

**Title: Be Faithful to Your Covenants**

**Text: Malachi 2:10–16**

Faithfulness is an important word.

When we speak of God, His faithfulness is perfect. He never wavers, never changes, never fails.

But when we speak of ourselves, it is very different.

Our faithfulness can be inconsistent. It can be conditional.

At times, it can even disappear.

That is exactly what was happening in Israel during the time of Malachi.

The people of God had become unfaithful.

What should have been marked by covenant loyalty had become characterized by compromise and betrayal.

God's call to faithfulness is not rooted in preference, it is rooted in His character.

He is perfectly faithful to His people, and He calls His people to reflect that same faithfulness in their lives.

**Main Idea: God Demands Covenant Faithfulness in Our Closest Relationships.**

So, what is happening in this letter that causes God to address this issue of faithfulness so directly?

Israel was demonstrating faithlessness in two critical areas, in their relationship with **God** and in their relationships at **home**.

Let's look at verses 10–12 to see how Malachi exposes this unfaithfulness.

**1. Covenant Unfaithfulness Betrays God — vs. 10–12**

Check out verse 10...

**Malachi 2:10 ESV**

*Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

Through the prophet Malachi, God asks three questions as He confronts His people.

*“Have we not all one Father?”*

*“Has not one God created us?”*

*“Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?”*

Remember who God is speaking to.

He is addressing His covenant people, Israel, those who had experienced His faithfulness for generations, beginning with Abraham.

This is not a general message to all people, it is a direct confrontation of those who belong to Him.

Before we apply it, we need to understand what He is saying to them.

### **God is the Father of Israel.**

God is the Father of Israel; something understood even from the time of Moses.

#### **Exodus 4:22 ESV**

*Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,*

Or the Prophet Jeremiah.

#### **Jeremiah 31:9 ESV**

*With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

### **God also created them as a nation.**

#### **Genesis 12:2 ESV**

*And I will **make** of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.*

#### **Isaiah 43:1 ESV**

*<sup>1</sup> But now thus says the LORD, he who **created** you, O Jacob, he who **formed** you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*

These three questions expose the heart of the issue for the Jewish people.

The first two establish their covenant identity, the third exposes their unfaithfulness.

The question then becomes, how are they being unfaithful?

The answer is in verse 11.

**Malachi 2:11 ESV**

*<sup>11</sup> Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.*

Do you see what they have done?

They have pursued and married foreign women.

This is in direct violation of God's command.

Look at two passages with me that prove this clearly.

**Exodus 34:15-16 ESV**

*<sup>15</sup> lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, <sup>16</sup> and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.*

Do you see the results of this kind of marriage?

What about Deuteronomy?

**Deuteronomy 7:3-4 ESV**

*<sup>3</sup> You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.*

Both passages make the same point.

Their Father, their Creator has specific laws for them to follow for their good, for God's glory, and for the protection and preservation of God's covenant people.

When they turned from God's commands and married pagan women, they tore at the very fabric of their identity as God's people.

This is about worship.

When an Israelite marries someone devoted to another god:

- Idolatry is introduced,

- loyalty to God is compromised,
- and the purity of worship is weakened.

This affects everyone, not just the couple.

***Individual compromise leads to corporate consequence.***

And for the Nation of Israel, they were facing a significant consequence.

***Malachi 2:12 ESV***

*<sup>12</sup> May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!*

Malachi intensifies the warning.

To be “*cut off*” means to be removed from the covenant community and placed under God’s judgment.

This sin is so serious that it warrants exclusion, even for the one who continues to bring offerings.

Outward worship does not shield a person from divine discipline.

God sees through religious activity when the heart is unfaithful.

This is not a new issue.

God had already warned His people that these kinds of relationships would turn their hearts away from Him.

That is what is happening here.

*We see this play out clearly in the life of Solomon.*

*In [1 Kings 11:1–4](#), his foreign wives turned his heart after other gods.*

*What began as personal compromise did not stay personal, it led to national spiritual decline and ultimately the division of the kingdom.*

That is the kind of damage Malachi is confronting.

After the exile, the same pattern appears again.

