

Divorce (Part 2)

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[0:00] Let's open our Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 7.

! God have brought it back with you. So we are going to take care of part 2 tonight, one way or the other.

Next week, because we are going to move forward, next week I'm going to kind of skip on ahead to the question out of Matthew 7 about who are the many and the few referred to by Jesus in Matthew 7 verses 13-14.

So that will be next Wednesday. And so you might go ahead and just study that passage for yourself. And then if you don't agree with me, you can just tell me, you know, and we'll discuss it. But tonight, we're going to finish up on the question that was asked. What is Paul's teaching concerning divorce in 1 Corinthians chapter 7?

[1:18] And I've added to that not only his teaching on divorce, but also his teaching on remarriage because that's part of the teaching. You can't separate the two. And we dealt with verses 10 and 11, which primarily deal with Christian, or does deal with Christian marriages.

We're both members, both spouses are believers. And now tonight, we're going to shift to a different scenario, but one that's very common, common in the church.

It was very common in the church in Corinth. And so that's where we're going to be, verses 12-16. So let me go ahead and read that text, and then we'll just work our way through this.

Starting with verse 12, 1 Corinthians chapter 7, 1 Corinthians chapter 8, 1 Corinthians chapter 8, A specialized issue in the Corinthian church related to unequally yoked marriages. That's the obvious issue, and I didn't need to tell you that, but we're just, you know, just some considerations before we really delve into what his point in these passages.

[3:28] So what is an unequally yoked marriage, by the way? I'm kind of borrowing from, I think, the King James language. It is a family where the husband is a believer and the wife is an unbeliever or vice versa.

So it's an unequally yoked marriage. That's the issue here. Now, I mean, that's the specialized kind of scenario. The issue, however, is really this question.

And this is the question that was on the minds of some of the Corinthian believers. The question is, is a Christian free to dissolve an unequally yoked marriage?

And that really is the question here that Paul is addressing. Is a Christian free to dissolve or end or seek a divorce, a separation of an unequally yoked marriage?

That's the question. And, you know, some Christians, Christian believers, or Corinthian believers, rather, were somehow, in their minds, they were justifying divorce from their unbelieving spouses for, apparently, for a number of reasons.

[4:46] Number one, devotion to pagan worship. That was an issue in the Corinthian church. That was an issue in all the churches in the early first century of the church.

And so there is a reason that some were concluding it would be better to divorce my, say, husband because he's involved in pagan worship, which, by the way, was a little more than just bowing down to some idol.

It involved gross immorality in many cases. It certainly did in Corinth. And idolatry, of course, but it was mixed with some very impure, sexually impure practices.

So, here's this Christian young lady. She's come to Christ now. And she's married to this guy who regularly participates in the fornication that's involved in his pagan worship.

Secondly, the teachings of Paul. Some were concluding that they should dissolve the marriage, this unequally yoked marriage, because of the teachings of Paul against entering unequally yoked marriages.

[6:01] And we're not going to look at this passage yet, because I'm going to save it for a little bit later. But now, the teachings that are recorded in 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 14 certainly came after this passage, this first letter.

But apparently, I think it's safe to say that Paul had been teaching on the subject. And so, it could be that there were some in the church unequally yoked situations, and maybe they were making a conclusion about Paul's teachings about unequally yoked marriages, making a wrong conclusion that they should end the marriage, so that they wouldn't be in an unequally yoked marriage. MacArthur, I think, was insightful in this comment. He said, Some may have thought that to continue in their unequally yoked relationship meant to join Christ to Satan, defiling the believer and their children and dishonoring the Lord.

And I think he's probably right. There were some here at the church that apparently had come to that conclusion, that extreme conclusion, which was not the case at all. Thirdly, the freedom they were seeking to divorce, justifying divorce, based upon the freedom to be single and focus on serving the Lord.

And, I mean, you can just imagine some coming to this conclusion. They're married to an unbeliever. The unbeliever wants nothing to do with Christ, nothing to do with the worship of Christ, nothing to do with following and obeying Christ's teachings and the teachings of the apostles.

[7:42] And it didn't want anything to do with that. And so here is this believing wife. Let's just use that scenario. And she's thinking, You know how I could have greater freedom to worship God and greater freedom to serve Him if I was divorced from this unbelieving husband.

And so there was another reason, I think, that some were justifying divorce. Another reason would be the desire to remarry a Christian and enjoy a Christ-centered home.

And don't you imagine that that would be a heart's desire on the part of the believing spouse in that marriage? You know, not only can we assume that it was very difficult for the believing spouse to worship in the way she or he wanted to, not only would there be ridicule and persecution inside the family and all the natural issues that would come about, but can't you imagine that that Christian lady would love to be united with a Christian and have a Christ-centered home?

The last one would be newfound joys of love and fellowship in the Christian community, some of which I think would be inhibited, maybe even prohibited in the family because of the unbelieving spouse, especially if the unbeliever is the husband.

And we see this today as well in unequally yoked marriages where the wife is forbidden to be a part of the fellowship of the church, forbidden by her husband, and if not totally forbidden, at least restricted.

