

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Selected Scriptures

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Amen. I invite you to open your Bibles, please, to the book of Romans chapter seven. Let's continue our worship through prayer.

Father, thank you for the privilege we have to worship you in song, in prayer, in giving and in your Word. And as we approach this subject matter this morning we pray that you would help us to approach it with sobriety, with reverence to your Scriptures, with humility, that we would allow your Word to speak for itself. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.'

God has unequivocally stated he hates divorce in Malachi 2:16.

Did you know that in the year 2000 in the United States of America 21 million people were divorced? That is a lot, a lot of people. The rate of divorce in the United States of America is astronomical. And this is a discussion which impacts everyone. We all have friends and family and coworkers and neighbors and people we care about that have been impacted very negatively by divorce. And often times people ask us questions and it is very important for us when we answer those questions that we are armed with biblical truth so that we answer them accurately.

And so our desire this morning is to really continue what we started last week. Last week we continued our study of the book of Mark and we saw some... noted some principles that we will recap in just a moment, but we dealt with the text that was in the gospel of Mark chapter 10. And now, as we continue that discussion, to really broaden it out so we have a very clear picture of what the Bible says on this matter, we want to arm you with biblical truth so that we can rightly advise and rightly counsel those who go through these difficult times.

Well, last week we established four principles from Jesus' teaching in Mark chapter 10. Those four principles were these. You will remember them if you were here. Divorce was permitted because of depravity. Secondly, divorce is not part of God's design. Thirdly, divorce opens the door to further sin. And, fourthly, God's design depicts a lifelong commitment. Those four principles came forth from that text quite readily.

As we continue our thoughts, it is important for us to realize that God's design for marriage is one man and one woman for life. That is an uncompromising stance that God's design has set forth for us. But with all the brokenness that surrounds us and all the challenges that confront us and all the scenarios that are presented to us, we need to know how to counsel when someone approaches us with a marital scenario.

So we are going to start with the easiest and work our way through, ok? The easiest conversation that someone will ask us has to do with: well, what do I do if my spouse has passed away? This is not challenging at all.

In Romans chapter seven we have in verses one through three some clear directions from God concerning how we would counsel someone who has a spouse that is passed away. It says this in Romans seven beginning in verse one:

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband.¹

I want you to remember that term, "released from the law of her husband."

"So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."²

Not only is it very clear in this passage, it also is reiterated or reaffirmed in 1 Timothy chapter five and verse 14 when Paul is dealing with the widows and he tells them, "If you are young, I bid you to marry and bear children." And so he not only permits remarriage, he really instructs remarriage on the part of a widow that is young and young is defined as less than 60 years old. So you can do with that what you want to.

That is not a complicated situation, is it? This is something we have very clear mind to present to someone when they ask them a question about it. But a second scenario that has come up to you, I am sure, on many occasions is: What do I do if my spouse has cheated on me? And I use the term cheated not because I like the term or think that it is an appropriate term, it is just the one that is used. The Bible calls it fornication or adultery. So we are going to use the biblical term. I just wanted to throw the question out there with the common term. What do I do if my spouse cheated on me?

I want you to look at one passage in Matthew chapter 19. There is also a passage that deals with this in Matthew chapter five. We are not going to deal with that. It says essentially the same thing so we will just allow Matthew 19 to suffice in our laying the foundation for this.

¹ Romans 7:1-2.

² Romans 7:3.

If you have heard me talk about marriage at any other time you will know that my stance on marriage is that it is to be valued and it is to be followed and it is to be kept and it is to be honored. It is to be recognized as a covenant between God and man, man and God, man and spouse, man and wife. This covenant is very essential and we cannot in any way take it lightly.

In Matthew chapter 19 and verse nine, the Lord Jesus answers a question for us that we are espousing. The stipulation here that is being called for is unrepentant fornication. And I would say the implication is not just unrepentant fornication, but continuous, unrepentant fornication. Look at this passage with me, Matthew 19 and verse nine.