In [Ezra 9–10](#), the people are found in the same sin, and the response is grief, repentance, and decisive action.

Why? Because this kind of unfaithfulness threatens the spiritual integrity of the entire community.

And the principle does not disappear in the New Testament. [2 Corinthians 6:14–15](#) warns believers not to be unequally yoked, because devotion to God cannot be shared with competing allegiances.

The issue is still the same, a divided heart leads to compromised worship.

So, when Malachi calls for God to “*cut off*” the one who persists in this sin, he is affirming a consistent biblical pattern.

When God’s people ignore covenant boundaries and compromise their devotion, the consequences are serious, and they never stay personal, they spread and affect the people of God.

At the heart of this issue is not just broken relationships, it is an offense against God Himself.

As Spurgeon put it...

*“Sin is the dare of God’s justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power.”*

— C.H. Spurgeon, *The Mischief of Sin*

That is covenant unfaithfulness.

It is not just hurting people; it is dishonoring God.

God calls His people to be faithful, not just in what we say, but in how we live.

If you are not married, hear this clearly, do not pursue a relationship with someone who does not love Jesus, because the danger is not difficulty, it is direction.

Over time, your heart will be pulled away from God.

And if you are married, this passage calls you to renewed faithfulness in your covenant, to honor your spouse, to guard your heart, and to live with integrity before God.

But we also need to be honest, left to ourselves, our hearts are prone to wander.

That is why the gospel is such good news.

Jesus Christ has been perfectly faithful where we have not. He never broke covenant, He never turned away, and He went to the cross to pay for our unfaithfulness.

And now, by His grace, He not only forgives us, but He also strengthens us to live faithfully.

So ask yourself this week, where do I need to be more faithful to God, and take one clear step in that direction.

And that unfaithfulness to God never stays contained.

It always shows up somewhere, and in this passage, it shows up in marriage.

## **2. Covenant Unfaithfulness Devastates Marriage — vs. 13–15**

Malachi takes us to a powerful and uncomfortable scene.

The people are at the altar, weeping and bringing offerings, asking God to respond, and He refuses.

He does not accept their worship.

The question is, why?

Look at verse 13...

### **Malachi 2:13 ESV**

*And this second thing you do. 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.*

Malachi says, *"this is the second thing you do."*

The first was marrying pagan women.

Now he addresses another sin that explains why God is rejecting their worship.

Listen to Stephen Miller's explanation of what is going on here.

*The people were weeping at the altar because God was not answering their prayers or blessing them. But their sorrow was not repentance, it was frustration. They wanted God's blessing without turning from their sin. - Stephan Miller*

Their sorrow was worldly, not godly.

### **2 Corinthians 7:9–11 ESV**

*As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into **repenting**. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. <sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you...*

They were not grieving over sin, they were grieving over the loss of blessing.

This is like Esau.

**Hebrews 12:15-17 ESV**

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; <sup>16</sup> that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. <sup>17</sup> For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the **blessing**, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he **sought it with tears**.*

Like Esau, they wept, not in repentance, but in regret over what they had lost.

They still don't understand why.

Look at verse 14...

**Malachi 2:14 ESV**

*But you say, “Why does he not?”*

This is the third disputation.

They are again disputing what God has to say about them.

Why does God not accept our worship?

Why does God not bless us.

The answer is simple.

God does not hear those who cling to sin.

Listen to the Psalmist...

**Psalms 66:18 NKJV**

*If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.*

And the people of Israel were sinning

Think about it.

*If a child continues in open disobedience and is still rewarded, what message does that send?*

*It says their behavior is acceptable.*

God will not do that.

He will not bless rebellion.

*“You can cry. You can fuss. But I will not bless you, says the Lord.”*

So, what’s the problem?

Well, we have already discovered that they men in Israel were turning their back on God’s requirement to not chase after foreign or pagan women.

But there is a part two to what they are doing that is infuriating the Lord.

**Malachi 2:14 ESV**

*But you say, “Why does he not?” 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 Lord says, *“I saw your unfaithfulness to your covenant wife.”*

Your Jewish wife. You walked away from her and pursued pagan relationships.

