

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MALACHI 2:1-17

In his classic book for pastors, Puritan, Richard Baxter, wrote, "God never saved any man for being a preacher." That means not everyone in the ministry - *who climbs into a pulpit* - will ascend into Paradise.

The pastor comes to God the same as people.

He has to humble his heart, repent of his sin, submit to Jesus as Lord, and trust Christ for his righteousness.

God doesn't offer a spiritual exemption for clergy.

In fact, Richard Baxter had some strong words for the pastors of his day, a message I think needs to be repeated today, "The great and lamentable sin of ministers of the Gospel is that they are not fully devoted to God. They do not give themselves up wholly to the blessed work they have undertaken to do.

Is it not true that flesh-pleasing and self-seeking interests make us walk unfaithfully... Is it not true that we serve God too cheaply? Do we not do so in the most applauded way? Do we not preach the realities which are above, while we mind the things which are below? So what remains to be said, brethren, but to cry that we all are guilty of too many of the aforementioned sins. Do we not need to humble ourselves in lamentation for our miscarriages before the Lord?"

I have no doubt the troublesome condition of the church today is largely due to the meager spirituality and shallow teaching of its ministers. "As the pastor, so goes the people." If pastors today would fall on their faces before the Lord in

repentance of their own sin, then perhaps revival would fall upon the church.

In Chapter 1 Malachi exposed the sin of the Jewish priesthood, in the same manner Richard Baxter censured the pastors of his day. The priests had defiled the altar of the Lord, and made a mockery of ministry.

Their actions were hypocritical and their motive was a stench. They defiled the altar by **what they brought, why they had come, and the way they behaved.**

The Lord had moaned, **“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain?”** In other words, if you can't serve me sincerely, then don't serve me at all!

They would be better off shutting the Temple doors!

It's interesting, but Malachi 1 was the justification used by the first century Qumran community to reject the Temple worship and the Jerusalem priesthood.

The Essenes were an order of Jews who lived around the time of Christ. They had separated themselves from the Jewish establishment and lived communally in the desert just north of the Dead Sea.

The Essenes were the caretakers of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some scholars believe John the Baptist studied with the Essenes. The Qumran community saw the *compromise of the Sadducees* and *hypocrisy of the Pharisees*, and in a way shut the doors of the Temple.

As we know, God is incredibly patient! Even His most vehement threats are often preceded by long periods of forbearance. God prefers not to judge His people.

He prefers the role of *blessor* not *bouncer*.

God was patient with the priests. He allowed the message of Malachi to ring in their ears for 500 years, hoping they would repent. They never did, and in 70 AD God shut the doors of the Temple Himself.

He raised up the Romans to destroy the Temple, and put an end to its wayward worship. The fire on the altar was finally extinguished, as Malachi had forewarned.

The preoccupation of pastors today is church growth and new churches. The goal is to expand attendance at all costs... And I too want to see our church grow numerically, but if we compromise our calling just to put buns in the seats, we've done more harm than good.

In Malachi, **God is more into shutting down churches than He is in starting up churches.** It's safe to say, that God despises Church growth when the pastors and leaders become selfish, insensitive, and self-centered.

In Chapter 2 of his prophecy, Malachi continues his call to the priests to humble themselves and repent.

Verse 1, **“And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.”** You've heard the Budweiser jingle, **“this Bud's for you.”** Well, God has a jingle for the priests of Malachi's day. They're drunk on deception and sin.

They're about to get sobered up. God has a jingle of His own... He says, **“*This commandment is for you!*”**

“If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,” says the Lord of hosts, “I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.

Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart.” God's complaint against the priests was they didn't give glory to His name! They were too busy trying to make a name for themselves.

This is the ultimate sin for a Christian minister. We've been called for one reason and one reason only - *to glorify God!* When we find ourselves tooting our own horn, or justifying ourselves, or promoting our virtues we reveal just how far we've strayed from the path.

Our motives have become mixed. Our vision blurred.

