

For I Hate Divorce - Says the Lord

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The morals of our day have dropped close to those of Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed with fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24). As we look around us in the world we see prophecy coming to pass. Conditions are getting worse--but then let us look at the religious world and see how the standard has continued to drop to the place where today there is very little difference between the standards of the secular and the religious worlds.

Moral standards began to drop as the religious world took on the status of the secular world. God's people cannot fellowship with the world and remain the same. When moral decay begins, it is like opening the door, and the floods come in to destroy completely. When people know God, yet do not worship Him as God, they open themselves up to deception, and God will let them dishonor themselves amongst themselves.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). When a group of believers moves off the ground of truth and drops its standard of holiness, allowing sin to move into its midst, that gathering ceases to be the pillar and ground of the truth. The Scripture tells us that *"a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough"* (I Corinthians 5:6). Jesus has said, "You shall know the truth and it shall make you free." Sin hardens hearts and blinds eyes, but much more than this, it separates man from God. Man may overlook, but God is concerned with "every jot and tittle." The world will pass away, but God's Word will stand. *"Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8). *"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior. Because it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy"* (I Peter 1:14-15). God's standard of holiness is Himself, not just a set of rules. God's people are to be holy because God is holy. If we are in Christ we will keep His commandments.

When coldness creeps into a gathering, morals are not the first thing to be affected. Standards are affected, and then gradually sin is allowed into the lives of members. Once sin in any of its expressions is overlooked, we know it won't be long before the moral standards are dropped. Then there are no absolutes; everything is gray, with no black or white. Sin blinds, and we cannot know, nor do we want to know God's way of holiness. When a gathering allows sin, it brings with it a rebellion against the strict demand of God's love, which is holiness. We can never approach the subject of holiness from the viewpoint of our opinion, intellect, reasoning, or the "letter of the law." Holiness can only be understood and walked in by the Spirit of God. The beginning place is, do we have a heart for God? If we have a heart for God, we can go to God's Word and He can speak to us.

People of the world do not have a heart for God. They are dead in their sins, living unto themselves and after the lusts of the flesh and mind. They are sowing to the flesh, and will reap what they have sown. Try as they might, they cannot stop the reaping. But we can stop sowing to the flesh by coming to Christ and making Him Lord, and by beginning to sow to the Spirit. For as long as we continue to sow we will continue to reap. If we sow to the flesh it results in death; if we set our minds on the flesh, death results. That death is eternal death--there is only one hope for life and that hope is Christ. He is the only One who can give us life when we are dead in sin.

The Spirit of God is given to guide us into all truth, and to give us the power or ability to be a witness to His life and nature. Christians cannot walk in the Spirit and continue to sin, for this is a contradiction of His Life and Word. Romans 8:4 tells us that *"the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* The walk in the Spirit is a walk in obedience to the Word of God.

As Christians, what do we look to for our standard of morality? The answer is, God's Word. What is the standard for morals of those who are not Christian? The answer is still the same; God has set forth the standards. In most of our world today, men are under the rule of ungodly men and forms of government. But even those who deny God recognize that the moral laws God has set forth are a must, if a country or a people are to be brought to a unity in purpose. In the natural realm, when the morals of a country or people decline, the fall of that people is close at hand. We can see that God has set forth the standard for morals, whether it be in the community of His people, or in the world; and when man sows to the flesh he must reap corruption. God is not a respecter of persons.

When people are not under God's law they are lawless, and come to that place where they begin to destroy themselves. Our society has come close to the point where it doesn't want to punish when moral laws are broken. The human rights movement of our day has brought us almost to the place where every man is a law unto himself. This is all part of the moral decay in our time. Scripture tells us that *"as the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be...marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be"* (Matthew 24:37-39).

The devil always hits at God's order. In the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve by getting her to act on her own. He pulled her out from under her spiritual covering, which was Adam. Satan has always tried to divide what God has said is one. If he can get man to move separately from God's law, then man plays right into Satan's hand and destroys himself. When men or courts divide what God has said is one, our moral decay has already begun; judgment is sure to follow. As in the days of Noah, we may think everything is going along fine and judgment will not come--but judgment is sure.

When marriage is broken, the decay of the family is well on its way. The decline in morals follows, with accelerated effects on children. This spreads to every area of our society. The alarming thing is, nobody seems to care about anything except satisfying his own lusts. With this as a goal there can be no true lasting happiness, because it is built upon the wrong foundation.

Divorce

What does God's Word say about divorce? There are not many who care what God says about it. But since man was made by God and for God, we must look to God, for in Him we have the truth which will stand for eternity. While there are many who are only looking for gratification of their own desires and lusts, even these cannot set aside God's standards. When they do, it is to their own destruction and damnation. This is all according to what God's Word says will happen in the last days: *"Men will follow after their own ways, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God"* (II Timothy 3:3-4).

Man, when he doesn't want to obey God, looks for a way around the demands of a holy God. He takes the clear commands of God and tells himself and others that these commands are not for today--or that they are for the Jews. But just to explain them away does not set them aside. God's Word is settled in heaven forever. So, the commands of God are given to us to obey, not to change in order to suit what we want to do. Man was made, not for himself, but to glorify God. God loves man even in his state of sin, but God hates sin and has revealed His hatred and judgment of sin by sending His Son who died

for our sins. God's judgment on sin was the cross.

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Even though sin is sweet for a season, its final payoff is death. Men's hearts have become blind, to the place where they live only for themselves. They have become so hard that they don't know or care what is right. Today, they live to satisfy their lusts.

"For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel..." (Malachi 2:16) God does not change His standard. Men's hearts change, but through the ages God has not changed. Man cannot change the commands of God to suit the desires of his own flesh or heart as they are at the moment.

