

Divorce

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[0 : 00] Open up your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark chapter 10. Mark chapter 10. We're going to be covering the first 12 verses of chapter 10 in the Gospel of Mark.

So I want you to turn there. If you don't have your Bible, use your phone or whatever it is that you've got that has your Bible on it. Make sure you're there in Mark chapter 10 because we're going to walk through this one step at a time through this passage.

And I want you to be able to visually follow what we're doing. If you don't have your Bible, the words will be on the screen so you can follow along there. But we're going to begin reading in verse 1. So I ask you guys to stand with me. Mark chapter 10 beginning in verse 1.

And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

He answered them, What did Moses command you? They said, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away. And Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment.

[1 : 04] But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh.

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And in the house, the disciples asked him again about this matter.

And he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Let's pray.

Father, I ask that you would help us by your spirit to see and understand the truth that Jesus was teaching his disciples and ultimately teaching us as well in this passage.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, I would imagine that there are two very common reactions to this passage.

[1 : 59] When I stand up here and I begin to read through this passage, there are probably two very common reactions. That of one, those who might be tempted to sort of tune out the rest of this sermon because you've been there and you've experienced that and you're trying to leave that in the past.

And so the last thing you want is for this to be sort of dredged up again. And even though you want to hear what God's Word has to say about it, there's a part of you that's tempted to kind of slightly tune it out because you've heard it before, you've felt it before, you understand your mistakes in the past, and you want to move beyond those.

And then I suspect that there are others who might be tempted, even though you probably wouldn't voice it out loud, but you might be tempted to kind of tune out most of this sermon because you're thinking in your minds, well, I'm never going to get divorced.

It's not even on the table. It's never going to happen. And so there's a question in your mind as to how precisely applicable this particular passage might be to you since you can't imagine a situation in which you might need to hear what Jesus is saying here.

It's just not on the table for you at any time. And so here's what I want to say to you, all right? I want to say to you, don't tune me out because I don't think this passage is mainly about what you think it's mainly about.

[3 : 18] All right? It's about divorce. Don't get me wrong. This is Jesus teaching on divorce, but these verses are not mainly about divorce. There's something bigger at play here than the issue of divorce and remarriage.

That's addressed, but I don't think it's the main thing that Jesus is teaching us here in this particular passage. So everything is not exactly as it seems.

And I'll show you why in just a second. But first, I want you to understand the context in which these comments take place. So if you look in verse 1, we are told that he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.

And crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. It says that he left there. He's leaving from Capernaum, his sort of home base of operations in Galilee.

Galilee is almost like a, you might consider it sort of a state, okay? If Israel is a nation, a nation that at this point in time is a part of the empire of Rome.

[4 : 25] But if Israel is a nation, then Galilee would be the northernmost state. And then down in the south, you have Judea, which is where the capital of Israel is, Jerusalem.

Most of Jesus' ministry took place in the region of Galilee where he was from. And if you remember, as we've walked through the Gospel of Mark, here's what we've seen.

This Gospel began exactly where it picks up here in chapter 10. It began along the Jordan River, across the Jordan River from the region of Judea.

So the Jordan River borders Judea down in the south. And this Gospel opens up with Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan River and then going out into the wilderness on the other side of the Jordan River, which is exactly where we find him here.

But then immediately, before you even get out of chapter 1, the scene shifts up to Galilee in the north, where Jesus is from. And so far, most of the Gospel of Mark has taken place in Galilee.

[5 : 29] There's a break from ministry in Galilee from the middle of chapter 7 up to the middle of chapter 9. If you'll recall, Jesus has been doing ministry all throughout Galilee in the first few chapters, in the first six and a half chapters of this book.

And then in the middle of chapter 7, Jesus moves on somewhere else. He takes his disciples and they go on sort of a teaching tour outside of Israel, just north of the borders of Israel.

So they go to the regions of Tyre and the regions of Sidon and Caesarea Philippi, which is directly north of the Sea of Galilee. And that's where Jesus has spent, we don't know exactly how long, but probably the last several weeks he's spent there.

And then in the middle of chapter 9, we saw Jesus return to Galilee. And not just return to Galilee, but return to Capernaum, which as I said, was sort of his home base for ministry operations in Galilee.

