

But I Say to You - Divorce

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[0 : 00] Well, if you would turn with me this evening to the Gospel according to Matthew, in chapter 5. The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 5.

And if we just read verses 31 and 32. Matthew 5 and verse 31. It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

And so this evening we're continuing in our study of this well-known sermon which was preached by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sermon called the Sermon on the Mount. And the theme and the message of the sermon is a call for us to live as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

[1 : 15] It's a sermon all about Christ-centered living for Christ-centered lives. And we have been taught a lot by Jesus so far.

We've been told about the marks of Christian character and conduct by way of the Beatitudes.

We've been illustrated to us with the illustration of salt and light.

That we are to live distinct lives from those who are in the world. But in the second half of this chapter, Jesus has been teaching us about our relationship to the law.

Not by nullifying the law or in any way adding to it. But Jesus has been giving us his commentary on some of the aspects of the Ten Commandments. And his intention and purpose is to give us a fuller understanding and a greater revelation as to why these laws were given in the first place.

And as we've said before, the reason for his teaching is because the scribes and the Pharisees who were meant to be the teachers of the law. And who were meant to explain the law.

[2 : 21] They only taught and emphasized how to keep the law outwardly. But for Jesus, the law doesn't just demand the outward reformation of our lives.

It demands the inward renewal of our hearts. And so in this section, Jesus is aiming to cut right to the heart of our thinking and our actions as Christians.

And we've seen that already when Jesus gave the explanation of the sixth commandment. Where he talked about anger and he said, thou shalt not kill. And Jesus emphasized that murder doesn't just begin with actions.

It begins in the heart because it begins with anger and hatred. And then last week, we saw that Jesus gave an exposition of the seventh commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery. And in that commandment, Jesus stressed to us that we need to watch our heart. We need to watch the eyes of our heart. Because according to Jesus, looking at someone with lustful intent is the equivalent of committing adultery.

[3 : 27] And Jesus exhorted us to take the issue of lust seriously. To the point that he uses the figurative illustration of plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand.

And Jesus used this illustration with the purpose of driving home the point that we need to protect ourselves from falling into temptation. But now as Jesus moves on from the very personal topic of lust, part of us would hope that he's now going to move on to something less personal.

And yet Jesus proceeds to talk about divorce. And as we said last week when looking at these topics, Jesus is encroaching on our personal space.

To the point that he may begin to make us feel quite uncomfortable. And they make us feel uncomfortable because these topics are topics which are very sensitive.

And personally, I find these subjects very hard to preach on. But I don't want to be guilty of avoiding what God's word teaches us. Because I am convinced that this infallible book is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[4 : 49] But thankfully I'm not the only one who found it difficult to preach on these subjects. Because the late John Stott, who was a well-known writer and a long-standing preacher at All Souls Church in London.

In his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, when John Stott reached this section on divorce, he commenced the section by saying, he said, I confess to a basic reluctance to attempt any exposition on these verses.

This is partly because divorce is controversial and a complex subject. But even more so because this is a subject which touches people's emotions at a deep level.

There is almost no unhappiness so poignant as the unhappiness of an unhappy marriage. And there is almost no tragedy so great as the degeneration of what God meant for love and fulfilment into a non-relationship of bitterness, discord and despair.

But with this pastor's heart, John Stott, he went on to say, Although I believe that God's way is not divorce, I hope that I shall speak with sensitivity, for I know the pain which many suffer, and I have no wish to add to their distress.

[6 : 06] And in a similar vein, I wish to echo these words. Because we need to tread carefully and tread cautiously. But I want us to do so by sitting down at the feet of Jesus and listening to what he has to say on this subject.

And I'd like us to do so by sitting down and listening to his four headings. Controversy, creation, concession and counsel.

Controversy, creation, concession and counsel. So we'll look firstly at controversy. Controversy. Jesus says in verse 31, just to read it again. He says, And so when Jesus began this section on divorce, you'll notice that in these verses, he didn't follow the same formula as the previous sections.

Because as we've seen before, Jesus sought to teach us using the method of contrast. Where he contrasted some of the Ten Commandments with this fuller revelation of God's word.

[7 : 34] And Jesus did that using contrasting phrases. Where he said, You have heard that it was said, but I say to you. You've heard that it was said, but I say to you. But in this section, Jesus is still referring to the Seventh Commandment.