Too often we're like the woodpecker, pecking at the trunk of a giant oak. Suddenly a bolt of lightning strikes from heaven, hits the top of the tree, and splinters it in pieces. The bird flies off, looks at the dead tree behind him, proudly raises its beak to say, “**Look, what I did!**”

And this is a lesson for us... Our pecking away at the work of God is not what brings the results. It's *God's bolts of blessing* - it's *His works of grace* that make the difference. Our pecking just testifies of our faithfulness.

It's God that brings the fire. *He deserves the glory.*

I once heard Pastor Chuck teach a Bible Study from 2 Corinthians 4, where he spoke about *the ministry*.

The study had a profound impact on my life. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 Paul says, “**We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that**

the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

God has placed the most valuable treasure on earth, *the Gospel*, in clay pots (i.e, plain, ordinary people), so the attention won't be focused on the container, but on the treasure inside.

You and I are ball jars - we're nothing glamorous or fancy. And this is why God has chosen to use us. He wants people to look *past us*, and see *Jesus* in us!

In his sermon Chuck used the illustration of a pitcher the family used for orange juice. He said he once tried to make tea in the pitcher, but his tea tasted like orange juice. His point was a vessel shouldn't contaminate its contents. What pours out needs to be pure. You want to taste *the contents* not *the pitcher*.

And this is how we should share the Gospel - never taint it with our prejudices or personality. We need to convey it as purely as possible, so the glory goes to God - not ourselves. People shouldn't taste the pitcher.

They should recall *the contents* not *the container*.

The priests of Malachi's day were doing just the opposite. They were polluting the ministry with ***their*** taste. And Malachi warns them, unless they repent God will curse them - *He'll even curse their blessings*.

The greatest disaster in American naval history was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. But it could've been averted if officers had taken the warning to heart.

It's now well documented that prior to the attack American interceptors had broken the secret code used in Japanese

diplomatic messages. Surveillance teams were decoding veiled references to an invasion, but they failed to treat the chatter as serious treats.

It's also now known that on the morning of December 7th, Army radar on Pearl picked up unidentified planes approaching the islands. They sounded the alarm, but an inexperienced officer failed to give the warnings the credence they deserved.

The disaster at Pearl Harbor was not due to a lack of information, or to a failure to receive adequate warnings, it was the result of certain people who failed to take the message to heart! *And this is our problem...*

Seldom are we the victim of not knowing. More often we're the stooge who knew better, but failed to obey.

We need to take God's word to heart - both *His words of warning* and *His words of encouragement*.

“Behold, I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your solemn feasts; and one will take you away with it.” The word “*refuse*” means “*excrement, dung, manure*.” One commentator interprets it as the entrails or intestines of the sacrifice.

Remember the priests were offering God the people's leftovers, the weak and sickly of the flock.

All the while they were complaining and grumbling. They were serving the Lord begrudgingly. They called the service of God, “*a weariness*.” They were making a mockery of ministry, and they were embarrassing God.

It reminds me of a man in Washington state who snuck into a trailer park where he attempted to siphon gas from one of the mobile homes. He put his lips to the pipe he thought lead to the gas tank and began to suck. He soon discovered that he had made an awful mistake. He was sucking out sewage - not gas.

He ended up with a mouthful of manure.

This is God's point here! He says to the priests, *"You've humiliated Me. I'm going to humiliate you."*

The priests prided themselves in their cleanliness, of properly washing and wearing spotless robes. The highest insult, the greatest indignity, was to be paraded around with manure smeared all over their face.

Verse 4, *"Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant with Levi may continue," says the Lord of hosts.* God had appointed the Levites to serve the spiritual needs of the people.

The priests, the family of Aaron, were from the tribe of Levi. Malachi's message was to awaken the Levites, produce repentance, and save them from extinction.

"My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name."

Here God remembers better days - when the descendants of Levi faithfully followed Him. There was a time when the priests were model ministers. In the next 3 verses God shows 4 marks of a true minister.

And the first mark is here, **he fears the Lord**. A true minister has a healthy fear - a reverence for God.

