

IS IT LAWFUL TO PUT AWAY THY MATE?

by
EVANGELIST PAUL RAGLAND
CAMP ZION
MYRTLE, MISSISSIPPI

Published by
NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH
1661 GRIGGSTOWN RD
CALVERT CITY, KY 42029
PHONE: (270) 527-3864

Permission to print given by:
THE FAMILY OF PAUL RAGLAND

not for resale

PREFACE

A war rages in our country. Let's take a fresh look at the casualty list:

• One out of two marriages ends in divorce.

• The median age for divorce is thirty-four for men and thirty for women.

• In 1986 out of six households, one was maintained by women with no husband present. The percentage is greater now.

I am sure you agree that the Bible, God's Holy Word, has the answers to life's problems as Jesus and the life He provides is revealed in it.

Our dear departed Brother Paul Ragland preached this powerful message at camp Zion in Myrtle, Mississippi. Few men have had the God-given grasp of Scripture of Brother Ragland.

In this day when men try to make the Scripture fit the circumstances of life and disregard truth, it is very important to stand on the firm ground of Scripture.

Bro. Ragland shares this important subject from the Scripture in his unique style and manner. You will be challenged and blessed as knowledge of the truth sets you free.

Luther Price
Clarksdale, MS 1997

PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

It is with delight that we publish this message by Bro. Paul Ragland with the permission from his family. This message was preached at Camp Zion, Myrtle, Mississippi during the March Power Conference 1979. We have tried to publish the message as Bro. Ragland originally preached it with only a small amount of editing for print. We have remained true to the context of the message and true to the Scripture as preached.

We send forth this message with a prayer that God would liberate the hearts and lives of men and women that are in bondage to the compromising views on this most difficult subject. May the Spirit of the Lord honor His Word and honor our dear brother, Paul Ragland.

New Hope Baptist Church: Publisher
Calvert City, KY
April, 1997

IS IT LAWFUL TO PUT AWAY THY MATE?

Evangelist Paul Ragland
Camp Zion
Myrtle, Mississippi

Please turn in your Bibles to the 10th chapter of Mark. We will begin reading with the 1st verse. Have you told the Lord Jesus that you loved Him today? If not you need to tell Him now.

We will begin reading in the 1st verse of Mark chapter 10. "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts, of Judea by the farther side of Jordan. And the people resort unto him again, and, as he was wont he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him, and ask him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, for the hardness of you heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples ask him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark 10: 1-12)

Using that second verse for our text and thinking this morning, I want to speak on the subject IS IT LAWFUL FOR A MAN OR WOMAN TO PUT AWAY THEIR MATE? There are many different schools of thought in this area. But beloved, when you come down to truth it is one way. That is the reason that the truth of God leads us away from confusion. I am never confused as I travel the highways unless there is an intersection or fork. You know if truth isn't but one way, there can't be any way but truth. There can be no confusion and all these schools of thought concerning divorce can't be right!

I want us to look this morning at what the Bible has to say. What you think or what I say doesn't amount to a hill of beans. We do need to look at what God has to say about it. Now I doubt that there is very few homes in this audience that have not been hurt by this issue of divorce.

You know when I first began my ministry, my pastor had taught against divorce. Once I was away at a musical festival with the young people. We had two of his sons with us when his wife died of a heart attack. I had to take those little fellows back in the car and I had to get them aside and tell them that their mother had gone to be with the Lord. It wasn't very long before this pastor married another preacher's wife that had divorced. I went to him and talked to him trying to get him not to do that and I refuse to let him participate in my ordination service. You know, neither my church nor my pastor gave me a Bible when I was ordained. Not many people hadn't been hurt by this issue.

My oldest sister married a divorced man. You know I have a nephew that was hurt in that issue. My sister just younger than me, that we buried in 1977, married a young man back in World War II, a handsome fellow. I never saw him but one time. They divorced with a lot of heartache and hardness. You know as I sat by the bedside as she died of cancer, she never mentioned him. I didn't know whether to call him or if he was alive or what. You know those things hurt you as you are sitting beside your loved one. And then

they breathe their last and you don't know where their mate is or how to get in touch with them.