Which he raised back in verse 27. When he said, You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

But you'll have noticed that Jesus doesn't introduce this section on divorce with a standard phrase, You have heard that it was said. Instead he begins with a phrase, It has been said, or it was also said.

And the reason why Jesus did this is because he's no longer referring to what the Commandment taught about adultery and divorce. He's now referring to what the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching about adultery and divorce.

Because as we said earlier, the Sermon on the Mount seeks to address and realign the distorted teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. And so here is Jesus and he's opposing the way in which a passage was interpreted by the scribes and the Pharisees.

[8 : 54] And the passage which was up for debate was what we read earlier in Deuteronomy 24. And that's what Jesus paraphrases here when he says in verse 31, Whosoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

And I say paraphrases because that's what the scribes and the Pharisees were doing. They were paraphrasing what the passage in Deuteronomy 24 actually said.

Because when you carefully read Deuteronomy 24, it states that the grounds for a man divorcing his wife and giving her a certificate of divorce was only to happen if she had committed some unclean act or some indecent act, such as being sexually immoral.

However, the paraphrase statement of Jesus underlined the fact that some of the scribes and the Pharisees, they were teaching that you could give your wife a certificate of divorce for whatever reason you wanted.

And this controversy about divorce and the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, it had actually divided a rabbinic school, the school from which the scribes and the Pharisees were taught.

[10 : 15] Because according to the history of the first century, there was a division, there was a rival between two rabbinic schools. The rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel.

Shammai and Hillel. And the division between the school of Shammai and Hillel is that the Shammai school took more of a conservative view of Scripture.

And the Hillel school took more of a liberal approach to Scripture. And the Shammai school, they were more conservative and they claimed that Deuteronomy 24, it was straightforward.

Just read it. Because they believed that it taught that the sole ground for divorce was a grave offence of something unseemly, which implied sexual immorality.

But on the other hand, the more liberal Hillel school, they held that Deuteronomy 24 could be interpreted to mean that a man who desired to be divorced from his wife could do so for any reason whatsoever.

[11 : 24] And in complete contrast to the Shammai school, the Hillel school interpreted the something unseemly. They interpreted it in broad terms, in order to include the most trivial offences.

And when you read it, it's crazy because some of the offences included that if after marrying your wife, she proved to be an incompetent cook, you could divorce her.

If you lost interest in her, you could divorce her. If she was getting old, and she wasn't as beautiful as when you first married her, you could divorce her. And according to the Hillel school, these things were classed as unseemly acts for a wife.

And therefore, proceeding with a divorce was justifiable. But what we would conclude is that if a man divorced his wife because of her cooking, or lost interest in her, his reasons would be extremely shallow.

But the reality is, what often causes a husband or a wife to lose interest, or to stop loving their spouse, is lust.

[12 : 43] Which follows on from what Jesus is saying to us last week about watching the eyes of our heart. But this controversy between these two rabbinic schools, the division wasn't actually over what Deuteronomy 24 said about divorce.

The controversy went much deeper than that. Because their controversy was in fact over the authority of Scripture. And of course the controversy over the authority of Scripture, it's not confined to the first century.

There are many people today who deny the authority and the infallibility of Scripture. But the main reason why anyone would deny the authority of the Bible would be so that they can twist Scripture to suit their own ends.

To suit their own personal agendas. And not for the glory of God. And it's a valid concept. Because we always need to be coming back to this issue and this question.

Who has the authority in my life? Scripture or self? When I read the Bible and when I consider what it's telling me, is the Bible authoritative in all my decision making?

[14 : 02] Or do I interpret it to mean what I want it to mean? And it all boils down to the question, who is the authority? Scripture or self?

Who dictates Scripture or self? Who is the Lord of my life? The God of the Bible or the God of self? And our answer to that question will tell us if we are teachable or not.

It will tell us if we are submissive to the authority of Scripture or not. Who has the authority?

Scripture or self? And when we think about what Jesus is saying here in the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes clear that many of the scribes and the Pharisees, they were being attracted to take a more selfish approach when it came to Deuteronomy chapter 24.

But in order for us to understand fully what Jesus is saying here, we need to consider what happened when the scribes and the Pharisees confronted Jesus on this particular topic in Matthew chapter 19, which we read earlier.

Because in the opening verses of Matthew 19, and I suppose it would be helpful if we turned back to Matthew 19, because in Matthew 19, we encounter a conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees and their topic of conversation is the topic of divorce.

[15 : 31] Where the Pharisees have come to Jesus and they have asked his opinion on divorce. And they ask in verse 3 of Matthew 19, they say, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?

