

Sunday Evening, February 11, 2024
WCF XXIV *Of Marriage and Divorce (3)*
Matthew 19:1–9; 5:31–32; 1 Corinthians 7:10–15

5. Adultery or fornication committed after engagement, if detected before marriage, gives valid reason to the innocent party to break the engagement. In the case of adultery after marriage it is lawful for the innocent party to seek a divorce and after the divorce to remarry just as if the offending party were dead.

6. Although the corruption of mankind is such that people are apt to seek arguments to justify unwarranted separation of those whom God has joined together in marriage, nothing but adultery or such wilful desertion as cannot be remedied by the church or the civil authorities is sufficient cause to dissolve the bond of marriage. In such cases a public and orderly procedure is to be observed, and the persons concerned are not to be left to their own wills and discretion in their own case.

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- I. The Biblical General Rule Is No Divorce sect 6
 - A. Christ Reaffirms the Rule—No Divorce
Matt. 19:1–9; Gen. 1:27, 2:24; Mal. 2:15–16
 - B. The Apostle Mandates this Same Rule—No Divorce 1 Cor. 7:10–15; 1 Cor. 14:37–38

- II. The Biblical Exception for Divorce Is Sexual Immorality Matt. 19:9; Matt. 5:31–32
 - A. Ground for Divorce Is for *All* Sexual Immorality
Matt. 1:18; Jer. 3:1–8; Lev. 18:22–23; 1 Cor. 6
 - B. Ground for Divorce Is *Only* for Sexual Immorality Matt. 19:3; Lev. 20:10
 - C. Ground for Divorce also is Ground for Remarriage sect 5
 - D. Ground for Divorce Is Only Offered as a *Permission*, Not a Requirement Matt. 1:19; Jer. 3:1–8
 - E. Jesus' Warning: Divorce If Not on Biblical Grounds, Is Itself Sexual Immorality
Matt 19:9; 5:32; WLC 139

- III. The Biblical Exception for Divorce Is Desertion 1 Cor. 7
 - A. Desertion Is Breaking the Covenant of Marriage 1 Cor. 7:12; Exo. 21:10
 - B. Desertion Is Grounds for Divorce 1 Cor. 7:15
 - C. Desertion Is Grounds for Remarriage after Divorce 1 Cor. 7:15

Quotes

“The Christian religion, by confining marriage to pairs, and rendering the relation indissoluble, has by these two things done more toward the peace, happiness, settlement and civilization of the world, than by any other part in this whole scheme of divine wisdom.”
Edmund Burke

“Sexual immorality is unequivocally stated to be the only legitimate ground for which a man may put away his wife. Preoccupation with the one exception should never be permitted to obscure the force of the negation of all others.”
John Murray

“Staying married, therefore, is not about staying in love. It certainly is not you always feeling happy. It’s about keeping covenant. ‘Till death do us part,’ or, ‘As long as we both shall live’ is sacred covenant promise—the same kind Jesus made with his bride when he died for her. Therefore, what makes divorce and remarriage so horrific in God’s eyes is not merely that it involves covenant breaking to the spouse, but that it involves misrepresenting Christ and his covenant. Christ will never leave his wife. Ever. There may be times of painful distance and tragic backsliding on our part. But Christ keeps his covenant forever. Marriage is a display of that! That is the most ultimate thing we can say about it.” . . . Staying married is not about staying in love. It’s about covenant-keeping. If a spouse falls in love with another person, one profoundly legitimate response from the grieved spouse and from the church is, “So what! Keep your covenant.”
John Piper

“We marry another sinner. There is no such thing as two perfectly compatible people. And a good marriage will take work and investment. All who have a good, long-term marriage is not because you married the perfectly compatible person, that person doesn’t exist. But it is because you went through seasons in which you had to learn to love a person you didn’t marry, who was something of a stranger. You will have had to make changes that you don’t want to make, and so will your spouse. . . . Most— two-thirds—couples who are unhappy, but who stay married and work on their marriages, within five years will become happy. This has led University of Chicago sociologist, Linda Waite, to say, “the benefits of divorce have been oversold.”
Tim Keller

“If there is a married couple in the church, and one spouse files for divorce without biblical grounds, the church has a responsibility to step in and say ‘You can’t do that.’ If the person persists in divorcing a spouse without just grounds, it is the duty of the church to discipline that person. The guilty spouse is to be disciplined to the point of excommunication in order to protect the innocent party and to allow the innocent party to remarry according to biblical law.”
R C Sproul

"Nothing but adultery or wilful desertion is a legit ground of divorce because Scriptures allow of no other grounds."
Charles Hodge

“God is not saying that adultery and sexual immorality (and divorce) is the unpardonable sin. That is very good news because there are very many of us who could not be pardoned if it were the unpardonable sin. And I don’t say that on my own authority; I say it on the authority of Scripture. The apostle Paul says, as he writes to the Corinthians, “Some of you were adulterers, but you were washed and sanctified and glorified.” We have men and women in our congregation who have committed adultery and through grievous tears have come to repentance and God, in His kindness, has restored their marriages. But none of them would counsel you to take this word of warning lightly. They can show the scars of their hearts to you. And so the author of Hebrews is saying heed God’s warning. Listen to the definite language - “God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” That doesn’t mean that there is no forgiveness for the repentant. What it means is, for those who will not turn, for those who persist in that sin, there is certain and terrifying judgment. And for all there are consequences. Heed the warning.”
Derek Thomas

“I would say to you who call yourselves Bible-believing Christians, if you see the Word of God diminished as it is in our day and are not moved to tears and indignation, I wonder if you have any comprehension of the day in which we live. If we as Bible-believing Christians can see God’s Word, God’s verbalized, propositional communication, treated as it so often is treated and not filled with sorrow and do not cry out, ‘But don’t you realize the end thereof?’ —I wonder: do we love His Word?”
Francis Schaeffer, *Death in the City*