I've got a niece that is married and divorced. So you see beloved I have felt this thing in my own family. There are many of you that have felt it, but I don't know of any family that has ever been helped by it. I've never known of any individuals that have gotten divorced that haven't been hurt by it. You know their friends get hurt. It divides in-laws, it divides churches, it divides towns. It comes into the church and involves the preacher in the church and people get hurt by it.

Did you know the majority of the fault belongs to those of us in the pulpit? We have not been honest or fair with the people. Afraid that we would hurt them and backing off from the truth, we have hurt them instead of helping them. I have never known the truth of God that failed to help people if they would come to it.

This is the thing I want us to look at this morning. Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?

Now the Lord Jesus Christ in His teachings had come back into the area of Judea. In this area the tetrarch is Herod. It has not been long since he cut off John the Baptist head for preaching about him marrying a divorcee. Now then, He has come back in that area and with this question they are jabbing and probing Him. They want Him to speak out so Herod will get His head or either the conservatives that are following Him will back off. He will be destroyed either way if He answers it. A catch question. They ask it tempting Him.

Now when we go back and look at the schools of thought in Jesus's day there are two schools. There was the school of Hillel who was the grandfather of Gamaliel, the one the apostle Paul had sat at his feet and learned. One of the most learned men of the day. His grandfather Hillel said that a man could put away his wife for dirty dishes or an unclean floor. For just any reason they could put aside their wife. You know in Georgia, and I don't know how many other states does that, they have a no fault divorce. Now there is another school by Shama and it was the conservative school. It said before they go to the marriage altar or the marriage bed if one of them has committed fornication, a bill of divorcement could be written that released them from that betrothal or that engagement. These were the two schools of thought when Jesus walked in.

Now the question is ask Him. Then He ask them a question. You see they made much of the Pentateuch and what Moses said and they were always saying we are Moses disciples. We are not yours. Jesus asked the question, "What did Moses say?" Now I think we are in a lot of trouble today because too many have gone off the deep end and said the Moses condoned divorce and the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible does not say that! I want to look at what the Bible does say. Now notice the question that the Lord ask them in the 3rd verse. "He answered and said unto them what did Moses command you?" (Mark 10:3) Now being dishonest they come with a half truth. They are not even going to come out with all of it.

Now then, in answer to the question that He asked, they said, "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement to put them away." Moses permitted it because of the going custom tradition. But he tried to make it harder in that they had to come out publicly with what was going on hidden. They also had to go before a judge and write a bill of divorcement, but it was before they had ever been to the marriage altar or the marriage bed. Now beloved, Moses didn't institute divorce. God didn't institute divorce. Moses nor God sanctioned divorce and did not condone it and the Bible doesn't. Now I'd like to put a question to you. Who did institute divorce? It came out of custom tradition. We study

the 7th through the 9th chapters of the book of Mark. The Lord had just been dealing with the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians who had laid aside the Word of God and the commandments of God for their tradition. They would rather have tradition than truth. They had rather have ritual than reality. They just want ceremonialism. They did not want Christianity. And we have a lot of people that way today. Now are we going to stay with truth or are we going to go with tradition? Are we going to go with ritual or are we going to go with reality? They said, "Moses suffered it." (Mark 10:4) But he tried to slow it down and make it harder for them to get it. It would be going on whether Moses wrote anything or not but Moses' writings did not sanction, condone, nor institute it. Listen, this will tear up this thing of implying something goes along with Scripture.

Now notice what Jesus came out with in the 5th verse. "Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you these precept." (Mark 10:5) You see when you harden your heart it means you come to God's Word, but with your desires and ambitions and things, you have already made up your mind what you are going to do and you are not going to mind God anyway. He said because they weren't going to listen to God anyway, Moses made it so hard for them they had to go through a ceremonial thing and go before a judge and publish it publicly so they would know why they were parting. But he did not condone it.