And so for the last two weeks, the last two sermons that I've preached, have seen Jesus there in Capernaum once again. And now he's leaving Galilee and leaving Capernaum for the last time in Mark's Gospel.

[6 : 37] He heads down south to Judea. And not long after these events take place, he's going to come back across the Jordan River. He's going to spend the rest of this Gospel in Judea.

Because Jerusalem is in Judea. And outside Jerusalem, Jesus is crucified. And outside Jerusalem, Jesus is raised from the dead. The rest of this Gospel will take place there.

And so the rest of this Gospel, from this point on, from chapter 10, verse 1, when he leaves Galilee, Jesus is headed toward the cross.

That's the context that you need to understand all of this in. Jesus is now leaving behind the bulk of his ministry, and he's moving into Judea, headed ultimately to Jerusalem, to his death, and then resurrection.

And it's the first thing that happens when he gets there. The first thing that happens when he goes down south is the Pharisees approach him. Now the very thing that had caused, that had precipitated this sort of traveling teaching tour that Jesus took outside of Israel with his disciples were controversies with the Pharisees.

[7 : 48] So when you read in chapter 6, in the first part of chapter 7, you see Jesus having run-ins and arguments and debates with the Pharisees over and over. They're constantly coming and questioning, why are your disciples doing this?

Why don't you do that? And they're constantly challenging Jesus. And so finally Jesus just takes off with his disciples and spends time alone, away from the Pharisees, away from Israel, teaching them and trying to help them to understand what lies ahead for him and for them as well in the future.

And now he's in Judea in the southern regions and the first thing that happens there is the Pharisees come to challenge him. That shouldn't come as any surprise whatsoever.

He's teaching the large crowds again and then in verse 2 it says that the Pharisees came up and in order to test him, asked, is it lawful for man to divorce his wife?

So I said a second ago that this passage is not mainly about divorce. And here's the first thing that I want you to see here. The Pharisees' question is not motivated by a desire to know what Jesus thinks about divorce.

[8 : 58] They don't care what he thinks about divorce. It's irrelevant to them. Mark says specifically, and in Matthew's account, he uses the same word, he says that they came to test him.

They're trying to trap him. They're trying to corner him. Now there were two schools of thought on marriage among the religious leaders of Jesus' day and among the Pharisees.

There were those Pharisees who would say that a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason whatsoever. It didn't matter at all. So that if she burned his dinner, he could divorce her.

All right? So it was a very kind of loose interpretation of the Old Testament where they said anything that happens, he can divorce his wife. And then there were those who were a little bit more strict and said, no, no, no, no, no.

She needs to do something very bad. She needs to do something very serious. Not necessarily adultery, but something on that level. Something very bad in order for a man to lawfully divorce his wife.

[10 : 00] So they had these two schools of thought. And so you might think initially that they're just trying to see where Jesus falls in this argument. Where do you land in this debate, Jesus? But I don't think that's at all what they're trying to get out of Jesus because I don't think they're interested in what he thinks about divorce.

In fact, if you'll remember, the last time that the issue of divorce, in fact, the only other time that the issue of divorce comes up in the Gospel of Mark has to do with John the Baptist.

because Herod, who was the ruler of Galilee, Herod, this wicked, evil ruler appointed by the Romans, propped up by the Romans, Herod had married his brother's wife.

So that Herod's sister-in-law divorced her husband, left her husband, and then married Herod. And John the Baptist was bold enough to call Herod out of it.

John the Baptist was bold enough to publicly call for the repentance of Herod, the king of Galilee. It's a bold move, and it's a move that ultimately ended in John's death.

[11 : 15] Herod arrested John. And we're told in the Gospel of Mark that Herod didn't necessarily want to kill John. In fact, he was amused by John. He liked to hear John.

He thought it was funny that John would, he would summons John into his court, and John would preach to him and condemn his actions and call him to repentance. And Herod, Herod found it all together entertaining.

But Herod's wife didn't find it entertaining at all. And she sought at every opportunity to find a way to get rid of John the Baptist.

And in fact, that's exactly what she did. In fact, I want you to turn back just a few pages in your Bibles, all right? I want you to turn back all the way to chapter 6.

Or rather, I'm sorry, not to chapter 6, all right? We're going to, I'm just completely lost where the story is. Chapter 7, I think. All right, I'll sum it up for you because I don't want to look for it.

