

## Matthew ch 19 vs 1-

We looked last week at Jesus' teaching concerning the necessity of forgiveness. and How God sees it as absolutely imperative to our relationship with Him in that if we don't forgive another their offense toward us, how can we expect that God would allow a double standard and forgive our offense toward Him. When you consider the insurmountable debt that has been forgiven us by God, how is it that we can't find that same compassion in our hearts to forgive those who have maybe offended us. and In comparison their offense towards us compared to our offense toward God that's been forgiven us is so minute and yet we harbor within ourselves this heart of unforgiveness and we see so much of ourselves reflected in this parable of the unforgiving servant.

Yet Jesus said that God won't forgive us our debts unless we forgive those who have offended us, because how else is the love of God to be demonstrated through you if you're unwilling to forgive those who have offended you when that's the heart of God. God longs for the opportunity to forgive and so how can we truly be called His children and claim to have His nature coursing through us when we don't respond, as He would desire us to. It's so important that we crucify the flesh and forgive those who have in some way sinned against us, or offended us.

Yet instead of doing that how many times we would rather sacrifice a friendship rather than humble ourselves and extend mercy. Jesus would say to you go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." The Lord would have you extend mercy and forgiveness, and that from the heart and that word forgive that Jesus uses in vs 35 means *"To let go, to let alone, to let be, to disregard, to leave, not to discuss now, to omit, to neglect, to give up a debt, to forgive, to remit, to keep no longer, to permit, to allow, not to hinder, to give up a thing to a person."* (From The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Copyright (c) 1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.) In other words when it's buried under the blood of Christ you don't dig it back up for future ammunition in your next battle, and use it as a perpetual you owe me because remember when... To bring something back up into someone's face out of their past that's been placed under the blood, after you've said you've forgiven them, only shows that you haven't forgiven them and that you don't have the heart of forgiveness. You need to get on your face before God and ask Him to deal with you concerning that and ask Him to give you His heart and the ability to forgive that person.

But you don't understand Jeff how I've been violated, this runs deep, really, you obviously haven't grasped the reality of how you've violated God and how your sin ran deep in the heart of God. Deep into the side of Jesus Christ as His side was pierced and His blood was spilled because of your violation and yet He took that penalty upon Himself so that He might be in the position to extend forgiveness to you. and Now you're not going to extend forgiveness to this other individual? Again Col 3:12-13 "*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*" You see for the Christian, forgiveness is not an option, it's imperative, that is if you want to experience the forgiveness of God.

Read that parable over sometime and you'll realize that the only one, who was hurt by harboring unforgiveness, was the individual who refused to forgive. You're the only one who will suffer by harboring unforgiveness, that's one of the lessons of that particular parable; But this morning Matt ch 19.

Vs1

So Matt marks for us the fact that Jesus left Galilee, and this is the last time that He will have been in Galilee until after His resurrection. and It's plain to see on your map at the back of your bibles that by heading toward the region of Judea He was heading southward, ultimately toward Jerusalem where He is to be crucified and resurrected thereby atoning for the sin of the world. and He knows this, He's keeping a divine timetable and the Passover is near and so in order to stay true to all the OT types its essential that His crucifixion take place at the time of Passover. So He's heading for Jerusalem to His ultimate destination, that being the cross.

Vs2

No doubt as we've seen in times past when Matt uses the word "multitudes" he's in reference to literally thousands of people that are accompanying Jesus, you could probably safely estimate anywhere from 5-15,000 people. and Jesus could never pass by the needs of a person with out being moved with compassion and doing something about it, He was in the business of meeting needs. If there was something ailing you and you came to Jesus you could rest assured that He would be moved with compassion and He would reach out to you and minister to the deep needs that you had. and You know what, He hasn't changed, what is it that's ailing your heart this morning? Because Jesus is here and He still has compassion for those in need, but the stipulation is the same, you've got to come to Him, so that He might meet the deep needs of your heart. He won't force Himself upon you, but if you're willing, He is able, and you can walk out of here changed this morning having had Jesus Christ touch your life in a very real and a very deep and a very personal way. You can be made whole, and you'll never be the same, but the choice is yours, all you have to do is ask,

(Jesus, if you're really here and what that pastor up there is saying is really true, I want that today. You know the things that plague my heart Jesus and I want to be made whole today, I'm tired of struggling and I know that you are the only one who can make me whole.) I've tried a lot of other things and nothing else has worked, Lord if your willing, I'd like to give you a try, would you heal my heart this morning? If you seriously cry out to the Lord like that in your heart, He'll reach out to you right where you sit and heal you of all that ails you as well.

