

MBC – 6/14/2020 – Pastor Doug Thompson
“Faithless”
 Malachi 2:10-16

I’ve given you our passage in your outline this morning for a reason: The Hebrew text is so difficult to translate – especially in vv.15-16, that the Bible you’re using might say something completely different than the Bible I’m using. It’s been called the most difficult passage in the entire OT. So read with me from the ESV translation of Mal.2:10-16. And I want you to notice a word that occurs 5 times—

- Malachi 2:10–16 ¹⁰Have 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? ¹¹Judah 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. ¹²May 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!
- ¹³And 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. ¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Did 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. ¹⁶“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*.”

Intro – the meaning of ‘covenant.’

What word did you hear five times? “*Faithless*,” it’s the Heb. Word bagad and it means “*betrayal*.” It’s also translated as *deceitful* or your Bible might say “*treacherously*.” We think of Judas. Benedict Arnold. But God is talking about His own people here. He was a Father to them, He created them as a people and a nation. He was always faithful toward them, but they were *faithless* toward Him. And toward each other. When things aren’t right on the vertical, things will never be right on the horizontal – isn’t that true?

And this word *faithless* specifically applies to *covenant* relationships – Malachi uses the word “covenant” 7 times, and it’s used throughout the Bible, but do we know what that means? Let me try to put the cookies on the bottom shelf where we can all reach them—

- A covenant is an agreement between two people or two parties that *defines the relationship*. Single people know what it means when a couple has the big ‘DTR’ talk – they are “*defining the relationship!*” Well God created human beings to exist in a relationship with Him, and throughout the Bible, He defines the relationship: When He chooses Abraham to be the beginning of the Jewish race, He *Defined the Relationship* in a covenant with Abraham. Later He *Defined the Relationship* very specifically in the covenant with Moses – that was His DTR with His people in the OT. When Jesus came He inaugurated a New Covenant, through His blood, which will *Define the Relationship* with His people until He returns.

Now the contrast to a covenant is a *contract*. A contract is meant to protect two parties who might become enemies. A *covenant* is a relationship between two parties that want to remain friends. So each party pledges what they will do to benefit the other. A contract revolves around *suspicion*, a covenant

revolves around *trust*. Each side must keep their word to the other. They pledge *covenant faithfulness* to the other.

- But Israel was *unfaithful* to their covenant with God. And we saw why last week: the priests had failed in teaching God's Word. So instead of continually reinforcing the terms of their covenant with God (the Mosaic covenant), it was becoming a faint memory. I mean, it was 1,000 years old. Maybe those old laws were obsolete now. Maybe it wasn't a such big deal to marry a foreigner, or to divorce your wife.

But God hadn't changed, Malachi 3:6 "*For I the LORD do not change!*" and His covenant with His people had not changed – not one jot or tittle – and the consequences of breaking His covenant hadn't changed.

*So I want you to follow me here: They had broken covenant with God by divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying pagan women who worshiped other gods. This was a double disobedience. And what made it even worse was that in both OT and NT, God's covenant relationship with His people is compared to the covenant of *marriage*, isn't that right? Since God created Adam and Eve to be the first husband and wife – He meant for the marriage union to be a picture of Him and His people. In the OT, God is the husband, Israel is His bride; in the NT, Jesus is the groom, the church is His beloved bride.

So all sin against marriage – think about this – all sin against marriage, lies about the Gospel.

I. Unequal yokes.

- Malachi 2:11–12 ¹¹Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary [lit. "*profaned the holiness of the LORD,*"] which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. ¹²May 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!

A. The father of the bride.

Yahweh is holy, and His people are to be holy – set apart for Him, consecrated. And God gave His people many laws under the Old Covenant to reinforce this principle of holiness – separateness – from the pagan nations. The most basic law was that they were not to intermarry with pagans—

- Deuteronomy 7:3–4 ³You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, [and this is the reason]: ⁴for 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.

This had nothing to do with race or ethnicity – nothing in the Bible prohibits interracial marriage. This was about protecting God's people from being seduced into worshiping false gods. An Israelite who married a foreigner was marrying a spouse with a different spiritual father – a demon! (And you never want a demon for a father-in-law, right?)

