

A DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE

Malachi 2:10-16

INTRODUCTION

I had the blessing and privilege to drop Rebekah off at TMU last Sunday. On Monday, at the orientation, both students and parents heard the commission given by the President of TMU, John MacArthur. He described how TMU's goal for both parents and students is to further imbed the truth of God's Word even as the students get their higher education so that they go out into the world better equipped to withstand the assaults we see in our culture on: conscience, civil authorities, and marriage

Recall the theme that I memorized during my ordination for the Book of Malachi was "The disintegration of a nation"

No better way to disintegrate a nation than by disintegrating the family.

READ Mal 2:10-16

This is the 3rd Dispute in a sequence of 6 disputes in the Book of Malachi. This dispute focuses on marriage.

No commitment you can make is as solemn as the one you make to your husband or wife in the sacred covenant of marriage.

There is no corruption of human affairs more vile or dangerous than the corruption of marriage.

Proposition: 2 Rods of Correction

So That: Malachi elevates the institute of marriage by defending against two great assaults on marriage:

- I. **Intermarriage**
- II. **Divorce**

So That: *“If a man has a box and he’s not sure what’s in it, he won’t be careful about guarding it. But if he knows it contains a valuable treasure, he will be diligent to guard it carefully.”* ~ Charles Spurgeon

Phil 2:15 – “prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world”

“**crooked**” – from the original language - σκολιός – from which we get our English word ‘scoliosis’ which describes the curving of the spine in a bad way

“**perverse**” – misshapen, warped

Illustration – these are two rods of corrections to our ‘spiritual scoliosis’

So That: These are **rods** straightening our spiritual backbone. These are **not spears** piercing our sides.

1st Rod of Correction, ...

I. Intermarriage

Mal 2:10-13

Point – 1 Cor 7:39 – we are to marry “in the Lord” (I Cor 6:14)

- that is the same intent here

Proof – “^{10a}**Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?**”

Unlike the 1st two disputes which are the voice of God in direct discourse, it is the voice of the prophet Malachi here.

→ God is only quoted once in **2:16**

Malachi begins this dispute with 2 rhetorical questions for emphasis

- this is similar to the beginning of the 2nd dispute

- 1:6 – “Father” “Master”
- 2:10 – “Father” “God”

In vv. 10-13 we see:

- A) The **divine foundation** for marriage
- B) A **gross abomination** of marriage
- C) An **imprecatory petition** to protect marriage

A) The divine foundation of marriage

Point – God created marriage. God looked at man in his singleness and said “not good.” God created man male and female

→ **Gen 1:28** (1st words from God to man); **2:7, 18-24**

AND

God created the nation of Israel as the special covenant nation through whom would come Messiah.

Deut 32:6 (in the Song of Moses) – “Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?”

Isa 43:1 – “Thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel,”

Malachi reminds Israel of their exceptional origin.

→ Reminds us of our exceptional origin!

Application – Perfect place to land in discipleship (or evangelism). Take people to the mind of God; to the divine perspective on the sacred bond of marriage

→ paint a picture of the greatness of God

Application– Homework has a place, in-depth diagnostic questions are necessary sometimes, but the best place to start in any area: → What is God’s view? What is God’s perspective?

B) A Gross Abomination of Marriage

Proof – “^{10b}**Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?**

^{11a}**Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has**

been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves,”

“deal treacherously” – appears **5 times** in Mal 2:10-16

- comes from one Hebrew word meaning garment or cloak
- the idea is to cover with a cloak so as to deceive, cheat
- betray, cheat, double cross, be untrustworthy and disloyal, act falsely, hypocritically, or treacherously

Jer. 3:20 – “Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her husband, So you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,’ declares the LORD.”

“abomination” – (**Deut 18** and **Lev 18**) - this word is used in Scripture to talk about idolatry, child sacrifice, divination, witchcraft, sorcery, a spiritist calling up the dead, temple prostitution, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality

“to profane” – Mal 1:12; 2:10, 11

→ They are profaning their covenant with God and they are profaning their covenant with their brothers and sisters in Israel

“the covenant of our fathers” this is a national sin/abomination

This atrocity is committed **“in Israel and in Jerusalem”**

- dealing treacherously with the national family
- dealing treacherously with the spiritual family

Sin in the people of God or the family of God is everyone’s problem.
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How?? → **Intermarriage**

VERY Important – What is the nature of this intermarriage???

