

God is Faithful

6.15.2025

Malachi Series

Message 3

Malachi 2:10–16 (CSB)

¹⁰ Don't all of us have one Father? Didn't one God create us? Why then do we act treacherously against one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? ¹¹ Judah has acted treacherously, and a detestable act has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the Lord's sanctuary, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.

¹² May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, whoever he may be, even if he presents an offering to the Lord of Armies.

¹³ This is another thing you do. You are covering the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands.

¹⁴ And you ask, "Why?" Because even though the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, you have acted treacherously against her. She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant.

¹⁵ Didn't God make them one and give them a portion of spirit? What is the one seeking? Godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, so that no one acts treacherously against the wife of his youth.

¹⁶ "If he hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord God of Israel, "he covers his garment with injustice," says the Lord of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.

Malachi 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ 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.

1. Setting of the Text.

A. We must keep God's arguments in perspective, as this is not an isolated passage.

1. First, the people questioned God, "Where is your love?"
2. God then questioned the people, "Where is my honor?"
3. He challenges their unfaithfulness as evidenced by their sacrifices.
 - a. They were offering lame, blind, and stolen sacrifices.
 - b. They were keeping the best for themselves.
 - c. And the priests were permitting and encouraging them to do this.

B. Years ago, a friend of mine who retired as a Major in the Army taught me that **what you permit becomes the standard**.

1. The priest's responsibility was to protect the altar and instruct the people.
2. They were failing on both accounts.
3. They permitted unacceptable sacrifices, and that led to a standard of worship that was corrupted and contemptible.

C. The result affected not only the Temple.

- a. It was also destroying the home.
- b. To quote my friend Barbara Welch, **"Accepting a negative hurts all."**
- c. The priests had accepted a negative, and that negative spilled over into the home.

2. Two Problems in the Text

A. The first problem God addresses in our text is the marrying of foreign women.

1. This was not a problem because of the need for a pure bloodline.

- a. The bloodline of Jesus included a Moabite named Ruth.
- b. The bloodline included an abused woman named Bathsheba.
- c. The bloodline of Jesus included a prostitute named Hagar.

2. The problem was that the men of Israel were accepting the idols of their non-Jewish wives.

- a. This had been a problem since the beginning.
- b. Early in the Exodus and Promised Land stories, the men were warned not to chase foreign women because they would worship the foreign gods.

Deuteronomy 7:3–4 (CSB)

³ You must not intermarry with them, and you must not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, ⁴ because they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods. Then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will swiftly destroy you.

c. The most obvious example was King Solomon.

- 1. For all of his wisdom, he sure was dumb when it came to women.
- 2. Actually, he knew exactly what he was doing.
- 3. And the many wives of Solomon were his downfall.

3. Idolatry leads to adultery.

a. Idolatry is unfaithfulness to God.

b. Adultery is unfaithfulness to a spouse.

1. God calls for Israel to treat Him as both.
 2. To Israel, God is both the One True God and their faithful Husband.
 - c. God speaks to His people pointedly and harshly.
 - d. Unfaithfulness in marriage is not a private matter but a communal matter.
 - e. This is emphasized in Malachi 2:12 ¹² May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob the man who does this, whoever he may be, even if he presents an offering to the Lord of Armies.
4. To cut off from the tents of Jacob meant to separate them from the promises and their identity.
 - a. Excommunicated or shunned might be appropriate pictures for us.
 - b. Paul deals with the same thing in 1 Corinthians 5-6, handing the sexually sinful person over to Satan, outside of the Church, so that they might experience what life outside of God's love and grace feels like.
 - c. The idea is that there is no grace, mercy, or relationship apart from the Body.
 - d. Apart from God, there is nothing good.

B. The second problem was the rejection of their wives.

1. The men of Israel were divorcing their existing spouses and trading them in for younger models.
 - a. This exposes the same heart of the people that encouraged lame sacrifices and stolen tithes.
 - b. The men of Israel didn't want anyone to have the best, except for themselves.

c. So if their spouse wasn't pretty enough, intimate enough, or just simply tired, then she could be handed a certificate of divorce and sent her way.