And it's obvious that the Pharisees which asked this question, they were taking the side of the Hillel school for their interpretation of Deuteronomy 24. But the reason they asked Jesus was to see which side of the debate he was on.

Because they wanted to know if Jesus was conservative in his view of scripture or not. But when Jesus responded to their question, he didn't even answer their question.

Instead, Jesus took them back to what the Bible says. And so Jesus doesn't enter into the controversy because his desire is to bring us back to creation.

Which leads us on to our second point. Creation. Creation. We've looked at the controversy, but secondly we see creation. Creation. I just want to read verses 4 to 6 in Matthew 19.

[16 : 43] Because it says, Jesus answered and said, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female? And said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife.

And the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. What we see here is that the Pharisees were far too preoccupied with the controversy over the grounds of divorce.

But when Jesus spoke, he spoke about the institution of marriage and creation. And instead of answering the question which the Pharisees posed, he asked them a question.

And Jesus' question, it's direct and confrontational. Because Jesus says, Have you never read the Bible? Have you not read what it says in the beginning of the Torah?

Why are you asking my opinion on divorce? What does the Bible say about this? And you know, just as a passing thought, sometimes that's the attitude we can have.

[17 : 54] That way we would rather have someone else confirm our wrong interpretations of the Bible and confirm them as correct than obey what the Bible actually teaches.

We'd rather listen to the contradictory opinion of men than the opinion of God. And that, my friend, is a wrong view of Scripture and one which ought not to be part of our lives.

Because whenever we have an issue, it is the Bible and the God of the Bible which we must consult first. But when you're asking the teachers of the Bible, do you not read your Bible?

You know there's a problem. However, Jesus proceeds to remind the Pharisees what the Scriptures actually teach about marriage. Because according to Jesus, the grounds of divorce ought not to be the discussion.

But what ought always to be the focus is the institution and the permanence of marriage. And that's why Jesus takes the Pharisees back to creation. Because marriage is what we often term as a creation ordinance.

[19 : 06] For marriage, it's not something new, but it's something that has been around since our Genesis. It's been around since the very beginning. And in his discourse on the institution of marriage, Jesus points out to the Pharisees.

He points out the definition of marriage and the duration of marriage. The definition of marriage and the duration of marriage. Because Jesus says that the definition of marriage is between one man and one woman.

Because when God made mankind, he made them male and female. And so the definition of marriage, says Jesus, is according to God. It's not according to man and it's not according to any government.

It's according to God's creation ordinance. According to what God has ordained. And that is not to be undermined or redefined. It's ordained simply for the procreation and the population of the world. But Jesus is also quick to point out not only the definition of marriage, but the duration of marriage. Because by quoting Genesis 2, Jesus stresses that when a man leaves his father and his mother and is joined to his wife, the two shall become one flesh.

[20 : 28] They're no longer two, he says. They shall become one flesh. And then Jesus quotes that all important part in Genesis. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

And as many of you know, I had the privilege of conducting the wedding of my little sister last month. And it was one of the most surreal, surreal moments of my life to have her standing before me with her now husband and putting vows to them.

It was a crazy moment. But what always reminds me of the solemnity of marriage, even in that great occasion, was the last part which my sister and her now husband made to one another, the vows that they made to one another.

That their commitment and their promise in their marriage is that they will remain together. And they said it to one another until God shall separate us by death.

And that's what Jesus is emphasising here to the Pharisees. That in the creation ordinance of marriage, the duration was to be lifelong until death.

[21 : 44] It was to be permanent. That's why Paul uses the image of marriage in Ephesians 5 to describe the relationship which Christ has with his church where he says in Ephesians 5, the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.

He is the saviour of the body. Therefore husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her. And what we see is that in Ephesians 5 that Paul paralleled the relationship of marriage with Christ's relationship to the church.

And he did so not only to stress that the love of Christ is permanent but he also stressed that the covenant that God has made with his people is also permanent.

Therefore divorce between Christ and his church it was never an option. It was unthinkable. And that's what Jesus is pointing out by referring to the creation ordinance.

He's pointing out that marriage wasn't instituted with a get out clause. It was instituted with the purpose of being permanent. And I suppose this is what I quoted to my sister from the reformed book of common order.

[23 : 07] It said about marriage that we ought not to enter into marriage lightly or inadvisably but thoughtfully wisely prayerfully and in the fear of God with due consideration for the purpose for which marriage was ordained because it says marriage was ordained for the lifelong companionship help and comfort which a husband and wife ought to have for one another.