"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."³

It is very strong, very straight language. And Jesus says if a person divorces his or her spouse and marries someone else, he commits adultery. But there is a clause in the midst of that, that some people in most of the circles that I travel want to say doesn't exist and want to explain away and reinterpret. And we will not do that. We will not explain away texts of Scripture, because all Scripture is authoritative, even the ones that rub against our thoughts, even the ones that rub against institutions that we value and love. Colleges and seminaries that have stands on these things, when they do not take into account all of the biblical teaching we must part company there. This is an uncomfortable subject matter, because I travel in fundamental circles as, I assume, most of you do. And this is a taboo subject. However, we cannot just explain away a text of Scripture. It is inappropriate. It is ungodly. It is unbiblical. And so the passage gives us some information.

"...except for sexual immorality."⁴

So to state this in a different way, a person who is divorced for the explicit reason of sexual immorality and marries another does not commit adultery, ok? That really is how you have to read that when it says except. Now some people might not like it, but that is the reality.

Now with that being said, I am stating to you: The Bible declares that under that specific ramification, that specific scenario of someone who has a spouse who continuously, unrepentantly involves themselves in sexual immorality, they—I would never counsel them to do this—can divorce. Ok?

Interestingly, however, that is not the end of the subject. That is not the end of the discussion, because, as a believer in Jesus Christ we have been called unto a pattern that is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. And for this consideration I want you to take a look at another gospel, Luke chapter 17. I would like you to turn there for just a moment, Luke chapter 17.

³ Matthew 19:9.

⁴ Ibid.

I have never and will never counsel someone to get a divorce from their spouse. I won't do that. But I will articulate what the Bible says about the matter. And then a person has to make a choice for themselves in this situation.

In Luke chapter 17 beginning in verse number three Jesus makes a very strong statement that must be considered. In Luke 17 beginning in verse three he says:

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."⁵

There is no wriggle room here, is there? So a spouse who commits sexual immorality and asks for forgiveness must be forgiven, must be, not should be... must be forgiven. This is a command, a direct command from the Lord. And so repentant sexual immorality must be forgiven. Forgiveness necessitates a remaining in the marital covenant. Makes sense, right? It is very clear. I believe it is very clear in this passage for us.

Now just as a thought for our consideration, any time we look at a subject of this magnitude—and it is a challenging subject. Now it is not challenging because it is revealed. It is challenging because it is very emotional. We want to see the mind of God and the character of God in it. And so before we move from this question I want to show us and take a look at something with us together from the book of Jeremiah.

Turn with me, please, to Jeremiah chapter three. The tenor of our service this morning is different than our typical Sunday morning service. I don't generally have counseling sessions from the pulpit. Usually we preach a message on a text. But here we have ourselves balancing out our comprehension of the passage from last week and, really, what we have is kind of a counseling room scenario to help us to be well informed as to what the Bible says here.

In Jeremiah chapter three we have a very interesting scenario in which God writes a bill of divorce to Israel. Now to understand this correctly we have to understand a little bit about Israel's history. Israel is generally referred to as the northern 10 tribes of God's people. They are the 10 tribes that would be in the northern part. And then the southern tribes would be referred to as Judah, right? So after the reign of Solomon the southern tribes of Judah and the northern tribes of Israel split apart under the reigns of Jeroboam in the north and Rehoboam in the south. During that time there is a split, ok? And as we look at this context in Jeremiah chapter three there is a split in the kingdom. So historically the kingdom is two. Historically previous to that the kingdom is one. Historically future from now, eschatologically, they are how many? One. Under Ezekiel 37's passage where God reveals to Ezekiel, "Take these two sticks, Israel and Judah, make them one stick under one head the Lord Jesus Christ." These two split kingdoms

⁵ Luke 17:3-4.

really are one kingdom. And so as we read this we have to have that as kind of a background to it. And we look at Jeremiah chapter three and verse six and following and we say, "This is very interesting." It says in verse six:

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the LORD. Then the LORD said to me, "Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the LORD; 'I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD. Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore. At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers."⁶

Now that is a long passage to set a little bit of a context for us. God, after years and years, yeah, hundreds of years issues a bill of divorce to Israel for her harlotries. But my question for you is: Did he really sever it? He talks about his dealings with them in the future. And so the pattern laid out, while he writes Israel a bill of divorcement never does to treacherous Judah who is equally performing the acts and deeds of a harlot spiritually. He doesn't divorce Judah and he then restores the whole group of them in the latter days. We have here an illustration of God writing on a bill of divorce to Israel.

