

Mark 10:1-12

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 July 2014

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0 : 00] Turn to the Gospel according to Mark as we continue to look at Mark's account of the life, death, and resurrection of our friend Jesus. As you're turning, I'm discovering that this lectern is too steep to put a stack of books on.

Okay. Turn to chapter 10 beginning in verse 1. We'll read 12 verses together. And he left there and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again, and again, as was his custom, he taught them.

And Pharisees came up, and in order to test him, asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? He answered them, What did Moses command you? They said, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.

And Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

So they're no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

[1 : 17] And he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. This is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Let's pray together. Father, we do thank you. We praise you this morning for your written word to us. It is by your word that we have the salvation of our souls. Your spirit combined with your truth and changed our hearts. And I pray this morning, Father, you will give me ability to speak with care and with clarity about the issue of marriage, remarriage, and divorce.

And that you help us all to apply it appropriately to our hearts. And we pray this in the name of Christ. Amen. So we're moving through the gospel according to Mark, verse by verse, as is our custom here.

And we see now that he has now left this region that he's been working in. And he's moving through and gone to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.

[2 : 36] We've entered now into kind of the second act, so to speak, of Mark's gospel. He's moved from his primarily public Galilean ministry to now this journey on his way to Jerusalem where he's finishing off the disciples.

He's giving them the final teaching, the things they need to know to be devoted to him after he leaves. And we've seen this series beginning in the second part of verse 8 where he heals a blind man at Bethsaida.

And he heals him in varying degrees, not because he didn't have the power to do it in one fell swoop. But he's communicating, as Mark's recording it for us, that Jesus is the Lord of spiritual blindness.

And we see this to be the case with the disciples as they're coming to further dawning revelation of who it is that Jesus is. We see Peter's confession in chapter 8 at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is the Christ.

And then Jesus teaches them about the cost of discipleship, the surety of the coming kingdom. And we see the transfiguration, the necessity of faith, the excellence of service, the radical nature of discipleship, which Kyle so poignantly taught on last week.

[3 : 49] And then we come to this teaching on the nature of marriage. They're now in a region called Perea. Perea, Mark and Matthew both skip over Jesus' Judean ministry.

Luke records it for us, but Mark and Matthew skip right over the top of it. And he's now moved south of the Sea of Galilee and out to the east to this area called Perea, an area that was full of Jews. So he's moved from a primarily Gentile region now to a primarily Jewish region. And again, the crowds are gathering to him.

And as was his custom, praise God, Jesus is teaching them once again. And here we find again in verse 2, the Pharisees. In order to test him, they ask him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? This was the job of the Pharisees. This is what they were all about as they surrounded Jesus, following him around, lurking around every corner, hiding behind every bush, looking for a way for him to slip up as he was a man coming, declaring to be the Christ, declaring to be the Son of God. [4 : 56] They wanted to do away with this understanding. And so they ask him a question. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

And we must ask at this point, why would that have been a test? Why would they have asked this question in order to test him? If you remember back in chapter 3 of Mark, verse 6, we immediately see the Pharisees going out and holding counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

And if you recall in John chapter 6, we see John the Baptist arrested by Herod. So you see them holding counsel with the Herodians, and then we see John the Baptist being taken prisoner by Herod.

Why? The reason being, this group of Herodians were loyal to Herod the Great, which was the father of Herod Antipas, which is the one who arrested John the Baptist.

And John the Baptist was telling Herod Antipas that it was not okay for him to have left his wife and taken his brother's wife.

[6 : 09] This was the circumstance, the situation that was going on. The woman he married's name was Herodias. She was the one that demanded John's head on a platter.

So remember that John the Baptist had been arrested and beheaded for speaking against the situation that occurred with Herod.

And so they're trying to trick him into the same thing, this large Jewish population. They're trying to get him to be also against what Herod had done in order for him to be arrested and therefore put to death.

So this is a major loaded question. For us, we just read it. This was loaded when they asked the question. But Jesus does not back down from the challenge. But rather, he responds with a very bold proclamation about divorce and remarriage.

I hope you were wrapping your mind around it as we read it together. He begins by asking them a question. What did Moses command you?

[7 : 11] And they said Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away, verses 3 and 4. Now, it's important for us to understand what was going on culturally around the issue of divorce and remarriage at the time.

The reigning opinion in the matter was given by a rabbi named Hillel. And it was common in this day that rabbinic traditions, rabbis that would interpret the scriptures, make doctrinal statements about them, and people would follow those things.