[12 : 22] My brain is just going completely blank here, all right? You have the story here of Herod bringing John in, or Herod's daughter, Herod's stepdaughter coming in and dancing for Herod at a party.

And in the midst of that party, he's so impressed by her dancing that he tells her, anything you want, I'll give you. And she goes to her mother and she asks her mother, what do you want? And her mother says, I want the head of John the Baptist on a flat.

And so, so she goes in to Herod and she says, here's what I want. And Herod, with all of his guests from his party there, cannot say no. He doesn't want John the Baptist dead, but he cannot say no.

And so Herod grants her request reluctantly and John the Baptist is beheaded. And the entire reason for this whole episode, the reason that she is so desperate to see John the Baptist killed is because John the Baptist stood up in front of everyone and said, it is unlawful for you to marry your brother's wife.

You must repent. And she was angry about that because that was, that was not only a calling out of Herod, that was a calling out of Herod's wife as well. She was the one who had divorced her husband.

[13 : 31] She was the one who had now married another man. And so she is the one guilty of adultery. She is the one guilty of breaking the law. And so she is, she's angry about that.

She's fed up with John and has him healed. Now, move ahead a few chapters to chapter 10 and the Pharisees ask Jesus a dangerous, dangerous question.

Jesus, what do you think about divorce? But you see, Herod's opinion of Jesus already is a dangerous opinion.

Herod has already expressed in this book that he is, he is of the opinion that Jesus may be John the Baptist come back from the dead.

All right? That's Herod's opinion. He's afraid that, he's heard about the miracles, he's heard about the things that Jesus has been doing, and he speculates, he says, that I think that possibly John the Baptist who might beheaded has been raised from the dead.

[14 : 31] And he's fearful of what might be happening here. So there's, there's already tension built into the Gospel of Mark between Jesus and Herod and this whole issue of divorce. And now the Pharisees come along and they publicly question Jesus in Judea because although Herod was the king, technically, of Galilee in the north, he spent most of his time in Judea, so he would not have been far away.

And if Jesus had issued a public condemnation of Herod at this point, that would have been death for Jesus. Their goal is not to figure out what Jesus thinks about divorce.

Their goal is to have Jesus arrested and ultimately executed. That's what they want. And they'll do anything to achieve. So they're not interested in divorce and divorce is not the main issue here.

The issue is, can we catch him? Can we trick him? Can we make him say something that's going to lead to his arrest, imprisonment, and then ultimately death? And Jesus masterfully uses this incident to address more than their question.

Take a look at what he said in verse 3. It says that he answered them, what did Moses command you? So that's a very simple question. But what does the Bible say, guys?

[15 : 45] I mean, you want to know what I think about divorce, but what does the Bible say? Because these, after all, are Bible experts. And they say to him, it says in verse 4, they said, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.

that's the Old Testament law. In fact, they're referencing Deuteronomy chapter 24. So if you want to turn over in your Old Testament all the way back to Deuteronomy chapter 24, beginning in verse 1 is where you get this law from Moses who wrote these, who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah.

You have this law from Moses about divorce. It says in Deuteronomy chapter 24, verse 1, that when a man takes a wife and marries her, if she then finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her.

You see, that's where the debate was about between the Pharisees. When could they rightfully divorce their wives? The issue was, what does indecency mean? And they argued over the meaning of indecency.

Well, it's indecency for a woman to burn her husband's toast. So clearly, in divorce, she says, no, no, no, no. Indecency is something terrible, like if she commits adultery or something along those lines. So they argued about that.

[16 : 59] But this is the rule. It says, he writes a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house and she departs out of his house. And then he goes on to say, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord.

And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God has given you for an inheritance. That's all confusing. That sounds strange. But essentially, what this law boils down to is it is an attempt by Moses to protect the institution of marriage from gross abuse and to protect women from being traded off like goods.

From just, well, I don't want you now so I'm divorcing you and she marries another man and then he leaves her and then the original husband says, no, I'd kind of like to have you back because this new wife is not working out and I'm going to get rid of her and I like you better and I'll take you back now.

And Moses says, you can't do that. You can't just trade your wife around like she's some sort of good that you've purchased down in the market. That's not going to work. And so Moses puts in a rule about when you can divorce and what you can do after you get divorced.

And that's what the Pharisees are citing here. Well, Moses said that a man could write a certificate of divorce for his wife and send her away. So that's their view of that passage.