Solomon knew this law, but he ignored it, and God's Word came true—

- 1 Kings 11:1–9 ¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

³He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ash-toreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. ⁸And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (Did they even burn their children alive to Molech? Solomon's own children?)⁹And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Solomon, David's son, the King of Israel! His heart was turned from the Lord to stupid idols.

"Oh Pastor, I know I shouldn't date an unbeliever, but I want to lead him to Jesus!" Famous last words. Solomon knew what God had commanded! He had no excuse. He was *faithless* to God's covenant. And let me show you a fascinating passage – I just read this going through 2 Chronicles—

- 2 Chronicles 8:11 ¹¹Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."

Bummer when you can't bring your wife to church! He couldn't share the joy of worship with his own wife because he was unequally yoked. Not just sad – it's a violation of his covenant with God. How does this apply to us?

B. The application today.

Again, for the record, nothing in God's Word prohibits marrying a person with a different skin color, or ethnicity. But, the NC repeats the OC prohibition on marrying an unbeliever—

- 1 Corinthians 7:39 Paul said this to widows, and it applies to every believer:³⁹A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord*.

And the reason for this is the same as it was in the OT – going back to Adam and Eve, God designed marriage to be a *spiritual* union, not just a physical union. Paul said this and it applies to marriage—

- 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 ¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

Christians are to marry other Christians. Period. It's not a matter of "Maybe we will be happy," or "Maybe I will lead him or her to Jesus," it's a matter of obeying Christ, and as I said earlier, it's a matter of picturing the Gospel. And if you want to have this God-intended spiritual fellowship in your marriage, you both need to be living for Christ, and on the same page in your theology. The Westminster confession said this almost 400 years ago—

- It is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as

are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are *notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies*" (24:3).

- Single people: this should be one of the first questions on your first date at Jamba Juice: "Soooo, you wouldn't happen to be *notoriously wicked or maintain any damnable heresies*, would you, now?"

Verse 12 is what God says to the Israelite who would disobey God, take a foreign wife and think he could just go on with his regular worship—

- Malachi 2:12 ¹²May 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!

God rejected their hypocritical worship, and cursed those who would do this. Their line would be cut off. Serious stuff. But this wasn't their only sin. Let's read on—

II. Unlawful divorces.

- Malachi 2:13 ¹³And 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.

But look at the explanation—

- Malachi 2:14 ¹⁴But 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.

So here is what was happening: Jewish men were divorcing their aging Jewish wives for younger pagan women – *double* covenant violation. *Double* unfaithfulness. Let's read the next two verses – again, I've given you the ESV translation here. What does God say about this selfish sin of divorce?—

- Malachi 2:15–16 ¹⁵Did 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. ¹⁶"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*." (I.e. "Do not break covenant.")

This is why God hates divorce—

A. Marriage is a covenant, not a contract.

V.14. "*your wife by covenant*." And it says that God was a witness to this marriage covenant. Marriage is a 3-way covenant, between the couple and God. But what does that mean? Let me compare a contract marriage to a covenant marriage—

1) Contracts are temporary, covenants are permanent.

Contracts usually have an expiration date, but the marriage covenant is until "death do us part," it doesn't expire until one of you expires, and as I like to remind couples, murder is not an option. When a couple views marriage as a contract, it's only binding *until* it's not happy anymore, or it's too much work,

or they find someone better. Covenantal marriage is an unconditional life commitment. That's a whole different kind of relationship, isn't it?

And maybe you didn't really think about this when you got married, but the #1 healthiest thing you can do for your marriage is to nail the back door shut, once and for all. I mean, that's what you promised, remember? When that backdoor is locked, and conflict comes, you aren't wasting your energy deciding if it's going to work, you put your energy into figuring out how it's going to work – because you're in this thing until one of you goes to Jesus.

- A pastor down in Texas tells men, "When you get married, you get measured for your tux and your coffin at the same time!"

#2) Contracts look for loopholes, covenants extend forgiveness.