A woman that does not share the same covenant values with you.

You have turned your back on her and, to top it off, you pursued relationships with pagan women!

**Malachi 2:15 ESV**

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

This is not new.

**Genesis 2:18 ESV**

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”*

**Genesis 2:24 ESV**

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

The NLT makes this a bit more understandable...

**Malachi 2:15 NLT**

*Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union...*

These men abandoned their vows.

They forgot who they belonged to and what God required.

God's design for marriage included godly offspring, a legacy shaped by faithfulness.

When they broke covenant, they did not just damage their marriages, they undermined the next generation.

The Jewish parents' great privilege was to pass on their faith to the next generation.

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV**

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup> You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

Again, this is the Law of Moses to the people of God.

Do you think that God was clear regarding their responsibility for their wives and children?

But they abandoned them.

These men left their families for pagan women.

They turned their backs on their high and holy privilege to love and care for the wives of their youth.

They destroyed the opportunity to produce a godly heritage.

And then in the next part of verse 15, Malachi instructs them on what they should do!

**Malachi 2:15 ESV**

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

The command is clear, stop being faithless.

Guard your heart, and honor the covenant you made with the wife of your youth.

While he does not spell out every step of restoration, the direction is unmistakable, God is calling His people back to covenant faithfulness in their marriages.

This passage is about real marriages within Israel.

*“The wife of your youth,” “your companion,” and “your wife by covenant”* all point to relationships established before God.

These men abandoned those covenants to pursue relationships that compromised their devotion to Him.

Whatever their motives, desire, pressure, or convenience, God calls it treachery.

They violated both their marriage vows and their relationship with God.

And in contrast, God remains faithful. He never abandons His people.

Their marriages were meant to reflect His faithfulness, but instead, they contradicted it.

The devastation of covenant unfaithfulness in marriage is unmistakable.

The Jewish people are at the altar, weeping and bringing offerings, yet God refuses to accept them.

Why? Because *“the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth.”*

Marriage is not merely a private arrangement; it is a covenant made before God.

When these men acted faithlessly, they were not just harming their wives, they were violating a covenant God Himself witnessed.

Verse 15 points back to God’s design: He made them one and sought “godly offspring.”

Marriage is meant to produce a legacy shaped by faithfulness to God.

When that covenant is broken, the damage does not stay contained, it affects worship, relationships, and the next generation.

This is consistent with [Genesis 2:24](#), where marriage is a one-flesh, lifelong union.

When covenant faithfulness is abandoned, the result is never neutral, it is devastating.

Marriage is not just a personal relationship; it is a covenant before God.

That is why this is so serious.

As Andreas Köstenberger says,

*“Marriage is a sacred covenant that reflects God’s faithful relationship with His people.” - Andreas Köstenberger*

That is what marriage is meant to display.

So, when covenant faithfulness is broken, it is not just a relationship that is damaged, it is a picture that is distorted.

The very thing God designed to reflect His faithfulness is now communicating unfaithfulness instead.

God calls us to honor marriage as a sacred covenant before Him, not something disposable.

That means guarding our hearts, honoring our commitments, and pursuing faithfulness in the relationships God has given us.

But we also need to acknowledge that in a room like this, there are people who carry the weight of past failure, broken marriages, and decisions they cannot change.

And here is the good news of the gospel: God is not only a God of truth, but He is also a God of mercy and grace.

He does not ignore sin, but neither does He abandon sinners who come to Him.

Through Jesus Christ, there is real forgiveness, real cleansing, and a real opportunity to walk in faithfulness today.

So, wherever you find yourself, whether guarding a strong marriage, seeking to restore what is strained, or living with the consequences of the past, the call is the same: pursue faithfulness to God now, resting in His grace and relying on His strength to live in a way that honors Him.

We have seen the damage covenant unfaithfulness causes, in worship, in marriage, and in the next generation.

Now Malachi shows us how God responds.

### **3. God Hates Covenant Breaking — v. 16**

Before we read verse 16, let me briefly explain something.

Some translations say, '*God hates divorce,*' while others, like the ESV, place the focus on the man who divorces his wife.

