

## *“Teaching Concerning Hard Hearts”*

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### *“Divorce Exists Because Of Hard Hearts”*

Read Mark 10:1-12



This paragraph appears as an intrusion in thought to what has preceded. It does show the continued and open opposition Jesus faced by the religious establishment. They were determined to undermine His credibility and topple His authority. Their question was intended to “test” Him. There was no other reason for asking. The question was asked because of its difficulty. Their hope was to entrap Him.

Up to the very end of His ministry; “As was His custom, He taught them.” The topic is divorce. What is divorce? Divorce formally terminates a marriage. It is the legal dissolution of a marriage. In verse two the word used by the Pharisees is **apoluo**. It is a compound word meaning “to release from.” It is different than the word used in verse 4. Here it is the neuter form **apostosion** from which we derive our English word, “Apostasy.” **Apostosion** is used only three times in the New Testament (Matt. 5:31; 19:7; and Mark 10:4). In all three occurrences it is translated with “divorce.” The sister word is translated “forsake” in Acts 21:21 and “apostasy” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (i.e., “falling away”). The meaning of divorce in Mark 10:4 is explained by the statement, “Send her away.”

In divorce, a spouse is released from the covenant established with their husband and/or wife. Either party is sent away. There is a defection from the covenant which had been cut.

Even though God permits divorce, the action exists because of the fall. Had there been no fall there would be no divorce. Divorce is a consequence of sin, and sin produces in the sinner a hard heart. The word used to describe the consequence of sin, “Hard heart,” is made up of two words: **skleros** and **kardia**. **Kardia** is our English word, “Cardia” and occurs with various words: Cardiologist, Cardiac-arrest, Cardiomyopathy, Cardio-gram. The word **skleros** simply means, “Hard.” It can carry the idea of “fierce or strong” (James 3:4). It can also mean “harsh” (Jude 15). A hard heart is one in which the “heart” is no longer responsive. In this context, it is a heart that sits in opposition to one’s spouse. The hardness is so severe that divorce happens. All of this is because of the fall of Adam and Eve.

Yet as Jesus points out, divorce was not a part of the original picture painted prior to the fall. God’s picture was a man and woman uniting together to form a “one flesh” union. This union would be distinct from any prior relationships that existed. The words used to describe this one flesh union are of interest: “united” (v. 7 [the NAS does not include the statement “united to his wife.” The NIV does. It reflects the idea found in Genesis 2:24]), “one flesh” (v. 8), “joined together” (v. 9).

The word used in verse 7, “United,” is a compound word. It takes the word for “glue” (**kallao**) and places a prefix (**pros**) in front of it to heighten or empower its meaning. In marriage, God “superglues” two individuals into a “one flesh” union. This union is so transforming that “they

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are no longer two, but one.” The contrast established between the “two” and now the “one” is set by a strong contrasting connector (**alla**). The word “joined together” is another compound word. It means, “To yoke with.”

God’s picture of marriage is the coming together of two individuals to form a new union whereby the two quite literally become “one.” It is in the mystery of this union that we have pictured the union Christ has to His church (Eph. 5:31, 32). Although the finite fallen picture is incapable of capturing completely the reality, it does speak to the weight of what one does when they enter into covenant with another. This union can only be severed, a renting of the one flesh, by a hardness of heart. It is because of sin that divorce takes place. **Had there been no sin, there would be no divorce.** Although provision is made for a divorce to take place, its availability does not necessitate its certainty. **Just because it can happen, does not mean it should happen.** All of this appears to be straightforward.

Yet as was their “custom” the disciples needed further explanation as to what this meant on a “practical” level (Mark 4:10, 34; 7:17; 9:28). What our Lord says next emphasizes the strength of the “one flesh” union. It is because of sin that divorce exists. But if one puts away their spouse for the purpose of another individual, then they are committing adultery against their first spouse.

What is Jesus saying? If you leave your spouse for the purpose of marrying another, you are committing adultery. What is Jesus not saying? Jesus is not saying all remarriage because of divorce is adultery. This much is clear (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:12, 15). **Divorce is not an unpardonable sin.** Whatever issues exist in the marriage relationship, God’s pre-fall purpose is for couples to endure and work out their concerns by seeing the sufficiency of Jesus. Their ability to survive and exist in a difficult context speaks to the grace of God. The context is different, but the idea is the same in 1 Corinthians 1:8-10. God places us in difficult circumstances so that we would not rely on ourselves but on Jesus, who is enough. Yet divorce does happen. And it happens because sin exists. It is a reality that marks our existence.

The word Jesus spoke attacked the prevailing mindset concerning divorce and remarriage. This same word is to be spoken today. The marriage covenant is to be celebrated and fought for. Divorce, although present, is not a solution to the problem. Its existence and provision does not necessitate that such be the outcome. Yet despite one’s efforts and desire, it can and does happen. What is the community of faith to do in the face of this difficulty? **First**, recognize it for what it is. It is there because of sin. **Second**, look past the sin and seek recovery of individuals in and through the community of faith. **Third**, believe the impossible. God can choose to do what He wants with what is His and when He does, it is always right. What God can do and what He wills to do are often significantly (and dramatically) different than what we think He should or must do.

In God’s triumphant march toward the cross, He continues to show forth the majesty of His Son’s person and work. Jesus is enough despite our best efforts to argue otherwise. His response to the Pharisees accents His authority over the Pharisees.

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