

THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

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Last First, First Last

Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

The Pharisees had come to Jesus that they may try him on the question of divorce. These men of law want to know if it is “*lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason*” (NKJB Matt. 19:3). Jesus answers, “*what God has joined together let not man put asunder*” (Matt. 19:6). Furthermore, Jesus states that the only lawful exception to this rule is the act of adultery (Matt. 19:9). The question posed by the Pharisees was a law question; i.e., a matter of right or wrong, righteousness or sinfulness. Jesus said that it is sinful to divorce for reasons other than adultery. When the disciples heard this they said, “*if the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry*” (Matt. 19:10). Apparently divorce was rampant over minimal issues of disagreements for spouses and thereby the apostles conclude that it just would not be in the best interest to get married in the first place. Jesus replies by saying that the only persons not subject to such a command; i.e., lawful divorce for the cause of adultery only, are eunuchs. Eunuchs are those “incapable of marriage or who renounce marriage” (NEB) due to their mutilated sexuality.

Immediately after the Lord answers the Pharisees question on divorce children are brought to him by their parents in hopes of receiving blessings and prayer. The apostles rebuke the parents yet Jesus commands that they be allowed to come. Jesus explains that the kingdom of heaven is comprised of those of child like humility and faith (see also Matt. 18:1ff).

Directly after the children incident Jesus departs only to be met by a rich (Lk. 18:23) young man (Matt. 19:22) who was a ruler (Lk. 18:18). This rich young ruler had a desire to go to heaven yet perceived that there was something lacking in his life (cf. Matt. 19:20). He asks Jesus, “*What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*” Jesus answers the rich young man with some association terms. The Lord tells the young man that “*eternal life*” is obtained by “*keeping the commandments*” (Matt. 19:17). The rich young ruler had done these things; however, there was something that gnawed at his insides and so he asks, “*what do I lack?*” Jesus answers by giving more terms of associations. The Lord said, “*If thou would be perfect*” (Matt. 19:21)

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors. We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please come back at your every opportunity.

Gospel Meeting Completed!

The success of our gospel meeting may never be known; however, we can say that the men who participated gave it their all and did a great job. If you want to make a request for a tape or CD please see the one of the deacons.

Please Keep **Tolene Witherspoon's** family in your prayers (i.e., the Duty's). Tolene's brother Clifford Duty has been diagnosed with bone marrow cancer and Jim Duty is having another bout with prostate Cancer.

Keep **Nina Gray** in your prayers too. Nina had a cardiac Angiogram test this past Thursday. The test went well. No stints were needed but she will be taking medication for the issue.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

Bessie Murphy
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(i.e., obtain eternal life), then you must "*sell all that you have and give to the poor*" then would you have "treasure in heaven" (Matt. 19:21). The young man; however, turns away in sorrow. What was standing in the way of the "*kingdom of heaven*" (Matt. 19:23) or "*kingdom of God*" (Matt. 19:24), and "*being saved*" (Matt. 19:25)? The young man's possessions took precedence over eternal life. Mark tells us that the rich young man put his "*trust in riches*" (cf. Mk. 10:24). The word "*trust*" (Gr. *peitho*) means to "trust, rely on, have confidence in a person or thing" (Liddell and Scott pp. 615). Rather than "*leaving all, and following Jesus*" (Matt. 19:27-29) the young man turns away in sorrow for he had great possessions.