One of the dangers of ministry is the familiarity that comes from constantly handling the things of God.

Familiarity can breed a flippancy. *Prayer becomes routine, worship a to-do, Bible study just paper work.*

The minister needs to maintain a sense of God's holiness, and a seriousness about the things of God.

Verse 6, “**The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips.** Here were the priests in their faithful days. **They spoke the truth.**

This too is a mark of a minister. His goal is “**to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.**”

He doesn't *water it down*, or *twist it*, or *distort it*, or *make it say more than it does*. In an age of lies and half-truths a faithful minister has truth in his mouth.

And, verse 6, “**He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity.**” Here's the third mark of a faithful minister, **he walks with God.**

In Scripture it's said of both Enoch and Noah - they walked with God. They had a relationship with God.

The faithful minister loves God more than he does the ministry. He wants to sit before Him and listen to Him. He desires to walk with God in peace and justice.

And it's because of the way he lives (*or walks*), it turns many people from sin. Every minister needs to remember the key to

his effectiveness its not just the sermons he preaches, but the life that he lives.

There were better speakers than Billy Graham - and more insightful teachers - but he had unprecedented influence because of the integrity he maintained. He did more than *speaking for God*, He *walked with God*.

Verse 7, “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.”

The fourth and final mark of a minister is **he teaches the Law**. He teaches God's people God's word!

Notice Malachi's emphasis on the minister's lips, the words that come from his mouth. We all have a Bible, the written word, but often when we read the Bible it doesn't speak to us as forcefully as when we hear it expounded. As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save.”

In his commentary on Malachi, Martin Luther wrote, “This is a passage against those who hold the spoken Word in contempt. The lips are the public reservoir of the church. Unless the Word is preached publicly, it slips away. The more it is preached, the more firmly it is retained. Reading it is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the power of error. Satan does not care a hoot for the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word. This penetrates hearts and leads back those who stray. Preaching is a channel through which the Holy Spirit is given.” There’s power in public preaching.

The true minister is faithful to “preach the Word in season and out of season” - in other words, when its *convenient and inconvenient*, when its *popular and unpopular*, when its *received* and when its *rejected*.

The minister is not merely a speaker, He's God's messenger. The faithful pastor **fears the Lord, speaks the truth, walks with God, and teaches God's Law.**

Let's pray for more men to take up this mantle.

“But you have departed from the way...” Malachi comes back to the priests of his day. “You have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of hosts.

“Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways but have shown partiality in the law.”

The priest's of Malachi's day doctored the message. They wanted to be more *popular* than *biblical*. They catered to itching ears and told folks what they *wanted to hear*, not necessarily what they *needed to hear*.

And since they had *deceived publicly* they will be *rebuked publicly*. To prove to the people the error of their teaching God will bring on them a public disgrace!

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?”

The covenant God struck with Abraham, He made with his family. It was a national covenant. Thus, it was vital they

realize to obey God was to help each other. God would either bless them or curse them as a whole.

And this is true of us. Remember *it's not the brides of Christ, plural - but the Bride of Christ, singular.* We're one people, one nation, in Christ. This means my behavior has a bearing on you and yours on me.

We are inseparably yoked together in Christ - we share a common destiny. Our lives effect one another. This is God's way of making us sensitive to each other. If my blessing is dependent on your obedience; then I'll see to it you stay encouraged and built up in Christ.

Verse 11, **“Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the Lord’s holy institution which He loves: He has married the daughter of a foreign god.”** Notice first, **“*marriage is the institution that God loves.*”** God created marriage. Marriage was God’s idea. After everything that God created, He pronounced that **“it was good.”**

God said, **“a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”** Malachi is clear, marriage is not the innovation of man. God created it and loves it. He considers it a holy, sacred, special institution, and so should we!

Yet the people of Malachi's day defiled the institution of marriage. They marred God’s sacred institution in at least two ways: First, **they married unbelievers**, and second, **they engaged in unbiblical divorce.**

Realize, when God forbid the Jews from marrying other peoples it had nothing to do with racial prejudice.

