

婚姻为何失败——马可福音 10:1-12 (上)

Why Marriages Fail – Mark 10:1-12 (Part 1)

Introduction, Outline

- Bible reading: Mark 10:1-12; Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Mark 10:1-12

1 Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them. 2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. 3 And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” 4 They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” 5 But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. 7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, 8 and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” 10 In the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. 11 And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; 12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”

- One word sums up the reason why marriages fail: “hardness of heart” (verse 5). Marriages fail because people are hard-hearted and unwilling to accept God's good will for marriage. God's original design was for all marriages to last a lifetime.
- Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, man has never seen one single perfect marriage relationship. Not one marriage is without pain and struggle. However, today, divorce has become such a common thing. People no longer have any sense of shame over divorce. Instead, they think divorce is everyone's free choice, which is completely normal and not a moral issue.
- Outline:
Title: Why Marriages Fail
 1. Background (related scripture)
 2. A Hard-hearted Temptation of Jesus (vv.1-2)
 3. A Hard-hearted Distortion of Scripture (vv.3-4)
 4. A Hard-hearted Failure of Marriage (v.5)

Background (related scripture)

- The Jews at the time of Jesus had a liberal attitude toward marriage. “Legal” reasons for divorce include: your wife burns your dinner, or spins around in the street to expose her ankles, or speaks so loudly that the neighbors hear it, or talks to other men, or says something bad about your mother-in-law... If your wife is infertile, you're pretty much obliged to divorce her.

- Christians' understanding of marriage must not be based on the shifting sand of culture, but must be built on the solid foundation of God's Word.
- The New Testament allows for divorce in only two situations: first, the spouse continues to live in sexual immorality and refuses to repent (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9); second, the spouse is a clear unbeliever and is determined to divorce the Christian spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15). But be warned: these two situations must be viewed as extreme exceptions rather than common occurrences. Just because a person has a long-term struggle with lustful thoughts does not mean he has committed sexual immorality which allows his spouse to divorce; nor can we say someone must be an unbeliever and allows his spouse to divorce just because he said something bad to his spouse in the flesh.
- "For **I hate divorce, says the LORD**, the God of Israel" (Malachi 2:16): **One sentence summary: God hates divorce.** This is God's **overall attitude** toward divorce. Divorce is never God's will. Any discussion on divorce must first give serious and full consideration to the fact that God hates divorce.
- Marriage is a covenant before God, and God is the witness of the covenant. **Proverbs 2:17** says one of the signs of a wicked person is she "leaves the companion of her youth, And forgets the **covenant of her God.**" Marriage is God's covenant, and tearing up God's covenant shows serious disrespect for God. When a society as a whole does not fear God, you will see an epidemic of divorce.

A Hard-hearted Temptation of Jesus (vv.1-2)

- "Jesus...went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan": Skipping over many significant events in Luke 10-17 and John 7-11, Mark takes us directly to the final period of Jesus' ministry in Judea.
- "Crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them": As usual, Jesus served all who came to him with teaching.
- "Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him...": Their question seems normal. Christians today often ask the same question. The problem is their motive. They weren't seeking truth in a humble and teachable way; instead, they were...
- "Testing him": They wanted to set a trap for Jesus. This question is their trap. They already knew Jesus' stance on divorce (Matthew 5:32), which was extremely unpopular at the time. (Analogy: If someone openly declares homosexuality is a sin in our society today, he will definitely become very unpopular.) If Jesus were to hold his stance, he'd immediately lose public popularity; but if he gave up his stance, they'd bring out his previous teachings and say that he is inconsistent and unfaithful to his word. This was their plan to "tempt" Jesus.

【Caution】 Beware of such tempting questions! What the truth is is not important to them, they just want to maintain their dignity, rights and status. That's why they made a case about divorce because it would cause Jesus to lose popularity.

A Hard-hearted Distortion of Scripture (vv. 3-4)

- "What did Moses command you?": In other words, "What does **the Bible** say?" As self-claimed experts of the Old Testament, of course you'd know the answer to such a basic question. Now, tell me: What

does **the Bible** say? However, the actual working principle of the Pharisees is: Rabbi so-and-so says this, Rabbi such-and-such says that, you choose your rabbi, and I'll choose mine...

【Lesson】 Learn to ask yourself this question: "What does **the Bible** say?" This is the **basic principle for Christians to deal with all practical issues.** Whatever practical issue we encounter, our answer is not: Pastor so-and-so says this, or that best-selling author says that, but: What does the Bible really say? Don't blindly follow the teachings of various rabbis!

