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What About Divorce? Matt 19:1-9
GPBC
3.14.21

Introduction – Today’s message is the second part of a two part series on these verses. So if you missed last week’s message, I hope you’ll go back on our website or FB and listen to last week as well. The big idea from our passage last week was coming to a biblical understanding of marriage. Before we can arrive at a godly, biblical view of divorce, we must first have a godly, biblical view of marriage. And to gain a godly view of marriage, you need to go back to the beginning, back to first marriage in Gen 1. Examining God’s creative order establishes for us God’s purpose and intention for marriage.

This is precisely how Jesus answers the Pharisees’ question on divorce. He took them to marriage by taking them to Genesis. Know what marriage is and then you will know how to answer the divorce question.

Now when Jesus points back to Genesis 1 to establish God’s purpose in marriage, He sums up how to view marriage by emphasizing the great mystery of marriage – the two shall become one. Last week we observed from the summary verse of Genesis 1:27 that true marriage consists of one man and one woman and that marriage is to be lived out as the husband holds fast to his wife. But Jesus doesn’t explain those points when speaking of marriage. He goes right to the heart of marriage to highlight that when God summarized marriage in Gen 1, marriage that God established and created, God defined marriage this way: the two shall become one flesh. That’s where we pick up today in v6.

- I. Marriage Results in the Two Becoming One (v6)
 - a. Over in Eph 5 Paul calls this a great mystery. In other words, we know this is the result of marriage, we just have a hard time figuring it out, or living it out. Men are from Mars, women are from Venus, right? Men and women are both created by God, in His image, but men and women are also very different in a host of ways. On top of that, when a man and a woman come together in marriage, even as believers, now you have two sinners living together and hopefully pursuing God together. But tossing double the sin into the equation makes living out the two becoming one difficult at times, to say the least.

- b. Most of married life is figuring out how to live now as two who are now one. Making decisions, compromising, denying self, asking forgiveness, extending forgiveness are all a part of walking through life as one instead of two. But that is precisely where God does most of His sanctifying work in the lives of a married couple. As the man learns how to be the spiritual leader and example Christ in the marriage, God is constantly molding and trimming and shaping him into the man of God he is to be. As the woman learns how to be the companion and model the church in the marriage, God is constantly molding and trimming and shaping her into the woman of God she is to be. And so the reality of two are now one is a lifelong pursuit just as becoming a child of God and uniting to Christ is a reality that becomes a lifelong pursuit.
 - c. So Jesus concludes since God created marriage and has designed it with a divine touch and divine purpose that in marriage these two individuals are now one – since God has declared these two are now joined together – that mysterious, glorious, divine bond of holy matrimony should never be separated by man. Marriage is a work of God that is not to be undone by man.
 - d. The reason of course being because marriage is an earthly, temporary picture of a heavenly, eternal reality. Marriage is meant to portray salvation. Since man cannot undo God’s work of salvation, he should not undo God’s work of marriage either.
 - e. Now there’s your answer to the question of divorce. When you understand marriage, you understand divorce should not happen.
 - f. But the Pharisees are not satisfied with Jesus’ answer because again, their whole intention is to trap Him, not learn from Him. If they can’t cause Him to lose His popularity by giving an unpopular answer, maybe they can cause Him to lose His popularity by disagreeing with Scripture, and so they press Him further with the follow up question of v7.
- II. Sin is the Root of Divorce (vv7-8)
- a. Again, the background of this question is found in Deut 24:1 where the Bible says if a man finds an “indecency” in his wife, he may write her a certificate of divorce. We discussed the two interpretations of the word indecency last week.

- b. But Jesus doesn't discuss the two interpretations of indecency, does He? He knows precisely what verse they have in mind, and He answers their probing, testing question in a way they were not expecting. V8
- c. The purpose of the law of Deut 24:1 was not to condone or endorse divorce. The purpose of Deut 24:1 was to restrict the practice of divorce. Galatians 3:24 says "the law was our guardian until Christ came." In other words, one purpose of God's law was to put a fence around our fallen desires to contain and restrict our inclination to sin. The law was to keep sin in check and kept as restricted as possible until we come to Christ and have a new heart that lives to please God.
- d. Moses allowed you to divorce for indecency, that is, adultery, because if that law was not given, sinners would divorce all the time, for any reason! Cf v3 – that's exactly how sinners in Jesus' day had used Deut 24:1 and how so many in our day view divorce.
- e. But again, Jesus is teaching, "You're asking the wrong question again." If God has joined us together in a holy union and man is not to separate God's work, the real question is, "then why do we still have divorce?"
- f. Answer: Because we still have sin. Sin is the root under every divorce. One or both parties in the marriage are continuing in a sin that is rips apart what God joined together. That sin might be as egregious as horrible betrayal, such as adultery, or it could be as simple as treating marriage like dating. Abuse can lead to divorce. Refusing to submit to one another can lead to divorce. But the bottom line is that whatever leads to tearing apart what God has joined together is sin.
- g. The right question then is what leads to divorce if God does not intend for us to divorce? The answer is sin. How then do couples resolve their differences or their offences that have led them to consider divorce? Jesus says, "but from the beginning it was not so."
- h. Go back to the beginning. Go back to God's purpose for marriage and the meaning of marriage. Recognize that one or both have departed from God's good design and purpose for marriage – repent, forgive, heal – and live out the two are now one!
- i. Sometimes its grueling, difficult labor to revive a dying marriage. It takes prayer, counseling, encouragement, devotion to the Lord and

one another, and it takes time. But if you can save your marriage and avoid divorce, all the painstaking labor will be worth it. You see if sin is the root of divorce, then divorce is not the answer. It won't solve the problem that led to divorce. It will only grow and produce more sin. The fallout of divorce is not only the damage divorce brings, it's also the sin that continues without being properly removed through confession and repentance.

- III. Unrepentant Sin that Leads to Divorce Results in Further Sin (v9)
- a. First let's set aside what is called the exception clause and come back to it next. So without the qualifying, exception clause the verse reads... So you see, sin just begets further sin. You just bring unconfessed sin into another marriage and that sin grows into more sin. The answer is not divorce or a new husband or a new wife. The answer is to repent of sin, forgive, and work out the two are now one.
 - b. Back to the exception clause. This clause has caused much consternation for biblical interpretation. I want you to be here tonight for a Bible study called "The 4 View of Divorce and Remarriage". Bring your Bibles and notebooks.
 - c. For now we can say this. It appears, at least on a surface reading, Jesus is teaching that the one thing that can break the two now being one is if someone else has been sinfully brought into that union. Adultery breaks, rips, and tears at the union of two who are now one.
 - d. That actually restates the proper interpretation of Deut 24:1 and indecency. In other words, Jesus is disagreeing with the Pharisees on divorce but He's not disagreeing with Scripture on divorce. They set out to trap Him in a discussion on divorce and He turned the tables on them. They need to repent of their view of marriage and divorce.
 - e. And maybe we do too.

Conclusion – I think it's very interesting that Jesus teaches on repentance in 18:15-20. If your brother offends you, and that may be your spouse, call them to repentance. True believers will eventually repent. Then He teaches on forgiveness in vv21-35. If your spouse repents, true believers will forgive. And then we have His teaching on marriage and divorce. The only actions that can save a marriage when sin is present are repentance and forgiveness!