Read the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and you'll find a Canaanite woman named Rahab, and a Moabite named Ruth numbered among Messiah's ancestors...

In God's economy there's nothing wrong with interracial marriage, *and beware if you think so...*

When Moses' sister, Miriam, objected to him marrying an Ethiopian God struck her with leprosy. I'll repeat, there's nothing wrong with interracial unions!

It was not for racial reasons, but spiritual reasons that God told the Jews to marry only Jews. God didn't want a believer to marry an unbeliever. He knew the power of marriage - *the incredible bond that develops when a man and a woman unite their hearts as one.*

After you're married the word "together" means more than ever before. When you're married you're together for better or worse. Spouses rub off on each other.

And in the case of marrying an unbeliever, God knew it would be a small jump from them *climbing into bed together* and them *bowing before an idol together.*

In Haggai 3 the prophet is asked two questions...

First, "If one carries holy meat does what it touch become holy?" And the answer was "NO!" Holiness is not communicable. You can't catch it or pass it on to someone else without them willingly receiving it.

The second question was, "If one who is unclean touches anything will it become unclean?" And this answer was "YES."

Holiness isn't communicable, but wickedness is! If you run with the wrong crowd - with wicked people - their wickedness will rub off on you!

And so it is in marriage, if you marry an unbeliever there's a far greater chance for you to get drug down to their level than for you to elevate them to yours!

At the least, your walk with the Lord will be hindered.

You'll not just go it alone. It'll be like walking with an anvil tied to your leg. Rather than coming home for encouragement your home will become a battleground.

Olivia Langdon was raised in a Christian home and had a strong faith in Christ. She had high hopes of converting her husband, when she married the famous author, Mark Twain. In the beginning he participated with Olivia in reading the Scriptures and in her daily devotions, but it didn't last long. Eventually he stopped.

What's sad is that Olivia followed suit, and threw away her faith. At the end of her life, just before her death, when Twain could see her agony of soul, he told her, "[Livy, if it comforts you to lean on the Christian faith, do so.](#)" But Olivia replied, "[I can't. I haven't any.](#)"

And not marrying an unbeliever is not just an OT command. Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, "[Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has](#)

Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"

I could fill a 55 gallon jug with the tears that have been shed in my office by people who failed to obey God and married an unbeliever. They know God hates divorce, and thus they remain married, but there're unable to share their most precious feelings with the person to whom they're suppose to be the closest.

The pain of these people throbs - and many have forsaken Christ to ease the tension in their marriage.

If you're married to an unbeliever don't separate from Christ for eternity, just to build a bridge for the moment.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 if your unbelieving spouse wants to remain married don't divorce them. Perhaps your godly example will eventually draw them to Christ. But if you're not married don't make this mistake. Be faithful, and refuse to marry an unbeliever!

Verse 12, "May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, being awake and aware, yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!"

This is the ultimate in hypocrisy. Here's a man who disobeys God and marries a pagan woman, then brings his sacrifice to God as if nothing's wrong.

There are couples who've come to me wanting me to officiate their wedding even though one of them is a believer and one is a unbeliever. They want to come to God's altar to take a vow of which He doesn't approve. They have no fear of God to suggest such a thing.

As a pastor, I'll marry **two believers** if they're ready for marriage... I'll also marry **two unbelievers**, since marriage is for all people not just Christians... But under no circumstances can I marry **a believer** and **an unbeliever!** It's an unequal yoke and it violates God's Word. For this God judged the priests in Malachi's day.

Verse 13, "And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant."

The word "**companion**" is the same word translated in Genesis 2:24 as "**joined.**" It speaks of a bond - *when two people leave their former allegiances, and cleave to each other.* In marriage there's first a severance from parents and past, followed by a permanence.

Yet the Jews in Malachi's day were ignoring the marital vows they'd taken and acted treacherously.

The word "**treacherous**" is the translation of the Hebrew "**bagad**" which relates to another Hebrew word "**beged**" or "**garment.**" In ancient Israel a marriage proposal was made when a man laid his garment over his fiancée. This was how Boaz proposed to Ruth.