In fact, to the degree that they no longer study the scriptures, but they simply studied the teachings of the rabbi. And Rabbi Hillel, having died 20 years previous, this was his prevailing understanding about divorce.

And he had said, For any reason, unload that woman. That was his phrase concerning the matter. And in this day, the religious understanding was that you could divorce a woman for any reason. Any offense given to you. Dinner's on the table a little bit too late. She spoke out of turn. Any reason that you found her unsatisfactory, you were able to divorce her.

[8 : 21] So this is the common thing that's happening in this day. Now, we get some Old Testament reference. And it's very important that we understand what is Jesus talking about when he asks the question, What did Moses command you?

And they respond, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away. And Jesus says to them, Verse 5, Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this command. We have to get our minds around us. We have to understand what's going on here. And the first thing I want to point out to you is that when Jesus says, What did Moses command you? And then in verse 5, Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment.

That both the verb and the noun that he uses there, the verb in the Greek for command and the verb in the Greek for commandment are much softer words than we would take them to be. Command is a definite command. You do the thing that you're commanded to do. Many of you on this side saw me command Cademan to sit still during Aletheia Way, and he did it, right? That's a command.

[9 : 24] It's a softer form of that verb. And we get a little bit of insight into that in the same account, the parallel account in Matthew, chapter 19, second half of verse 6 through 8.

Jesus says, What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. Verse 7, They, being the Pharisees, said to him, Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?

And listen to Jesus' response. Verse 8, 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.

So you see the difference there. Moses didn't, in fact, command it, but rather he just allowed it to happen, and he put some parameters on the result of divorce. So let's go.

I want you all to turn in your copy of God's Word to Deuteronomy, chapter 24. Now remember in this day, as it is in our day, it was proper, and it was common to quote from the Old Testament in a loose manner.

[10 : 33] We do that all the time. We talk all the time to each other about biblical truths, and we don't directly quote. We'll say the scriptures say in Ephesians, and we'll make a loose quotation of something. This is okay, provided that we can firmly back it with the actual recorded Word of God.

They were doing this as well in this day, and when we see New Testament, loose quotations, citations of Old Testament, we can also take those as the inspired Word of God as well.

So often, we get some clarity on things when we look at the New Testament as it compares to the Old Testament. Sometimes, the reverse is true. We go to the Old Testament to get greater clarity about what they were talking about.

That's the case here. Deuteronomy 24, verses 1 through 4. When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of the house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

Okay? So follow the logic through there. If you couldn't stick with it, that's okay. It took me a couple of times as well. If a man gets married, and he finds for any reason, this was Hillel's understanding of this, for any reason, some indecency, some reason he no longer wanted her to be his wife, and gives her a certificate of divorce, and she goes off and is married to another man, and then that man does the same thing, also finds some indecency in her and gives her a certificate of divorce, or he dies, the only thing, the only thing that Moses is forbidding here is for the first man to take her again for his wife.

[12 : 30] It's the only thing that he's forbidding in this case. And what he's doing here is he's saying, you can't on a whim divorce your wife and then change your mind and go back and remarry her. Right? She goes off. She's married to another man.

There's another one flesh union happening there. He can't go reclaim her for his own. So back in our text today, Mark chapter 10, Jesus clarifies this whole situation.

Jesus is clarifying it for them. I think they got it in their context. We have to do a bit more work. But beginning of verse 6, he says, but, but, what did Moses command you?

They respond. And he says, but, from the beginning, he starts out with the very beginning of the way God created things to be. God made them male and female.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. Quoting there from Genesis 2.24, 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.

[13 : 34] Right? Later on, they're in a house, the house. The disciples asked him again about this matter. He says, then whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

A rather absolute statement given by Jesus concerning divorce and remarriage. And if we stop at this point, if we simply open Mark and read this, I don't think there's any wiggle room in this. Do you? We just read this text. I don't think that there is. However, there is a hermeneutic principle that we let Scripture interpret Scripture. We look at the Bible on the topic, and there are some other texts that certainly refer to divorce and remarriage.

This has led to a spectrum of views. Not a couple of views, but a spectrum of views on this issue. There are two widely held, I'll call them conservative views, views held by people that we would respect and that we align ourselves with theologically in other regards.

I'll give some detail to these shortly, but I'm going to call them this morning, number one, the more permissive view, and number two, the more restrictive view. Not to give any value in the way I'm saying that, but the more permissive view and the more restrictive view, these two commonly held views.