Marriage was ordained for the continuance of family life in which children may be nurtured and trained up in godliness. Marriage was ordained without doubt for the stability and welfare of human society which can be strong and happy only when the marriage bond is held in honour.

But one question which people always raise when it comes to marriage, especially when it's the issue of relationships, and I think it's appropriate just to raise it at this point, because the question which is often raised despite the clarity and transparency of scripture, the question is, should a Christian marry someone who is not a Christian?

But based upon our answer from the authoritative voice in our lives, the Bible clearly states in 2 Corinthians 6 14 and elsewhere in scripture, it says, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion have light with darkness.

And the basis for Paul's statement is not the attraction which two people might have for one another, or their compatibility, or even their love for one another.

[25 : 01] That doesn't even come into the equation. Paul simply says, what about fellowship and communion? Because Paul says, what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?

What communion hath light with darkness? In other words, how can you share your sins and your struggles and your temptations as a Christian with someone who cannot understand unless the Spirit opens their eyes?

It doesn't matter how supportive they are of your faith. The authoritative voice says that there is no fellowship and there is no communion. And for that reason, I wouldn't like to encourage anyone, any Christian, to marry someone who is unconverted.

I would never stop it if that was their desire. But if they asked my opinion, I would discourage it simply because Scripture discourages it.

And we must never think that by entering into marriage that we are going to convert them, that we are going to change them. It was Spurgeon who used the illustration when a woman came to him and asked why she shouldn't marry someone who is not a Christian.

[26 : 21] Spurgeon told the woman, stand on the desk, stand up on my desk. And then Spurgeon looked up at her and said, pull me up. But she couldn't. So Spurgeon quickly said, right, I'll pull you down.

Down she came. And the point Spurgeon made was simple. It's easy for someone to pull you down to where they are than it is for you to pull them up to where you are.

And that's the danger when communion and fellowship in the Lord cannot be enjoyed in a marriage. Because until the spouse is converted there will always be a division.

There will always be separation. There will always be a battle which may cause the Christian to even compromise. And I say all this because I grew up in a home like that.

There was nothing wrong with the home. Not at all. Not in any sense. No opposition to the gospel. Far from it. But when I was converted I came to realise that there was a division.

[27 : 28] a spiritual division. Because I discovered that my mother had been converted about five years after my parents had got married. And now 34 years later my father is still unconverted.

And if I could put it in this way. What's missing in their marriage is fellowship and communion. communion. And there is a longing to have that communion and fellowship in the Lord.

And there are many others in that same situation where they have been converted in their marriage and their spouse remains unconverted.

And it's difficult. It's not easy. And there is a division. but it should be a cause for us as a church to pray for them.

To pray for their marriage. Should pray for their marriages. That their marriages would be blessed. That the Lord would intervene. That the Lord would convict and convert and unite them in that full sense with communion and fellowship in the Lord.

[28 : 39] So we've seen controversy. Creation. And thirdly concession. Concession. Jesus says, the Pharisees say in verse 7 in their response to Jesus.

Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorces and to send her away? And he said to them because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives.

But from the beginning it was not so. And in these verses in Matthew 19 we see that the Pharisees responded to the exposition of Jesus on the definition and the duration of marriage.

They responded by asking about the passage in Deuteronomy 24. For they said, why then did Moses give? Why did he give a command of a certificate?

Why did he command to give a certificate of divorce? But what was wrong with the Pharisees' perception of Deuteronomy 24 was not only that they had broadened its meaning and insisted, but they had also insisted that this was now a command that had to be upheld.

[29 : 54] But Jesus is also quick to point out that Moses' provision of divorce was not a divine command, but a divine concession. concession. And it was given, says Jesus, because of the hardness of your heart.

And once again, Jesus is referring to the heart, the whole person. And Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, you're twisting scripture. Because in the creation ordinance of marriage, divorce was not part of the institution.

There was never a get-out clause set in place when marriage was ordained. But Moses, Moses had to provide divorce. Not because there were so many unhappy people in unhappy marriages.

The reason he provided it was simply because men would often exploit women. And so divorce, and the certificate of divorce, was set in place to protect vulnerable women.

Because what would often happen in ancient Israel is that if a woman was found to have committed an act of indecency, an impulsive man who ruled his house, he could send his wife out immediately.