[18 : 31] And then Jesus says to them, because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment. Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment.

In other words, Jesus says, you guys, you don't understand that passage at all. You don't understand what's happening at all. Moses is not giving you permission to get divorced. He's trying to regulate your sinful activity.

You see that? Moses is trying to put some borders and some walls around their sin. Because if you don't put up borders and walls, they're going to go crazy with it. And they're just going to treat their women the way that women were often treated in the ancient world.

And they're just going to trade them off and dismiss them whenever they want. And Jesus says, it was because of your sinfulness. It was because of your hardness of heart that Moses gave you this command. This wasn't Moses giving you an excuse to get divorced.

This wasn't Moses trying to give you an out of your marriage in case something goes wrong. This is Moses recognizing and God through Moses recognizing you people have hard hearts.

[19 : 36] And I'm going to have to put some rules in place to protect you and to protect marriage and to protect women and your culture because otherwise you're going to go crazy with this stuff. And so he makes some rules but these rules are not intended to promote divorce.

They're not intended to create favorable conditions to divorce. They're not intended to allow a man to find a way out. That's not what they're for. And Jesus is highlighting that.

It's because you're sinful. It's because you're hard hearted that he gave you this commandment.

And notice he directs it straight at them because of your hardness of heart. Not simply well because of the hardness of heart of the people who were alive at the time of Moses.

He says no because of you because you have hard hearts. And then he goes to what is I think the heart of the issue. And he goes all the way back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and he says but from the beginning of creation in other words Moses said this in Deuteronomy 24 but rewind but from the beginning in Genesis chapter 1 but from the beginning of creation God made them male and female and then Genesis chapter 2 therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh so they're no longer two but one flesh.

So Jesus is Jesus is correcting their interpretation of the scriptures and I think that while their main goal in bringing up the issue of divorce is to trap Jesus to test him to trick him Jesus main goal in answering their question is to show them two things their own hard heartedness their own sinfulness and then the right way to interpret the Old Testament.

[21 : 23] One of the things that we can learn best from both Jesus and from the writings of the apostles is how we are supposed to deal with two thirds of our Bible. You realize two thirds of our Bible are Old Testament.

66 books in the Bible and 39 of them are in the Old Testament and we have a tendency to jump in at Matthew because we want to hear what Jesus says or we have a tendency to jump in with Paul's letters because we like to listen to what Paul has to say it seems more immediately applicable and we often skip over the Old Testament and we'll jump back to the Old Testament to get some nice feel good stuff from the Psalms or to find somebody we feel like relates to us in our troubles from the book of Psalms or we want some practical answers and wisdom and so we'll jump into the book of Proverbs but we don't often deal with most of the Old Testament.

When we do deal with the Old Testament we read the stories and then we just treat them as if they're nice little moral tales so that we read David and Goliath and we think that the story of David and Goliath is about our need to be courageous and brave in the face of dangerous and frightening enemies and that's not what David and Goliath is about.

We misunderstand the Old Testament in the same way that the Pharisees misunderstood their scriptures the Old Testament and Jesus aims in this passage to help his disciples to see and understand where the Pharisees are going wrong in their interpretation of the Old Testament.

And here's the principle that Jesus is laying down for them. The principle is that now that we're entering into the age of the new covenant in which Ezekiel God promised that he would take out hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh.

[23 : 09] The new covenant in Jeremiah where he promises that he will write his law on our hearts. Jesus is showing his disciples there's something there's a fundamental shift occurring.

There's something different at work at play here because we are now in my ministry we are moving from the era of the old covenant to the era of the new covenant and the fundamental difference between the people of God under the old covenant and the people of God under the new covenant is that under the old covenant they did not receive hearts of flesh.

The law was not written upon their hearts. The spirit did not dwell within all of God's people to enable them to obey God. In fact the apostle Paul tells us that there's nothing wrong with God's law the problem is not the rules that we fail to obey all the time that's not the problem.

The problem is that prior to the coming of Christ prior to the day of Pentecost nobody was able to obey the law because if the Holy Spirit doesn't live within you and doesn't enable you and doesn't begin to transform you from the inside out then they're just rules that you will fail to meet up.

They are rules that you will fall short of every time. But now under the new covenant for those who trust in Christ and believe in him the spirit comes to dwell within us and he begins to change us.