[14:56] But before we get to those things, I want to talk first about some non-negotiables. Things that both of these views completely agree upon. Things that if we're going to be biblically faithful, we must agree upon.

Five. I'm sure there are more, but five that I came up with this week. Number one, God presided over the first marriage and presides over every subsequent marriage.

End of Genesis chapter 2. The first marriage happens. Jesus quotes from it in verses 7 and 8.

Genesis 2, 24. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

We don't join ourselves together. A priest or a pastor does not join us together. The state, the federal government doesn't join us together. God joins us together.

And just as an aside, let this bake your noodle. God created marriage before the fall. Secondly, God created marriage to give us a shadow of the blessed relationship between Christ and the church.

[15:58] Right? Creates marriage before the fall. This is what it's created for. This is the reason.

There are subservient reasons. There are other reasons that marriage exists. But the primary reason, the overarching reason, this is the reason.

If we must put a reason, God created marriage to give us a shadow, a glimpse of what the relationship between Christ and the church looks like. What that kind of covenant, committed love looks like.

You can read more about this in Ephesians 5, 22 through 33. For the sake of time, we won't go there today. This is why, though, marriage was created. For these reasons, thirdly, God hates divorce.

God hates divorce. Malachi 2, 16. And this is in the ESV rendering of it. Malachi 2, 16 says, The man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts.

So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless. Now, there's a lot of weight to the way in which we deal with our marriages and the way in which we deal with divorce in Malachi 2, 16 in the ESV rendering.

[17:12] However, I think that they fell a bit short in their rendering here. If you read it from the NASB, another translation that I respect highly, and most other translations, it reads this way.

For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

Now, I think both are true statements, but I think the other, the NASB rendering of it, has much greater weight to it. God says, I hate divorce.

And this is why we do too. Like, I know that everyone in this room, there's not a single person in this room or in my hearing in some later recording of this that hasn't in some way been touched.

I have divorced. Whether you've been part of one, your parents have been divorced, you know people that have been divorced, it's a rampant issue in our culture today. We have all been affected by this, and no one loves it.

[18:12] No one celebrates it. Right? We don't rejoice in the breaking of unions in this way. God hates divorce. Number four.

These are non-negotiables, remember. The marriage covenant is temporal. That means it exists in this realm. That is that death breaks that covenant and gives a remaining spouse the ability to remarry.

Right? So, marriage is a lifetime commitment. When somebody dies, you're freed from that commitment. Romans 7, 2 and 3. Paul writes, For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives.

But if her husband dies, she was released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. And if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

So, death frees us from the covenant commitment to our spouses and we are then able to remarry. Don't take this as an endorsement of murder. Number five.

[19 : 20] Divorce and or remarriage after divorce is not an unpardonable sin. Whatever stance you or I, we take on this issue, whichever camp we decide to align with in this matter, right?

So, whatever you deem in your convictions in your reading of Scripture as sinful in this, whatever it may be, it's not an unpardonable sin.

In fact, the only unpardonable sin is the sin of unbelief. The sin of grieving the Spirit, which is to say that we don't respond to the convictions that the Spirit brings on us, that we don't repent of sin.

Both views hold that if someone is wrongly divorced and or wrongly remarried, that these are acts of sin. Not perpetual sin, they're an act of sin. You're not living in that sin, but you've committed a sin, as so many of us have committed sins, as so many wrongs have been issued up against our Lord.

And that is that they should be confessed from the past and should be avoided in the future. So, divorce and or remarriage after divorce is not an unpardonable sin. It does not separate you from the love of God in Christ.

[20 : 36] Okay. A few details about the two views to get your theological minds primed. Firstly, a few details about the more permissive view.

The more permissive view would say that divorce is permitted under three circumstances. And you get into some of the spectrum of different understandings here, but I'm going to present it to you in this way. Under three circumstances, when a spouse deserts the relationship, when a spouse commits adultery, or when a spouse is dangerously abusive.

They also believe that remarriage is permitted to the non-offending spouse when divorce has occurred for the aforementioned reasons. So, the non-offending spouse, the one who didn't sin in the severing of the covenant relationship, they are then free to remarry in that case.

Secondly, that was brief, wasn't it? The more restrictive view would say the divorce is only permitted when a believer is married to an unbelieving spouse who demands a divorce.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians, for the sake of peace, you grant it to him. An unbelieving spouse, being a person who's not under church discipline, demands a divorce and you grant it to him.