Those at John 6:52-68 turned away from Jesus because his sayings were hard. Many today turn from God for the same reasons; i.e., they are not willing to put His commandments above their will or desires. The Lord demands our all (Joel 2:12-14; Matt. 22:37; Lk. 14:26). This being the case, the disciples were "*astonished exceedingly, saying, who then can be saved*" (Matt. 19:25). If it is so that eternal life is only obtained by giving up possessions in this life then "*who can be saved?*" The disciples had earlier concluded, "*if the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry*" (Matt. 19:10). Jesus answers by saying, "*With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible*" (Matt. 19:26). Man's personal conclusions to life are that we cannot possibly be perfect, we cannot possibly know all truth, we cannot help but sin and so forth. While man is spiritually pessimistic God confidently affirms you can because this is the way He created us; i.e., "*good*" (Gen. 1:31). God has not given an unreasonable command when he states we should leave off all things that would keep us from eternal life. The "*leaving all and following Jesus*" is summarized by the Lord at Matt. 19:29; Mk. 10:29; Lk. 18:29 as leaving, "*houses, lands, children, brothers, sisters, father, mother, and wife.*" Those willing to leave these things in life; i.e., not follow after and allow them to stand in the way of obtaining eternal life, shall be first in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus concludes his discussion over the rich young ruler's question and answer session by saying, "*But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last*" (Matt. 29:30). Those first in the eyes of the world are those who "*follow*" and "*trust*" in riches, lands, houses, wives, children, brothers, sisters, mother, and father. Their hope is not set in a spiritual eternal life but rather they see only the world before them. Those first in the kingdom of God; however, are those who follow and trust in Christ. Said individual believes and hopes in an eternity with God. The lesson is that one's priorities must be first with God. Jesus had earlier said, "*seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. 6:33). Jesus instructs His disciples to "*seek*" (*zeteo*) "strive for" (Moulton 182)... "to search after... to search or inquire into, investigate... desire" (LS 344). The true affections of the Christian's heart ought to be spiritual. We ought to set our **affections** on things above (**Col. 3:2**). Paul tells the Galatian brethren, "*And they that*

are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof (Gal. 5:24).

To further illustrate the point of having your affections first with God, rather than with things of this world, the Lord gives a parable about laborers in a vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16). A householder went out early in the morning (sunrise) to hire laborers to harvest his crop of grapes. They agree to the wages of a shilling a day. Later, at 9:00 AM, the householder goes out and finds more laborers who also agree to work the whole day for a shilling. Again, at 12:00 noon and 3:00 PM the householder went out to find more laborers who agreed to the same wages. When the time to pay the workers rolled around the early morning workers “*supposed*” that they would receive more money than the late comers (Matt. 20:10). When all received the same pay for differing hours worked the one’s who worked longer murmured (complained) against the householder. The householder reminded the complainers that their original agreement was a shilling for a day’s wages. Though the early workers were first in the vineyard to work they were last in relation to wages paid. So the kingdom of God is in relation to the world’s thinking. The kingdom is spiritual whereas the world is concerned with the carnal. When one puts their **affections** toward God first in life (i.e., above wife, children, brothers, sisters, mother, father, lands, and homes) then they are actually last in this world but first in the kingdom of God. Where do your priorities lie? Would you rather be first in this world or first in the kingdom of God? The Christian today must realize that the “*perfect*” state of mind (cf. Matt. 19:21) is the mind that seeks heaven above all other things of this life (cf. Phil. 3:12-15).

What is really behind this article? Some brethren are telling us that divorce for “the kingdom’s sake” is an exception to the Matthew 19:6-9 command. The reasoning is that if my spouse is hindering my service to God, preventing me in some way from serving God, beating or molesting me or my children then I am authorized to divorce her / him. The text of justification is Matt. 19:29; Mk. 10:29; Lk. 18:29. This article is thereby designed to prove that the leaving Jesus speaks of at these passages is not getting rid of a family member but rather prioritizing one’s affections (please read Matt. 6:33 and Col. 3:2 as they fit into this context). The argument is one of emotions. These brethren state that an abusive husband who drinks, curses, smokes, and beats a wife is a horrible influence on the wife and children and is likely to cause a son or daughter to grow to be abusive or unfaithful to the Lord. Their answer, get rid of him. What love! What commitment to your original marital vows! Teach your children to rid themselves of loved one’s when problems arise! Surely the man you fell head over hills in love with a while back is no longer worthy of your time and efforts to help. Consider the apostle Peter’s statement regarding this matter. Peter said, “*ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives*” (I Pet. 3:1).

Years ago my wife enjoyed listening to a national call in radio show with the host Dr. Laura. At times I would listen to people’s questions and think, “how can anyone be that dumb?” The questions and scenarios were indeed horrendous; however, what was more shocking was the people’s inability to know what to do in certain circumstances. I consider the endless scenarios about wife beating, child molestations, evil influence, and so forth in the divorce question to be in the same category as those who called in to Dr. Laura. Brethren are acting foolish! God has given the principles and brethren are running around not knowing what to do in all these scenarios. Let us recall that the interpretation of God’s word includes authorized silence. When God gives a command He does not have to say a thousand thou shalt not do all these other things (please study Hebrews 7:11ff). When the Lord answered the question about divorce for reasons other than adultery he said, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” How much clearer can it get?