

Let Not Man Separate

Mark 10:10-12
Charlie Brackett

Jesus had taught about marriage, "What God has joined together, let not man separate." Being accustomed to easy divorces, the statement no doubt surprised the disciples. When they got into the house, they asked again about the matter. Jesus' answer was, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." Matthew gives us a parallel, but more complete record of the Lord's comments in Matthew 19:9. Listen, please. "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."

Mark states the general principle which our Lord taught. That is, marriage is for life, and if a person divorces his mate and marries another, he is guilty of adultery with the second partner. Matthew, on the other hand, gives us not only the principle, but an exception to the principle. Namely, if a person's mate is guilty of sexual immorality, then, and only then, the Lord allows him to divorce his mate and marry another. In the case of the first marriage being violated by sexual immorality, the second marriage relationship is authorized by God. He participates in it by joining the two together. Any other second marriage is not authorized by God. He does not join the two together, therefore, it is adulterous and will have to be answered for in the day of judgment.

Someone says, "That's a difficult restriction. If that's the way it is, then maybe it's better not to marry the first time." That is exactly the conclusion reached by the disciples when they first heard this teaching. They said, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." (Matthew 19:10)

Of course, not everyone can go through life without being married. God didn't intend them to. He made men and women to need one another and provided marriage as His means of bringing two together into a special oneness that is good for each. But, God intended that relationship to be permanent. What God has joined together man has no right to separate.

The fact that marriage *is* permanent should cause us to think more seriously about who we marry. When two people join themselves together after choosing carefully and prayerfully, the marriage will have a better chance of success. And when those two people work at marriage as though there is no other course, believing that marriage is for life, the marriage will succeed.