【Warning】 Some Christians today have a morbid dependence on pastors. They want pastors to help them read the Bible clearly, and then directly tell them what God wants them to do specifically, so that they don't need to use their brains and just follow it blindly. Some say this is submission to authority, but it is not. This is laziness and a lack of love for God's words.

【Principle】 Every Christian has only one ultimate authority—the Lord Jesus Christ. If we don't know what God commands through Christ on any issue, then we have no way of obeying Christ on that issue. Then, when we take human teachings as scripture and obey them, we're practically making idols and denying the lordship of Christ in this matter.

- “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away”: This is a serious misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1!

【Background】 According to the teachings of Jewish rabbis, if a man wants to divorce his wife, he only needs to issue a formal document. The document reads: "Let this be from me your writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation; that you may marry whatsoever man you will." All you need is this piece of paper. Find two or three witnesses, read this divorce letter in front of them, and hand it to your wife, then you're legally divorced. This is a gross misinterpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1!

Just a little back in Deuteronomy, there is teaching that "You shall not divorce her as long as you live" (22:19, 29). Even when certain marriages are entered into immorally, once you enter into it, you cannot divorce for as long as you live (Deuteronomy 22:28- 29)! The Pharisees skipped over all these verses prohibiting divorce and landed in Deuteronomy 24 where they could find one verse they could distort, and they used that to answer Jesus.

【Correct Interpretation】 The original text of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not permit in any way. It simply assumes that it will happen, just as 22:28 assumes that rape will happen, but it is by no means permitted! The only command in this passage is in verse 4, whereas the first 3 verses simply describe a tragedy that will happen (because God knows that hard hearts will sin!). The only command is "her former husband ... is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, ... for that is an abomination before the LORD" This passage is a prohibition of remarriage, not a permission of divorce! Remarriage is prohibited because divorce isn't legitimate in the first place, so remarriage renders a person "defiled." God is warning those who want to divorce their wives easily: It is wrong for you to divorce your wife, and it's wrong for her to remarry. Her remarriage is considered defilement. And now, after she's been defiled, do you want to marry her back? No way! Absolutely not! Don't even think about it!

【Conclusion】 The Pharisees took a Scripture where God meant for them to take marriage seriously and not divorce and remarry casually, and they turned it upside down into a proof-text to support their

casual divorce. No wonder Jesus called them hard-hearted, so hard-hearted that they'd twist the Bible like this.

【Lesson】 If a person does not have the resolute determination to obey God's Word, he'll never truly understand the meaning of God's Word! If God's Word does not fully become a person's authority, he'll misinterpret God's Word to fit his sinful desires. The Bible is like a play-dough in their hands, and they can make it into anything they want!

A Hard-hearted Failure of Marriage (v.5)

- "Because of your hardness of heart": Impenetrable, indifferent to God's truth, callus-covered, no matter how hard you poke, their heart just won't respond. A soft-hearted person will feel pain when poked and will react; a hard-hearted person will have no reaction no matter how hard he is poked. In this context, their hardness of heart is revealed in their unwillingness to accept God's beautiful design for marriage. The hard-hearted husband refuses to love his wife sacrificially, the hard-hearted wife refuses to submit to her husband's leadership, and the result is that both parties want to get out of marriage.

Next time, starting in verse 6, Jesus takes us back to God's original design for marriage. The biggest error of the Pharisees is to focus on the laws and rules of what they could and could not do. Regarding divorce, the real question that should be asked is not whether people can get divorced. The real question to be asked is what beautiful design God has for marriage! People who truly understand God's perfect design will never even want to divorce.

Concluding application

If you haven't been married yet – Congratulations! You could just take “divorce” out of your dictionary. If you choose to follow Jesus, you will never need to use this word in your life. **If you have ever been divorced** – Examine carefully whether the divorce was permitted by God and how you can live a life of complete repentance today. **If you are struggling in your marriage** – Ask God to reveal the areas where you have hardened your heart, and rely on the power and grace of the Holy Spirit continually to pursue a holy marriage. **If you've never struggled in your marriage** – Well, what are you still doing down here? You are completely sanctified and ready to live in heaven! (Such a person does not exist!)

Marriage is a sanctifying gift from God to Christians, allowing us to see how much hard-heartedness we still have that needs to be softened by the blood of Christ. May God continue to sanctify us through marriage!