The idea of *“dealing treacherously”* with your wife is synonymous with breaking your vow - not fulfilling the promise you made when you first proposed!

And realize, the reason your spouse married you was because you made a promise. *Are you living up to that promise?* In Malachi's day, Jewish men were divorcing their wives - breaking their vows. Then they were coming to God's altar weeping and praying for a blessing. They couldn't understand why the heavens were silent. They wondered why, *“For what reason?”*

It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out the problem. God was not going to bless a person when they were walking in deliberate disobedience to Him.

I read an article in the Atlanta newspaper entitled, *“Bless this Divorce: Couple to seal separation in Church.”* It went on to announce that a man and his wife, members of a church in Decatur, wanted to end their marriage with a special church service.

The pastor of the church was quoted as saying, *“Since both are members of this congregation, it seems appropriate to ask God to approve the ending of the marriage.”* *Appropriate to ask God to approve what He's forbidden in His Word?* Ridiculous! Ludicrous!

This is why I could never marry a believer and an unbeliever - or two homosexuals... *How can you ask God to bless what He has forbidden in His Word?*

Malachi goes on to stress the meaning of marriage. *“But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit?”*

Realize, marriage is more than a *domestic arrangement*, it's more than a *legal contract*, more than a *social institution*, more than a *romantic involvement*..

Marriage is first and foremost a *spiritual union*.

The two become one. Ecclesiastes 4 talks about a three-fold cord. This is marriage. At the altar, God spiritually weaves together two hearts, two souls, two lives. He even puts His Spirit into the loom so that He weaves together not a two-fold, but a three-fold cord.

In a marriage two psyches become spiritually knitted together. But here's a question, *why does God do this?*

He tells us, **“And why one? He seeks godly offspring.”** This is interesting. If we were elaborating on spiritual oneness in marriage we'd probably point to the fulfillment, or happiness, or significance marriage brings, but Malachi points to another reason.

God **“seeks godly offspring.”**

The best way to insure well-adjusted, emotionally healthy, spiritually solid children is to have two parents united and growing together in a loving relationship.

And the easiest way to damage those children, cut them deeply, produce emotional wounds that will last a lifetime is to rip apart the children's two parents.

I saved an old article. It's dated January 1989. It's entitled, **“Even Good Divorces Alter Lives of Children.”**

It reads, **“A ten-year study of broken families challenges the concept of the ‘good divorce’, in which there is little damage to the children. Psychologist Judith Wallerstein tracked sixty**

couples who were divorcing under the best of circumstances: they were educated and middle-class; they were not in psychiatric treatment; and there were no prolonged custody battles. Dr. Wallerstein found that a decade later, many of their children were growing into troubled adults. Dr. Wallerstein's conclusions puncture the illusion that families eventually bounce back after a divorce and resume their lives without any deep scars.

"When I interviewed kids ten years later I expected them to say that their parents' divorce was a long time ago. But I was surprised how vivid and green those memories were for them," she said. "I didn't expect a nineteen-year old to say, "Whenever I heard loud talk and yelling at night, I'd wake up and start to cry."

Though it had been thought girls cope better with divorce, the psychologist observed a "sleeper" effect among the young women. *"When these same women, who were doing well in high school, hit ages eighteen to twenty-two, we suddenly saw a drop in functioning and a tremendous rise in anxiety over relationships and betrayals,"* Dr. Wallerstein said. Calling the "sleeper effect" serious, she said, *"These young women suffer very, very much. They are experiencing this just at the point of starting their family."*

(After enumerating many more of divorce's horrible effects on children the article concludes) Although divorce is a fact of life today, Dr Wallerstein said the children of broken homes find no comfort in numbers. *"Our findings show that all children suffer from divorce, no matter how many of their friends have gone through it... Each and every child cries out, "Why me?"*

I don't want to heap guilt on those who have been divorced. Some of you were divorced on biblical grounds, but too many marriages end because parents are thinking only of themselves and their happiness.

