing to pay it. It's like going to war if you're a king. You don't want to go to war unless you know you can win or else you strike a truce. In other words, you've got to be willing to make an assessment of what this is going to cost you and verse 33, it's going to cost you all that you have...everything.

And so this is why it's called forcing your way into the kingdom and this is repeated in other passages in the gospels. There's a certain seizing of the kingdom. There's a tremendous battle that goes on in the human sinful soul to bring the person to crush the pride and the self-will and to bring the person to total penitence. Oh, they had no interest in this. They were not interested in the hard work of repentance. They were not interested in reassessing themselves as wretched sinners and it was this kind of language on the part of Jesus that was so hateful to them but those who were willing to do that were applying all the necessary force aided by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God to overcome the strength of their sinfulness. You're not willing to force your way. You're not willing to do the hard work of repentance to come into the kingdom of God. So they rejected the gospel of the kingdom. Corrupt motives, antagonistic to God's demands, self-justifying, seeking human approval, evil at heart and therefore detestable to God and particularly rejecters of the true gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

We turn to another mark that is important for us to know and it's one of the reasons that they rejected the gospel apart from the fact that they didn't want to reclassify themselves as sinners. This is No. 7. They had no category for grace. They had no category for grace. Verse 17, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." That seems just out of nowhere, doesn't it? Like what's the connection? This may seem to have absolutely no connection to the preceding statement but it has a very, very, very tight connection. You see what offended them about Jesus was that He embraced sinners. Do I have to remind you of chapter 15 verse 1? "All the tax gatherers and the sinners were coming near to Him to listen to Him and both the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble saying,

'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" This was an outrage, an absolute outrage, against their spiritual sensibilities, their sense of self-styled holiness, that Jesus would hang around the scum. Sinners was a generic category for all the people who couldn't go to the synagogue, all the people who you didn't eat with or speak with or even come close to. Even, as I pointed out, a Pharisee wouldn't go near one of these people as much as even to teach him the law because they were so defiling, they thought.

So here's Jesus embracing these people and then He tells a story in Luke 15 about a father, who is God, who runs through town, throws his arms around a wretched, rotten, vile, sinning son who has heaped shame upon that very father's head and who has wasted his substance with prostitutes and lived with Gentiles and eaten with pigs and he's reached the lowest point possible in their imagination and now this loving father, who's God, he throws his arms around him, kisses him all over the head, puts a robe on him, puts a ring on him, puts sandals on him, and has a huge celebration and says all heaven rejoices over God embracing a sinner like this. They have no category for that. They have no category for that kind of forgiveness, no category for that kind of grace whatsoever.

So they believe that Jesus is, by preaching forgiveness and grace, assaulting the law. They are, like religionists tend to be, legalists. If you're going to earn your way in then you've got to earn your way...all systems of human achievement...you've got to earn your way in by obeying some of the standards, some of the laws, and depending on what religion, they become more sophisticated and Judaism very sophisticated. And so here comes Jesus with all this forgiveness. Here comes Jesus with all His grace. Here comes Jesus talking about God embracing a sinner. They're just outraged. They just can't believe it and so they see in Jesus an attack on holiness and an attack on purity and an attack on virtue and they are highly offended and they are convinced that it is this very attack that is the reason they believe He is satanic. When they accused Him of doing what He does by the power of Satan, it is because He associates with the people that they connect with Satan's domain and so they see Him as a lawbreaker, a law violator, attacking God's holiness and soiling Himself with these people. They accused Him repeatedly of hanging around sinners and drunkards and prostitutes and so Jesus knows this and so He wants to affirm to them His view of the law and what is His view of the law? Is He one who depreciates the law?

Well, if you were to go back to the Sermon on the Mount, you would remember Him saying repeatedly in chapter 5, "You have heard it said," such and such and such, "but I say unto you," and in every case that He said that, you have been taught the law means this and He pushes it up higher, doesn't He? You have been taught that you shouldn't commit adultery but I'm telling you you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery in your heart. You have been taught you shall not murder. I'm telling you you can't hate and keep that law. He raised the standard in every case. Why? Because He was, No. 1, a true interpreter of the law and, No. 2, faithful to that law and that's what He means in verse 17 when He says, "Don't misunderstand Me, folks. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail." Now this is a contrast in the

most massive sense. We know that in the Bible, according to the Old Testament Psalm 102 verses 25 and 26, Isaiah 51:6, Matthew 24:35, 2 Peter 3:7 and 10, some day the heaven and the earth will pass away. The Book of Revelation lets us in on that as well because there's a new heaven and a new earth, Revelation 21, so we do know that prophetically the time will come when the universe as we know it will be uncreated. "Elements will melt with fervent heat," Peter says, "and in their place will come a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal state."

