

Intro

The Bible is real and practical. The Bible isn't a bunch of lofty philosophical speculations. The Bible isn't escapism where we look to the future and forget about life today.

In Malachi's day divorce was placing Israel under a curse. Today divorce restricts blessing and brings hardship. Everyone suffers.

Recently Tom Brady and Gisele announced their divorce. In his official statement, Tom tried to put a positive spin on it. Highlighting gratitude for their years together, the children that came from their union, their peaceful agreement to dissolve the marriage, and how they'll continue to work together to parent their children.

Tom admitted that going through divorce is "painful and difficult." But divorce is a common thing many experience. And divorce gives way to opportunity to write a new chapter in their lives.

That's one spin on divorce. Let's look at Malachi's spin.

READ PASSAGE (2:10-16)

Body

BIG IDEA: Remember God's blessings to prevent faithless living.

This is the big picture given in 2:10 where Malachi reminds them God is their Father and God has created Israel to be his one unique, treasured nation to display his glory.

As Christians, we remember God is our Father. Watching over us, meeting needs, providing protection, speaking to us in the Bible, listening as we pour out our hearts in prayer. God has adopted us into his family. With adoption comes the right of eternal inheritance. And God's made us a new creation to display his glory. Newness of life to make us shine in a world ruined by sin.

If we meditate on the blessings we have in Christ, we might be moved to faithful living. Israel forgot these things.

Passage Focus

Israel is doubting God's love because of humbling circumstances and delayed promises. Doubt is affecting their attitude towards God. They're failing to fear God.

Failure to fear God is affecting how they do marriage. Some are marrying foreign women who worship other gods. Some are divorcing their Jewish wives of many years.

As we treat God casually we bring ruin into our lives. And the lives of those around us.

Unlawful marriage and divorce are symptoms of deeper heart problems. We see the word "faithless" repeated throughout the passage. Faithless to each other. Faithless to spouses. Faithless to God. How we do marriage reveals our attitude towards God!

Divorce

We're faced with another hard one today: divorce. Again, my purpose isn't to shame those who've gone through divorce. My purpose isn't to dredge up bad memories of the past. Why did Malachi say these things? To correct a present problem in Israel. To prevent more men from divorcing their wives. So my purposes are:

- 1) To prevent the marriages present today from ending in divorce.

In the strength God supplies, fight the fight of faith by remaining faithful to your spouse by honoring the marriage covenant you made in the sight of God.

- 2) To instruct the unmarried on the seriousness of divorce.

If the Lord should will that you enter into marriage, go into marriage with the conviction that divorce is not an option. Resolve beforehand to remain faithful to your spouse "till death do you part."

Divorce is a curse. Avoid it all costs. That's what I'm saying.

I don't speak theoretically as one distant from the scars of divorce. My parents were divorced when I was one. I accept it as God's hidden will. Redemption's happened. But effects from a decision 47 years ago linger on today.

Point 1: Faithless by unlawful divorce (2:13-16) – Resolve to love your spouse till the end

And this second thing you do.

The first was marrying women who worshipped foreign gods.

You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

The people are crying at God's altar because God is rejecting their sacrifices. They feel the pain of God's rejection. What's fascinating is they understand what's going on.

How do they know? Well, 2:2 indicates curses are already being experienced. And 3:10-11 indicates their crops were suffering. They've concluded crop failure is a curse from God. They know their suffering stems from God's rejection. So God isn't accepting their offerings.

But they're ignorant as to why.

But you say, "Why does he not?"

They're a confused people. They have no clue.

Malachi provides the answer.

Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

The man's the guilty party here. "Because" indicates reason. In the past (in their youth), the LORD witnessed something between the man and the women. In marriage they made a covenant with each other. In covenant, they pledged themselves to one another making specific commitments. One of those commitments

must have been to remain married. The men are going back on a commitment witnessed by God. The unfaithfulness is the divorce itself.

Faithlessness shouldn't be because the wife *"is your companion."*

Companion = someone you're united to, your partner, the one you do life with.

This speaks to the "one flesh" (Gen 2:24) nature of marriage. When the covenant was made, the two became one. A permanent companion to walk with you through all of life's joys and trials.

"wife of your youth" = the one you married when you both were young (the norm assumed here). The one you prayed for, the one whose beauty captivated you, the one who quit their job because your job required you to go to Virginia for 16 weeks shortly after you were married, the one who gave birth to your children, the one who taught you to care for children when you had never seen a diaper before, the one who cared for your children while you went to work, the one you went to Orland and Bridgeton with, the one who encouraged you when you thought you'd never pastor. Remember her.

You've tossed her aside like garbage. Violating your promises God witnessed. God says, "I've seen what you've done. I'm disgusted. That's why you're under my curse."

Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?

God not only witnessed the marriage covenant. God acted on the man and woman at that past event. This is a really hard one to interpret! That's why, if you aren't looking at an ESV, your translation may be a little different. The Hebrew is challenging. For our purposes, how is the Spirit involved?

- 1) It might not be the Holy Spirit meaning, in the one flesh relationship, God united the spirits of the two.
- 2) If the Holy Spirit's intended, it might mean the couple (whether believing or not) received a portion of the Spirit to keep them united to one another.

Some restraint of sin that doesn't involve the indwelling Spirit.

- 3) Or it goes back to Adam and Eve, meaning that when he made them one the Holy Spirit was actively involved.

Whatever the case, God made the two one. The problem is the man has broken God's union by discarding his wife.

And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.