[9:43] And so there's not the freedom to be there at the church and enjoy the joy and fellowship of the church because of the unbelieving husband. So I think we can assume all of those kind of scenarios were going on in the Corinthian church, and so then some were concluding that it would be better to divorce, to dissolve.

I mean, this guy or this woman is not a believer anyway, and so let's just end this, and so I can just really be a part of my Christian faith without any hindrance.

The second preliminary consideration that I have there for you Paul's instructions in these verses, this is very important, we understand this, his instructions here do not justify unequally yoked marriages.

We can't come and draw an implication here that since Paul is giving instructions on what should happen or what a believing spouse ought to do in this unbelieving situation, we can't imply that Paul is endorsing this kind of marriage.

He's not. Scripture is not endorsing it. In fact, the Bible commands very clearly that Christians are to marry Christians. Christians are to marry Christians.

[11:06] A couple of places, in fact, you don't have to turn far for this first one, just the last verse, or near the last verse in chapter 7, a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to marry, to be married to whom she wishes only, and then there's this qualification, only in the Lord.

So, here's a scenario where the wife is not bound and free to remarry, but she must marry Christians. And so, that's, I think, a clear command.

And in 2 Corinthians, and I mentioned this verse or passage a while ago, and it's the famous passage in 2 Corinthians 6 and verse 14, where Paul says, Do not be unequally yoked together

with unbelievers.

For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness, and what communion has light with darkness, and what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? Unequally yoked. Or, do not be bound together with an unbeliever. And so, it's just pretty clear in Scripture. And the point I'm trying to make is that some might draw a conclusion here that since Paul is dealing with the issue of unequally yoked marriages, that maybe it's a permissible kind of an arrangement.

[12 : 39] But that's not the implication we need to draw from this. As a matter of fact, I think it's pretty clear that Paul, in this passage in Corinthians, is addressing cases where the spouse, one spouse becomes a believer after the marriage.

I think that's the issue here. We're not talking about, necessarily, about unequally yoked marriages that started out that way. Paul's talking to a church, a young church, a very evangelistic church, that is spreading the Gospel, sharing the Gospel, and God is gracious, and He's blessing, and He's saving people, saving people who are married.

And so, we're not talking about unequally yoked marriages that started that way. We're talking about those that became that way after one believer trusted Christ, and then the problems that it causes.

Thirdly, Paul's instructions apply to all unequally yoked marriages. Now, I'm not speaking out of both sides of my mouth. Even though Paul is not implying that that kind of arrangement is justified or is allowed in Scripture, and though he is speaking to a specific kind of scenario where one spouse becomes a Christian after the marriage, however, the instructions he gives apply to any unequally yoked type of situation, whether it started that way from the beginning or became that way in the advent of one of the spouses becoming a believer.

So, I think we can draw that conclusion here. And then fourthly, Paul is instructing the Corinthian Christians by his own apostolic authority. And I just want to touch on that again just in case you weren't here when we dealt with this issue the last time with part one.

[14 : 45] When he said in verse 12, I, not the Lord, say... He's not there in that phrase denying the divine inspiration and authority of what he's writing.

It carries divine inspiration. It carries apostolic authority. Paul is just merely giving his own... He's not giving his own private opinion about the subject.

He is... He means here that Jesus did not teach directly on this issue. Jesus did teach directly on the issue where two Christians are married and He deals with the issue in verses 10 and 11 about divorce and remarriage.

And He says, the Lord said, and He said that because Jesus did teach on that directly. We looked at those passages. But on this issue, this scenario, Jesus did not teach on that.

And so, here is Paul speaking from his own apostolic authority. And it's binding and authoritative. So we don't have to think it's some authority of some lesser degree.

[15 : 50] Alright, now let's look at verses 12 and 13. Paul's general instructions to Christians bound in unequally open marriages. That's verses 12 through 12 and 13.

A few things that I would say about that as we try to discern or understand the meaning here. In the first place, life, let's just admit this, and it's not hard to admit it, life is difficult for both partners in an unequally yoked marriage.

Have you ever considered that, that it's difficult for both partners? They say, well, why should we care about the difficult life of the unbeliever? Well, I'm not talking about how much we ought to care for either one, but understand that it's a difficult situation unequally open marriages and it's difficult for both partners.

Certainly for the believer, it is. And every one of us in this room know of situations, and as a pastor, I have known of a number of them throughout my ministry, primarily where there's a believing wife and unbelieving husband.

And we have a situation like that in this church right here, maybe some right in this room. And I have, you know, very close information.

[17 : 10] I mean, I know how hard it is for some of these ladies, and we've talked about that. And so we know that. It's also difficult for the unbeliever. It's kind of interesting. I'll just quote this for you.

It's one unbelieving spouse who wrote this. He said, Two things have become difficult for me since my wife became a Christian. First, she's no longer the person I originally fell in love with and

decided to marry.

Second, there is now another man in the house. And she constantly talks about him. She refers to him with every decision she makes.