But this is not the point in what our Lord is saying here. This is a contrast from a human perspective. He is saying, "It is easier for the universe, the entire whole universe, to go immediately out of existence than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail." The contrast is extreme, the most massive...that is the entire universe...to the most miniscule...a stroke, keraiain the Greek, and it means...it's actually a little horn. It is the difference between an F in English, let's say, and an E, that one little stroke, or the difference between a capital R and a capital B, that one tiny stroke. Now in Hebrew, in their understanding, they would see the difference between a baeth and a koff. The difference is the baeth looks like a sort of reverse C but it has a tiny little tag on the bottom. That's a kerai and a koff without that tiny little tag. He is saying, "Look, the whole universe could go out of existence before one tiny kerai on the pages of God's inspired revelation would ever be changed. Wow. He is not depreciating the law, not at all.

In fact, if you go back to Matthew 5:18, you will find that in that very Sermon on the Mount, He said that. Matthew 5:18, "Truly, I say to you, 'Until heaven and earth pass away,'" and there He notes that it will happen. "Until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke"...and there's kerai, stroke, the tiny little tag, not the smallest letter. So you go from a tiny little strong on a letter to a letter and what was the smallest Hebrew letter? It's a yod that looks like an apostrophe, tiny. The smallest Greek letter is a yota. It's just one little line, tiny little line like an "I" without a dot. Not one tiny little tag, not tiny little yode, not one tiny little yota, will pass away until everything is accomplished. Then when it's all done and it's all over then heaven and earth can pass away and the eternal state can come.

There are a couple of things to understand about this. This is probably, this with Matthew 5:18 and also with Matthew 24:35...you can write that down and look at it later...constitutes the statement that is probably the clearest defense of verbal inspiration. When we talk about verbal inspiration, we're talking about verbum in the Latin, meaning word. You hear people say, "Well, I believe the message of the Bible is inspired." Really? That's good. I heard a well-known preacher in a glass house say on television the other day that "I believe in the message of the Bible but not necessarily all the words being inspired." Really? How do you convey a message without words? That is a bizarre notion. Words matter. If you change one word in a sentence, you've changed the meaning. What is the meaning without the words? That is a bizarre concept. What we have here is Jesus saying, I'm talking about not words but letters, absolutely down to the letters. Scripture, John 10:35, "Scripture cannot be broken." That is to say it is plenary, from the Latin meaning full, so it is verbal, inspires,

that is every verbum, every word. It is plenary. Again, that means it is all the Word of God and it cannot be broken. It is whole. It is a unit. It comes together and the details matter.

Let me show you a couple of illustrations of that. This would be another study but they come to mind and they're helpful. Look at Galatians 3:16 and in this passage, the Apostle Paul is writing about God's promises to Abraham and in verse 16, he says this, Galatians 3:16, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham." You remember back in Genesis 12 and following, God gave promises to Abraham and to his seed and then he interprets that. He does not say "and to seeds" as referring to many but rather to one "and to your seed." That is Christ so when God spoke about Abraham's seed, who was He talking about? Christ. The point is the difference between a singular and a plural is critical. You have letters. You have little tiny tags on letters. You have one letter making the difference in interpretation, an "s," singular or plural. It's a huge difference whether the promise to Abraham referred to many or just to one and we know it was fulfilled in the one who is Christ.

Let me show you another one. Look at Luke 20...Luke 20. The Jews were somewhat content to think of Messiah as the son of David. They got that fairly clear from the Old Testament, 2 Samuel 7, and so Jesus says to them in verse 41 of Luke 20, Luke 20:41, He said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is David's son?" You just, you're stuck on the fact that Christ is David's son and that's it. That is to say He's in the royal line of David, a man, a human. "How is it that you say that Christ is David's son," verse 42, "for David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand.'" That is "The Lord...God...said to My Lord...the Son, 'Sit at My right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" David therefore calls Him Lord. How is He his son? Why is it that all you can allow is that the Messiah would be a son of David when David himself called Him Lord. Do words matter? Do letters matter? Do singulars and plurals matter? Do tiny little marks matter? This is a verbally inspired revelation of God down to every letter in the original autographs and Jesus says, "Not one letter will ever change until everything is finally in its eternal state, all completed, all accomplished, all fulfilled," powerful stuff. He is not setting aside anything.