[31 : 11] He could kick her out and mock her in the street. And that's what would happen, would have happened in the situation of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph.

Joseph had found out that Mary was pregnant. He could have booted her out. But Joseph sought to devote her quietly. Joseph did that, he wanted to do it quietly because he loved Mary.

He didn't want to make a mockery of her, but he did seek to devote her. That was until the angel explained that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit. But usually when a man kicked out his wife, he exploited her.

And if that woman found another man to marry, she wouldn't be able to marry him because she still married to her first husband. And if the first husband wanted to claim his wife back, he could claim her back if he wanted to exploit her further.

And it gets quite complicated. But in order to protect women, the concession was set in place that a man would have to issue a certificate of divorce so that she is then free to marry.

[32 : 24] But what we must be clear on is that the purpose of Deuteronomy 24 was to protect vulnerable women, but it was never a command to divorce your wife for whatever reason you wanted.

Because there is no, there's certainly no command given to a husband to divorce his wife, not even any encouragement to do so. And so, when we listen to Jesus preaching on the Sermon on the Mount and he teaches us on the subject of divorce, he's not giving to us principles and guidelines for proceeding with a divorce.

Rather, Jesus is calling us, calling us to appreciate the true meaning of marriage and the solemnity of it. And Jesus will emphasise the solemnity of marriage to us next week when he talks to us about vows.

But in this section, it's concluded, Jesus gives us one final word of counsel. We've considered the controversy between these rabbinic schools, we've looked at the creation ordinance as Jesus taught about marriage, and we've seen that divorce was given as a concession, not a command. But lastly, we see that Jesus gives us a word of counsel. A word of counsel. He says in verse 9, And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

[34 : 01] And it's clear to us that the counsel which Jesus concludes with is direct and to the point. But what's interesting is that Jesus is repeating what he said back in Matthew 5, in the Sermon on the Mount, because Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, it was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. And so Jesus is clear on this issue, because according to the teaching of Jesus, if God has instituted marriage as an exclusive and permanent union, then divorcing your spouse and marrying another or to marry a divorced person is to enter into a forbidden and adulterous relationship. For that person may have secured a divorce in the eyes of man-made laws, but in the eyes of God they are still married to his or her first spouse.

But Jesus makes one exception to this principle. He says, except for sexual immorality. But I think I need to explain this principle which Jesus sets out for us a bit more clearly.

[35 : 25] Because I believe that the teaching of Jesus, not only in this verse, but in the entire Sermon on the Mount, it only applies to those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

And I believe that it only applies to two Christians who are joined together in marriage. It doesn't apply to the unconverted. It applies to the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

Of course, as we've said, marriage is a creation ordinance and therefore it applies to all of creation. But I believe that this statement of Jesus only applies to Christian marriage.

When two Christians are brought together together and they are united. And that's not only because the whole theme of this sermon is Christ-centered living for Christ-centered lives, but also because the word which Jesus used to describe the exception, the exception to the principle of marriage, the word which he used for sexual immorality as the exception to the principle of marriage, he was using a term to describe the unfaithfulness of Israel in the Old Testament.

And that's clearly depicted for us throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Hosea, where you have the picture of the Lord's unfaithful bride mirrored in the life and marriage of Hosea and Gomer.

[36 : 57] We have the picture of Israel committing adultery and going off with other gods and prostituting themselves to all these idols. But what's key to understanding all that went on in the Old Testament is that when the nation of Israel, you'll remember, it was divided into two kingdoms, with the kingdom of Israel in the north and the kingdom of Judah in the south.

And the southern kingdom of Judah, it was to be kept within the covenant. That's despite their unfaithfulness, despite their sexual immorality and going off with all the other idols, the marriage bond was to be upheld because of God's grace and God's love towards them.

But what's solemn is about the northern kingdom of Israel, the northern kingdom of Israel was cut off. They were divorced from the covenant of grace because of their sexual immorality.

And that's why I believe that Jesus is speaking about that within the bounds of Christian marriage. He's using those terms in view of Christian marriage.

But what Jesus is teaching is that Christian marriage, it also ought to be different to the world. Not only because Christians ought not to divorce for any reason except sexual immorality, but because the example which Christian marriage ought to imitate is the example of Christ's marriage to his church, which as we know is a marriage based upon love and reconciliation.

[38 : 36] And that is one of the emphases of the gospel, the message of God's love and God's reconciliation. And as John Stott concluded his teaching on divorce, he said, I have made the rule never to speak to anyone about divorce until I have first spoken with them about the subjects of marriage and reconciliation.