⁶ Jeremiah 3:6-18.

But we also notice his faithful long suffering. And it is clear from this passage that Israel will be joined together with God in the latter days. Yet in Matthew 19 he makes allowance for divorce under the one parameter of fornication.

As we look and we try to get a real feel and a sense for all of Scripture, not one passage, not two passages, all of Scripture, we see God's fidelity, his solidarity. We see his unity and his commitment in faithfulness. However, again, because of the hardness of our hearts God permits under this one clause the opportunity for unrepentant, continual fornication for a spouse to divorce is sexually inappropriate spouse.

We look at these things and we say, "Ok, Lord, this is not your design. But for some reason you have included it in your holy Word and we will not ignore it."

So the first question we asked is: What do we do if my spouse ... or what do I do if my spouse has passed away? And God's Word gives us permission to marry. The second question is: What do I do if my spouse commits sexual immorality continuously and unrepentantly? The Bible gives permission for divorce. Third question for us to consider. What do I do if my believing spouse is just unbearable?

Yes, I said it. And you probably are. We are all unbearable at times. But, you know, on a more serious note. What do I do if my believing, saved spouse is just unbearable? Look at 1 Corinthians seven with me, please.

Now, listen. We are empathetic people and we should be. And we feel bad when someone has mistreated and we should. But when we give counsel, we must give thus saith the Lord, not I feel really bad, oh, you should really, you know, oh, you have a right to... oh, you really could. No. No. When we give someone advice, it had better come from the sacred, written Word of God. And so if someone says to you, "Oh, my spouse, they are emotionally abusive. They don't respect me. They don't love me the way that they should. They are unkind. They stay out at all these hours. They don't treat me the way I deserve to be treated. They don't take care of me. They don't provide me with enough money. They don't provide me with enough time. They have all the demands for me. They are just unbearable to live with."

When it comes to that scenario we look at the biblical text and there is only one biblical text on this issue, 1 Corinthians chapter seven verses 10 and 11. That is all you have. And because it is all you have, it is the only counsel you can give. Do not cave under the pressure because of your concern and love. Issue concern and love in spite of the only counsel that God gives you. Look what it says here in 1 Corinthians chapter seven beginning in verse nine.

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.⁷

⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.

There we have the entirety of biblical revelation about what to do if your spouse, your believing spouse, is just unbearable. I might say: Jesus said the same thing in Mark 10:9 that we looked at last week.

“...let not man separate.”⁸

Same thing.

Now look at how this is worded.

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart...”⁹

That is a technical term, that term depart, a technical term for divorce. A wife is not to depart from her husband. That is a direct command. Verse 11.

“But even if she does depart...”¹⁰

Very interesting. The verb is written in the subjunctive mood. Now you all know what a subjunctive is so I don't have to explain it to you. No. I guess maybe you might not remember what a subjunctive mood is. The subjunctive mood is the mood of possibility. Maybe she will and maybe she won't. However, this is written in the aorist tense. Aorist is a simple tense. So really this could be—and probably should be written—but since she has departed, if this has already taken place, this possibility, if she has already departed, if she has already done this formal act of divorcing, here is what to do.

Another way to read it, just for the sake of bringing it into today's day and age. You could read it like this. If she disobeys the command not to divorce her husband, she now has two options. If a believer disobediently divorces his or her believing spouse sinfully, here is the two options. It says it in verse 11. Option number one, remain unmarried. Do you know what that says? Don't compound your sin. Option number two, the preferable one, fix what you have done or be reconciled. Reconciled means to reestablish that relationship properly and rightly.

So if we sinfully divorce, here are the two options: remain unmarried or, better, remedy the situation, be reconciled. Those are the only two options for the believer that is in an unbearable situation with another believer.

Is this making sense? It is important that we not take liberty where God is very specific. And he is very specific here.

I say these things, please know. You know me well enough. I say these things not unlovingly, not unkindly and certainly not unempathetically. My heart breaks for those

⁸ Mark 10:9.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 7:10.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:11.

that deal with these challenges. But I have only one source of authority to give you and it is thus saith the Lord. And it is the only thing you have to give to someone else that comes to you with they question.