Now as you look at the Old Testament, it is true that there were ceremonial things that God set aside, the Sabbath day that God set aside. There were dietary laws that no longer apply as indicated in the New Testament very clearly in Acts 10. Set those things aside. They were for a certain time and a certain place. There were certain social laws in Israel. But there are two elements to the Old Testament law that can never change, okay? One is promise and the other is righteousness. In other words, whatever God promised in the Old Testament will be fulfilled and whatever God said is righteous is always righteous. God's promises cannot change. God's morality cannot change. The law doesn't change in those two ways. All the promises will be fulfilled. They were being fulfilled right then, right there, that day in the face of those Pharisees. They will continue to be fulfilled all the way out to the new heaven and the new earth. Everything that the Old Testament prophesied through direct prophesy, through type, through symbols such as a sacrificial system, all of that will come to its complete fulfillment and will not fail.



Secondly, all true standards of righteousness reflect God's unchanging holy nature. First of all, if God said it's going to happen, it's going to happen because He can't lie. Secondly, if He said it's right and it's wrong, that's going to be that way forever because God cannot change. Prophetic promises will all come to fulfillment and righteous standards of God will never change. He is aware of this. Jesus is affirming this. If they really believed in the righteous character and nature of God being inviolable and the law of God being inviolable and unchanging, they wouldn't be living the way they were living. You know what? If they really believed that, they'd be on their faces like the publican in Luke 18 pounding their chests screaming for mercy because they would have known if they really understood the law that they fell way short and they would have known they were under horrific condemnation.

So when it came to God's moral law, they didn't pay attention to the reality of what it said. They are the ones that are guilty of depreciating and demeaning and disregarding the law, not Jesus. Just because they didn't have a category for grace and a category for forgiveness doesn't mean that they on the other hand actually upheld the law. They didn't. Nor did they affirm the law in its prophetic element or they would have embraced John the Baptist. They would have embraced their Messiah who had proven Himself to be such. And Jesus is saying to them, "If you were really loyal to the law, you would acknowledge Me. Search the Scriptures," He said, "They're speaking of Me." If you really acknowledge the law, you would have walked across the bridge of John the Baptist and when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," you would have affirmed and acknowledged it and known by My works, My miraculous works, and My words and My impact that I was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises and if you really upheld the law, you would know that I too uphold the law and do not diminish the law. The truth of the matter is you depreciate the law by rejecting its prophetic fulfillment and rejecting its absolute holy standard and He proves it to them in verse 18. He picks a law that they loved to violate.

By the way, hypocrites are usually pretty careful about how they select their zones of operation and these guys were no different. He picked out one of their favorite Old Testament commands to ignore. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." You know what He's saying to them? You're a bunch of adulterers. Divorce was pretty rampant among the Pharisees. Well, of course, we wouldn't expect them to live pure lives, would we? Because false religion can't restrain the flesh. Being a legalist is pretty hard stuff. They didn't commit adultery. They just dumped their wives and went with the woman they preferred and then when they didn't prefer her, they dumped her and went with somebody else they preferred. That was their M.O., so He's addressing them as adulterers. He's saying, "You're standing before Me and you have divorced your wives and you've married somebody else. Who are you to tell Me I'm depreciating the law? Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

They knew that law. Let me show you that law, Deuteronomy 24. Believe me, they knew it very well. They had worked it over. They knew it. In Deuteronomy 24, we have this, verses 1-4, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes...he doesn't like her anymore...because he's found some indecency, some uncleanness in her...that's all it says...he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, sends her out from his house." So out she goes because he doesn't like her anymore because of some uncleanness, some vile, shameful thing, not adultery by the way, because adultery had a penalty and it wasn't divorce. The penalty for adultery was death so if you commit adultery, you don't get a divorce, you get death. Verse 22 of chapter 22, "If a man is found lying with a married woman, both of them shall die...both of them shall die;" death for adultery. So we're talking about a woman not who commits adultery but who does something that he sees as shameful. He doesn't like what she did. It's unclean. So he writes her a certificate of divorce; puts it in her hand; out she goes. This doesn't commend divorce, doesn't condone divorce. It just says if it happens...if it happens and it does. She goes out of the house. She goes to be somebody else's wife of course. That's normal for divorced people.