Now let us look in the Old Testament and see what Moses said. Turn with me if you would to the 24th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. They were big on the Pentateuch. So let's notice in Deut. the 24th chapter beginning with the first verse. Jesus asked the question, "What did Moses command you?" "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it into her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deut. 24:1-4)

Now let's notice, back in those days when a man became engaged to a girl, she may be 12, 13, or 14 years old and the wedding may be 4 or 5 years off. This man would go to this girl or to her father and he would give him or her that money and it would be an engagement, a betrothal, or an espousal and from that time on all the laws of the land according to inheritance or adultery was tied in as though they were married, yet they were not living together nor sleeping together. Now then if during this betrothal period, uncleanness was found in the woman, even then they had to go before the court and the judge and there had to be a written bill of divorcement given to break an engagement but no place in the Bible is there any mention of a divorce after the marriage altar or the marriage bed. It is death then folks, that devolves the marriage.

What were the vows you took when you stood at an altar? Until divorce do we part or was it unto death do we depart. Why? Because it was sacred before God and your fellow man. But you see this bill of divorcement was before a marriage altar.

Now if this woman had been guilty after the marriage if you study your Bible they stoned them. It was death. The bill of divorcement had to do with before the marriage altar. Study your book. A lot of people try to play around on the word fornication and adultery. How can single people commit adultery? Single people don't commit adultery

it is fornication. Now I know it could not mean adultery. Turn with me to Lev. the 20th chapter and the 10th verse. "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adultery and the adulteress shall be put to death." (Lev. 20:10) Not divorce, it was death. Now this is mentioned over and over so I know that this could not have been after the marriage altar because it would have been death not a bill of divorcement. Another thing I know, as I look at this, is it couldn't have been a man who married someone who had been to a marriage altar and then she had been unfaithful or he was suspicious of her being unfaithful because in Numbers the 5th chapter they had that jealousy offering where she would drink that portion before the priest and her husband and if she was guilty a chemical reaction would set in, where her belly would swell up and her thighs would rot if she was guilty but, if she was innocent they wouldn't. So I know it wasn't that. All it could have been is before the marriage altar. Amen!

Now let's notice how the 22nd chapter of the book of Deut. verifies it. We are looking at what Moses commanded. Notice now in Deut. the 22nd chapter reading the 13th down through the 19th verses. Now a lot of writers have said, "Well that it could be this thing of annulment if she wasn't a virgin when she went to the bed." There is only one thing wrong with that the Bible doesn't go along with it. That is all that is wrong with it. Now notice as we read here. "If any man take a wife and go in unto her and hate her, and give occasions of speech against her and bring an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman and when I came to her, I found her not a maid. Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate. And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her. And, lo, he hath given an occasion of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; and they shall amerce him in a hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all her days." (Deut. 22:13-19) No way he could put her away. He couldn't put her away how long? He couldn't ever put her away all the days of her life. Why? She was a virgin when she went to that bed and they brought the evidence before the men of the city.

Now what would have happened if she hadn't been a virgin when she went to the marriage bed? The next portion answers that. Would it have been divorce? No! It would have been death. Notice now as we look in the 20th verse. "But if this thing be true and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel; then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die; because she has wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house so shall thou put evil away from among you. If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of one die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so shall thou put away evil from Israel." (Deut. 22:20-22) So you see beloved, divorce doesn't put anything away but death did. So you see if she was guilty before and hadn't said it then it was death not annulment. What did Moses say? That is what Jesus ask them. Did Moses sanction? Did Moses condone divorce? I don't believe the Bible teaches that.