Now so we have established three answers to three questions. Now we want to look at a fourth one. What do I do if my unbelieving spouse is just unbearable? In the process of answering this question, we are going to answer another question which is: What if I am married to an unbeliever and he is not unbearable? The answer to the first is different than the answer to the second. Look at verses 12 and following. We are in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. Look at verse 12.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.¹¹

Ok, so here is the command. If you are married to someone that is not a believer and they want to remain married to you, what is God's command here? Remain married. What if they are really wonderful? Remain married. What if they are kind of mezzo, mezzo? Remain married. What if they stink? Remain married. Yeah? Isn't that what it says? If they are pleased to dwell with you, let you not divorce. No permission for bearable, wonderful, unbearable, unbelieving spouses.

Now one of the problems that has come in—let me just give you a little bit of history—one of the problems that has come in, as the people in Corinth were kind of rescued from their pagan idolatry and rescued into the gospel, what is going on is, ok, one of the people in this marriage relationship has become a believer. The other is an unbeliever and the believer is saying, “Well, I can't find myself rightly living and fulfilling all the duties that a right spouse has with this other spouse. I really don't feel right about joining myself together with an unbeliever. I can't see myself rightly having sexual intimacy with an unbeliever. I feel like maybe I will be contaminating myself, because in other places it says not to mingle believers with unbelievers.”

And Paul says, “That is not the case. That is not the case at all.”

Verse 14. Here is his answer to that.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.”¹²

God says, “If you are in a relationship, in a marital covenant with an unbeliever and that person is pleased to dwell with you, remain in that marriage, pleasing God, fulfilling your duty, living for God.” And Peter would tell us, as if you are the woman in that situation,

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.

¹² 1 Corinthians 7:14.

that you re to demonstrate the Word by your activities, that you might win your husband by the testimony of the Word in your life. And so the concept is very clear. If your spouse intends to continue the marriage, continue. The unbelieving spouse is sanctified. What does that mean? It doesn't mean saved. It means that they are... have God's blessing upon them, because they are related to you. Isn't that nice? And we have seen that many times. It is a wonderful thing that we are blessed by association and so are the children while they remain in the house blessed by association.

But here he gives us the rest of the story, verse 15. Here is a change of direction.

“But if the unbeliever departs...”¹³

That, again, is the formal word for divorce.

“...let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage.”¹⁴

Remember I told you to remember something when we were reading Romans chapter seven? Free from the law, free not under bondage to the law. And now we have the same type of terminology here in chapter seven.

“...let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.”¹⁵

In other words, the believer and the unbeliever are wedded together and the believer says, “I really can't take all this religious stuff. I can't really take your allegiance to God over me. I can't take the fact that you won't do the things that you used to do with me and go the places you used to do with me.” And he says, “I just can't... this is untenable. I can't stay.” And that person departs. Let them depart. A brother or a sister, the remaining party is not under bondage in this matter.

A lot of times with all the right intent and all the right purposes, the one that is remaining claws and fights to keep that together because they want to be a testimony. And that is good. It is all a good endeavor. That is not what this passage says. Really it says, “Let him depart. Let her depart. Let that person depart.” That is the command of the Lord. God has called us to peace, not to fighting, not to fighting for them not to leave. Let them go.

And here is the rationale he uses in verse 16. This is very important rationale in verse 16. A lot of times we read this backwards.

“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?”¹⁶

¹³ 1 Corinthians 7:15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:16.

You are not the only vessel that can bring someone to salvation. You don't have to say, "Well, if they go, I won't be able to save them." God says, "Let them go. If they divorce you, let them go."

Now this is not easy and this is not pleasurable. This is not enjoyable, I think, personally to talk about and consider. But here is the biblical revelation on the matter. Whether I like it, whether you like it, whether I enjoy it, whether you enjoy it, this is what the Bible says. It says remain while they want to remain. If they depart, if they divorce you, you can't fight it. You are not going to be able to fight it. You are not the only way in which that person can get saved. Let God be God, not you be God.

And so that is the revelation here and it is tough stuff.

