

Matthew 19:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Jesus explains that Moses permitted divorce 'because of the hardness of your hearts,' but 'from the beginning it was not so.' Divorce represents concession to sin, not God's ideal. The phrase 'hardness of hearts' (Greek 'sklerokardia'—hardness, stubbornness) indicates sinful rebellion requiring legal regulation. Reformed theology distinguishes God's perfect will (permanent marriage) from His permissive will (allowing divorce in fallen world). This verse shows that not every biblical permission reflects God's best but sometimes His accommodation to human sin.

Historical Context

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 regulated divorce but didn't command it. Mosaic Law protected women from arbitrary divorce by requiring written certificate and preventing remarriage to first husband after intervening marriage. Jesus clarifies this was regulatory, not prescriptive—managing sin's consequences, not endorsing divorce. 'From the beginning' appeals to pre-fall creation as normative standard.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish God's ideal from His accommodation to human sin?
2. What 'hardness of heart' in yourself needs confronting?
3. How should the church balance biblical ideals with pastoral care for broken marriages?

Interlinear Text

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι Μωσῆς πρὸς τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν

He saith unto them Moses because of hearts

G3004

G846

G3754

Moses

because of

G3588

hearts

G4314

G4641

ὑμῶν ἐπέτρεψεν ὑμῖν ἀπολῦσαι τὰς γυναικας ὑμῶν ἀπ'

of your suffered you to put away wives of your from

G5216

G2010

G5213

G630

G1135

G5216

G575

ἀρχῆς δὲ οὐ γέγονεν οὕτως

the beginning but not it was so

G746

G1161

G3756

G1096

G3779

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 2:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

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