

CHAPTER TEN

*Concerning those who asked
whether it was lawful to divorce one's wife.
Concerning the rich man who questioned Jesus.
Concerning the sons of Zebedee.
Concerning Bartimaeus, the blind man.*

1-9. And He arose from thence, and cometh into the region of Judea beyond Jordan: and the people gather around Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. And the Pharisees came to Him, and, testing Him, asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses allowed a man to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Because of the hardness of your heart He wrote you this statute. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. The Lord often left Judea because of the malice of its inhabitants, but now He returns to their region because the time of His passion was approaching. He does not yet go up to Jerusalem, but instead He goes into that part of Judea near the border, to bring benefit to the simple and guileless multitude. For Jerusalem was indeed a workshop of evil, because of the cunning deceit of the Pharisees. Behold now their evil cunning, how they test and tempt the Lord, not letting Him alone so that the multitude could hear and believe Him, but always approaching and trying to catch Him in His words and refute Him by their questions. For they asked Him a question, on each side of which lay a trap: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" If He should say that it is lawful, they would answer Him, "Why then did you say that, except for reason of adultery, it is not lawful to divorce?"¹ But if He should say that it is not lawful, they would accuse him of opposing the

¹ Mt. 5:32

teachings of Moses.² Christ, therefore, Who is Wisdom, replies to them with an answer that escapes both of their traps. He asked them what Moses had commanded them to do, and when they said that Moses had permitted them to divorce their wives, the Lord explained the meaning of this law to them. The Lord says, "It was not Moses who was harsh when he gave you this law; rather, he wrote this law because of the hardness of your hearts." For God, knowing the inhumanity of the Hebrews, and that one who had begun to hate his own wife might easily kill her, permitted a man who was not happy with his wife to divorce her. But it was not so from the beginning; instead it was God's will and design to join spouses together and make them one, so that they even leave their parents behind them. See what the Lord is saying: God does not want a man to have many marriages so that he leaves one woman and takes another for his wife, and then leaves this one and is joined to a third. If this were so, He would have made one man to have many wives. But this did not happen; instead "God made them male and female," and He commanded that one man be joined to one woman. But we may also understand this passage another way: the word of teaching, casting good seed into the soul of a believing man, acts like a husband towards his wife who receives him. For the word desires to bring benefit to the soul which receives it. And so the word of teaching leaves his father, that is, the elevated mind, and he leaves his mother, ornate language, and cleaves to his wife, which is the soul being taught. To bring her benefit, the word of teaching humbly comes down to meet that soul, teaching her with simple words and thoughts. Thus the two become one flesh, that is, the soul believes that the Word of God became flesh, and no human thought can tear asunder the soul from her belief.

10-12. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall divorce his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall divorce her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. Once again the disciples too were scandalized. This is why they approached and asked Him again, because their reasoning was not yet sound. He answered them and said, "Whoever divorces his wife

² Deut 24-3