

Mark 10:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

Analysis

Jesus explained Moses' concession: 'For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept' (πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν τὴν ἐντολὴν ταύτην). The term 'hardness of heart' (sklērokardian, σκληροκαρδίαν) indicates stubborn refusal to obey God—literally 'hard-heartedness' or callous indifference to divine will. This phrase appears in contexts of rebellion (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Ezekiel 36:26). Jesus identifies divorce not as divine design but as accommodation to sinful human stubbornness. God permitted divorce to regulate an evil practice, preventing worse harm (forced cohabitation in hostile marriages, wife-abuse, unlawful remarriage). But permission doesn't equal approval. This interpretive principle is crucial: Old Testament concessions to sin (polygamy, divorce, slavery) aren't normative but demonstrate God's patient accommodation to human fallenness. Jesus points beyond concession to God's creational intent (vv. 6-9).

Historical Context

The phrase 'hardness of your heart' echoes Exodus 4:21; 7:13 (Pharaoh's hardened heart) and Deuteronomy 9:6 (Israel's stubbornness). In Jewish thought, 'heart' (kardia) represented the will and moral center, not mere emotions. Hardness indicated deliberate resistance to God. Jesus' diagnosis that divorce stemmed from sklērokardia was theologically radical—He reinterpreted Deuteronomy 24 not as divine ideal but as concession to sin. This challenged Pharisaic assumption that Mosaic law represented perfect divine will. Jesus taught that some Old Testament

provisions accommodated sin without endorsing it, pointing toward the New Covenant's heart transformation (Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 36:26). Reformed theology distinguishes moral law (reflecting God's eternal character) from positive/civil law (temporary provisions for historical context).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' explanation that divorce was permitted 'for hardness of heart' help distinguish between what God allows and what God desires?
2. What does this teach about interpreting Old Testament laws—some reflect eternal moral truth, while others accommodate human sin without condoning it?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ	ἀποκριθεὶς	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Πρὸς	τὴν
And	answered	G3588	Jesus	and said	unto them	For	G3588
G2532	G611		G2424	G2036	G846	G4314	
σκληροκαρδίαν	ὑμῶν	ἔγραψεν	ὑμῖν	τὴν	ἐντολὴν	ταύτην	
heart	of your	he wrote	you	G3588	precept	G3778	
G4641	G5216	G1125	G5213		G1785		

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:51 (Parallel theme): Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Nehemiah 9:26 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets

which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

Matthew 19:8 (Parallel theme): He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

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