^{11b}**and has married the daughter of a foreign god”**

- this is about religion not ethnicity

- Septuagint – “gone after other gods” – captures heart of the issue

Deut 7:3-4 – “you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ^{4a}For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods;”

At the time, they had the Philistines to the east and the Ammonites and Moabites on the west. As a result, there was ample opportunity to marry the daughters of a foreign god.

Again, this about religion; NOT ethnicity →
Ruth is a powerful example!

Same principle in the New Testament → **1 Cor 7:39** – “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.”

“for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves” → Malachi brings it back to God

Application – The New Testament equivalent is you are profaning the Body of Christ

→ you are making Christ to lay with a harlot **2 Cor 6:14-16**

C) An Imprecatory Petition to Protect Marriage

Proof – ^{12a}**“As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob *everyone* who awakes and answers,”**

“cut off” – could mean either excommunication or execution.

Lev 20:2-3 – “Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. ³I will also set My face against that

man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name.”

The people are compounding their sin with **hypocritical worship**.

“^{12b}**or who presents an offering to the LORD of hosts.** ¹³**And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand.”**

Excessive displays of emotion → manipulative mourning/misery

Illustration – The expressions ‘to weep crocodile tears’ is understood to mean to pretend a sorrow that one doesn’t truly feel, to create a hypocritical show of emotion.

This idea comes from the ancient belief that crocodiles weep while luring or devouring their prey. The fact is that crocodiles do not have tear ducts. Their eyes can produce secretions to moisten the lids if the animal is out of the water for a while...but these are not tears. The glands that moisten the eyes are very close to the throat so the effort of swallowing forces moisture from them, and gives the impression of tears.

In the same way, if you are willfully disregarding God- who is your Lord and Father and Creator - you better be careful what kind of worship you bring. Let it not be hypocritical worship.

Acceptable worship requires an acceptable heart. Not a perfect heart as none of us would be able to bring that.

→ God is ready to forgive, but hypocritical worship is a grave affront to God. – **1 Cor 11**

Application – Missionary dating – a desire to win your future husband or wife to the Lord. By your actions, you are helping him/her ignore the things of God. How can someone who rebels against God tell the person to submit to Christ as their Lord.

Application – If married to an unbeliever – **1 Cor 7:12-14**. Paul was preaching in a pagan environment and God was saving people. God says, through Paul, if you got saved and are married to an unbeliever, your whole household is sanctified by the Lord. You stay with your spouse and, of course, pray for their salvation. **You do not leave.**

2nd Rod of Correction, ...

II. Divorce

Mal 2:14-16

Point – The will of God is explicit and on the face of the text.

→ God Hates Divorce

The Bible often says God hates sin in general.

It is rare the Bible lays out God's hatred for one particular sin.

Now, let me say opening words of comfort up front.

Maybe you had a husband that was an unrepentant serial adulterer.

Maybe you had an unbelieving wife who deserted you and you are now divorced as a result

- You are clean before the Lord.
- You are free to remarry before the Lord.
- Please don't let the shadow of these strong words of condemnation of divorce fall across you.

Maybe you were divorced in the past as an unbeliever, but now you are saved. You have truly repented and are right before the Lord. God's strong words of condemnation are not intended for you. There may still be lifelong consequences for past sin

Illustration – David sinned, truly repented but David would never build the Temple and the sword would not depart from his household

→ The God who hates divorce is the God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

Maybe you are here this morning and are thinking of committing adultery against God and the wife of your youth... Perhaps you are considering deserting your husband... → these words of condemnation/conviction are intended for you

Proof – “^{14a}**Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously,**”

God is the Witness to marriage (14)

“We are gathered together here in the sight of God/before God”

- There will be witnesses
- The most important is the Witness

Gen 31:50 (Laban to Jacob) – “If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, *although* no man is with us, see, God is the Witness.”

Prov 5:21 – “For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths.”