Now let's notice if you will the last book of the Old Testament. As we turn to the book of Malachi. Malachi, the 2nd chapter beginning in the 14th verse. "Yet ye say,

Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet if she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." (Mal. 2: 14) In this thing of marriage God wants some companionship between those two and it is a covenant not so much between them but with Him. You see marriage isn't a contract between two people it is a divine ordinance of God. It is a covenant with God. It is not something that men and women think they can enter into and back out of.

Now notice how he goes on. "And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." (Mal. 2: 15-16a) God in the last book of the Bible said He hates divorce. Now beloved, God never instituted anything He hates. We begin to go back to this thing of marriage, it was instituted before sin and sin never has changed any of God's institutions. So we don't have to look for a place to pussy-foot around or straddle the fence.

When you come to the conclusion of what Moses commanded and what God says in the last book of the Old Testament, I believe that the school of thought in the Old Testament was that divorce was never instituted, condoned nor sanctioned by God nor any of God's prophets. So you can just forget this thing of playing around with fornication and adultery. Because beloved, this semantics on words is what has got a lot of folks off on the wrong track. Now language is alright but you had better realize Christianity is life. There is nothing wrong with grammar but beloved, we need an extra portion of grace. Never let language nor grammar be a substitute for life nor grace. They ought to add too, never take from.

Now we have looked at that school of thought. What did Moses say? Moses said you have hardened your heart and you are going to go ahead and not mind God's Word anyway. You are going to go ahead and do what you want to do. You know those people of divorce, usually before it happens they pull off the gloves and they slug it out. They get bitter and ugly and nasty with each other. Some of them never do go back and get right. You know they hurt in-laws. You see a lot of times it is not the ones that divorce but the loved ones that really get hurt and shamed in the thing. So we have looked at what did Moses command. Moses said the only thing a bill of divorcement was for was during the espousal or betrothal before the marriage altar. After it goes there, it is death then, no divorce. Death is the only thing the Bible teaches that dissolves marriage.

Now let us turn back because now the Lord is going to go back to the creator. What was His school of thought? Turn now as we go back to the 10th chapter of the book of Mark. Let's notice if you will the 6th verse. "But from the beginning," now then the Lord Jesus Christ takes them back to the beginning and goes back to our heavenly Father. He goes back to the creation. "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." (Mark 10:6) He goes back and He says why do you think God made them male and female? It was for marriage. You were created for marriage, you are different physiologically and biologically. God created you for marriage. That is the reason He made a man and a woman. We have come along in a age when we are trying to make men out of women and women out of men. And if you will check the divorce courts that is when this thing really started. When they tried to change God's creatures into something God never intended them to be. Men must be men and women must be women.

Now when we go back to the twenties there wasn't one out of seven divorces in the marriages back in the twenties, because back then men were men and women were

women. But you know it came around to World War II when women went to work, got independent and you know, just like the precious speaker this morning was speaking, men can't be mothers. Now beloved this is our big problem the mother out of the home that has been the down fall of our nation. You can say what you want too. I know, I was reared up in a home that way and I have seen homes this other way and folks, I know which is best. But you know I'm in a great big laboratory where they experiment has been run and I know, I can look at the product. Now when the women started dressing like men, the men begin to look like women, that is when the divorce courts picked up. See they have gone against the creator's thing. Now I want to tell you when you find them staying together you find a man that is a man and a woman that is a woman. It is a little bit of heaven to behold. I mean down through the years children, just like Dr. (Gray) Allison said, learned it at home. You know where they learn a lot of this stuff, at home. Not from the pulpits it is from the home.

So you see God's plan in the beginning was to be a man and a woman and those two would marry and become one flesh. He made them male and female for marriage. Created for it. So the majority of the Bible has to preach and teach and show you how to maintain a marriage not how to get a divorce. We find it much easier to go the other way than maintain. Now He says because of the way God created them, "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife." (Mark 10: 7) Now we have got a lot of folks that are married but they never have left mother and daddy, never have cut the apron strings. Now you see until there is some leaving there can't be any cleaving any gluing or sticking together. And there are a lot of mothers and daddies that have caused the divorce of their son or daughter. A lot of it starts back there at the knee. Just give that kid anything they want, permit anything, let them do their thing, and when they marry somebody else that is done that way, folks they are going to split the blanket. They are not going to have their way all the time. That is what happens.

