

Morning Sermon April 26, 2020

“Divorce” Matthew 5:31-32

³¹ “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Matthew 5:31–32 (NKJV)

I do not remember ever preaching a sermon before on the subject of divorce. Being a divorced pastor has humbled me about such things. I have what is called a biblical divorce, as my wife left me, committed adultery, left me for another man and is now married to a third. I have studied the subject of divorce and remarriage more since my divorce than I did before it. Yet, I do not spend an inordinate amount of time studying it ...

I. The significance (or lack of it) of the certificate -

³¹ “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ Matthew 5:31

The idea of a certificate of divorce was taken from God’s Law, as expressed in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 –

24 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³ if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (NKJV)

1. Lack of favor because of uncleanness –

A. Uncleanness was sexual immorality

B. Uncleanness was adultery

2. What the certificate did: allowed the wife to remarry - :2

3. What the certificate did: it prohibit a husband who had divorced a wife, from marrying that same woman again - :3-4
Why? Because such action would show that a Covenant (marriage Covenant) taken before God was taken lightly!

4. How the Pharisees had blatantly misinterpreted God’s Law regarding divorce –

A. They misinterpreted Deuteronomy 24:1

They divided it in two reasons for divorce:

(1) she finds no favor in his eyes

(2) he has found some uncleanness in her

B. This led to divorce being allowed for ANY REASON, much like it is today –

³ The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Matthew 19:3 (NKJV)

“The burning question in Jesus’ day was, what does “something indecent” mean?” Those in the very liberal rabbinical school of Hillel interpreted “indecent” in the widest manner possible. They said a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner! They also extended “indecent” to mean a wife’s walking around with her hair down, speaking to men in the streets, or speaking disrespectfully of her husband’s parents in his presence. A wrong word about a mother-in-law and a woman could be out on the street! Rabbi Akiba, who was of this school of thought, went even further, saying that the phrase “becomes displeasing to him” (“she find no favor in his eyes,” KJV) meant that a man could divorce his wife if he found a woman who was more beautiful. Such husbands were bigoted and arrogant.” R. Kent Hughes

C. Obtaining the certificate became the only requirement for divorce - give her a certificate of divorce.’ Matthew 5:31

D. This is an example of sin distorting, minimalizing the requirements of God’s Law –

²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the* righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)

II. *A legitimate reason for divorce –*

³² **But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Matthew 5:31–32 (NKJV)**

1. *Sexual immorality / adultery is allowed here as a reason for divorce:*
 - A. *Adultery breaks the Covenant of marriage / in the case of adultery divorce only acknowledges, makes official a breach that has already happened –*

In this case the innocent party would be free to remarry!

- B. *Physical Abuse / Abandonment have also been argued as reasons for divorce (or separation) –*

¹⁵ **But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15 (NKJV)**

2. *My point is there is at least one legitimate reason for divorce!*
3. *I believe, even if there was divorce and it was not for a legitimate reason and it resulted in adultery, there is still forgiveness in Christ –*

⁹ **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)**

4. *There are great and painful consequences connected to the sin of divorce... yet I do not believe remaining single forever is necessarily one of them -*

III. *What does it mean to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? (about Divorce)*

²⁰ **For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)**

Some seem to think this means exceed all righteousness, even God's? Does God require even an innocent party in a Biblical divorce NEVER to Remarry?

Despite the fact I have not remarried after now 22 years of divorce, I been told by some:

1. *I must not remarry, or I would be committing adultery, I would also have to resign as Pastor if I did remarry!*
2. *I have been told by some; I must take back my now ex-wife:*

 - A. *Despite the fact this would mean breaking law set out in Deuteronomy 24:4 about remarrying someone you have already divorced*
 - B. *I was told the way I should do this is by murdering (executing) my ex wife's current husband, of course these people would not call him her current husband!*

These are extremes the other way, yet they are equally wrong! Despite these errors, I am not calling for a Re-voice on divorce, to somehow make it seem good or okay

3. *God is clear in His Word about marriage and divorce -*

⁴ **And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."**

⁷ **They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"**

⁸ **He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Matthew 19:4–9 (NKJV)**

- A. *Marriage is between a male and female – Matthew 19:4*
- B. *Marriage makes two people one flesh – Matthew 19:5*
- C. *Separation is painful – Matthew 19:6*
- D. *Divorce was given because of hardness of hearts / sin, it is never perfect or even good – Matthew 19:7-9*
- E. *The only way to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees if divorced, even if the innocent party, is confession and forgiveness of sin!*

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