2 Chr 16:9 – “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”

“**the wife of your youth**” – in the Ancient Northeast, nearly all marriages were arranged during the childhood of both parties. A man would ordinarily be married by 20 years of age.

Prov 5:18 – “rejoice in the wife of your youth”

Malachi joins Solomon as a witness to a mutually satisfying marriage relationship, one of mutual interest, mutual trust – unlike situation in the surrounding and prevailing cultures.

“^{14b}**though she is your companion and your wife by covenant**”

God calls marriage a covenant.

He is also bringing out something that was revolutionary at that time. Grammatically, male and female verb forms used in 2:10-13 → indicates both sinned and → both sinned against
→ equality of the wives!

“**your wife by covenant**” – only one other place marriage referred to as covenant (Prov 2:16-17)

The Bible was written in a culture that decidedly regarded women as inferior to men – marriage is a **covenant of equals**.

Men and women stand in the same relation before God as Father and Creator (2:10) and in the covenant of marriage.

Application – Beloved, marriage is not rooted in the sand of emotional security. It is rooted in the rock of covenant loyalty.

Notice the human objects of treachery in the text:

10-13 – “**deal treacherously** each against his brother” (general “brother” that would include men and women)

14-16 – “**deal treacherously** against the wife of your youth” – specifically to the men (husbands)

Hebrew “**From the lesser to the greater**”

“deal treacherously” against brother by intermarriage (general term “**brother**” in 2:10 includes women)

“deal treacherously” against wife by Divorce → Worse Offense!!

10-13 – intermarriage (male/female verbs)

14-16 – divorce (male verbs)

The charge here applies to both husband and wife, but is given to the husband. Husbands, listen up! You lead the charge.

You are the spiritual leader. If you guard your spirit, win the battle in your heart, you will trust and protect your wife.

“^{15a}**But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring?”**

- This verse is very difficult to translate from the original language.

Point – **God made husband and wife one flesh**

Gen 2:24 – “a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

- to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth

Christ’s words - **Matt 19:3-6**

Application – What does it mean to become “one flesh”?

- emotionally
- socially
- physically
- spiritually

This is the foundation.

Here is the exhortation:

“^{15b}**Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong, says the LORD of hosts.**”

Now, the Bible teaches that God hates sin, but it is rarely said that He hates a particular sin. → A sin that cries out mightily to God.

“**I hate**” – As bad as **intermarriage** with those outside the family of God is, **divorce** is worse.

3 names of God here in the text :

“**the LORD**”

“**The God of Israel**” – only occurrence in Malachi – because the subject concerns the future of the chosen nation.

“**The LORD of Hosts**” – against Israel in this context

The God of War – The LORD of Hosts – hates divorce AND “**him who covers his garment with wrong**”

A much better translation of “**wrong**” is “violence.” It refers to cowardly, savage acts of terrorism or means of violence – from the original word **SM'X'** (*hamas*)

Ps 55:9 – “I have seen violence and strife in the city”

The reference of covering with violence is referring to the custom of putting a garment over a woman to claim her as wife. It is supposed to be a loving symbolic representation of the shelter of servant leadership, love and protection.

Ruth 3:9 – “And he said, ‘Who are you?’ And she answered, ‘I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative.’”

The garment is supposed to symbolize **trust** and **protection**. Instead of spreading their garment to protect their wives, they covered their garment with violence toward their violence → like the blood of a murdered victim.

God is saying that they cover the altar with hypocritical crocodile tears and they cover your garment with violence

Application - Beloved, Adam and Eve didn’t need a village. They needed God and each other.

Marriage is not a cultural custom.
It is not merely a legalization of mating habits.

Marriage is not a legal custom to be adopted, a consequence to be accepted, a convenience to be applied so you can have a better tax deduction nor is it a cage to be avoided.

Marriage is emotional. But first, it is volitional.
Marriage is a decision of the will. They had not won the battle in the arena that all spiritual battles must be won.

Illustration – “I have a right to be happy.”

Really?? Where do you get that? You won't find that in the Bible.

→ You don't have a right to be happy.

→ You have a command to be holy.

Tell me Christian, which do you think will give you greater contentment and joy and satisfaction ... being **holy** in a difficult situation or being "**happy**" in a sinful situation?