Notice: "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife." (Mark 10: 7) I believe that it kind of implies there that she could get along in the kitchen a lot better with her mother than she could her mother-in-law. It says for him to leave his father and mother, didn't say for her to leave hers. To go with him but not to go with him to his mother and dad. Now I remember back in the twenties, I've seen couples that married that borrowed the \$3 to buy the license and all they had was a mattress they laid on the floor and set on apple crates but they had each other. I have seen them today move in to 50 and 60 thousand dollar homes with two automobiles and everything under God's heaven and wasn't together six months. So you see, it can't be things that keep people together, It is Jesus Christ!

There isn't a person that ever walked the face of God's earth that isn't too selfish and self centered to give their way to somebody else unless it is to get gain. What every last one of us need to be, we need to be conquered. We are rebels from birth, folks. That word cleave ought to be glued. It ought to stick, it ought to be a hard knot. They twain shall be one flesh. She lays down her will, not 50 percent. He lays down his will, not 50 percent. It is God's will and then you will see a little bit of heaven down here. "What therefore God hath joined together," (Mark 10: 9a) that word joined means yoked. You see, God yokes them together at that time to learn how to maintain a marriage and grow in love to each other and worship Him and be an example to the universe He has placed them in down here. Show them how to maintain a marriage not how to get one of these no fault divorces. "Yoked together" and then notice what He mentioned next. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." (Mark 10: 9b)

You see, the only person that can put asunder a marriage is God and He can't do it without taking your breath. Now that means the individuals that are married or the lawyers or the judge or anybody else. Let no man! But you see God has the privilege to asunder any marriage but He has limited Himself, He can't do it except through death. What were the vows you took when you stood at the altar? Until death do we part. Did you mean that?

Folks this thing of marriage is a divine institution of God. And beloved, because people are going to hardened their hearts in sin it isn't going to change God's institution. He isn't going to be able to come our way. But He sure would like to change us and control us and mold and bend and conform us to His image and what we should be down here. He then walks away and He is there with his disciples.

Now then the Lord Jesus Christ gives them the warning of the creator. Notice next, "Now in the house his disciples ask him again of the same matter. And he said unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if a woman put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mark 10:10-12) That is the warning.

Now then we have a school of thought we have to look at. What about the gospels? What about Jesus preaching and teaching? What was His school of thought? Now then we have the synoptic gospels to view together, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He doesn't sanction nor condone divorce. Now let me ask you a question. Do you believe that Bible you are holding is the verbal, inspired, infallible Word of God? Do you believe that Matthew could contradict Mark or Luke? Do you think Mark or Luke can contradict Matthew? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, or correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16-17) Now God's Word doesn't change. God's institutions don't change. God's commandments never change. You see the gospel is to change us we are not supposed to change it. And you know married folks are different from single folks. A single person can do a lot of things and get by with it, and you can't. You can do a lot of things a single person can't do and get by with it. Why? Because of God's institution.

Now let's notice here as we look at Mark. He says it is not lawful. Let's look and see what Luke has to say about it. Turn with me if you will to Luke the 16th chapter and the 18th verse. "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." (Luke 16:18) Now folks where do you get this stuff of the innocent party some of you preach and teach. Even the person that has never been married marries one that has been divorced then they are guilty. Where do you get this thing of the innocent party? What commentary did that come out of? It didn't come out of the Book. It didn't come out of the Book! I want to tell you this Bible sheds a lot of light on commentaries. There is nothing wrong with them. I've got a house so full of them I have them stacked. I'm going to have to build to make room for my books. But I always stay with the Book. So where do you get this thing of an innocent party when a person that never has been married marries one who has and that makes them guilty. Why? Because this one that was put away has gone and done the same thing of the one that put her away and she is as guilty as they are and that makes the other one guilty too. Where do we get this thing? Who ever thought up this thing of an innocent party? Moses didn't think it up did he? The creator didn't think it up, did He? Mark didn't think it up, did he? And Luke, he was kind of against it, wasn't he. Now then let's look at what Matthew said because you think

Matthew contradicts Mark or Luke. If it did I would have to lay my Bible down.

