

I. **Review: 1Cor 7:6-7; Matthew 19:4-6 – THE ONE-FLESH COVENANT: MARRIAGE**

A. Paul's concession

- i. Certain circumstances necessitate singleness or marriage. All necessitate self-control.
- ii. Only those who accept God's definition of marriage should enter into that covenant

B. Some have the gift of being a Eunuch for God's kingdom

- i. Some don't have a passion for sexual intimacy
- ii. Some remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom of heaven

C. He Created them from the beginning male and female

- i. Each has their own roles
- ii. Each made for marriage – one flesh covenant
- iii. God does the joining
- iv. A reflection of Jesus and the church

II. **Continuation – *The One-Flesh Covenant: Marriage***

A. Matthew 19:7-9 (ESV) *They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" (8) He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (9) And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."*

- i. Jesus' teachings on marriage were an answer to those who sought a loophole in divorce: Mat 19:3 *ESV And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"*
 1. It would be like if I asked Bob right before I was baptized, "Is there a way I can undo this in case I don't like it for any reason?"
 2. The question betrayed the ignorance of the people on the matter
- ii. Jesus had to teach them what God's plan was from the beginning
- iii. Divorce was never part of the plan
 1. Marriage was initiated in a perfect world
 2. Divorce happens in a broken (sinful) world
 3. Marriage reflects God's desires
 4. Divorce reflects man's brokenness
- iv. Divorce is not a loophole – it is not an option
 1. It is not something to be sought
 2. It ought not to be pursued for any reason
- v. Divorce happens when someone does not submit to God's plan
 1. Sin – hardness of heart
 - a. Dissatisfaction and selfishness lead to the eventual breaking of marriage = Adultery
 2. Although a Christian may experience a divorce that Christian ought to never initiate the divorce.
- vi. If someone cannot accept this covenant after being married and seeks another marriage, they are charged with adultery, for man cannot break what God has joined.

B. Matthew 19:10-12 (ESV) *The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." (11) But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. (12) For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."*

- i. The disciples understood the kind of covenant Jesus defined for marriage. They knew it was hard to keep for they were accustomed to the practice of divorce (lack of self-control).
 - ii. Marriage is not for everyone (Mat 19:11-12)
 - 1. Some cannot grasp (accept) this commitment (contract)
 - 2. Eunuchs from birth who may not need to marry - they don't experience a passion for sexual intimacy
 - 3. Eunuchs by men (castration) – something that was typically done to some slaves in ancient times by the king to protect their harem
 - 4. Eunuchs by decision for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven - they don't pursue marriage for the sake of God's kingdom – a gift of the Spirit.
- C. 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (ESV) *To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. (9) But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.***
- i. Addressed to the singles
 - ii. Self-control
 - 1. Lack of it is not an excuse for immorality in any case
 - 2. All Christians have a Spirit of power, love and self-control (2 Tim 1:7)
 - 3. Without self-control we will be disqualified (1 Co 9:25-27)
 - 4. This self-control is related to the gift of remaining celibate for the sake of the Kingdom
 - 5. Jacob waited 7 years for his wife Rachel (Gen 29:20)
 - a. He did not have the gift of continence but was patient and submitted to God's plan
 - b. Marriage must not be taken in rashly – it is for life!
 - iii. For most in Corinth it would have been best to remain celibate (for the circumstances they were experiencing, verses 26-28)
 - 1. You may be undergoing such a circumstance in your life
 - a. Health issues
 - b. Age related issues
 - c. Other troubles of the time: financial, residential status, etc.
 - 2. Sometimes these call for singles to show restraint in marital desires
 - 3. Spouses need to come to mutual agreement to make sure they are honoring their marriage and fulfilling their conjugal needs adequately to not give the devil a foothold because of lack of self-control when facing issues that affect their conjugal duties.
 - iv. If you don't have the gift and understand and can accept the marriage covenant as designed by God then you can get married – it is not a sin.
 - 1. Marriage is better than to burn with passion
 - 2. Don't be a slave to immorality
 - 3. Celibacy is not a cure for sexual immorality; marriage is – if you can accept God's One-Flesh Covenant.
 - 4. Young widows were encouraged to marry to fulfill their role as women in the kingdom and give no occasion for slander - no hint of immorality (1 Tim 5:14).
- D. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (ESV) *To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (11) (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.***
- i. Addressed to those Christians who were married to each other

- ii. Jesus had already defined what marriage was so Paul had nothing else to add, only to reiterate:
 - 1. Don't get separated, don't get divorced
 - 2. If you get separated/divorced, remain unmarried (celibate) or be reconciled
 - 3. Even though translations (e.g., the NIV) often render the Greek word *chorizomai* as "separate" (which it clearly can mean), in Greek literature and legal documents it also was used as a technical term for divorce. Paul refers to the marital status of the women who initiated the action of *chorizomai* in 7:10 as "unmarried" (*agamos*).
- E. 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 (ESV) *To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. (13) If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. (14) For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*
- i. Addressed to mixed marriages, marriages between Christians and unbelievers
 - ii. The reason why Paul lays this rule down (verse 17) was because Jesus' talk on marriage was directed to Jews who knew not to marry Gentiles.
 - iii. Perhaps some Jewish Christians were encouraging the Gentile Christians of Corinth to abandon their pagan wives since they were now in Christ, citing such a union as unclean before God.
 - 1. The Jews were obliged under the Law of Moses to put away (divorce) foreign wives: Ezra 10:2-3 ESV *And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: "We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. (3) Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law.*
 - iv. Although this was true for the Jews, now in Christ we are under grace and called to peace (1 Co 7:15C). The Spirit teaches us God recognizes this "mixed" marriage by virtue of the believing spouse (any analogy to Christ and us ring a bell?) and therefore your children are holy (legitimate) as well.
 - v. If the unbelieving spouse is content to live with their Christian spouse there is no reason for divorce or separation. The Christian spouse is free to serve their unbelieving spouse in love. The Christian spouse is dead to any old sin or passion that used to motivate them. Their first ministry is their unbelieving spouse now.