As one author puts it, "I maintain that the children have rights too: a right to a mother AND a father, a right to a stable home environment, a right to an actualized biblical model of what a God-blessed home should be. Divorce deprives them of that and often leads to a self-destructive life pattern." If you're in a miserable marriage and you're looking for a reason to hang in there and make it better, remember the Lord *"seeks godly offspring."* Think about your kids!

Verse 15 ends, *"Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."* It's amazing to me, how blind we can be to our own problems... Today, when evangelical Christians think of the dangers confronting marriage in our society we're quick to rail against same-sex marriage. Yet this involves just a tiny percentage of the population.

Whereas, 40-50% of all marriages end in divorce, and they do so without the slightest condemnation from society. The stigma attached to divorce has vanished.

Yet the far greater danger to the institution of marriage is the cavalier attitude taken by too many heterosexual participants - *especially men*. Malachi says, *"let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth."* In Israel, older men were divorcing their wives.

Malachi is talking about a man whose wife works and helps put him through school. She labors alongside him as she helps him build his career. She endures the lonely nights and long hours to help him succeed.

Only to find that when her hair starts to gray and her skin sags a bit her husband decides to dump her for a newer model. Apparently, this is what was going on in Israel - *and it sounds amazingly contemporary.*

Divorce happens for many reasons, but its happening too frequently today... In 1920 there was 1 divorce for every 7 marriages. In 1960 it was 1 divorce for every 4 marriages. Today it's a little less than 1 in 2.

Though divorce has become more popular in our world today, God maintains the same attitude He had in Malachi's day. We're told in verse 16, "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says the Lord of hosts.

"Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." Hey, God still "hates divorce."

Notice, divorce "*covers one's garments with violence.*" In other words, it's messy, and bloody. Divorce is a violent act. It's the ripping apart of a bond.

When a divorce occurs the two people - and their children - never just tear along the seam. It's never nice, neat, and easily repaired. Marriage is *too involved on too many levels.* A husband and wife and their kids become inseparably wound together and wrapped up in each other. You can't tear them apart without pulling something out and leaving something

missing. The tear is jagged and ragged. It never completely heals.

Divorce shatters hearts, it bruises kids, it splinters families - this is why God hates it so... The Hebrew word in verse 16 translated “*divorce*” implies an amputation. The root word means “a cutting off.”

It reminds me of CS Lewis’ quote about divorce, “Christians all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical operation. Some think that the operation is so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit that it is a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership...” This is why God hates divorce.

Numerous studies have shown that when divorcees are interviewed years later, and they’re asked if they had it to do all over again would they still get divorced?

The overwhelming response is **NO!**

They would've hung in there and worked it out!

I know marriage can be difficult. I read of a woman who ran into the police station in Minot, North Dakota, asking the police to protect her from her husband.

The police were busy at that moment, and didn't notice when the woman walked back outside. They found her in the parking lot facing off with her husband.

The spouses had chainsaws pointed at one another.

Some couples assume rebuilding their marriage will be too tough. They should realize the *pain of rebuilding* won't be near as severe as the *pain of divorce*.

People think of divorce as starting over - usually its not that simple. Its starting over with scars and wounds and nagging feelings of failure, and emotionally impaired kids, and a broken covenant with God.

Starting over isn't easy either.

In World War 2 Winston Churchill told the British people, "**Wars are not won by evacuation.**"

And neither are good marriages. Hang in there!

I'd rather be in God's will, and in a less than perfect marriage than to step out of the will of God for a promise that will never materialize. Being outside the will of God is far worse than being in a less than perfect marriage. Remember "**God hates divorce.**"

Chapter 2 ends, "**You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, "In what way have we wearied Him?"** They were grieving God and didn't even know it... God answers them, "**In that you say, "everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"**"

The Jews were grieving God by *questioning His justice...* "*Where is God? Why doesn't He judge?*"

Or they were *misinterpreting His mercy*. Because God was being patient, and offering them a chance to repent, they concluded He approved of their behavior.

Neither was true and God responds in Chapter 3...