[24 : 37] He begins to transform us. It's not all instantaneous. It's not as if the moment that we trust in Christ the spirit comes in and he perfects us and he enables us to obey the law all the time. It's not that.

It's that he comes in and he begins to change our hearts. Our hearts are now alive and he begins to mold and shape us so that we begin to have new desires. No longer are we simply trying to follow a list of rules but now our hearts are beginning to long to follow those rules.

Our hearts are beginning to long to obey God and although we may mess up although we may fall short at times there is at root there is a desire to please God there is a desire to obey his word.

It's new covenant time. And one of the realities that we've got to recognize about the new covenant is the new covenant does not rely upon the standards of the old covenant.

The new covenant goes beyond those standards back to God's original intentions and purposes in creation itself. This will revolutionize your understanding of the Old Testament.

[25 : 46] You see Jesus is saying that when God created man and woman he created male and female he intended for one man and one woman to be united to become one flesh and remain that way for the rest of their life.

That was God's intention. And yet we read the Old Testament and it's not the issue of divorce that crops up all the time actually. We read the Old Testament it's not men didn't divorce their wives they just got another one.

They just had two or three or three hundred wives. And we read it and we think what's happening here? Even some of the great heroes of the Old Testament even David had multiple wives.

Solomon of course is the preeminent example of multiple wives. Hundreds of wives hundreds of concubines and God still worked through them. God still used them to accomplish various things in his plan and we read that and we think God why?

What are you doing here? What's happening? Why is this allowed? What's happening? What's happening is under the Old Covenant God is accommodating the sinfulness of his people.

[27 : 02] He's accommodating their sinfulness because they're unable to meet the standards of creation. They can't do it. They can't even meet the standards of the law that he gives them to govern them during this time period much less the standards that he set up in creation.

But we are different. We live under the new covenant. When we trust in Christ the spirit comes in and recreates us. The apostle Paul says that in Christ Jesus we are new creatures.

We are new creations. The old is gone. All things are new now for us. Not like old covenant believers.

Not like them at all. And the Pharisees come to Jesus as a hard hearted sinful people unable to even measure up to the law that God gave to govern and curb a sinful people.

And they ask him a question and Jesus rather than doing what was standard of the old covenant and accommodating God's word to their sinfulness in that period Jesus says no.

[28 : 19] Read the whole story people. Read the whole thing. Understand the law in the broader context of the word of God. Understand that command in Deuteronomy 24 in the light of Genesis 1 and 2.

And understand this that God's purpose for man and woman, God's plan for making us male and female is one flesh for life. There is no divorce.

There is no leaving behind this woman and taking another woman as your wife. That doesn't happen under the new creation. It didn't happen under the original creation before the fall. It doesn't happen now under the new creation in the new covenant. Jesus says that's not the way that it's going to be. It will not work that way now. Now the Pharisees don't get it. They don't understand because they still have hard hearts and they don't get it.

And initially here the disciples still don't even get it as we'll see in a minute. The disciples still don't fully understand. But there will come a time, read the writings of the apostles later on, they get this later.

[29 : 21] They understand marriage as it was originally designed to be at creation later. But they don't get that now because they don't have the spirit yet. But Jesus is telling them, when this work is done and I'm finished ushering in the age of the new covenant and the spirit comes to dwell within you, we're going back to creation standards.

Not those accommodated standards that God allowed Moses to give to you. Because no longer will my people be a hard-hearted people. My people will have hearts of flesh rather than stone. No longer will my people try to obey a list of rules. My people will have the word of God written upon their hearts. Something new is going to happen, Jesus is saying. And you need to read the Old Testament in the light of those massive changes in God's work of salvation throughout history. So you don't have to be puzzled by the issue of polygamy in the Old Testament. I've heard non-Christians say, I don't know why you're fighting for traditional marriage when you don't even see it in half the Bible.

You see polygamy all through the Old Testament. What they're failing to understand is they're failing to read the Old Testament in the way that Christ reads the Old Testament, in the way the apostles read the Old Testament, in the way that even have us to read the Old Testament.

[30 : 42] And we don't have to stutter and stammer and say, I don't know what's going on there. We can say, there are answers to this. It's not, this book is not a sort of flat book.