[21 : 55] And remarriage is not permitted under any circumstance provided that the spouse is still alive. Now, remember that these things are simply an act of sin.

It's not really a super clear-cut simple issue. I have a typo in my notes that says this isn't a clear-cut smile issue. It's not that either.

It's a rather complex issue. And it's an issue that can't really be weighed in a vacuum. And it's so easy. Some things in the scriptures are so easy. Some theological wrestling, you can stand way back from any real circumstance, any real consequence, and you can muse about it and you can wonder what did God mean by this?

But this isn't that way. It means things for our living. It means things for the life of our church. It's a challenging one. In addition to that, it's a widely contested one.

The more permissive view is held by modern pastors and scholars like John MacArthur and Andreas Kostenberger. You don't have to know who that is. It's the most widely held evangelical view, which is not necessarily a reason to believe it.

[23 : 03] It's historically held by Protestants like John Murray. And in fact, the Westminster Confession of 1647 reads, in case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce and after the divorce to marry another as if the offending party were dead.

The more restrictive view is held by modern pastors and scholars like Votie Bauckham and John Piper. Historically, the Baptists of England, when they adopted the Westminster Confession, omitted the previously read paragraph.

They just took it out altogether in the Second London Confession of 1689. So, you've got, this is just some examples of opinions, respected, scholarly opinions, on both sides of this coin.

All of this should cause us to pause. It should really cause us to weigh these things out, to give attention. Some theological stances you can just dismiss altogether from the source that it's coming from, right? You know, that guy's crazy.

Don't listen to anything he has to say. But these are respected men that are holding varying opinions, not only now, but through history. I have been vexed by this issue for the last three or four weeks.

[24 : 16] In fact, I've spent a good deal of my time on this issue over the past three or four weeks. I brought up here the things I was complaining about not stacking. Just some of the books that I've been reading on the matter.

This doesn't include the online resources that I've been looking at, trying to gather and glean and listen. Many of you in this room I've had conversations with. We've been talking at length about what this means and what the truth could be.

I came to a great deal of conviction in the matter because I have given advice concerning, counsel concerning divorce and remarriage without first carefully consulting the scriptures. I realized that whether, whatever view may be right that I had just wholeheartedly swallowed the more widely accepted view and had never really, really searched the scriptures myself on the issue.

What a great deal of conviction that brought for me as a pastor. It's possible, it's possible that I've been partied to sin, that I've actually encouraged it in some ways.

If not, if not, if I was right in the counsel that I gave, the conviction is still there that I didn't really give it from a biblical stance. I hadn't planted my foot firmly on the word of God as I gave that counsel.

[25 : 28] Much repentance was necessary for me on that part. It's been a bit of crisis of faith for me to be totally honest with you. It's caused me to really look at the word of God on the matter and wrestle with it.

To say, if this is God's word, am I willing to submit to it no matter what it requires of me? No matter what uncomfortable situation, no matter what apologies I may have to issue, no matter what it says, am I willing to submit myself to it?

Am I going to put myself under it, be governed by it, or put myself over it to judge it and to make my own calls based on the circumstances in my life and those in the lives of people around me?

No. No, of course not. Of course not. This is the very word of God to us and it's not ours to piecemeal and treat the way we would like to. God has spoken to us and we must submit ourselves to it whatever it may say.

I'm very thankful this past couple of weeks for our general habit of verse-by-verse exposition because I've got to tell you, the temptation for me would have been to skip over chapter 10.

[26 : 38] I just would have gotten really far away from the teaching on divorce. We'd have just gone, yeah, chapter 10, it's a great chapter. We're going to start off in chapter 11 now just to distance myself from having to wrestle the issues and the outcome, the outworkings of such issues.

I'm thankful for it. I thank you that you put up with slow, careful, verse-by-verse exposition for that very reason. So what opinion did I arrive at?

I haven't. I know you probably would like for me to have arrived at opinion, but I haven't. I haven't set my feet firmly. We can talk later if you'd like I'm leaning, but I haven't yet.

I'm still working it through. I'm still trying to carefully search, prayerfully consider what it is the Word of God has to say to us about marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

But here's a realization that I came to together. It would be arrogant of me. It would be an improper abuse of my position if I stood up here and told you what I believed and then expected that you all would believe it too.