Because sometimes a discussion on these topics makes a discussion of divorce unnecessary. And at the very least, it is only when a person has understood and accepted God's view of marriage and God's call to reconciliation that a possible context has been created within which one may regrettably talk about divorce.

And it goes without saying, divorce is not an easy subject to talk about. Someone once said, it can be as painful as death because it affects everyone involved.

And I'm sure that we are fully aware of the fact that Christian marriage is subject to the same problems as every other marriage. And every situation is different.

And I can't speak for every situation. I'm just trying to present and please bear with me as I do present what I believe the Bible is teaching.

[40 : 12] But Christian marriage, it has an enemy. The enemy of our soul. That is the greatest enemy of Christian marriage.

And I remember hearing a true story about a Christian woman who was on a flight to the United States. And with this, I'll close. This woman, she was sitting beside a man who seemed a bit restless in his flight.

Because he kept closing his eyes and putting his head down and mumbling to himself for a few moments. And then he would lift his head and a few minutes later he would repeatedly, he would do this again, put his head down and mumbling a little bit and sit back up.

And at first, the woman on the flight thought that he might be travel sick. Maybe he wasn't feeling well. And so this Christian woman, she proceeded to ask the man, are you feeling okay?

And he said, yes, I'm fine. I'm just praying. And the woman said, oh, that's good. I'm sorry, I won't disturb you anymore. But then the man, he continued to put his head down, his mumbling and he carried on like this for a wee while.

[41 : 23] And so the woman stopped him and she said, she just asked him, can I ask, what are you praying for? And the man turned to her and said, I am praying to Satan and I am praying for the destruction of Christian marriages.

And you know, every time I think about that statement, it sends a chill through me. But the promise is, greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

And this evening, he, Jesus, is encouraging us to consider our own love. To pray for our marriage, that we'll be strong, that our families will be a strong unit.

We've been encouraged to pray for one another. Pray for those who are struggling in their marriage, that you might know about. That we'd encourage one another.

That we'd be a Barnabas, the sons of encouragement to one another. To encourage one another to work hard at our marriage, for the glory of God, and for the furtherance of his kingdom.

[42 : 39] So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we come to thee, and we realise that there are one who is a great teacher, and that we are slow to learn, but that our prayer might be like the psalmist.

Teach me, O Lord, the perfect way of thy precepts divine. And O Lord, that thou wouldst truly bless us, bless our homes and our families.

Remember those, Lord, who are married, that thou wouldst give us strength in our marriages, with our strains, with our difficulties, with our things that go on that maybe nobody else knows about.

Yet, Lord, we thank and praise thee, that even as we heard that we have a Father in heaven, one in whom we are able to call upon, one in whom we are able to trust, that he is one who is working all things together for good, to those who are the called, according to thine own purpose.

O bless us, Lord, we ask thee, that thou wouldst keep us. Remember those, Lord, who are struggling, those who are maybe going through divorce or separation. Lord, may thine hand be upon them.

[43 : 57] Remember those who are going through dark periods, where families have been torn apart. O, we need thee, Lord. We realise that without thee we can do nothing.

But the great promise is that with thee all things are possible. Bless us, we ask. Keep us and do us good. Go before us and cleanse us, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 128.

Psalm 128 in the Scottish Sauter. It's on page 420.

Psalm 128, singing the whole psalm. Blessed is each one that fears the Lord and walketh in his ways. For of thy labour thou shalt eat, and happy be always.

[45 : 02] Thy wife shall as a fruitful vine by thy house sides be found. Thy children like to all of plants, about thy table round. Behold the man that fears the Lord, thus blessed shall he be.

The Lord shall out of Zion give his blessing unto thee. Thou shalt Jerusalem's good behold, whilst thou on earth doth dwell, thou shalt thy children's children see, and peace on Israel.

The whole psalm of Psalm 128 to God's praise. Amen. Blessed is each one that fears the Lord and walketh in his ways.

For all thy labour thou shalt keep, and happy be your grace.

Thy wife shall look to all of thee signs be known in thy dung by your children along above thy day■
above thy day the ground.

[46 : 47] Behold the man that fears the Lord, that blessed shall he be.

The Lord shall out of Zion give his blessing up to thee.

Thou shalt Jerusalem's good behold what thou wonder that dwell thou shalt thy children's children see and peace on Israel.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

F okay.

[48 : 30] Your cl