It's a book with curves. It's a book you've got to follow the story to understand. You've got to know where you are in the story. And so, if you're in the Old Testament, understand where you are in the story and read that and understand that within its context of salvation history and understand where they are.

They're looking ahead to Christ. They're looking ahead to the day when the Spirit will indwell all of God's people. They're looking ahead to that. And they're not meeting up to the standards laid out in creation, but there's coming a day when they will, when we will, read the Old Testament through the eyes of Christ.

It'll begin to make a lot more sense. And that's what Jesus is teaching His disciples here, is under the new covenant we're returning. We're returning to creation ordinances, not the law of Moses. And so He says in verse 8, He says, the two shall become, flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. And then Jesus adds His application. Here's His application. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

[32 : 08] You see this? In Genesis chapter 2, God unites Adam and him in marriage. In Deuteronomy chapter 24, a man is permitted to write his wife a certificate of divorce.

Jesus says, what God has joined, Genesis 2, now no man, Deuteronomy 24, may separate. No divorce for my people.

None at all. That's a pretty straightforward concept. That's not complicated.

It's not difficult to figure out. It's very straightforward. If God has united two people together, no man can separate them. Now we know, we know that at this time, people continue to get divorced.

I mean, you know, for instance, that Herod's wife actually got an official legal divorce from her husband before she married Herod. She had a legal divorce through the Roman government. She would have had to appeal to the Roman officials to get a divorce because she was part of the royal courts.

[33 : 20] So she would have had to appeal to that. She would have had to have been approved for that. So all of those things, that sort of stuff is happening. It's not like we 2,000 years later have a much more complicated system and so we've got to kind of navigate things a little bit differently because American law is different and things happen differently.

No, Jesus is facing a situation that's very similar to our situation and Jesus' response in all of that is don't let man separate what God has joined together. Deuteronomy 24 is no longer in effect.

The Roman court system doesn't have the power to annul what God has joined together. see no difference here in our day, in our world.

Now, I'm tempted to not even say this because we are tempted to take this and run with it the way the Pharisees would try to run with Deuteronomy 24. But the scriptures do allow, and I think if you look at these allowances, there are two allowances for divorce for a believer in the New Testament as I understand it.

But if you look at those allowances in the light of what we're seeing in this passage, they're colored a little bit differently. The first allowance is actually we find in this story, but not in Mark's account of the story.

[34 : 34] We find it in Matthew's account in Matthew chapter 19. You don't have to turn there, but you can check it out when you get home later. And Jesus there adds a little exception clause. He says, except in the case of, literally the word is immorality or fornication.

So Jesus allows for divorce when immorality has been committed by one member of the marriage, by one spouse. He does allow that.

And then the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, you can check this out again later, but in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, the Apostle Paul allows for divorce if a believer is married to a non-believer and the non-believer abandons, leaves the believer.

If they sever the marriage and they go off and there's no hope for the marriage, then the believer is allowed, they are permitted to marry someone else.

In other words, their first marriage is fully dissolved in God's eyes. They're allowed to enter into a covenant of marriage with someone else. marriage. Now, I do hesitate to mention those because we have a tendency to find some way in almost every marriage to find where one of those might apply in the situation.

[35 : 52] What? I mean, look at the way he behaves. He couldn't possibly be a believer. So, you know, right? Am I free to, you know, if he's gone for too many days, can I just go ahead and end this thing?

Right? Or are we, I'm pretty sure that at some point in time she probably cheated. I can't prove it, I don't know it, but I'm pretty sure so I feel like I'm okay. So I'm hesitant because I know our hearts. I know the way that we are. Not all that much different from the Pharisees, although we ought to be, and so we might try to take those exceptions and twist them. So I mention them to you because I want you to see them in light of this particular passage.

Who are those kinds of allowances for? Who are they for? Well, in the one case, it's obvious in Paul's exception, it's for someone who's married to a non-believer, a non-believer whose heart is still hard, who doesn't have the spirit living within them, who's not capable of attaining to the original creation designed for marriage, and so they may very well leave, they may very well abandon their spouse, and a Christian cannot be held accountable for that.

It's not their fault. And so in that instance where you have one person who's still in the place of a lost person, a Pharisee, in this passage, and they leave, there's nothing that a believer can do.