Remember, a *covenant* is a relationship between two parties who want to remain friends. So each party pledges what they will do to benefit the other. When marriage is just a contract, a good lawyer can get you out of it. When it's a covenant, both people know they are marrying a sinner, and constant forgiveness will be *required*. That other person is not going to stop sinning – so you must be committed to forgive.

- I think pastors should make that a part of a couples' marriage vows: "I promise to love, honor, cherish – and *forgive!*" Don't you think?

That's the covenant God has made with us, isn't it? "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

#3) A contract is for yourself, a covenant is for the other.

- When a couple sees marriage as a contract, it's a 50-50 deal: *If* you do your part, *then* I will do mine. "I do," means, "I do – if you do."

But in a covenant marriage, both pledge 100%, unconditionally. "You don't do your part, then I'll do your part because I am promising you and God to love you, serve you, remain faithful to you, and forgive you, until death do us part." A contract is about *getting* for me, a covenant is about *giving* to you.

- I just read that Kelly Clarkson is divorcing her husband – but not to worry, she had a *pre-nuptial agreement* to make sure she didn't get shafted if they got divorced. Even our first lady has a pre-nup with the Prez – I guess when you're #3 you're beginning to see a pattern. . . But anytime you hear of a pre-nuptial agreement, that's not a covenant marriage. It's just a contract waiting to be broken. And I remember hearing a lawyer say he had never known of a pre-nup that wasn't eventually used!

One more thought here: This says that *God makes covenant marriages*:

- ¹⁵Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union?
- Gen.2:24, "They shall become one flesh." And Jesus' comment on this in Matt.19.6 was right to the point: "*What God has joined together, let no man separate.*"

A second reason God hates divorce—

B. God designed marriage to produce “godly offspring.”

- Malachi 2:15 . . . 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.

One of God’s purposes in the covenant of marriage was for two godly people to have kids and raise them in godly homes. This is what God designed for believing homes to look like—

- Deuteronomy 6:6–9 ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You 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. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Mom and dad were both part of this daily instruction in godliness. But these Jewish men were violating God’s purpose by divorcing their believing wives and marrying pagans. And their children were being lost to pagan gods.

- Isn’t this why Satan attacks marriage? Divorce, polygamy, so-called “gay marriage,” all of these mar God’s purpose in marriage to show our children the holy, faithful relationship between Christ and His church. But here is a question—

*So is there hope for those who are unequally yoked?

You say, “My husband, my wife, is not a believer – no HS – so are our kids without hope?” Well God spoke to this very situation in 1 Cor.7. Paul was forbidding believers from divorcing each other – with the sad exception of adultery, for which Jesus permitted divorce. But should a believer divorce an unbeliever? Paul says no—

- 1 Corinthians 7:12–14 ¹²To the rest I say (I, not the Lord – he means that Jesus did not address this issue) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

He meant that even one believer in that marriage meant that the Holy Spirit was in that home, and there was hope for the salvation of the spouse and the kids! So if you are in that situation, the glass is half full, not half empty!

He went on to say that if the unbeliever can’t handle living with the believer and divorces him or her, the believer should accept that, and they are free to remarry “only in the Lord.” (and I’m summing up a whole lot of teaching in just a couple sentences, you realize!)

Final reason God hates divorce—

C. Divorce is treachery against another person.

I said that Heb. word for “*faithless*” is often translated as treachery. Look at v.14: these men were divorcing “the wife of their youth” – they married them when they were perhaps just teenagers, and they became companions, God said, they were one flesh. But as they both got older, some of these Jewish husbands wanted a younger, pagan upgrade, so they threw their wives out with the trash. And a divorced woman in that society was in a very disadvantaged position. She was looked down on, alone, no income. And believe me, it’s still like that in parts of the world today. (Uganda)

- So v.16 ¹⁶“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.

It’s like he comes to worship with the blood spatter of his murder victim all over his clothes! If two become one in marriage, then divorce is like having a limb amputated. It’s a tearing, a ripping apart. There is no pain quite like it.

