

LESSON 11

SEPARATION, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Scripture Texts: Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11



Five times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11) Jesus spoke on the matter of divorce, and every time He spoke in condemnation of it. Present-day lightness toward many of life's relationships reaches also to the attitude some hold toward marriage. The Bible can by no possible interpretation be made to justify divorce because of incompatibility or temperament or even because of intolerable situations which may render separation necessary. The New Testament frowns on separation and forbids divorce, save for one exception, immoral conduct.

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

Matthew 19:8

Take Heed to Your Spirit

Malachi 2:14-16 God through Malachi was telling Israel of their faults and exhorting them to return to the right way. **Let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.** Falseness to one's wife or husband is sin in God's sight. (See also Mark 10:2-12.) Jewish husbands could divorce their wives for any cause of dislike, such as overcooking the food, looking at another man, or having offensive breath. Their hearts had become so hard that they would divorce their wives for becoming ill or suffering injury. Because of their hard hearts, Moses suffered this, and they continued this practice even to the time of our Lord. **For the Lord . . . saith that he hateth putting away**—that is, divorce. **Therefore**—because He hates putting away—**take heed to your spirit**—where the trouble first begins.

We need to watch our hearts. What reactions does your heart feel to things seen and heard? What dreams and desires are allowed to grow there? What thoughts are harbored there? God tells us to take heed to our spirit, watching the heart, and keeping it pure and fit in His sight. This is the only safeguard against dealing treacherously with the companion of your youth.

Christ Revoked Divorce Law of Moses

Matthew 19:3-9 The Pharisees asked Jesus about the lawfulness of divorce. They were not sincere and attempted to trick Him. However, He gave them a sincere answer. He pointed back to the establishment of marriage in the beginning by God—the leaving of all others, the permanence—cleaving to one another, and being made one flesh by the transforming power of God. This is what marriage is. God made it so.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. Under Moses' law, because of the hardness of their hearts, the husband who divorced his wife for any reason, had to put a bill of divorcement into the hand of his wife and send her out of the house. When this was done, she was free to marry another man as though she had never been married, and she was not called an adulteress. If she had committed adultery, her husband did not need to divorce her; she was stoned to death by the men of the city under the law of Moses and Israel. So, here in this Scripture, Jesus is dealing only with divorce obtained for some

reason lesser than fornication (unfaithfulness to the marriage vow). This man has committed two sins: (1) putting away his wife and (2) adultery. Notice the exception. If she has committed fornication, he is at liberty to put her away since she has broken the bond. Under Moses' law, she could be stoned.

When a man under the New Testament Law puts away his wife for any reason except fornication, she can marry again and not be an adulteress. The offender has already sinned, and the one who marries him sins also. Keep in mind that we are teaching on the Christian home. The sinner is not subject to God's Law. What God joins together is always joined together. God never joins a couple together unless they can be Scripturally joined together. It is necessary that a marriage be valid at inception for there to be a Scriptural divorce. This writer cannot agree with those who believe that God's approval rests upon all marriages. In this day of marriage by elopement, childhood marriage, and marriage brought about by lust and not love, there must be more than a mere ceremony if God's approval is expected to rest upon it. Women should thank God for the liberty and freedom brought to them through Christ. Jesus tells us that the rules apply equally and with no difference to both wives and husbands (Mark 10:11-12).

Law of Separation

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 . . . I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from the husband: But if she depart—if conditions of cruelty or sin become such that she cannot rightly remain, as sometimes may be the case—then **let her remain unmarried**—to recognize the marriage bond and be true to it, even though forced to live separately. **Or be reconciled to her husband.** If possible, this is best. The separation may wake up the faulty one and bring him or her to repentance. Thus the marriage may be mended. **Let not the husband put away his wife.** Both husband and wife are under the same rules and have the same obligations. It is not right for any married person to keep company with another, even though that one is not at present living with his or her companion. Our standard of action should be what is right in God's sight.

The Pattern

Since marriage can be accompanied by good or evil, it behooves one to think seriously before taking any step. Examine well the Scriptures on the subject and be sure. When in doubt, it is best not to act. As is said concerning the keeping of days, **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind** (Romans 14:5). The Bible is our final authority. Marriage can be broken by the sin of either partner. The sure remedy for each is salvation through Jesus Christ.

"Here are five things we should remember if we would understand the New Testament passages having to do with this subject: (1) Moses made no provision for husbands to divorce fornicators. (2) Moses made no provision for husbands to divorce adulteresses. (3) Moses made no provision for husbands to divorce wives who were even suspected of unchastity. (4) Moses' divorce law permitted husbands to divorce wives for something LESS than unchastity. (5) Wives who had been divorced according to the law of Moses were FREE to marry another man, and they were not called adulteresses if they married again while the first husband was living."--C. M. Washington.

JUST A THOUGHT

A broken home is the world's greatest wreck.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.

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