Now turn with me if you will to the 5th chapter of the book of Matthew as the Lord begins His church and begins to instruct them. Matthew the 5th chapter, the sermon on the mount. Matthew the 5th chapter reading the 31st and 32nd verses. "It hath been said," you see there had been a whole lot of old law and a lot of traditional commandments. Jesus said, "It hath been said" and let's notice what He said has been said. "Whosoever shall put away his wife let him give her a writing of divorcement." (Mat. 5:31) What He is doing is quoting Moses. Then notice the 32nd verse. "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication." So you see this couldn't have been after marriage because you can't fornicate after marriage, it is adultery, "causeth her to commit adultery. And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Mat. 5:32) Now let's stop and think for a moment. When you begin to study your gospels you have four gospels. Matthew is writing to the Jewish thinking of his day and is writing a gospel of promise, a promised Messiah to a promised people. He is writing a gospel of promise. When you come to Mark, he is writing to the Roman mind and the Roman thinking and he mentions if a man puts away his wife or the woman. You see those Roman woman were putting away their husbands but not the Jewish women. Only the Jewish man could put away the woman. Now notice Mark is writing a gospel of power to the Romans, the Roman thinking. Luke is writing a gospel of perfection. They had had 400 years of the golden age of Greece to develop and prefect man and hadn't been able to do it with philosophy and it goes back in the genealogy of the first Adam to the last Adam. And he says through Jesus Christ and His gospel you can be perfected. John writes to the believers a gospel of possession. So you see Matthew's thinking is different than Luke and Mark because he is writing to the Jew and brings in the Jewish custom.

Now notice with me if you will as we look at the 1st chapter of Matthew the 18th and 19th verses. Matthew the 1st chapter beginning with verse 18. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When, as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph," (espoused is the same thing as engaged or betrothed,) "before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily." (Mat. 1:18-19) He was going to get a few witnesses and put her away. Why? He could write her a bill of divorcement. They hadn't been to the marriage altar or the marriage bed and he could put her away. That is when God's angel said this is of me. This is of me. You see this ties in to what Matthew is writing. He is writing to the Jewish thinking and the Jewish custom and tradition of the day. He is not contradicting Luke nor Mark because he is not saying that you can get married and then if one of them commits adultery then you can divorce. Matthew isn't saying that. A lot of people try to say he did but he didn't say that.

Now let's turn, if you will, a little further. Turn with me to the 19th chapter of the book of Matthew. Again he deals with this thing in the same manner that Mark and Luke deal with it. Matthew 19 beginning with verse 3. "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh?" Now notice this next phrase. "Wherefore, they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them,

Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives:" but notice this next phrase "but from the beginning it was not so." (Mat. 19:3-8) At the institution it was not so and hadn't been so since. Now because our judicial courts and all go along with this thing, folks, that is no sign that you and I need to turn to that away from the Word of God. That is what they did in that day. If we would be honest that is what a lot of us have done. We have got a lot more tradition than we have truth, because we haven't let the Spirit of God put any backbone in us.

Now I tell you, there are too many people that are against this thing until some of them or their folks are involved. If that is all the Christianity you've got you haven't got much. If that your folks can do it can change your doctrine you didn't have much to start with. I want to tell you, when you get the right doctrine of God it is going to make you love them more and try to help them more. It isn't going to make you try to shun them. I've got a lot of good friends that I led to the Lord that were married and divorced before they ever got saved. That doesn't justify it, but I want to tell you I can work with anybody that has been married and divorced as long as they are right with God and they won't try and justify themselves. I can fellowship and work with them and I can love them. When you and I can't, we need to get right with God. Holiness is an attitude not an attainment.