What do we do if our spouse dies? What do we do if our spouse is involved in a sexually immoral relationship outside of the marriage? What do we do if my believing spouse is just unbearable? What do I do if my unbelieving spouse is unbearable? The Bible gives us information and we can only go based on what the information is that is revealed. Deal with it and that is the advice to give. But that still leads to further questions, doesn't it? The topic has not been exhausted.

If God allows for my divorce, can I be remarried is a fifth question. And the answer to that is yes. Where God says there is a severing, a breaking of that covenant relationship, where God says it, there is a breaking of that covenant relationship.

Now there are a lot of people that disagree with that, but we can only base our conclusions not on what John Piper says in a really good book. John Piper wrote a really good book *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence*. It is an excellent book. I commend it to you. But when you come to the last two chapters in the book he explains all of this away. He is like takes magic mirrors and says, "Well, this really doesn't exist."

And that is not what we do with God's Word. We don't take God's Word lightly. And we shouldn't. And, you know, he doesn't. So don't misunderstand. I just disagree with how he deals with that particular issue and probably some others as well. But God does allow for remarriage.

Why do I say that? Verse number 15 says:

"...a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases."¹⁷

Same type of wording used in Romans chapter seven to the believer whose spouse dies, same type of wording. I have sat in classes where this has been disputed. And you think: How can you dispute that which is rightly and clearly depicted? Well, it is because sometimes we approach texts with a preconceived idea. And we need to make sure we don't. And do you know what? There is room for disagreement here. You have got to

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:15.

stand where you stand from the Scriptures, not from empathy, not from your opinion, but what does God's Word say.

This leads us to a sixth question. What if I was married and divorced before my salvation? Because married before salvation leading you to salvation has already been answered, right, in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. But married and divorced before salvation. What then? Where does that leave me then? Well, God doesn't speak specifically and directly to the matter, but he does speak indirectly to the matter in 2 Corinthians chapter five and verse 17, a very familiar passage of Scripture. God's Word says this. Ready? You remember it, but let me just read it to you again or bring it to your mind.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."¹⁸

Did that work for the apostle Paul? Did all things become new for the apostle Paul who was before a persecutor, a blasphemer? Is there anything worse than blasphemy? No, no, no. And injurious, one who spoke improperly. All things became new. And the churches at Galatia when he came around he said, "I don't know what is going on with Paul, but I know this. The faith he used to persecute now is the faith that he is espousing. He is preaching that which he used to persecute against. His whole life is changed and he became a great apostle to the Gentiles as a blasphemer."

In most circles—and it is unfortunate—divorced people are treated as though they have committed the unpardonable sin. And it is not appropriate at all. The Bible says all things become new. If that does not include all things, then we have some confusion in our brains. But it does include all things so God's Word does indirectly deal with this question. If someone has been married and divorced before their salvation God has made all things new. They are free in Christ to seek to be married to someone that walks with God and loves God and has been saved by God's grace and to live out the marriage bond appropriately, which leaves us with one final question.

What if I am wrongfully remarried? What if I wasn't supposed to get remarried? What if I divorced inappropriately according to God's Word and then I remarried someone else? What then? Well, here is where it becomes challenging from our initial approach and clear from a further approach. Look at Mark chapter 10. Here is why it is confusing for people, rightly so. This came from our study last week, Mark chapter 10 beginning in verse 11. His disciples were questioning him about the matter.

So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."¹⁹

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁹ Mark 10:11-12.

And so Jesus answers the question: If someone gets divorced inappropriately and marries someone else, they are in the midst of adultery. This is a big problem. They commit adultery. And it is in the present tense, so it does talk about it being a continuous problem.

So here is where we start to deal with this. You cannot undo a problem with a problem. You can't commit further sin to undo a previous sin, because once you marry someone else—remember the one command from Deuteronomy 24? Remember Jesus said, “What did Moses command you?”

Well, he didn't command anyone to divorce anyone, which is how the Pharisees interpreted his question. The only thing that Moses commanded was if you are divorced and remarry someone else, you cannot go back to the first spouse. So for a person that has remarried wrongfully to go back or to try to figure out some way to get back to that first spouse, you violate some other biblical principle and so you compound sin with sin. Divorce would be compounding the problem.

