

The Law Concerning Adultery and Divorce

Matthew 5:27-32

2. For the hardness of their hearts, the law of Moses tolerated and permitted divorce, although such, except for the cause of fornication, was a sin against the seventh commandment, "as it opened the way to adultery."

3. *"From the beginning,"* divorce has been wrong. (Matthew 19:8)

B. Jesus upholds God's original law: *"But I say unto you, that everyone that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery."* (v.32)

1. The sanctity of the home must be guarded.
2. Jesus clearly upholds and defends God's original marriage law, and he forbids divorce, except for the single cause of fornication. (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:6-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18.)
3. Nowhere in the New Testament is this teaching relaxed. (Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-17.)
4. According to the New Testament, remarriage is allowed:
 - a. In the death of a mate. (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39.) This is the only honorable way out by all parties.
 - b. In the case of adultery, by the innocent. (Matthew 19:9; 5:32.) The adultery, however, must be the actual cause of the "putting away," and not a result as is so often the case. And the adultery must have occurred without fault on the part of the one claiming the right to remarry.
5. This prohibits the remarriage of unscripturally divorced persons, which is "legalized adultery" in God's sight. This is admittedly a strict rule, and was so recognized by the Lord's disciples who asked for more light, saying, *"If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. But he said unto them....he that is able to receive it, let him receive it."* (Matthew 19:10-12.)

CONCLUSION -

- I. It is profitable to hear and heed the words of the Saviour.
- II. All who respect the authority and will of Jesus know that it is necessary to know and do his will in order to have happiness here and hereafter.

-- Charles Crouch

INTRODUCTION -

- I. In his continuing contrast between the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, and the righteousness required by his law, Jesus in this paragraph discusses the seventh commandment.
 - A. See Exodus 20:14, and Deuteronomy 5:18.
 - B. The seventh commandment defends the sanctity of the home.
 - C. Adultery is any sex experience outside the marriage bond.

II. THIS IS A DELICATE SUBJECT-- MUST SPEAK CAREFULLY.

- A. God ordained marriage--the idea and the institution originated with Jehovah. (Matthew 19:4-6.)
- B. He said, *"It is not good that man should be alone."* (Genesis 2:18.)
- C. Jesus also teaches, *"It is not good"* for man to profane or destroy marriage, which is the work of God. (Matthew 19:6.)

III. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT-- MUST SPEAK PLAINLY

- A. Adultery is an old sin, wrong from the beginning. (Genesis 19:30-38.)
- B. God dealt with it severely in the Old Testament. (Leviticus 20:10)
- C. Adultery today is a common, very prevalent sin: "New morality," etc.
- D. If the homes of a nation are corrupt, the nation collapses. (Proverbs 14:34.)

DISCUSSION -

- I. **ADULTERY AND ADULTERY IN THE HEART.** (Matthew 5:27,28).
 - A. **The seventh commandment:** *"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery."* (v. 27)
 1. The law punished only those guilty of the act, and, according to the Pharisees, this law was broken only by the act.

2. God has always condemned adultery because it is a sin (a) against self, (b) against marriage, and (c) against heaven.
 3. It is a sin against (a) the conscience and (b) against the body-- the very opposite of glorifying God in the body.
 4. It destroys marriage and the home: For marriage to exist, there is the need for solid affection and mutual trust, both of which are destroyed by adultery.
 5. There is no circumstance which can justify the scarlet sin: It never was right, and it never will be right.
- B. The Lord's exposition:** *"But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* (v. 28.)
1. As in the law of murder, Jesus goes behind the act and shows that, before the overt act is committed, the sin of adultery must first exist in the heart.
 2. He does not forbid the "look of admiration or of affection," but the lustful look. (cf. 2 Peter 2:14.) He thus legislates against the look or desire which might, and which does, lead to the deed.
 3. In this way Jesus cuts off an enormous evil at its root: The man who abhors the sin of adultery in the heart will never be guilty of the act.
 4. Mental adultery, a favorite American pastime, is a common "little fox" that defiles many souls. (Mark 7:22,23.) Millions are stimulated to guilt of this sin in the heart and in the act by the merchants of filth and smut whose thriving business is seen in magazines and papers, on TV and movies, on billboards and in advertising, books, etc., etc.
 5. And if such looking be such a grave sin, what of those who commit the prevalent sin of Bathsheba by dressing and/or undressing so as to encourage or tempt to such looking? (Matthew 18:6; Romans 14:19.)
 6. Like righteous Job, let us make "a covenant with our eyes." (Job 31:1.)

II. SEVERE OPERATION PRESCRIBED BY THE GREAT PHYSICIAN. (Matthew 5:29,30)

- A. If right eye offend:** *"And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body be cast into hell."* (v. 29)
1. Self-denial is the first condition of discipleship. (Matthew

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- 16:24.)
2. Because of the intensity of the passion, its widespread indulgence, and its dreadful consequences, against which Jesus is legislating, he advises the strongest possible motivation to godly life.
3. The Lord here teaches that the passions of the flesh must be mastered or subdued at any cost: Extreme sacrifices may be necessary, and should be decisively made.

B. If right hand offend: *"And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into hell."* (v. 30)

1. To avoid serious sin, we must shut our senses, with strong determination, to that which excites, inflames, or arouses us to yield to temptation, however precious be the member.
2. Jesus is here teaching spiritual surgery: Drastic operations - the speedy and decisive amputation of any pleasure or tendency which would be a hinderance to spiritual and eternal life. (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.)
3. Self-denial is to be practiced only where there is a need for it--it is not an end within itself, although we should gladly give up any pleasure or thing which would cause us to stumble and be lost.
4. He also gives "the spiritual anesthetic, or that which should dull the pain of such loss:" Entrance to higher life, which more than compensates for any necessary loss. (Matthew 18:8,9.) See Thomas, p.63, for illustration of man, with deep Cobra bite, who instantly cut off his hand with a tremendous blow of his dagger, to save his life.
5. **Crucify**, do not dally one moment with, *any evil passion or sinful appetite*: To indulge them is to give them added strength, and thus to encourage your own ruin.
6. Obviously these verses are not to be taken literally: To dismember the bodies of Christians would merely turn the church into a hospital and would not prevent the sin of adultery.

III. JESUS TEACHES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE.

(Matthew 5:31,32)

- A. The law and divorce:** *"It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife let him give her a writing of divorcement."*
1. See Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

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