Now let's read further. You see from the beginning it was not so. "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." (Mat. 19:9-10) Beloved, the law must have been a lot stricter than they were because they said, "Well Lord, we had better not even get married, had we?" He was telling them, you had better sit down and get some sane thinking and you had better get with God and you had better quit this stuff of running around in the world and look for a mate because beloved, you will get something you don't want. You see this thing is sacred and God means business and you had better get with God before you try to get with a mate. When you get with God He will lead you to the one he has for you and it will be a little heaven down here on earth. If you don't there is going to be a whole lot of hell down here on this earth. We have a lot more of that going on than we have the heaven.

So we see that if we look, Matthew, Mark, nor Luke, they don't contradict each other. You see Matthew is writing about the Jewish thinking and he is going back to what Moses said. What Mark and Luke said didn't contradict and they even omit the word fornication. They used the word adultery. The reason for that word fornication it is going back to the bill of divorcement before they went to the marriage bed and it used Joseph and Mary as an example.

Now then, let's look at the school of the apostle Paul. Did he contradict what the Lord said? Now turn with me to I Corinthians the 7th chapter. Let's notice the 10th verse. Let's look at the school of thought here. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and 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 be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman who hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." (I Cor. 7:10-13) Here are two people and they marry and might have been lost when they were married. You see beloved, I believed that lost people are married just as much as the saved. I believed that when you were lost you were married just as much and as these other people. If I didn't I would have to say you were living in adultery if you were

lost when you got married. So you see they were married. One of them gets saved, He says to that saved one don't you leave them and don't you divorce them. You stay with them if they will stay with you. They can leave but you can't. You have to keep the door of reconciliation open.

Now when you read a little further there it says if they leave, then you are not invited. It doesn't mean that you are no longer married and there is a lot of people try to preach and teach that but if you look at the 39th verse it says as long as they breathe, as long as they live, they are husband and wife. It is going to take more than your mate leaving you to loose you from marriage bonds folks. When they leave, bless God, it is going to be dying not moving out. Now you say well preacher I was lost, out there in darkness and didn't know.

Let me say this from the bottom of my heart, it is a shame on us preachers that we haven't loved them and tried to tell them the truth. How many of you preachers ever preached a whole message on divorce in your church? You preached tithing, didn't you. But where do they need help most? What is the most important thing in our church? It is the families. What is the most important? Helping them live for God and live with each other. If we neglect that fellows we are majoring on minors. Then look at the little fellows that are hurting. They say, well preacher I was lost and then I got saved. I got married and then I got saved. Yes, then you say but preacher the Lord forgives and certainly He does. But did you know that your first marriage wasn't sin. Hebrews 13 says "marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled." You see, God doesn't forgive that first marriage because it wasn't sin. When you try to justify yourself that is the stump you are going to run into, that your first marriage wasn't sin. God don't forgive marriage. Amen? God wants you to learn how to maintain marriage. He is not in this business of separation.

Now let's notice what this thing does. Go to your Old Testament. The greatest metaphor you have in your Old Testament is God married to Israel and He couldn't divorce her. When you come to the New Testament the greatest metaphor you have is Christ married to the church and He can't divorce her. You see if you are going to teach that you can get married and divorced and remarried, you are going to have to teach that you can get saved, get lost, and get saved again. This tears up the foundation of the security of the believer. Secondly, when you look at the 7th chapter of Romans, you are going to tear up the great doctrine of sanctification. As long as she is married to a husband she can't be married to another. You go to the I Corinthians 7 and you are going to tear up the great doctrine of reconciliation. The door has to remain open. You are going to tear up the wonderful image God has given to the church and a husband and wife compared to Christ and the church. You are going to tear down the image of the church of the living God. Look at what you do when you go against God's teachings.