If the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of the house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, now she's back on the street again either as a widow or a divorcee again. Her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife; can't take her back because she's been defiled. Whoa. Why was she defiled? Because she had no grounds for divorce. There were no grounds then. Adultery wasn't a grounds for divorce. It was a grounds for execution. So when she remarried, she's defiled so if you take her back, you're taking back a defiled person. That is an abomination...very strong word...before the Lord and that is a sin on the land. Wow, sin, abomination, defiled. Now what is this text saying? Don't divorce your wife or you're going to have divorce all over the place. Whoever she marries is guilty of adultery. Whoever marries her makes her guilty of adultery. It just recognizes divorce is going to occur but if you do it, understand this. You are proliferating adulteries all over the place.

What is that uncleanness thing? Well, this is not any kind of commendation of divorcing your wife for uncleanness. It's the opposite. It simply says if you do it and you send her out and she's going to do what's inevitable, what women all did and still do, she's going to marry again, then everybody in that union is defiled and if you ever go back to her, you're defiled because she's defiled. Wow, divorce just creates defilement everywhere. You say, "Well, what about adultery?" Now remember, adultery was punished by...what?...by death. So you just can't divorce wives and have people remarry...the point of the passage is...without proliferating adultery and Jesus is saying in verse 18, just essential...you can go back to Luke...just essentially that. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. He who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." If you marry a divorced person, she's an adulterer and you're an adulterer. That's how it is.

Now the Pharisees, they had looked at that passage and they had decided that that was a permission. Okay? It's not in the passage; doesn't say anything about that. But they had decided that that was a Mosaic permission, which it is not, to divorce your wife for uncleanness. That's a pretty general category, wouldn't you think? And fortunately for the Pharisees, along came Rabbi Hillel. He lived the last 50 years of B.C. and Rabbi Hillel came up with his very popular interpretation that whatever you decide is uncleanness to you is uncleanness and the point of the passage is when you decide it's an uncleanness, you have a right to divorce her. They stopped at that point. They didn't bother with, "and when you remarry you commit adultery," etc. They had twisted that. Hillel conveniently had worked his machinations with the text to make it a permission to divorce your wife for some uncleanness and go ahead and marry another, total misinterpretation and total misrepresentation and I might just add hastily that false religion is very adept at misinterpretation and unable to make accurate interpretations. And so, by the way, here was Rabbi Hillel's list. Here are the causes for divorce...burning dinner, lousy food, too much salt, spinning in the street so someone saw her knees, taking her hair down, saying something unkind about her mother-in-law, infertility, not giving you a son, or finding someone prettier makes her in your eyes unclean and then there's a whole lot of blanks. You can fill in your own, very convenient interpretation, a very happy one for the Pharisees, and they didn't bother to interpret the rest of it accurately so they were proliferating divorces. When they saw somebody they liked better or somebody that was nicer or they were tired of having lousy food or whatever for any excuse.

And our Lord says, "You hypocrites...in effect. You parade yourselves around as if you are the paragons of devotion to the law and you stand here before Me as a collective group of adulterers by the proliferation of your divorces." And adultery was a capital crime...Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 20 verse 10, Deuteronomy 22:22. It was a capital crime. Just because it's no longer enforced doesn't change God's attitude toward your divorces and your remarriages. He exposed their deception. He exposed their convenient misinterpretation of Scripture and, as I said, that's one of the characteristics of false religion. They're amazingly clever at distorting the true meaning of Scripture.

Now in light of all of that, you say, "Well, didn't Jesus give some exceptions?" Yes, He did. Now look at Luke 16 here. Jesus here is referring back to that Deuteronomic law in Deuteronomy 24 in which there are no exceptions. He's simply reiterating that law but that has to be taken in comparison with a couple of other passages. Since God in His common grace had allowed the death penalty for adultery to disappear, and it is a kind of common grace; since God graciously had allowed the nations to go their own way sinfully and not punish adultery with death, there was a provision for divorce under one condition. Go back to Matthew 5, Matthew chapter 5. Now this is what they said and we're back into the Sermon on the Mount. "It was said," that means rabbinic teaching, rabbinic teaching. That's the whole thrust of this. It's a "You have heard it said but I say," "It was said but I say." Again, you heard it...the ancients were told but I say. He's contrasting their view, what was taught to them, with the truth. "It was said...verse 31; this is what you guys have been

taught...whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal." Wow, that's pretty simple. You know what that says? If you want to divorce your wife, just make sure you do the paperwork. Yeah, just make sure she goes out with a paper in her hand. That's it. You can divorce her for any reason you want. Just do the paperwork. "But I say to you every one who divorces his wife except for the cause of unchastity...that would be adultery; sexual sin...makes her commit adultery when she remarries and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." You make her and whoever she marries adulterers. Jesus is saying this is taking it all the way back to the original law with the one exception that if there is the cause of immorality, unchastity, sexual sin, then there is a granting of the right to a divorce. It's still good to forgive but you have the right if that...and I like to think of it as an impenitent ongoing adultery. The person is not to become a victim permanently of such wretched behavior so where there is that unchastity as a pattern, divorce is allowed.