There is mercy and there is grace for those who have been impacted by divorce. Did you know that? Did you know that even under God's Word that there is mercy and grace for those that have been divorced and wrongfully remarried? Do you know that God still loves the remarried person? It is not how it is always treated. Sometimes they get left in the corner of the church to do nothing. Sorry, you can't pull the weeds out of the garden. You have the scarlet letter on your chest. Except instead of it being the regular letter, it is the D letter. That has happened in multitudes of churches and it is not right scripturally. It is not right from God's perspective.

You know, God has always and will always continue to be faithful and God's goal in our marriages is for it to be the right way. One man and one woman for life. The picture that is painted in Ephesians chapter five is of Christ's faithful love for the Church. And that is what our husband wife relationships are supposed to depict. And in that picture is God's redeeming love. And in that picture is Christ's shedding of his blood for his bride. And it covers every sin.

Does a person who has been divorced and remarried inappropriately that now seeks to walk with the Lord, are they plagued day after day with adultery? I do not believe so. I believe that they were plagued, day after day, until they rightly repented of their wrong actions in wrongfully being divorced and wrongfully remarrying. But is that the end of the story? Plagued from then to eternity. No. There is always room for grace and mercy. This is the way our God deals or else we would all be in desperately bad shape.

Our counsel to others must be in accordance with truth. Truth cannot be determined by empathy, but truth must be delivered with empathy. If you are in a different relationship than that which is ideal, now a marriage relationship, I speak. If you are in a different relationship than that is God's ideal, God's love for you is unwavering. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ your sin, all of it, has been judged in the person of Jesus Christ, every one of them. And your record before a holy God is a righteous record. Why?

Because we are not standing on our own righteousness. If I had to stand on my own righteousness, I would spend every moment of eternity in the lake of fire, because my righteousness doesn't cut it. My record is only righteous because of what we know to be justification by faith in Christ alone.

So if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, all of your sin has been judged in Christ and your record is spotless before God because of what Christ has done. But maybe there is someone here this morning that is involved in a tremendous amount of guilt because of their marital issues and they don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. You don't know him. You know? The Lord Jesus Christ paid the price for all your sin. And he hearkens you and beckons you to accept his willing payment for your sin and his willingness to give you his righteousness for eternity if you will but call upon the name of the Lord. You will be saved.

You see, God's Word deals with these difficult areas. And as a church and as individuals, as marital units, we should seek the ideal. We should seek to fulfill God's aim in marriage. And when we are dealing with others that have conflict in that area and they are looking for counsel, we had better point them to what God says, not that which is a balm for their soul necessarily initially. Sometimes when you give them the picture, they leave slumped shouldered and face down. But we only have the written revelation we have. And it is our responsibility, not with sadness, but with great confidence to articulate what the written record says whether it makes them happy or if it makes them sad, because we have the Word and it is God's final decision to make on these issues. And while it is hard to talk about, it is joyous to look at the glorious privilege that is ours through the Lord Jesus Christ, because no matter what state you are in there is room at the cross for you. There is room for forgiveness for you and for me because of what Christ has done. His payment was sufficient for all my sin, past, present and future. And he has made himself available as a salvation plan, as a salvation... a saving God to carry us to glory and to pay for our sin. What a glorious Savior we have. And we can leave while maybe not agreeing with everything I may have said, you have to interpret these truths for yourselves from God's Word, but we must leave recognizing that when we give advice, it must come from the Word and from the Word alone. And going with the recognition of the forgiveness that is ours in Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, we think about these things and they are challenging for us, but you have spoken and we believe you and we will respond to you rightly. I pray for anyone here that may be struggling with decisions they are trying to make, with decisions they have made. Help them to see the truth and to live in accordance with the truth. For anyone that may have violated the principles here and are in a relationship that is not in accordance with your perfect will in the Word, we pray that you would help them to seek solace in you and to recognize the glorious grace that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and help them to live out the days of their lives praising you and worshipping you and serving you and thanking you for your long suffering toward us. Help those of us that have been in relationships that are in accordance with your plan that we would be graced by you to

*fulfill our responsibilities, because we know if it were about us, we would not do it right.
So help us to lean upon your grace and help through these things. In Jesus' name. Amen.*