

Luke 16:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Analysis

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. Jesus gives a concrete example of law's enduring moral authority (v. 17). The statement is absolute: 'Whosoever putteth away his wife' (πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, pas ho apolyōn tēn gynaika autou), 'and marrieth another' (καὶ γαμῶν ἔτεραν, kai gamōn heteran), 'committeth adultery' (μοιχεύει, moicheuei). The present tense indicates ongoing state—remarriage after divorce constitutes continuous adultery.

The second clause extends the prohibition: 'whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband' (ὁ ἀπολελυμένην ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς γαμῶν, ho apolelymēnēn apo andros gamōn) also 'committeth adultery' (μοιχεύει, moicheuei). Both the divorcing spouse who remarries and the person who marries a divorced person commit adultery. This teaching directly challenged both Roman law (which permitted easy divorce) and Pharisaic interpretation (which debated grounds for divorce based on Deuteronomy 24:1).

Jesus affirms God's original design for marriage: permanent, exclusive covenant between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6). Moses permitted divorce due to hard hearts (Matthew 19:8), but this was concession to sin, not God's ideal. Jesus raises the standard, calling His followers to honor

marriage's permanence. This illustrates how the kingdom doesn't abolish law but reveals its true, radical demands.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish debate centered on Deuteronomy 24:1's phrase 'some uncleanness.' The School of Shammai restricted divorce to sexual immorality; the School of Hillel permitted divorce for trivial reasons (burnt food, a prettier woman). In Roman culture, both men and women could easily divorce. Yet Jesus returns to Genesis rather than debating Deuteronomy, asserting God's creational intent: marriage is permanent covenant that only death should dissolve.

Matthew 19:9 includes an exception clause—'except for fornication' (porneia)—suggesting sexual immorality may permit divorce and remarriage. Mark and Luke's accounts lack this exception, perhaps because they're addressing Gentile audiences where the sexual immorality exception was understood, or because they're emphasizing marriage's ideal permanence. Either way, Jesus treats divorce as always tragic, always involving sin (either the divorce itself or the conditions necessitating it), and always contrary to God's design. Christians should pursue lifelong marital faithfulness as witness to Christ's unbreakable covenant with His church (Ephesians 5:25-32).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' teaching on divorce demonstrate that the kingdom raises rather than lowers God's moral standards?
2. What does marriage's permanence reveal about God's character and His covenant faithfulness to His people?

3. How should churches balance Jesus' strong prohibition of divorce with compassion for those experiencing marital breakdown?

Interlinear Text

πᾶς	ό	ἀπολελυμένην	τὴν	γυναῖκα	αὐτοῦ	καὶ
Whosoever	G3588	her that is put away	G3588	wife	G846	and
G3956		G630		G1135		G2532
γαμῶν	έτέραν	μοιχεύει	καὶ	πᾶς	ό	
marrieth	another	committeth adultery	and	Whosoever	G3588	
G1060	G2087	G3431	G2532	G3956		
ἀπολελυμένην	ἀπὸ	ἀνδρὸς	γαμῶν	μοιχεύει		
her that is put away	from	her husband	marrieth	committeth adultery		
G630	G575	G435	G1060	G3431		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 19:9 (Parallel theme): And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:4 (Parallel theme): The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.