

A Word Concerning Divorce (Part 2 of # 8)

Matthew 5: 31-32

Tonight I would like to finish up our study of the portion of the Sermon on the Mount where our Lord dealt with divorce. As I mentioned last time, it is not my intention to single out or condemn any who have faced divorce. I am aware of the pain and devastation that you have already experienced in that regard and I certainly don't want to add to your hurt. It is not my goal to belittle or look down upon any one; I simply want us to honestly consider what the Bible has to say about this serious matter. We will all have to agree that divorce is rampant in our society, and in the vast majority of circumstances, it brings suffering and pain to those involved.

So let's continue to examine the [imperatives](#) our Lord reveals as we consider the conclusion of: [A Word Concerning Divorce](#). In our last study we discussed:

I. The Perception of Divorce (31-32)

A. The View of the World (31) – The world views it as permissible under most any circumstance.

B. The View of our Lord (32) – Also [Mark 10: 2-9](#). Christ revealed that they were looking at it from the wrong perspective. Rather than focusing on whether divorce was permissible, He challenged them to consider God's initial plan for marriage.

II. The Devastation of Divorce (32) – [But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.](#) In this statement Jesus reveals much regarding the devastation of divorce. I can think of none who have faced it without enduring great hurt and long lasting effects. Let's take a moment to consider the truths that are spoken regarding divorce. First we see:

A. The Separation of Divorce – Jesus speaks of a man [putting away](#) his wife. This bears a strong implication. It literally means “*to let go; dismiss; disown; or cast off.*” It has the idea of cutting all ties with. We are all aware that divorce causes separation, but that puts it in perspective. It reveals the harshness and devastation of the separation.

- Keep in mind it was never God's will for this to happen. [Mark 10:8-9](#) – [And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.](#) [9] [What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.](#)

- I have experienced the separation caused by divorce, being raised in a broken home. I have lived with the hurt and devastation of that separation. I know the pain of a home that was divided due to divorce. Often a couple feels divorce is the only option, but they never stop to consider the difficulty of the separation it always brings.
- Sadly it isn't limited to physical separation. There is always an emotional and psychological separation as well. The scars and hurt of divorce heal very slowly, if at all.

B. The Sin of Divorce – Jesus speaks of what is commonly known as “the exception clause.” He reveals that with the exception of fornication, divorce results in adultery. Sin is always at the heart of divorce. I say that with a heart of love, but it is true nonetheless. You may have suffered a failed relationship that ended in divorce, by no fault of your own, but there was sin on the part of your spouse. You may have been faithful to the marriage relationship, seeking to work through the difficulty, but your spouse was engaged in an extramarital affair. Sin was at the heart of that affair. God intended for marriage to be for life and yet many times sin enters the relationship and it is terminated. I can think of no circumstance where sin is not directly involved with divorce.

C. The Succession of Divorce – *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.* The devastation of divorce does not end once the papers are final. It has lasting effects that often affect other people. I will deal with the exception in a moment, but apart from that, those who marry divorced persons are engaging in adultery as well. Sin has consequences that are often far reaching. Divorce is no different; it always affects more than the two people that decided to get a divorce.

- This is a different aspect, but it is related to the succession of divorce: often children who grow up in broken homes are more likely to view marriage as temporary because of the example that was set before them. Typically one of two things happens: they will either follow in the footsteps of their parents, or they will determine to take a different path. Clearly the divorce rate in our society reflects the casual approach that many have regarding marriage. I always counsel couples to make a commitment that they will not resort to divorce as a solution to their problems.
- Now, before I move on, allow me to clarify something. The Lord stated that entering a marriage relationship with one who is divorced is entering an adulterous relationship. Those are not my thoughts, but God's Word. However, I do not believe those who seek the Lord in repentance live in a continual state of adultery. If you are in that circumstance and have asked

the Lord to forgive you, He has done just that. Being divorced and remarried is not the unpardonable sin. You do not have to live the rest of your life in guilt and shame. God is faithful to forgive and divorce is no exception.

I. The Perception of Divorce (31-32)

II. The Devastation of Divorce (32)

III. The Clarification of Divorce (32) – *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.* I want to try and bring our thoughts to a close as we consider the clarification of divorce. First of all consider:

A. The Exception – Jesus said that divorce results in adultery with the exception of fornication. Now I will admit, with the circumstances of my childhood, I wanted to believe that divorce and remarriage were never permissible under any circumstance. There are those who still hold that point of view and that is between them and the Lord. I told you at the beginning that it was not my desire to share my opinion, but to allow God's Word to speak for itself. To me it is clear that our Lord allows for divorce and remarriage when fornication is involved. According to His Word they are free to remarry. (I have no way of knowing for sure in every circumstance, so I have chosen not to officiate weddings where divorce is an issue.)

- I also believe according to God's Word there is one more exception. Turn with me to [1 Cor.7: 10-16](#). These verses are not an encouragement for divorce. Paul urges those who are married to remain married, [v.10](#). Those who are saved and divorce are to remain unmarried, with the exception of fornication, [v.11](#). The remaining verses deal with a believer being married to an unbeliever. As long as the unbeliever is happy to stay in the relationship, the believer is to remain committed to the relationship. If the unbeliever chooses to depart, then the believer is no longer under bondage. This should only happen if one of them came to know Christ after the marriage vows were taken. If a believer chooses to marry an unbeliever, they knew what they were getting into from the beginning. God is never pleased with that situation and for that reason I will not knowingly perform a ceremony where one is a believer and the other is not. [2 Cor.6:14](#) – *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

B. The Expectation – I want to close with a word about the expectation regarding divorce. God never encourages or commands divorce. Once a couple has taken the vows of marriage, they are one flesh in His eyes.

- I have counseled with those seeking divorce who thought it was the only reasonable solution. I can never biblically encourage divorce, whatever the circumstance. It should be removed from the Christian's vocabulary. Every effort ought to be made to reconcile the differences and make the marriage work. God is never pleased with divorce. [Mal.2:16 – For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.](#) God expects us to take our marriage vows seriously and seek to remain married. If you are unmarried and think you may get married at some point, I urge you to take your vows seriously and fully understand the expectations of the Lord.

Allow me finish this study with the resolution for divorce. Again I want to emphasize that divorce and remarriage are not the unpardonable sin. Divorce results from sin, but if repentance has been made, one does not live in a continual state of adultery and sin. [1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#)

Again I want to challenge those who are not divorced to thank God for their marriages and homes, but also we must be careful that we don't develop a condemning attitude toward others. If you are guilty of a condemning spirit, then you have sin that needs to be confessed and forsaken. Whatever the need is our Lord is able to forgive and strengthen.