[37 : 13] But that's obviously not, it's not something that a believer is able to initiate. It's not something that can occur in a marriage between two believers, it's just, it cannot happen. And then look at the other instance where Jesus allows in cases of immorality, in cases of fornication, but Jesus, I think, is assuming that on the whole, believers will not be guilty of that kind of ongoing fornication.

And I don't think that Jesus is saying, well, if somebody, you find out somebody made a mistake 20 years ago, you're free to take off. No, I think the point is that you have a person who is unrepentantly involved in sexual immorality, then a spouse can sever the marriage if it's necessary. But unrepentant sexual immorality? Do you guys remember the sermon on hell last week? Do you remember what it means if you're an unrepentant sinner? You just don't ever repent and you just don't care?

It means that you're not a believer. It means that you're headed toward hell and you need to repent and trust in Jesus. So I think that these exceptions are not laid in place for normal Christian homes. Regardless of how difficult marriage might be at times, regardless of how rocky it may become at times, regardless of how hard it may be at times, those exceptions just simply don't apply in Christian marriages.

[38 : 38] They apply in mixed marriages where a believer is married to a non-believer and there are things that are outside of their control that they can do nothing about. But if you read those

exceptions in such a way as to provide a narrow door of escape for you, then you're doing exactly what the Pharisees did as they interpreted Deuteronomy 24 as providing a narrow way of escape when Deuteronomy 24 was meant to curb sin, not promote sin.

And never mind the fact that we don't live under the old covenant, we live under the new covenant, and we're to have hearts of flesh, and we are to desire the things that God desires for us.

Yes, we fail. Yes, there are those among us who it's happened in the past, and the past is the past. And you do have to move on from the past, and you do have to let that go, and you have to be faithful to the marriage that you are in.

But, in light of this, my conclusion is that a lot of people have repenting to do. Are you not currently in sin, but you might look back and say, I excused it.

Either I didn't think about it, and I just did it, or I excused it with those exceptions, and I used them the way the Pharisees would use Deuteronomy 24, and I excused myself out of it, and there's nothing you can do to change that.

[40 : 06] That's in the past, especially if you're remarried. My position is you've got to remain faithful to the spouse that you have, all right? But, how many believers are there who have never repented of that, and confronted with this teaching?

Repentance is necessary. This is hard enough. I know that. I know that because the disciples say it. They don't say it in Mark's gospel, but they say it in Matthew.

Here in Mark, in verse 10, it says that in the house, the disciples asked him again about this matter. In Matthew's version, Matthew tells us that they asked him about it because they said, this is hard, Jesus.

This is a hard saying. They recognize the difficulty of this, and Jesus doesn't soften it for them. He just gives it to them in the form of a warning.

He said to them, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

[41 : 10] One thing that these disciples would understand is the danger of adultery. The displeasure of God that adultery incurs.

I mean, the Old Testament and the Old Covenant was punishable by stoning them. They understand this makes God angry. And Jesus does not try to soften the blow of his teachings in verses 1 through 9.

He doesn't try to soften that privately with his disciples. He looks at his disciples who have said, this is hard. What are we supposed to do with this? And he just gives them the warning, look, if you don't heed my teachings and you get divorced, it's adultery.

It's dangerous. It's dangerous. You will incur the anger of God. Don't do it, he says. Don't do it. It's a strong warning.

But it's a warning that ought not even be necessary for people who are filled with the Spirit of God. It ought not be, but it is.

[42 : 16] Because though we have new hearts, though the Spirit lives within us, the Scriptures also teach that we can grieve the Spirit. That we can resist the Spirit's work in our lives as believers.

And what I think that means is that we don't pay heed to the teachings of Christ. We don't pay heed to the Word of God. And even as believers, we will go through periods when we are in disobedience.

Now that must be followed by repentance at some point. You're not a real believer. But we will go through those times. And what's going to shock you out of those times? Or what's going to keep you from going further down that path as a believer?

Sometimes it's the warning. And Jesus says, listen, I'm not going to soften this. I'm just going to warn you. If you go that way, it's adultery. Don't do it. It's dangerous. Do not do it.

Even as a new covenant believer, even as someone who has the Spirit within you, it is possible for you to walk in a bad direction for a little bit. And on this issue, Jesus says, do not walk in a bad bad direction.

[43 : 16] Do not be hard hearted like these Pharisees. But repent and turn back and walk according to the Spirit.

Let's pray.