**Divorce** – The issue is not divorce but *unfaithfulness to a vow* and its effect on another.

**Important Things to Keep in Mind:**

* Many preachers avoid this subject altogether, and especially avoid these two verses.
* We must not study some parts of the Word of God and then ignore others. We cannot shy away at difficult parts of God’s Word. These two significant versus are as much the Word of God as anything else throughout scripture.
* The gospel of Jesus Christ concerns every part and portion of our life, and we have no right to say that any part of our life is outside of its scope.
* All six of the subjects we are discussing are contrasts which our Lord draws now from comparing the law of Moses versus his teaching, but rather the false interpretation of the law by the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus is correcting the perversion and false interpretation of the law that was being taught by the religious leaders of his day.

**Let’s Do Three Things:**

1st – What exactly did the **Law of Moses** really teach about this matter.

2nd – What exactly did the **Pharisees and scribes** teach on this matter.

3rd – What exactly did **Jesus** Himself teach.

**What exactly did the Law of Moses really teach about this matter.**

* **Deut. 24:1-4 Compared to Matt. 5:31-32** (Jesus’ Summary)
1. Notice that adultery is not mentioned in Deut. 24:1-4 as a reason to be able to leave a marriage. This is because under the old law anyone caught in adultery would have been stoned to death. There was no reason to mention it. The divorce would be brought to an end by punishment, not divorce.
2. The whole object of the Mosaic legislation in this matter was simply to control divorce. The position had become very chaotic.
* In those days men generally held a very low view of women, and they had come to believe that they could divorce women for any reason even very frivolous reasons.
* Judaism generally had three approaches (*m. Giṭṭin* 9.10). Hillel argued that a wife could be dismissed for *“any good cause,”* which included something as trivial as burning the food. Shammai limited such a dismissal to *“unchastity.”* Akiba even permitted it for finding *“someone else prettier than she.”*
* This allowed for men to make up any reason to divorce women, when what was really happening was lust! Women and children were always at the disadvantage. Thus, the law addresses this with three principles.
1. First, divorce was limited to certain causes. Divorce was prohibited to natural, moral, or physical defect. **Divorce was greatly limited**, and certain issues had to be proven by the sight of two witnesses.
2. Secondly, any man who divorced his wife had to give her a **bill of divorcement**. Which meant she had been released from her marriage not because of unfaithfulness, and **it was done to protect her** (she was free to remarry).
3. Thirdly, the husband who divorced this wife and gave her a bill of divorcement **could not marry her again.** This reinforces that fact that doing this was a very serious matter, and one could not just go back on such a decision. It reinforced the significance of such a decision. Marriages could not be something you walk in and out of at will.

**What exactly did the Pharisees and scribes teach on this matter.**

* **Matt. 19:1-12 Compared with Matt. 5:31-32 and Gen. 2:24**
* The Pharisees and scribes said that the law of Moses commanded, in fact urged, a man to divorce his wife under certain conditions. However, **the law never demanded anybody to divorce his wife** (Matt. 19:7). Furthermore, they were also demanding divorce and insisting upon their right to it, for all kinds of **inadequate reasons**. They did so by using their own interpretation of what they considered unclean and worthy of a divorce.
* **For Example**: They taught that, if a man ceased to like his wife, or for any reason found her to be unsatisfactory to him, that, in a sense, was ‘uncleanness.’ Once again the Pharisees and scribes were, through their interpretations and teachings, causing injustice towards women, for their frivolous selfish reasons.

**What exactly did Jesus Himself Teach.**

* **Matt. 19:3-9 should be taken in conjunction with Matt. 5:31-32**

**1st Principle**: Jesus’ emphasis is that of the sanctity of marriage.

* Jesus is saying that marriage is not a civil contract, or a sacrament; marriage is something in which these **two persons become one flesh**. Jesus views marriage as *a permanent thing*.
* Furthermore, Jesus, in response to why Jesus commanded one to give a certificate of divorce, says that Moses and God only allowed such to be done **due to their hardness of hearts**. God made a concession. It was never God advocating divorce, or commanding anybody to divorce his wife; it was God reducing the chaos to a certain amount of order.

**2nd Principle**: God has nowhere in scripture ever commanded anybody to divorce.

* Having to write a bill of divorcement and commanding someone to have a divorce is not the same thing. **What God does teach is the law to love and forgive**! We are all undeserving and unworthy of forgiveness as sinners, but God has given us grace. This should shape all of our relationships, especially in the relationship of marriage.

**3rd Principle**: There is only one recorded legitimate cause and reason for divorce.

* There is one, but there is only one according to Jesus. The only reason Jesus gives for divorce is ‘fornication’ or **unfaithfulness** by one party.

**Surely the Early Church Faced Such Difficult Teaching: 1 Cor. 7**

**Vs. 10-11 – Paul says do not divorce your wife, and wife do not divorce your husband.**

* If you do you are to remain unmarried, or reconcile with your husband.

**Vs. 12-14 –** If your husband or wife are unbelievers (say a person comes to Christ yet the other is still lost), you are still to remain married as far as you are concerned.

**V. 15 –** If the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.Scholars disagree here:

* Some say that this just means one is able to get out of the marriage, but notable to remarry. They argue that only death allows one to be separated (1 Corn. 7:39).
* Some argue that if an unbelieving partner leaves then the marriage is nullified and one is released to marry another, as long as the new partner is a believers (1 Cor. 7:15 “not enslaved” and “God has called you to peace” as there evidence).

**Matt. 5:32:** Divorce Apart from Adultery and Marrying a Divorced Person

* Jesus is saying that there is only one thing that can break this bond. Therefore, if you put your spouse away for any other reason you are putting her or him away without breaking the bond. Thus, making her or him break this bond if they marry again, after an unbiblical split.
* These two versus are where Jesus enforces the previous **3rd Principle**. Jesus teaches that there is only one cause for divorce, and no other.
* **Concluding Words:** Adultery is not the Unforgiveable Sin! Rom. 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation in Christ Jesus! Divorce is rarely the option, so fight for your marriage and get help!