[27 : 47] This is not the way our church is governed. I certainly am entitled to my opinion and my convictions. There are many cases in the scripture I'm going to tell you what I think it means, but often those things don't have real implication.

They don't work out in any practical way in our living together. Romans chapter 11, the very end is an example of that. What does it mean by all Israel will be saved? I presented to you a bunch of options. I told you this is what I think it means, but the general point of the text is that we shouldn't be haughty towards the Jews.

Right? Acceptable in this case. I don't think I have the power, though, to say this is what our church will believe on this particular issue.

Let me read to you from our statement of faith the current statement on the family. I'm going to give you five reasons why I think we need to make a doctrinal stance concerning divorce and remarriage as a church together.

Let me read to you first what I think needs to be amended in our statement of faith to bring some more clarity to the issue for our church. It says, of the family, we believe that marriage is the lifelong uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment, that the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, being created in the image of God, and in equal measure, depend on his grace, and that the marriage is God's unique revelation of the union between Christ and his church.

[29 : 08] There's some further things about the roles that we play in that relationship, but that's what it currently says, and it leaves some wondering. It seems actually to be a fairly restrictive statement, but are there other circumstances in which it's okay, and how do we deal with remarriage?

It doesn't say anything about that. Some people may say that this just doesn't really matter. It's not that important. Let people follow their personal convictions, but I say to you that it does matter. It matters immensely. How am I to know that's true? But on my personal convictions, what ceremony should I perform and not perform? Someday, if we have leadership and multiple pastors and one holds one view and another holds another view, isn't that going to be horribly confusing for someone who comes and asks the question, I've been divorced, can I be remarried?

Shouldn't we have the same answer to that question? I think we should. So let me give you five reasons that I'm going to lead us to make a doctrinal stance concerning divorce and remarriage. Number one, our church believes in a congregational church polity. That means governance, that the final say in matters of doctrine and in matters of discipline belong to the church, not to elected officials of any sort, but to the congregation.

[30 : 29] It's one example, Galatians 1.8, Paul says to them, but even if we, the apostles, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed, or cast out, or separated away.

Paul's saying to the church at Galatia, hold everyone accountable. The apostles, angels, and anyone else, hold them accountable to the truth of God.

Secondly, these matters have bearing on how we function together as a faith family. What will permit, what we won't permit. I mentioned before, how strange would it be if the leadership had varying views on something.

If one person says you need to confess a sin and the other person says it's not sin at all. How horrible and confusing that matter would be. Thirdly, we must contend for the truth in this generation concerning marriage.

We must. As the people of God, we should be set apart concerning marriage. There's a lot of statistics running around out there and statistics get skewed in all kinds of ways.

[31 : 39] For many, many, many years people have said that the statistics outside of the church for marriage, half of marriages end in divorce and those within the church, half end in divorce. They're the same.

Some more recent studies have come out and said, no, that's not the case. Actually, people within the church are more successful in their marriages but it's still like 30%. It's still a dramatic rate in which people are getting married.

Whichever one of those shows that we're not setting ourselves apart from the culture. We haven't separated ourselves and fought for marriage and what it's for.

If we have a right understanding of it, marriage is not primarily about our happiness. Marriage is about the glory of God. So whatever the truth may be, we have to contend for it.

We have to set down firm lines and stand on those things, not let the culture influence who we are. We can't let the culture at large define truth for us.

[32 : 36] We must let God's word do that. Fourthly, working together through a process to make a doctrinal statement, as I said, I'm going to suggest that we just make a change to the statement of faith.

We could write a paper. There's many ways we could accomplish this. But to form this kind of doctrinal statement is going to be a test, I think, a really healthy test of our love for the truth.

Do we love the truth? Do we want to walk in the truth regardless of what it says or what it means for our living? Are we subservient to the truth?

Let me read from you again from our statement of faith on the scriptures. We believe that the holy bible was written by men divinely inspired and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction. That it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter. that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us and therefore is and shall remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

[33 : 47] What a lofty statement about what we believe about the scriptures and this will be a test of that. John 17 7, Jesus is saying a high priestly prayer and he's laying out his hopes for his apostles and therefore for us, he says to God, sanctify them in the truth.

Your word is truth. Are we going to arrange our lives by common philosophy, by our own circumstance, or on revelation?

It will be a test of our love for the truth. Fifthly, it will be a test of our love for one another. a test of our love for one another.

If you're a member, and I know that many of you right now in this room are not, but if you're a member, you did not commit to this church as a set of programs and presentations.