And now I want you to look at God’s parting word here in v.16—

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

D. The application today.

Don’t be a covenant-breaker, don’t be treacherous. Don’t betray your covenant with your one Father, the one God who created you! If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, by His own sovereign grace, He will never be faithless to you. And don’t be faithless to one another – keep your word, keep your promises and commitments – we all depend upon each other to be faithful in the church family, don’t we?

And be faithful to your marriage covenant. But notice that God tells us where this begins: “*So guard yourselves in your spirit.*” *Covenant faithfulness begins In your heart.* Didn’t Solomon say—

- Proverbs 4:23 ²³Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

He should have heeded his own words! Jesus said, all of our actions begin as thoughts in the heart. Murder begins with hatred in the heart. Adultery begins with lust in the heart. So faithfulness begins with faithfulness in the heart too. And let me apply this to our marriages because in so many ways, as our marriages go, so goes our church—

Are you faithless, or faithful?

Are you fulfilling your wedding vows? Do you even remember what they were? I know you promised to love, honor, and cherish – are you keeping those promises?

- I know you promised to be faithful to your husband or wife. Have you kept that promise – are you keeping it now? Let the Spirit search your heart this morning: are you faithful in your thoughts? Jesus said that adultery starts in the heart – what’s going on in there? “Guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.”
- Hebrews 13:4 [says] ⁴Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

But in your marriage covenant you also promised that through good times and bad, you would “love and cherish” that other person “as long as you both shall live.” Look in your heart this morning: are you still

loving and cherishing your husband or your wife? You aren't keeping your end of the marriage covenant if you have stopped working on that. If you have given up, and settled for a lukewarm marriage – that is *unfaithfulness* to what you promised your spouse and God. “*Guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.*”

Malachi rebuked those covenant-breaking Jews who wept tears on the altar, wondering why God wasn't answering their prayers. But listen to what Peter says to New Covenant Christian husbands—

- 1 Peter 3:7 ⁷Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way [lit. “according to knowledge”], showing honor [to cherish, count as precious] to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, *so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

Men, do you *know* your wife? Do you ask her what she thinks and how she feels? And do you tell her what you think and feel? If she is your “companion,” you should. Does she feel cherished by you – more than any hobby, or sport, or any other friend? Does she know without a doubt that you love her? You promised that you would. God heard that promise. Do you tell her you love her, every day? More than once a day?

- Every man here knows what Ephesians 5 says to husbands: “Husbands love your wives, just like Christ loved the church.” Which means, love your bride the same way Jesus loves His bride. Which means, love her the way Jesus loves you, if you are a Christian.
- And the picture of what that looks like, is in John 13 – Jesus, the Lord of the universe, is down on His knees, like a servant, washing the dirty feet of His Disciples—

Men, *that's* how you should love your wives, because that's how Jesus loves you. Stop expecting your wife to serve you, you start serving her. “For the Son of Man did not come to *be served*, but to *serve*, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Brothers, He calls you to do the same for your bride. Don't you sit in your big chair and tell her to get you a beer – you let her sit in the chair, and you get *her* a beer! – or iced tea, whatever.

Peter's point is, if you're not doing, that, don't wonder why your prayers are hindered. Repent, and by His grace, start today.

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If this has been hard stuff to hear I want to end with some very good news this morning—

Covenants in the Bible weren't *made*, they were literally *cut*: an animal was killed and the blood of that animal stood as a witness to what would happen if one of the parties violated that covenant – their death would be required. And Paul said in Romans, and it's still true – “the wages of sin is death.”

So before time began, God chose a multi-racial, multi-ethnic people to set His unconditional covenant love upon, but there were two obstacles: 1.) None of us keep our end of the covenant. But God sent His Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life and offer up His covenant obedience for all of our disobedience. And #2.) All of our covenant breaking requires blood – our own death – so God offered up the lifeblood of His own sinless Son to cover all of our sins. And if you trust in Jesus Christ this morning, whatever your sins, even if they involve adultery, or unbiblical divorce, they are covered by the blood of Christ: “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

And even though we have been faithless, God will be forever faithful. This is the covenant He has made with all those who love and trust His Son—

- “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

- Now Why This Fear?