Then let's notice something else when you turn to I Timothy and you turn to Titus, you are going to go along with two standards. It said that the bishops and the deacons were to be the husband of one wife. That doesn't mean bigamy, one at a time. Certainly we know it wasn't polygamy. So there is a different standard for us than there is for you. Amen? Then when you try to justify this one and say that they can marry and go ahead and preform it. You are going to get in more trouble than you can get out of and probably get run off. And you ought to be, for not being honest with God and honest with His people to help them. You see you are spending too much time trying to justify them and what they have done and try to set up something in the church for them and to justify our pastor if he remarries them. If we had spent as much time as we should have on how to

maintain it, bless God, we wouldn't have so much of this problem. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. A stitch in time will save nine.

So as we go to the Bible, I want you to turn as we look at the last school in Mark the 6th chapter and the 18th verse. One of the greatest preachers that ever walked the face of God's earth got his head cut off because he preached on divorce. I guess this is the reason it scared a lot of other preachers. Now notice here in Mark 6:18, "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

So as we have looked through the Book, the question that was ask Jesus Christ was, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" Folks I can't find any place in the Book where it says it is. It is not legal. Oh, it is done. We do a lot of things but God isn't pleased with it. Has God called us to help our people or hurt them. Those homes that you are ministering to need help. I don't know of any people walking the face of God's earth that need more help than a precious husband and wife. Pressures that are put on them from the outside, pressures from the church, pressures from the children, pressures by in-laws, pressures by relatives. God give us shepherd's hearts that we will try to teach and to draw them together to maintain and not how to get rid of each other.

Let's bow our heads now for just a word of prayer. Every head bowed and every eye closed as they play softly. The altar is open. You may have a wrong attitude toward some people that are married and divorced. Somebody might have hurt your brother or sister or your son or daughter and you need to come to the altar and let God get those things out of your heart. The altar is open. As they play softly.

Preachers, have you been honest in trying to help those precious souls God has given you to shepherd? After Jesus had finished preaching He turned around and picked up a little child and he showed them those that got hurt. Those little fellows don't sleep, they don't understand why mother and dad don't stay together. They love both of them too much to be separated and they weep and cry themselves to sleep a many a night because of a self-centered selfish mother or dad. A lot of them from broken homes and they have wrong attitudes and dispositions toward mother and dad.

You just can't keep that old wrong attitude toward that former mate or those in-laws. You don't love what they did, but you have got to love them. God will make you. We'll be going in a few moments. The question is going to rise and if you minister you are going to face this thing. You are going to have to face truth. You are going to have to preach it in such a way the Bible does not contradict itself or they will throw it right back at you. It doesn't. This Book was given to help us. I don't know of any more help you need but in the home. Deep down in their hearts that is what they want. They want the truth. They want help. They have been hurt enough. We need to preach the gospel so there can be so healing done. Oh, Lamb of God I come. Just as I am.

I was over in West Helena, Arkansas preaching. A young teenage boy brought a 13 year old girl to the service and she wept the whole time. They said that her mother and daddy is getting a divorce. She was torn up and could not sleep at night. She loves mother and loves dad. She just can't understand why mother and dad don't come back together.

I am so glad God reared me in a stable, close home. Thank God for mothers and dads that live Godly. Show those sons and daughters something. Mother and dad might not have done right but don't let any bitterness get in your heart and cut you off from God.

We have looked this morning at every school of thought found in the Scripture. No place does it legalize nor justify, but thank God, the Lord can clean us up and we can worship and serve Him and go again.

I don't know of any area of the Bible that I have studied and fasted and prayed and cried over more than this area that I have spoke to you on this morning. I go from home to home and town to town across the nation and find people crying and wanting help. You know you just can't get close to God without getting under a burden and wanting to help them. When it has been in your family it hurts folks. It hurts those nephews, nieces, and after a while that grandmother and granddad can't even go see those little fellows. Just snatched away from them. They just weep and cry at night. These things ought not be.