At least I hope you didn't. I hope we made it very clear to you that that's not what you should be committing to, but rather you committed to a group of people, a group of people who love Christ and want to pursue the truth, a group of people that you can pursue the truth with, even when we don't get it exactly right sometimes.

[35 : 03] You want to walk through those things together. Doctrine is not something given to us that we can hurl at each other carelessly, not giving any respect to situation and what people have walked through.

We don't use doctrine to beat each other over the head with it, but on the other side, there's so many churches this day that just go along to get along, right? Peace at any cost, and they dismiss truth altogether, right?

So there's this false sense of unity in the church which typically has to do with a piece of property, the building, and what they've accomplished together that they can physically see and touch.

Shame on them and shame on us if that's what we do. A wise man once said to me that there's a great deal of difference between compliance and commitment.

I'm just kidding, dad. My dad said that. I mean, he's a wise man. Sometimes I don't think about what I'm going to say before I say it, and it comes out all wrong.

[36 : 09] That's right. That's exactly right. I often plagiarize my dad unknowingly. He says things to me a lot that I end up repeating. I knew this one that time.

Anyway, a wise man, my father, said to me, there's a big difference between just compliance and commitment. Just going along with things, right? Taking a look at reports that we give and budgets that we vote on and just going along because it's easier to go along than to raise your hand and ask a question, right?

It's easier to go along and not search the scriptures yourself. Beloved, as members of this church, you have doctrinal responsibility. You have responsibility to hold me accountable to the truth.

If I get up here and say something and I err in some way, it's your job to tell me that I erred, right? Not to be arrogant, not to say you figured something out ahead of me and I'm the pastor and you're so smart sitting in the pew, right?

But so that we can preserve truth together, we can walk together in it because it's best for all of us when we do this. 1 Corinthians 13.

[37 : 14] 2, Paul says if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, he's setting up this hypothetical scenario, right?

I'm the most brilliant person ever. I can discern from right and wrong with flawless ability. I can move mountains with my face, but have not love.

I'm nothing. I am nothing. Ephesians chapter 4, Paul writes again to us, verses 11 through 16. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers jobs given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of fullness of Christ.

This is our great goal together, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

[38 : 37] love. And what I want you to take away from that is that we have the capacity to walk in truth together. We've been given the scriptures, we've been given the spirit of God, and we've beheld Christ.

We're being built together into his body. So working through a process like this is going to be a great test of our love for one another. I hope that encourages you to work on this process, to be involved in this process, to begin wrestling with these doctrinal issues.

So how will we go about all this? I'm going to form a committee made of the elders of the church and a few other members of our congregation just to broaden the scopes and perspectives on things.

And we're going to work really, really hard to present to you a paper of some sort for your review. Let me again encourage you, you should be studying this on your own. If you're a member of this church, I will be sending out an email later in this week.

I'll link this sermon to it for those who weren't here this Sunday. And I will also include some links and resources on both sides of the doctrinal debate.

[39 : 49] You need to begin working through it on your own. We'll together as a committee will present a paper to you and then we're going to meet to discuss. And we're going to meet to discuss and we're going to meet to keep on working at it and keep on working at it, loving one another in the truth until we can arrive at I hope a unanimous decision, maybe just a consensus among us, but this is something I think is incredibly, incredibly important that we wrestle through together.

This will likely be a lengthy process. I think it's going to take us time, but I think that the time and the energy invested in it will be ultimately really healthy for the long-term life of this church and ultimately glorifying to God.

Now in all of this, as I said before, we've all been touched by divorce, remarriages, some of those exist in our congregation. Don't hear any of this as condemnation towards you.

My sins are as deep as yours. We have all failed in so many respects. If we arrive at a position where you find that you need to repent, just repent and move on. Know that you're accepted in this faith family, that we love you.

We want to lead each other in truth. This is one thing. There are so many other things we need to be talking about. There's so much other sin we need to be working out in our body together.

[41 : 13] This is just one part of a greater process of living together as a community of faith. We're going to fail. I am confident that in our discussions and in the things we do, we're going to get prideful.

We're going to have to repent of that. We're just going to get mad at each other. I hope not, but I bet it happens. Praise God that for all these things, there's grace upon grace upon grace, infinite grace given to those who are His.

We have been redeemed in Christ. As such, our natural response should want to be obedience, discipleship. This is what Mark's pressing us to, that we would follow, Jesus, with all that we are. Let's pray together.