The difference comes from how the Hebrew is understood, specifically who is doing the "*hating.*"

I am using the ESV because it best fits the flow of the passage.

From verse 10 onward, Malachi has been confronting the men for acting treacherously, and verse 16 continues that emphasis by highlighting the man's responsibility.

Either way, the point is clear, divorce is not neutral.

It is described as an act of treachery and even violence against a covenant relationship God Himself established.

**Malachi 2:16 ESV**

*“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. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”*

In Malachi 2:16, the focus is on the man who breaks his covenant.

To *“cover his garment with violence”* is a vivid picture of guilt, his life marked by the harm he has done.

Divorce here is not a neutral decision or merely the end of a relationship, it is described as an act of treachery and even violence against his covenant wife.

The issue is not simply that a marriage has ended, but that a covenant has been broken.

Both verses 15 and 16 end the same way, *“So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”*

That repetition is intentional.

The problem is not merely relational, it is internal.

Unfaithfulness begins in the heart, and without guarding it, covenant breaking follows.

This command is for those who have acted treacherously and for those who have not.

It is both a call to repentance and a warning of prevention.

Guard your heart, because covenant unfaithfulness does not begin in a moment, it begins in one's spirit.

Malachi makes it clear, God takes covenant faithfulness seriously and calls His people to guard their hearts.

Throughout Scripture, violating a covenant is not a private matter, but as an act of wrongdoing that brings real harm.

In [Psalm 55:20](#), the psalmist speaks of one who “*violated his covenant,*” describing it as betrayal, not neutrality.

That same idea is present here, divorce here is not simply the ending of a relationship, it is the breaking of a sacred trust.

This connects to God’s design for marriage from the beginning.

In [Genesis 2:24](#), a man is to “*hold fast*” to his wife, a phrase that speaks of covenant loyalty and permanence.

To walk away from that bond is to act against God’s design.

And as [Matthew 19:6](#) affirms, *what God joins together is not meant to be separated by man.*

The breaking of that union is treated as a serious moral act.

Malachi says the man who divorces his wife “*covers his garment with violence.*”

*Picture someone standing before you wearing a garment that should be clean, but instead it is stained, marked, not with dirt, but with the evidence of harm done. You cannot ignore it. It tells a story. That is what God sees. What may be explained away or justified on the outside is still marked by what has been done.*

Covenant breaking does not disappear; it leaves a mark.

That is why God calls it violence, because it leaves real damage behind.

God takes covenant faithfulness seriously, and that means we must as well.

If you are married, this is a call to guard your heart and honor the covenant you have made.

Do not treat your marriage as disposable, but as something sacred before God.

Guard your spirit, because unfaithfulness begins in the heart.

And if you are not married, this is a call to pursue relationships that honor God, not ones that pull your heart away from Him.

We also need to say this clearly, many carry the weight of past failure in this area.

Divorce leaves real scars, and this passage shows why.

But it also shows something greater, our God is not only a God of truth, He is a God of mercy.

Through Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness for sin, healing for what has been broken, and strength to live faithfully moving forward.

You cannot change the past, but by God's grace, you can walk in faithfulness today.

The call is simple, guard your heart, honor your covenant, and rely on God's grace to live faithfully.

### **Conclusion**

Covenant faithfulness honors God, but covenant unfaithfulness betrays Him and causes real damage.

This matters because how we treat covenant, especially in marriage, reveals whether our hearts are aligned with the God we claim to worship.

This week, identify one area where you need to be more faithful to God, and take one intentional step to guard your heart and honor Him in it.

We are called to faithfulness, but we do not naturally live that way. Our hearts wander, our commitments weaken, and left to ourselves, we fail.

But Jesus Christ never failed.

He kept every covenant perfectly.

He remained faithful to the very end, even to the point of death on the cross.

And because of Him, we are not only forgiven, but we are also changed.

We are given a new heart and the power to live faithfully.

So, we do not walk out of here trying harder on our own.

We walk out trusting Christ more deeply, and by His grace, guarding our hearts and living in a way that reflects His faithfulness.