

I. Two Vital Commands

- A. Foundations and Framework from last three weeks for considering Paul's teaching regarding divorce and remarriage here in 1 Cor 7:10-11**
1. In bulletin for reference
 2. Include
 - a. foundational attitudes toward topic
 - b. Framework for understanding text
- B. This is a command to Christians and not a suggestion, simple good advice, or mere godly counsel.**
1. *Parangellow* - to give an order, to command, to instruct with undeniable authority
 2. **Luke 8:29 (ESV)** ²⁹ *For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)*
- C. The command to committed Christians seeking to honor God with the highest devotion in every area of their lives, in regards to marriage, is this: "Don't leave."**
1. The command to Christian women in a Christian marriage to a Christian man is, "Don't leave."
 2. The command to Christian men in a Christian marriage to a Christian woman is, "Don't leave!"

II. The Content of the Command

- A. The command comes not from Paul but from Jesus**
1. Could be an instruction Paul received from Jesus
 2. More likely, given Paul's wording, it is a restatement of Jesus' response to the Pharisees in Mark 10:2-12
 - a. **Mark 10:2-12 (ESV)** ² *And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* ³ *He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"* ⁴ *They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away."* ⁵ *And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* ⁷ *'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*
 - ¹⁰ *And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."*

(1) Pharisees are always looking for loopholes, for a means to

- twist the word of God to their personal advantage
- (2) They ask Jesus if divorce is lawful knowing full well they have such a law and that if Jesus denies the law on divorce he will be negating the validity of the entire law, which would be blasphemy.
 - (a) Jewish law (and Roman law) gave all the rights to divorce to men and made it very easy for them to divorce their wives for any reason, even for setting a meal before them they didn't like.
 - (b) Divorce in Corinth was widespread and easily enacted for a wide range of reason including social aspiration and personal taste.
- b. Jesus responds by referring them back to Torah and daring them to deny the very word of God they are trying to trick him with
- (1) What did Moses command?
 - (a) Because of hardness of heart
 - (b) Moses wrote a law
 - (2) The comparison that matters
 - (a) What did Moses command?
 - (b) What did God create?
 - i) God created the conditions of marriage: male and female
 - ii) God enacts the mystery of marriage: two become one
 - iii) God maintains the sanctity of the individual marriage, and neither the spouse, nor the community, nor Moses can overrule God!
- c. Divorce and remarriage results in adultery.
- (1) Against both partners
 - (2) Divorce (though legal) leads to adultery (never legal)
 - (3) Divorce (though permitted) leads to sin (never permitted)
 - (4) Therefore avoid divorce as rigorously as you would avoid sin!
 - (5) (And, of course, in our society we have to add that all sin should be rigorously avoided because the wages of sin is death.)
3. Knowing that Jesus considered divorce and remarriage a violation of God's will akin to adultery, Paul issues these two vital commands to the Christians in Corinth (and, be extension, to all Christian at all times): do not divorce. Dissolving your marriage denies God's intent for marriage and God's will for marriage and is sin that produces soul deadening guilt rather than life giving devotion.

B. The two vital commands

1. Really one command applied to each partner in the marriage
2. To the woman

- a. **1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *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),*
- (1) To the Christian woman seeking the highest devotion to Christ Paul writes, “Don’t leave your marriage.”
 - (2) The verb separate means both do not leave physically, as in putting physical distance between you and your spouse, but it can also apply to intimate and emotional separation.
 - (3) Stay with him, learn with him, walk with him, worship with him, pray with him, love with him, work with him
- b. Parenthesis - if you do leave, if there is some reason why physical distance is a necessary option, your leaving cannot be to find another partner.
- (1) If you must leave, say for safety, then you must choose either to remain single or else choose to be reconciled with your husband.
 - (2) If a woman Christian woman chooses separation her options are singleness or reconciliation.
 - (3) The point here is not merely an allowance for a bad situation, the point here is the necessity to work in marriage with such love and devotion to one another that this choice between singleness and reconciliation is never needed.
 - (4) If Jesus’ command to love another is the primary focus of each Christian life, then there is no grounds for one to separate from the other.
3. To the man: **1 Corinthians 7:11b (ESV)** *and the husband should not divorce his wife.*
- a. Paul commands the husband: “Don’t leave!”
- (1) Not in your heart
 - (2) Not in your mind
 - (3) Not with your eyes (porn)
 - (4) Not in your affections
- b. The options for a Christian man in a Christian marriage are purity, faithfulness, and selfless love.
- (1) **Ephesians 5:25-33 (ESV)** *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,*

30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

- (2) In Paul’s day
 - (a) Men treated women as property to be used and discarded at will
 - (b) Divorce was frequently an expression of self-indulgent, sinful pride
 - (c) Therefore, divorce represents something uncharacteristically unloving and un-Christlike.

III. Conclusion

- A. The command of Jesus applies all the more to marriage, “Love one another!”**
 - 1. Divorce denies the will of God for marriage and is not an option for the devoted Christian couple.
 - 2. There may be circumstances where separation is a wise choice, but, while reconciliation is an option, remarriage is not.
- B. Human hard-heartedness seeks divorce. God seeks goodness, grace, and love.**