Now look at Matthew 19. Same issue comes up again. Matthew 19:3, "The Pharisees come to Jesus testing Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?'" And they asked the question because they know the popular view is the Hillel view. Wouldn't you think? There was another rabbi named Shammai who took the opposite view. His view wasn't as popular. Hillel was the reigning view and so the Pharisees, wanting to expose Jesus and make Him more unpopular with all the divorced people, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" That's what they believed. That's what they did and he answered and said, "Didn't you read in the book of Genesis that He who created them from the beginning and made them male and female and said, 'For this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. The two shall become one flesh. Consequently, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate.'" Marriage is two people coming together constituting now one flesh indivisible for life. That's the divine pattern.

And so they asked the question, verse 7. "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her?" Well, Moses didn't command it. It was allowed. Verse 8, "He said to them because of your hardness of heart, He permitted you to divorce your wives but from the beginning, it has not been this way." It is a concession. There should be death in the case of adultery but the death penalty not being enforced, even back in Moses' day, there was a concession that you who have been offended by immoral conduct of a spouse can divorce and so in verse 9, He repeats what we read in Matthew 5. "I say whoever divorces his wife except for immorality and marries another woman commits adultery." And so Jesus is saying, "Look, you're accusing Me of being a lawbreaker. You're the lawbreakers. You're divorcing your wives all over the place for burning your dinner, for putting too much salt on it, because you found somebody you liked better. I'm upholding that law." And of course, in the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ, God forgives all violations of law to the one who repents. They didn't understand grace and the gospel and they certainly didn't adhere to a true interpretation of the law.

By the way, to show you that God allowed this divorce idea in the case of immorality, the strongest illustration is in Jeremiah 3. Jeremiah 3 says, "If a husband...verse 1...divorces his wife and she goes from him and belongs to another man, will he still return to her? Will not the land be completely polluted?" He's reiterating Deuteronomy 24. "But you are a harlot with many lovers." He says to Israel, "You're like a...you were My wife...My wife...and you've gone off to other gods. You've polluted the land...verse 2...with your harlotry and your wickedness." Verse 8, "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce." Why? "She polluted the land...verse 9...and committed adultery." In verse 10, "...did not return to Me with all her heart." Had she returned to Me with all her heart, we would have cancelled the divorce. There's a place for forgiveness but when it's impenitent, even God divorces Israel.

And so Jesus is saying typical false religion, greedy lovers of money in it for gain, antagonists to God's demands...they don't want to hear the real truth...proudly self righteous and confident in their own religious works, seekers of honor from people, corrupt and detestable at heart, rejecting the gospel that alone can save them, ignorant of grace and forgiveness and inaccurate and unfaithful in a true understanding and obedience to the Word of God. And folks, the conflict hasn't changed. It's nothing new. It's the same even now. It is the Word of God and the Word of Christ versus the false teachers and the false teachers are like this in all areas and they are that way even today. The sides are drawn. They are drawn permanently. The conflict has not changed. The leader of the conflict, Satan, hasn't changed. The emissaries of the conflict on a supernatural level haven't changed. The same demons are basically carrying on the conflict today. The doctrines of demons, the same demons that have been around since the fall. Only the people have changed but it's still the same question. Who's telling you the truth? Who is telling you the truth? False religion damns. It does not save. It must be exposed for what it is and we must adhere to a true understanding of God's word. Telling the truth about liars is the only merciful, compassionate and loving thing that one can do. Jesus told them so that they could repent. He told them so that the people would see them for who they really were and we do the same and at the same time thank the Lord that He has opened our eyes to understand the glory of the truth. Let's pray.

Father, we come now to the end of this service this morning but just to the beginning of our application of these things. We pray that You might use us to help people who need to see the truth. So many people in the world are caught in false religion. Give us the courage and the boldness to confront and the compassion, sympathy and sweetness to call them to the truth lovingly. And we thank You again for the joy and the celebration really that worshipping You is and we ask now that You, the God of peace, would sanctify entirely our spirit and soul and body being preserved complete without blame to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ faithful as He who calls You who will bring it to pass. Amen.

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