She always asks him for advice and instructions, and I'm no longer the boss in my own house. This is a quote, a direct quote from another. And I thought about that quote in my last pastor, and I won't mention their names, but a young couple in our church where the wife was a believer, a very strong believer, a very committed believer, and her husband was not.

And I tell you, she would share with Sherry and I, because she was part of Sherry's Sunday school class, how her husband just berated her about her Christianity and how she was always talking about Jesus.

[18:31] And they used to go out and party all the time and get drunk all the time and run around with a certain group of people and have all kinds of fellowships. He said to her on many occasions how much fun it was before she became a Christian.

And now she doesn't even want to have any fun anymore and can't get drunk anymore. And now her husband's a born-again believer. And he was saved and serving the Lord, serving the church. And what a difference, what a change has been made. But just understand that it's difficult for both sides. It's not a good situation. Secondly, as we consider his teaching here, the unbeliever is free to stay in the marriage or leave.

Now that's clear from the text, isn't it? The unbelieving spouse is free to stay in the marriage or leave. You know, willing to live with her, willing to live with him, verses 12 and 13.

See, unbelievers are not under this commandment that Paul gives because they are not in covenant relationship with Christ. They're not under this commandment.

[19:46] Thirdly, the believer may not initiate a legal divorce. That is taught here very clearly. Like it or not. No matter how tough the situation may be.

Now if there's physical abuse, abuse, I would never recommend that that wife or in some cases the husband to stay in that home and take that abuse.

There's something that can be done. But the Scripture is pretty clear. The believer is not to take the initiative in legal divorce. It says in verse 12, let him not divorce her. Verse 13, let her not divorce him.

And so that's clear from the teachings here in verses 12 and 13. Then some practical spiritual blessings of remaining in an unequally open marriage. Verses 14 through 16.

And there are several. In verse 14, a blessing of remaining in that unequally open marriage is the sanctification of the home.

[20:50] The sanctification of the home. He says, therefore, the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. And the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean.

But now they are holy, he says, or set apart, or sanctified. So there's sanctification. the point here is, well, the important issue is this word sanctify.

And Paul is not using the word sanctify in the sense of salvation. That's not the idea here in verse 14. I'm talking about salvation. Otherwise, he would not have spoken of the spouse as an unbeliever.

So the issue is not salvation. The word sanctify just means set apart. Literally. And so, Paul's point is threefold. Or twofold, rather.

No, threefold. I did say threefold. Okay. Alright. Two explicit and one implicit. Number one, the validity of the marriage.

[21:56] The validity of the marriage. It's valid in God's eyes, basically, is what we're saying here. That is, God sanctifies or sets apart the marriage as legitimate in His eyes.

That's what He means by sanctify. So, that's a blessing of remaining in the unequally yoked that we're not talking about a marriage that's not valid in God's eyes and so we ought to end it.

That was an issue with the Corinthian believers, some of them, apparently. It's valid. It's a bonafide marriage even though unequally yoked. Secondly, the legitimacy of the children.

The legitimacy of the children. If the marriage, you see, is not valid before God, and this was their concern, see, if the marriage is not valid before God, then the children are illegitimate.

That was the conclusion that they were coming to and it would be a natural conclusion. They would be illegitimate, born out of adultery or fornication rather. But that's not the case. That it is a

sanctified marriage and so the children are as well.

[23:07] They're legitimate. And then the third one is the blessing of God in the home. Primarily because one spouse in the marriage is a believer, the home is set apart for God's blessing.

That's something that Christians who are part of an unequally yoked marriage ought to realize that their very presence there means that God is going to bless that home because of their commitment to Christ.

All in the home benefit. And one Bible commentator wrote, one Christian in the home graces the entire home. Such a home is not Christian in the fullest sense but it is immeasurably superior to one that is totally unbelieving.

The indwelling spirit and all the blessings and graces that flow into the believer's life from heaven will spill over to enrich all who are near. And so there's the practical and spiritual blessing of the home, sanctification of the home.

Secondly, sacredness of the marriage vows. The sacredness of the marriage vows. Verse 15, But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart.

[24:32] A brother or sister is not in bondage to such cases but God has called us to peace. Now what is he talking about here? Well, first place, the believer is not to take the initiative here.

So the believer is not to contradict God's plan for the permanence of marriage. He certainly is the principle taught in the larger passage here.

And that's the idea here. The believer is not to contradict God's teaching, God's plan on that, the permanence of marriage. Let him, let her not divorce.

Verses 12 and 13 remember. Now, need to note that the principle of no divorce now has been stated four times in this passage. Starting with verse 10, from 10 to 13, no divorce has now been repeated four times.

So the believer is not to damage the plan. The believer also must not take any initiative in legally divorcing his or her unbelieving spouse. We can't help but draw that from this text here.

[25:40] And the believer must not promote or encourage his or her unbelieving spouse to seek a divorce or take up a legal fight in the courts to deny the unbeliever's choice to divorce.

The believer is not to The believer is not to The believer is not to divorce. is not to