

1 Corinthians #13
Life After Divorce
1 Corinthians 7: 10-15

One of the gravest social problems the church faces today is the deterioration of family life. Families live under severe stress due to the complications of both parents working, the husband often traveling and away from home several days a week; the demoralizing affect the media has on young people, the automobile, and unrestricted dating; and the vicious struggle for obtaining status symbols beyond the financial reach of our income.

Young marriages are on the increase, along with illegitimacy, criminal abortion, and divorce. And unless the Church takes a strong stand for the Christian ideals of marriage, there is little hope of saving our own church families, who are being engulfed into the sea of an un-Christian and morally unhealthy society.

I was not in the ministry very many years before I realized that some of the very same couples, who so blissfully and hopefully pledged their vows to each other for life, were now standing apart quarreling, accusing, and suspicious of each other. And I was faced with a very real problem in my ministry - the people that I had married were now on the verge of getting a divorce.

For some strange reason, as a young preacher, I had never thought about the fact that some Christians were going to end up in the same divorce courts that non-Christians do. But I soon came to understand that, all of us are subject to various strains and stresses. Disagreements arise in the best of families. Selfishness can raise its ugly head and destroy love and confidence. Alcoholism can enter any home and make it a shambles, materially and spiritually. Our Lord was right when He said to His devoted disciples in Mark 14:38, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

It did not take me long to realize that there were some dear brothers and sisters in Christ who were involved in a divorce. As I saw lives that were broken and hurting, I knew that what they really needed was to be ministered to by their church, and loved by their pastor.

Therefore, it was not long before I was on my face before God for wisdom to deal with the problem of divorce. I knew what the "traditional" view of divorce was, but I wanted to know what the Word of God had to say.

In our last study, we looked at "The Biblical Principles of Divorce," and this week we are going to draw a conclusion concerning this most important subject.

There are many different attitudes concerning divorce. Some have a special interest in the biblical teaching of divorce because they are divorced, or because their marriage is in serious trouble. However, the truth about divorce should be a concern to everyone. **Christians should be especially concerned about the biblical teachings of divorce because of our responsibility to minister to those who are hurting as a result of a broken marriage.**

Let me ask you a rather simple statement - **What is a divorce?** Let me answer that question by making a statement. As I study the Scriptures I find that there are two types of divorce - a *Traditional Divorce* and a *Scriptural divorce*. **The failure to acknowledge these two different types of divorce has only added to the confusion that surrounds the divorce issue.**

The ***traditional view*** of divorce is that of a legal dissolution of any marriage contract for any reason. The ***Scriptural view*** teaches that there can be no dissolving of a marriage except for when the marriage and divorce occurred prior to salvation, or for sexual immorality, or desertion of an unbeliever.

To see this truth, look at verses 10-15 of our text, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband; But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman who hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace.” In verses 10-11, Paul addressed the traditional divorce, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband; But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife.” **The woman had obtained a divorce according to Greek law, which was easy to get. The fact that the woman had obtained a divorce is indicated by Paul's command for the woman to remain "unmarried."** However, from God's perspective, the woman was commanded to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to her husband, because the divorce she obtained was not valid in the eyes of God.

But look at verses 12-15, “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him

not put her away. And the woman who hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace.” Paul now turns from the traditional divorce to the scriptural divorce, as seen in the words "to the rest.” To those he says in verse 15 “a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.”

What was it that the divorced Christians were not in bondage to? By all the rules of interpretation, there can be only one answer: they were no longer in bondage to the marriage. Before the divorce they were in bondage to the marriage. **After the divorce they were not in bondage to the marriage.**

But now Paul begins this third section of this passage of scripture in verse 12 by saying, “But to the rest speak I...” **Having spoken to the unmarried (verses 8-9), and to the married (verses 10-12), who else is their? Who were the "rest"?** They are those who have married outside of the biblical standard. **To point this out he uses the example of a Christian who has married a non-Christian, and the result that it brought about.**

But how does Paul's view on divorce compare with Christ's view on this matter of divorce? **To answer that question go back with me to John 4 and to the incident at Jacob's well.** John records in his Gospel that Jesus came to this well to meet a certain woman. **John also notes that because of her life-style, this woman waited until all of the other women of the city had drawn their water supply for the day before she came. Jesus was awaiting her arrival.** In the course of the conversation between this woman and Jesus, John 4:16 reveals that Jesus asked the woman to “...go call thy husband.” She answered in verse 17, “...I have no husband.” Now notice very carefully what Jesus said in verses 17-18, “...thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: In that saidst thou truly.”

What I want you to see tonight is a very strong and important truth. ***First***, I want you to notice that the woman considered this man with whom she lived not to be her husband, as seen by these words, "I have no husband." ***Second***, I want you to also notice that Christ did not consider him to be her husband either, as seen in these words, "...thou hast well said, I have no husband."

Now the thing I want you to see is this - Christ recognized divorce for what it was, and made this statement, “For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.” **She had been married five times, but how many husbands does she have? NONE.** How did Paul refer to the woman whom

had been divorced in 1 Corinthians 7:11? He says, “But and if she departs, let her remain **UNMARRIED...**”

What am I saying? Simply this, it is wrong for us to deny a man a ministry because of the traditional statement that says, “He must be the husband of one wife.” Remember, the word Paul used for the divorced person was “unmarried.”

The view of Christ concerning divorce is a very conservative one. He held to and advocated God’s original design for marriage was one woman for one man, stressing in Matthew 19:6 that what God hath joined together could only be dissolved as a result of adultery. Although His view of divorce was stern, His attitude toward those guilty of adultery was that of compassion, as seen in the story recorded in John 8:1-11, “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? This they said, testing him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted himself up, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they who heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted himself up, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” Please remember this statement: **although God hates sin, He loves sinners.**

Therefore, it must be concluded that the views of Christ and of Paul are without exception the same concerning divorce. Although Paul makes no mention of the “exception clause” (Matthew 19:9), that Christ referred to, nowhere in the Scripture is it found where Paul disputes it. It must also be concluded that Paul, like Christ, was stern in his beliefs concerning divorce, but compassionate in his attitude toward those caught in the dilemma of divorce.

Divorce is not the “unpardonable sin,” and those people that are divorced need to know their sins were covered by the blood of Jesus. But they also need to know that there is a place where they can come to be encouraged and ministered to, instead of being condemned and rejected.

Remember, it was Jesus that has given us the example of ministry when He said in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me

to preach the, gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” **God has called us with a holy calling to minister to the needs of others. Let us be about our Father’s business.**

If you are not saved, why not come tonight and receive Jesus as your personal Savior?