

Unlawful Divorce

Mark 10:2
Charlie Brackett

The Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him a question testing Him. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" they asked. This is an important question for us to consider. For several years now our country has had no-fault divorce laws. A person can get a divorce from our courts for any reason, even though trivial.

It was not very different when Jesus walked on earth. Those Pharisees taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason so long as he gave her a writing of divorcement. If he was no longer pleased with her, he simply had divorce papers drawn up, and the marriage was over. Like today, their laws sanctioned the practice.

Earlier, however, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus limited what they understood was sanctioned by the law of Moses. In Matthew 5:31 beginning, Jesus said, "...it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." Such teaching was not popular. The religious leaders objected because it countermanded their teaching and threatened their authority. The general populace also objected. Jesus' teaching limited their freedom to do as they pleased regarding marriage.

It is no wonder that today the Lord's teaching on divorce and remarriage is unpopular. In the thirty odd years of no-fault divorces in the United States, our society has grown accustomed to easy divorces. Almost half of all first-time marriages end in failure, and the divorce rate is higher for repeat marriages. It has become common to enter marriage with the idea it can be ended if the going gets tough. And, guess what? It always does!

My friend, we need to listen to what the Lord says about divorce in this text. He speaks as the Creator. He created us, and He created marriage. He understands our needs, and He does not sanction divorce for every cause. Will we listen to God or man? I will listen to God. How about you?