I'm not saying that life with Jesus is problem free, I would be a fool to insinuate that, but I am saying that Jesus Christ can give you peace and make you whole and spare you the consequences of your sin, which makes the worst of struggles pale in comparison.

Vs3

Now the important word in this vs is that little word testing, or tempting, this was not a question that they had for Jesus out of genuine concern so that they might have a balanced understanding of the heart of God in this controversial issue. They were trying to entrap Him, or get Him to speak contrary to Moses. Or at the very least side with one of the main schools of thought on the subject at the time, so that the other might have grounds to hold against Him. They figured this question was a good one, because at the very least He's going to offend a mainline group of people regardless of which of the 2 views He took. And the topic is just as controversial today, divorce rates are astronomical, people don't like their mate, so they're looking for a justified means of escape, what *is* the heart of God on the issue, what *does* Jesus have to say concerning this issue of divorce and remarriage? *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"*

You see as I said there were 2 main schools of thought on this issue at this time, 1 very conservative, the other very liberal. and To sort of set the stage for this it's important that you know from where they get their thoughts in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. Deut 24:1 says something to the effect of, *When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, that he can write her a certificate of divorce, put it in her hand, and send her out of his house.* Well the big question was what exactly constitutes "*some uncleanness*"? They were never in question of their right to divorce their wives; they just wanted to know upon what grounds was it justified? If you were of the school of rabbi Shammai, you held the view that under no circumstances were to divorce your wife unless you found that when you married her, she wasn't a virgin, or because of adultery, and that was about it. There were no other grounds that constituted "uncleanness."

However Rabbi Hillel's school of thought was much more liberal than that, he taught that just about anything you didn't like about your wife constituted uncleanness. Clear up to the point that if you liked your steak well done, and when you got it there was a little bit of pink in the middle, you could say that's it you're out of here. Hillel taught that if your wife so much as talked to another man in the streets or went out with her hair down, or had a bad temper or spoke disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his hearing, that these were all grounds for uncleanness and therefore grounds for divorce. That school of thought eventually went so far as to say that even if the husband ever found another woman that was more beautiful to behold in his sight than his wife, that she could be considered now "unclean" in his sight. and So he could legally divorce her to marry the other woman more or less trading her in on a newer model. So needless to say Hillel's school of thought was by far the most popular and it gave men that sense of justification in divorcing their wives and not feeling as though they were violating the law of God. So I personally think that these Pharisees weren't too concerned about which way Jesus went with this because they figured either way we've got Him in such a dilemma that He can't not offend hordes of people.

#### Vs4-6

So notice what Jesus does here, He doesn't side with either of the rabbinical teachings of the day, nor does He appeal to Moses from which they've derived their supposed justification. But instead He goes all the way back to the beginning and examines what God established from creation to use as the pretext for determining God's perfect will and the ideal concerning marriage. and Just a quick little side bleep, this word "made" in vs 4 is literally created, and so next time you come across someone who believes that the bible allows for some form of evolution in that yeah sure God sort of kick started the whole thing. But then just sort of allowed evolution to take over, Jesus didn't take that line at all, He points out that man was *created* from the very beginning. And the given in the text is that God having created male and female in the beginning means that God had an infinite amount of options at His disposal from which to choose from in how to create them and how they were to interact as far as marriage is concerned.

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing that we want to emphasize with out-throwing stones is the fact that God created them, *male and female*, God did not create them male, and male, nor did He create them female and female. You will not find anywhere in the scriptures where God advocates homosexuality. Now I know that in our culture today to say such a thing is definitely not politically correct, but believe me when I tell you I'm much more concerned about being biblically correct, than I am about being politically correct or culturally relevant. Now on the other hand homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin as some may seek to purport, God's love is unconditional. But He does not tolerate sin regardless of what it is and any sin no matter how morally shocking, or culturally accepted it is, is still sin and all of it separates us from God and leads us to hell if unrepented of.

I wanted to emphasize the fact that from the beginning God created 1 man and 1 woman and that was His desire. Had He wanted there to be other options He would've created man with other options. If He had condoned polygamy He would've created 1 man and multiple women, or had He thought divorce was OK He would've given Adam (and for that matter Eve as well) other options to choose from. But He didn't do He, He gave Adam one choice, Eve, Eve had one option, Adam. and That was God's desire and His ideal from the beginning, 1 man and 1 woman were to be joined together and be together until death separated them. Death unties the marriage bond, but short of that God desired that they stay together permanently. and I don't know what they did with Mal 2:16 where God says *I hate divorce*. To me that sounds pretty clear, God's desire is that you work it out and stay together because He sees it as a bond that is intended to be permanent, in vs 5 where He says, (read vs 5).

