

The Covenantal Life
Week 6 - Covenant Dissolution
Matthew 19:3-9

- People have authority *in* marriage, but have no authority *over* marriage - it is established and exists objectively before God
 - So much of our disrespect for marriage comes in the name of “autonomy” - chiefly expressed in rampant divorce
 - Divorce is not ours to proclaim - man has no ability/authority to end a marriage
- Divorce is not utterly prohibited - God’s covenant law for marriage can be violated to such a degree that the covenant is dissolved
 - Deuteronomy 24:1-4 - Legal justification for divorce in the case law of Israel in particular circumstances
 - Malachi 2:16 - Go to verse for those who would absolutely prohibit the possibility of divorce
 - The condemnation here is of divorce based simply on aversion - unjustified
 - Matthew 19:9 - Jesus Himself makes an exception in His condemnation of divorce
 - God “divorces” Israel, nullifies the covenant between them - Hosea 1:9, 2:2, Ezekiel 16:32, 38-43
 - Divorce is not a decision, it is the result of sin - has an objective existence before God
- Not just any sin rises to the level of covenant-dissolving - grounds for divorce are narrow
 - Sexual immorality - sexual union is the covenant-making act, and when this is engaged in with another, the marriage can be legitimately dissolved
 - Flagrant violation of the nature of the covenant itself - surrenders covenantal rights
 - Not limited to the physical act (Matthew 5:28)
 - Giving to another what rightly belongs to the spouse, manifesting the one flesh union with another violates the covenant and may result in its dissolution
 - Abandonment (1 Corinthians 7:15) - refusal/rendering it impossible to engage in covenant renewal
 - When this occurs, the abandoned party should not feel bound by covenant obligations
 - Goes against the nature of the covenant itself, willfully fails to manifest the one flesh reality - withholding from spouse what is rightfully theirs
- Divorce (at least in most cases) is not absolutely required
 - Repentance can restore even the most damaged marriages
 - We should neither be quick to divorce, nor dogmatic where Scripture is not and assert that divorce is never right or appropriate