More on this in the second point.

So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

Since godly offspring are so critical, guard your heart lest you divorce your wife. Don't divorce because of the effects it will have on your children.

"For 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."

Some of you may have translations that differ.

"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, – NASB

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, – NIV

"For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, – NKJV (ESV notes this is an option)

These differ significantly from the ESV. How should we understand this?

Comment on translations

What I don't want is for you to lack confidence in God's word. What I want is for you to be able to understand the difference in translations without your faith suffering.

- 1) These versions and the ESV are using the same Hebrew.
- 2) Different translations use Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic Scriptures to produce English translations.
- 3) ESV, NASB, NKJV aim for word for word correspondence.
- 4) NIV aims for thought for thought. Meaning they interpret it for you more than the ESV.
- 5) NLT aims for thought for thought but not as word for word as the NIV.
- 6) The Message is way off.
- 7) My preference is word for word.
- 8) In personal translation I've found the NASB most accurate with ESV right behind.

In Malachi I've found the ESV more accurate.

- 9) I am thrilled you had the ESV when I got here!
- 10) The ESV is right on 2:16.

The Hebrew reads "he hates" (not "I hate") and God is the one speaking. Meaning the man is doing the hating, not God. The man hates his wife by divorcing her according to God.

- 11) These differences have minimal impact as Malachi 2:16 illustrates.

If we go with the ESV we lose a great proof passage that says, "God hates divorce." We lose the exact words, but we don't lose the concept. The fact that God is rejecting offerings and cursing the people committing divorce = God hates divorce. God equates divorce with violence. Divorce is like a non-physical assault on the wife. God hates violence per Psalm 11:5.

So in the end, we lose nothing! Have confidence in your English translations. Read your Bibles. Meditate on Scripture. Obey your Bible.

"So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

Malachi restates his warning. Guard your hearts by not even contemplating the possibility of divorce. Don't be a faithless people that divorces your wives.

The warning is to those who are considering divorce but haven't yet done so.

What does repentance look like?

If this is you (man or woman), what does repentance look like?

- 1) Confess your sin to God (if you haven't already). Own it
- 2) Look to the cross where sins past, present, and future are forgiven.

- 3) Accept God's forgiveness. Forgive yourself like God has.
- 4) Confess your sin to those affected. Former spouse, children, church family.

Don't pretend it didn't happen! Don't pretend your action didn't affect others.

- 5) If remarriage isn't an option, repent by treating your former spouse with dignity.
- 6) If remarriage is an option, pursue it if your former spouse is open.
- 7) If you're remarried, do marriage well today. Unfaithfulness was rejecting God's commands.
Faithfulness is obeying God's commands. Repent by resolving to honor God in your marriage today.

If you've been abandoned

There's sting. Rejected by a spouse you were one with. There's loss. Your companion is gone. There's guilt. Was it my fault? There's fallout. The kids were affected in some way. There's fear. Could I ever trust like that again?

Turn to Jesus. Pour out your heart before God. Learn where necessary. Accept it as God's hidden will. Move on while the sting lingers. Find perfect, committed relationship in God the Father.

Turn to the local church. Do life with people who can empathize and walk with you.

Marriage is a good thing!

A companion to do everything with. Raising kids, serving in the local community and local church, celebrating God's blessings, enduring sickness and trial, leisure, listening and talking about anything and everything.

This is a good gift from God.

Warnings

Beware of normalizing divorce. Resolve that divorce isn't an option. Beware of friends who've divorced giving ungodly counsel. Statistics say people are 75% more likely to get divorced if they have a friend who got divorced. Seniors, divorce is being normalized in your age bracket. Baby boomer divorce rates are growing. Follow your Bible not your culture!

Point 2: Marriage exists for godly offspring (2:15) – Resolve to influence your children towards God

And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

In other words, God's design for marriage is godly offspring. That's not to say sexual pleasure and companionship are bad things. But Malachi's highlighting how divorce frustrates God's design.

The implication is divorce hinders children from following Jesus. The way we do life either helps or hinders our child's response to God!

Gospel implications

In the gospel we learn that Jesus died for our sins. He died as a substitute because God is holy. God hates sin. Like divorce. So sin has to be punished. If we've repented and believed, trusting in Jesus' death as payment for our sins we're forgiven. If we persist in rebellion and unbelief, we'll pay the punishment for our sins in hell.

So in the gospel we learn about God's forgiveness, which is a model for our interaction with others.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. – Ephesians 4:32

When professing Christian parents can't forgive each other and get divorced, they deny the gospel. A child thinks to themselves, "Jesus means little to my parents. So why should he mean anything to me?"

When professing Christians get divorced they communicate something else about the gospel. The new birth isn't real.

In the gospel, Jesus promises us a new heart with power to fight sin.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" – John 7:38

When their parents get divorced, the child thinks to themselves, "The new birth can't be real. If it was, my parents wouldn't be fighting. Dad wouldn't have moved out. I guess I can't trust Jesus' promises."

Disclosure

I can't discuss every possible scenario in one sermon. If you have questions, send me an e-mail. I like questions. It means you're considering and wrestling with the Bible. We learn for faith and obedience.

Non-Christians

God's design is good. Sin frustrates God's design. Sin ruins ourselves and others. Jesus came to rescue us from sin. From ourselves. Turn to Jesus by trusting him and turning from sin. God's ways are life-giving, not life-destroying.

Conclusion

- 1) Resolve to love your spouse till the end.
- 2) Resolve to influence your children towards God.