Vs5

That word "joined" right there or your bible might say cleave or be united is the Greek word "*kollao*", and it means, "*to join fast together, to glue, cement,*" is primarily said of metals and other materials" (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers) So when you take two pieces of metal and you weld them together, that's how God sees the marriage bond. Or when you take 2 pieces of paper and you super glue them together, that's how you are seen before God in marriage.

Now sure there are two pieces of paper there or 2 pieces of metal, but they've become one unit. Try to separate those pieces of paper after they've been perfectly glued together and see what happens. I guarantee you, that you will never get them to separate with out causing some form of major damage to one sheet if not both and its irreversible damage. Divorce does the same thing, ask anyone who's gone through it and they'll tell you that it's not a pleasant thing, it's very painful and it leaves an element of permanent damage, why because the 2 have become one and they've been torn apart. There's not only a physical, but a spiritual union that takes place, and the two become one, and of course that is literally fulfilled in your children, somewhere to the tune of 23 chromosomes a piece 23 from the mom and 23 from the dad.

So the 2 literally become one, and anytime there is divorce where there is children involved, mark my words, they suffer and they are torn. God hates divorce, why, because at the root of all divorce is sin. It doesn't matter what either party says with in the relationship, at the root of divorce, some where in the relationship there is sin that culminates in, and causes the divorce. Sin wasn't apart of God's original plan, so again Jesus takes them back to the beginning to show them how divorce wasn't part of God's original plan, just as sin itself wasn't part of Gods original plan.

To say that divorce is ordained of God is to say that sin is ordained of God which we all know better, but this is what Jesus is trying to make clear to these guys. That marriage is spiritually binding before God; it is not merely a social contract, that's to be violated anytime there's a minor inconvenience.

Don't let anyone fool you even the best of marriages can be tough, any time you get two sinners together sooner or later there's bound to be problems. But you don't just throw in the towel at the 1<sup>st</sup> bit of contention, because according to Jesus marriage is divinely ordained, and so what God has joined together, let not man separate. Pray through it, seek godly counsel, humble yourself before God and your spouse and confess your errors and your pride and work it out. It takes both of you pulling equally to establish a balance, again where it speaks of being joined I can't recall where I read it but someone spoke of the idea of 2 oxen being joined by a yoke and it takes both of them pulling equally to accomplish the work to which they've committed. If one pulls harder than the other they get out of line, and if one refuses to work at all than the whole forward movement comes to a screeching halt and nothing is accomplished. and It may be a little on the weak side for examples but you get the idea, it takes both of you putting equal effort into the relationship if it's to have it's proper end, which is togetherness until death do you part.

Vs 7

We got Him boys, they think they've got the Lord on a double-edged sword and He's fallen right on to it. If you're saying the divorce is wrong, why then did Moses *command* to give a certificate of divorce. But if you go back and read that passage in Duet 24 you'll see that these guys are twisting scripture, look at what Jesus says.

Vs8

So Jesus immediately recognizes their error and places the scripture back into it's proper perspective, Moses never *commanded* anything. At best he permitted it because of the hardness and unwillingness to reconcile that existed in man. But you see that's why it's so important to know God's word and be one who rightly divides it so that when you're confronted by someone who is twisting the word, you'll recognize it and be able to defend it properly. Every now and then I'll get that person who says to me, "*Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?*" Trying to tell me that God has some major problem, with my hair and that I'm somehow in sin. and I always have to encourage them not to close their bibles at that vs but to read the next 2 as well. Where Paul says, "But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God." and Then I have to ask them, are you apart of the churches of God, then it's just not a problem is it? You see there's a big difference in bowing to people's personal prejudices (which is what that is), and so in reality its sin in their own lives.

Vs not using my freedom to cause other people to stumble, (big difference), one is sin on my part; the other is sin on theirs. and It's important to know God's word so that you might discern between the 2.

So Jesus says here listen guys, Moses never *commanded* nor approved anything, he allowed it because of the hardness of you own hearts and really as a safety net for the women. Because in that society women had virtually no rights and no way to take care of themselves and so if a man kicked his wife out of his house and then she's living on skid row, and another man came along and wanted to take her to himself as his wife and take care of her, this other guy could pipe us and say I don't think so she's still my wife. and So this man could literally ruin her life perpetually, and so Moses said no if you send away your wife, you give her a certificate to make it official. and When she has that certificate she can never be your wife again so you'd bettered make sure that, that's what you want to do. and So it was never meant to be a license to run around and always be trading in your wife on a newer model. It was meant to be a form of security for the wife so that she could remarry and not have to live out her life in poverty or prostitution or begging for other people's breadcrumbs. But from the beginning it wasn't so, God did not originally establish that, it was to be 1man, and 1 woman, till the parted by means of death.