We can understand the natural man being carried about by his mind, and doing what he wants to do, but when those who say they love God and stand for holiness begin to twist the Word of God to make a place for sin in the so-called "Christian community," then we know the end is near. This compromise has been taking place for quite some time, with the explanation that now "they have more light." They say, "The love of God covers all sin, so we can just keep on sinning." Men are deceived, and are deceiving; they are blind and leading the blind.

God's Word is plain in this area of divorce, if we want to know the truth. But if we don't want to follow the Lord, we can't understand even the simplest English. The question seems to be the same today as it was when Jesus was here on this earth: *"Is it lawful for a man to put away [divorce] his wife?"* (Matthew 10:2) The answer to this question is the same today as it was when Jesus answered the Pharisees. God doesn't change His mind, nor does He make exceptions for special conditions or circumstances, as many are trying to do today in religious circles. Jesus' answer to them was, *"For your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. [This is God's putting together.] What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."* Then later in the house He said to them, *"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery"* (from Matthew 19:3-9).

Writing to the Romans, Paul witnesses to this same truth. In Romans 7:2 he says, *"Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies she is free from the law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress."* Also in I Corinthians 7:39 Paul says again, *"A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."*

These three Scriptures all agree that the wife and husband are one until death shall part them. We might note that these Scriptures nowhere say "unfaithfulness" gives one the right to divorce his or her mate. The only reference to unfaithfulness being grounds for putting away is made in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. These references are in the Jewish setting, referring back to Deuteronomy 24:1. In the Jewish culture, there was a time of separation between the establishment of the marriage covenant and the coming of the bridegroom to take his bride. It was possible for the Jewish bride to commit an act of unfaithfulness or fornication by giving herself to another man before the marriage.

Jesus said, *"except it be for fornication."* This pertained to an act of fornication before the coming of the groom to take his bride. In the Jewish culture a couple was considered man and wife at the time of the marriage covenant, but became one upon the coming of the groom to take his bride. Once they had become one, death was the only thing that could separate and free the other to marry again. Jesus said

that unfaithfulness during that time of separation was the only ground for putting away or divorce--and this was before they had come together as one. If a man put away for any reason other than unchastity, it made the wife an adulteress, and whoever married a divorced woman committed adultery.

These truths are plain to those who want to hear the demands of a holy God. The law of marriage is for mankind, not just for those who have accepted the Lord into their lives. John the Baptist lost his head for his stand against Herod's having his brother's wife. Neither Herod nor his brother's wife was a believer, but their condition was still adultery according to God's Word.

Salvation doesn't free us from the demands of God's commandments. The law says, "You shall not commit adultery." When anyone commits adultery he transgresses God's law, and that is sin. Being a sinner does not free us from our moral responsibility to God's law. All men are morally responsible for their actions and deeds whether they are Christians or sinners. Man would like to escape his moral responsibility and say he is not responsible, but God's Word says that every man will give account for his words and deeds. Every man is without excuse, when it comes to the knowledge of God's demands. *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them...so they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened"* (Romans 1:19-20). It is true that man can reason his way to justify whatever he desires, but this does not relieve him from his responsibility to obey God's Word.

One excuse that is being used today in many religious circles is that God forgives sin. This is true, but on what basis does God forgive? II Corinthians 7:10 says, *"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death."* There can be no salvation or forgiveness without repentance. A heart of true repentance proves itself by turning from its sin; whatever our sin is, God's grace is sufficient to forgive, if we will only repent and receive it.

Repentance needs to be seen in the light of God's Word and clearing oneself with that Word, rather than in the light of the desires and lusts of the flesh. It's easy for one to say, "I am sorry for what I have done, but God doesn't want me to live by myself the rest of my life." Or, "I want God's salvation, and I want to continue to live in sin." This is impossible--either we repent from sin or we don't have salvation. More and more people are being told, "God forgives you; just tell God you are sorry." God only forgives when you're sorry enough to repent and forsake sin. Marrying and living with someone who has a living mate is adultery. The way of repentance is to stop living with that person.

We cannot look at the situation from an emotional standpoint. God does not overlook sin for any reason. His commandments demand obedience. Many people have gotten their lives so tangled up that it would be impossible to bring them back to the beginning point. Wherever they find God they have to turn--repent--from their sin to find His salvation. This is going to mean different things to different people, according to where sin has taken them. We cannot help but reap what we have sown. So in many cases there will be a cost, but that cost is the price of sin.

Others have the philosophy that we are to remain in the condition wherein we were called, using the passage found in I Corinthians 7:17-24. The references in this passage are to circumcision and slaves. The verses do not refer to the condition of sin, such as adultery. If it were possible to use this logic, we could say, "If you are a drunkard when you are called, you should remain in that condition," and "If you are in adultery when you are called, you should remain in that condition."

But let us not be children in our understanding. God's commandments are plain if we want to obey, and obedience is not on our conditions, but is obedience to God's Word. Adultery is one sin that reveals the

real desires of men's hearts. The lack of true repentance tells us that man would rather live for himself than meet the demands of a loving God. Man has lost his sense of value--he doesn't care what God says; he is going to satisfy his own lust to his own damnation. His one concern is himself. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). God's standard is sure, and calls for obedience. We can reason and explain it all away if we want to, but God's Word says there will be no adulterers in heaven. We need a revelation of God's holiness, not "logic" that makes a place for sin in our lives. The wisdom of man cannot know the ways of God (I Corinthians 2:13-16).

Some have said this is too simplistic a view about this question of adultery. They say there are many situations which cannot be resolved into obvious elements of black and white. But in this the command is clear. In God there are no gray areas. The question is, do we want to obey? Faith rests in the Word of God, and whatever is not of faith is sin.