How about the right of your children to have a mom and a dad?

How about their right to have a secure home not torn apart?

3 implicit charges from the designation of the wife as a "companion" and the reference to the custom of "covering your wife with a garment"

From this charge, there is

- **companionship**
- **trust**
- **protection**

How do you make God's view of marriage - one of companionship, trust, and protection of your wife - your view?

How do you win the battle for virtue, integrity, and purity in your marriage?

→ By understanding where the battle is fought ...

and where the battle is won. In one place, and one place only...

→ **in the HEART!!!**

Men (and women), your responsibility is

"Take heed to your spirit" (2:15, 16) – literally means to

"guard" or "keep" your spirit – same word as in **2:7** "preserve"

- Recognize the thoughts
- Recognize the situations
- Eradicate the Sin

Exterminate! Search and Destroy! Be a Fighter! Be a Man!

Illustration – On Tuesday, I washed Rebekah’s car, got her favorite coffee and some roses and pulled up to her dorm to drop the car off and say our goodbyes before I headed home. I told Rebekah, given that my beloved Margie is in heaven, it was a sweet ministry that on that particular day, which would have been our 30th anniversary, I got to do that for our daughter.

Application –

Does your wife know she is “your girl”?

Does she know she is the apple of your eye?

Is that head knowledge or experiential knowledge?

Do you often tell your wife you love her?

Do you often show your wife you love her?

Puritan Thomas Watson – **“A man is not kept chaste by having a wife, but by loving his wife.”**

CONCLUSION

I am going to close with two letters.

Divorce from a Kid’s Point of View, written by a 13 year old:

“Dear Fathers. If you are a father thinking about leaving your family, I don’t believe you truly know in your heart what your child is going through. I may seem to be a normal 13 year old girl. I smile on the outside and show a positive attitude, but inside I’m crying out so loud for normal family life. You see, my father left my mom and me when I was 18 months old. Oh, sure, he probably thought I was too young for the divorce to affect me. But oh, how he was wrong.

What happened to the commitment and the promise that he made to my mom and most importantly to God? Will he ever realize that has scarred me for life? I just want to be a normal kid. What’s so wrong with that?

I've sat in restaurants the last ten years staring at the complete families around us, wondering, wondering what it would be like to have a father at home, to have a father kiss me goodnight and listen to my prayers; a father to be there at my volleyball games, to look at my report cards, to meet my teachers or maybe even tell me, "I love you." But all the waitress sees is the smile on my face. Doesn't my dad know how much he has hurt me?

If God gave me one wish and one wish only, I would wish for my father to watch me grow up. He wasn't there when I had my birthdays. He wasn't there for my school events or for my Girl Scout Awards programs. He never met any of my teachers and never saw a report card. My father got what he wanted. He couldn't face the responsibility of me. He got his freedom. He gambled. What he doesn't realize is that he has lost his little girl."

A second letter from a 28 year old woman who wrote this to a Christian radio host:

"I just listened to your broadcast ... and felt compelled to write. You mentioned that you received a letter from someone concerned that you are 'too hard' on divorce and my heart broke.

I am a twenty eight year old single profession woman. I grew up in an unstable, non-Christian home. I have had five parents and three sets of siblings. My mother called me just this past Sunday to inform me that she is about to bestow upon me a sixth parent and a fourth set of siblings.

I understand in the very depths of my being why my God hates divorce and why we should too. No good thing comes from it. Ever. Divorce has not only stolen from me a family, but also a trust that marriage is a good and desirable thing. The grapes my parents ate with relish have set my teeth on edge. Divorce answers no question, solves no problem, resolves no conflict, gives no respite, restores no dignity and grants no peace.

Divorce cannot be dealt with too harshly, especially in the church of Jesus Christ. I bless God that He knows no divorce in the marriage covenant He has established between Himself and His bride! We must teach husbands and wives to honor the covenant they made before God, if for no other reason than the sake of the next generation.”

There are two sounds from God in our text.

One is a loud crack of thunder – “I hate divorce.”

There is another sound from God – “I am the Lord. Merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

→ This sound was shouted even louder at Calvary.