Vs9

So there it is, the one "clause" that the Lord says can legally in the eyes of God, dissolve a marriage contract, being sexually unfaithful to your spouse, and fornication covers it all. Whether it be a homosexual involvement, or heterosexual involvement with someone other than your spouse, bestiality or anything of the like. and Even at that it's God's 1<sup>st</sup> desire, if it's possible to work it out, however if you can't come to grips with it, you are released and you do not sin. Now Paul adds to this in 1 Cor 7:15 that if your spouse is an unbeliever and they depart from you that you aren't bound to them in such a case, he says, "*But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.*" But he also says that if the unbeliever is willing to live with you that you aren't to seek to be separated from them, if they aren't trying to hinder your relationship with God than stick it out. If they are than pray about it and let God work it out, now I would also say that if you are in an abusive situation and you are being physically beaten and battered that God doesn't desire that for you, because again He's called us to peace. But I can't tell you personally to run down and file for divorce until God speaks to you personally about that, but I would tell you to not even hesitate in being legally separated because again God doesn't desire that type of relationship for anybody.

## Vs 10

In other words, man this seems to be a serious union to enter into, and it might be wise to not even get married! and That's what Jesus is trying to get a crossed to them, this is not a social contract, it's a vow before God that needs to be seriously considered before entering into. Some of the Pharisees had made it sort of this fly by night ordeal by which if they didn't for some reason like the person or some personality trait of their spouse, they'd just divorce them and move on. (Sounds a lot like the world we live in now doesn't it?) But Jesus would say, hey count the cost, because as far as God is concerned it's not quite that simple and He's the One we need to be concerned with.

To marry and then divorce under some other guise other than what Jesus is saying here isn't acknowledged by God as a divorce, that's why it's committing adultery to remarry, because as far as God is concerned you're still married to this other person. Now does that mean it can't be placed under the blood or forgiven, no not at all, but we aren't to use the grace of God as a cloak for vice either. and As much as people may like me to I can't water down what this is saying, it applies to me just as much as it does anyone else.

## Vs11

So some are given the gift of singleness, they don't struggle with those passions that weigh on those who haven't been given that gift, such as sexual temptations and struggles. Paul the Apostle was given that gift, and he speaks a little bit about it in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 7, J.B. seems to have had that gift or at least stayed single for the sake of the kingdom, but not everybody is given that gift.

## Vs12

In other words if you can stay single and devoted to the things of God unencumbered by the things of married life, hey wonderful use it for the glory of God, go for broke and run the race to win. But one is no more spiritually elite than the other Prov 18:22 says "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.*" So it just depends on what God has called you to do, either way be content and serve God with all your heart.

## Vs13-15

Now don't think even for a second that it's coincidental that Jesus now turns His attention to the children having just finished His teaching on divorce. You'd probably be surprised to learn the large percentage of kids that are in trouble with the law that come from broken homes. and How many kids are turned away from God or who grow bitter towards God because of the divorce of the parents, and Jesus has such love for children.

So I believe it's very significant that Jesus ministers now to the children having just taught on divorce and the damage that it brings. and The disciples were rebuking the people bringing their kids to Jesus when Jesus had just taught them that in order to even enter the kingdom they have to humble themselves as children and now they're trying to keep the kids away from Him. But the Lord rebukes them and quickly reminds them, hey, you let them come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven, and He prayed for and ministered to the kids. Take the time to invest Jesus into the lives of your kids, pray for them, and minister to them.

Now, we've gone over a very sensitive subject today and I would have you know that even though God hates divorce, He loves you, God hates sin, but He loves sinners. God desires to extend mercy and grace and forgiveness, but He would also spare you the hurt and the pain that comes along with these things and so He issues stern warning. and Again I can't water them down, but it's not the unpardonable sin, nor does it belittle or lessen God's love for you. So if you've been through divorce I would encourage you to talk to God about it if you haven't already, allow Him to wash you and make you new and clean before Him, allow Him to heal your hurts and renew you. and If you're on the fringe of divorce or are contemplating it, I implore you don't do it, humble yourself before God and your spouse and seek God to heal your relationship with Him and with each other. Because if you're willing, He is able.