2. The book of Deuteronomy addressed this very problem, providing protections for women regarding divorce.

a. In the Middle East, women had no rights or opportunities.

b. Even today, women are still "less thans" in many cultures around the world.

c. The men of Israel had reduced marriage from a Covenant to a Commitment.

d. Covenants are guided by conviction and character.

e. Commitments are guided by convenience.

C. What Israel was doing to their homes and their spouses had not gone unnoticed by God.

1. The same God who inspired the minute details of Leviticus is concerned with every aspect of our lives.

2. There is no space off-limits to God.

3. What happens behind closed doors may be hidden from man but not from God.

4. Yet, the problem was deeper than that.

5. The men were wrongly treating their wives and expecting God to accept their sacrifices and offerings.

3. Tears are not repentance

¹³ This is another thing you do. You are covering the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands.

A. This echoes the story of Esau (Edom) that we read at the beginning of this letter.

1. Esau found his pleas rejected because he was unfaithful to his birthright.
2. Esau sold his rights as the firstborn to his younger brother, Jacob, for a bowl of beans.
3. He valued what he had been given so little that God wouldn't let him have it back.
4. To say another way, Esau found the blessings of God contemptible and not worth more than his next meal.

B. When we treat that which is valuable with contempt, we lose it.

1. Sometimes, even tears will not restore what we willfully squandered and blasphemed.
 - a. Tears are not evidence of repentance.
 - b. Changed lives are the evidence.
2. Esau sought the gift with tears, but was rejected because he wasn't changed.
 - a. The people of Israel cried at the altar with no intention of changing their lives.
 - b. They offered sacrifices while plotting against their spouse.

C. Hard truth: Not all prayers are answered.

1. God was rejecting the prayers and offerings of His people.
2. They were offering sacrifices of repentance and not receiving forgiveness.
3. They were making sacrifices for holiness and not receiving holiness.

Proverbs 15:8 (CSB)

⁸The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Proverbs 15:29 (ESV)

29 The LORD is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

D. Sin separates us from God and hinders prayers.

1. We must be careful not to assume that we can live as we want and God will still turn His face toward us.
2. The people of Israel disconnected between how they lived and how they worshipped.
3. But God sees it all together.
4. Our lives influence our worship, and our worship, in turn, determines our lifestyle.

4. Sick Offerings, Broken Marriages

Notice the connection between offerings and marriage.

A. The sacrifices were designed to point toward Jesus, the perfect sacrifice.

1. When they offered lame and defective sacrifices, they were defacing the image of Jesus and his perfect sacrifice.
2. Every sacrifice and every drop of blood pointed toward Jesus, the perfect, sinless Lamb of God.

B. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians reveals that marriage represents Christ, a great mystery now unveiled.

Ephesians 5:22–33 (CSB)

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, ²³because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved

the church and gave himself for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. ²⁷He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰since we are members of his body. ³¹**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.** ³²This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

1. Our marriages were designed to point others to the unity and holiness of God.

2. When we treat our spouses sinfully, we disfigure the image of Jesus that is revealed in marriage.

a. Just as the sacrifices of Israel were meant to point the Nations to the God of Israel,

b. Their marriages were designed to point the Nations to the love and unity of God.

3. As New Testament believers:

a. Your marriage was designed to point your kids to Jesus.

b. Your marriage was designed to point the world to the wholeness, love, and mercy of Jesus.

c. **Lame sacrifices, broken marriages, and stolen tithes (Malachi 3:10) ALL detract from God and his faithfulness.**

C. Christian marriage is a binding and uniting of two persons with God.

Malachi 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ 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.

1. Although Paul made the mystery clear, God had given a glimpse 500 years earlier in Malachi.
2. When God made Adam and Eve and united them, He united them with and in the Spirit.
3. Faithlessness towards your Christian spouse is a form of faithlessness to God.

D. The ESV uses the word “faithless” in verses 14 and 15 instead of treacherous.

1. At issue is the faithlessness of God’s people.
2. They were faithless at church, at home, and with their finances.
3. Not only were they marrying the wrong people, they were leaving Godly people to do it.

Malachi 2:16 (CSB)

¹⁶“If he hates and divorces his wife,” says the LORD God of Israel, “he covers his garment with injustice,” says the LORD of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.

5. Covers his garments with injustice.

A. What does God mean by “cover his garments with injustice”?

1. This is an example of a part of speech called a **Metonym: A part of speech where a word is used in place of another.**
2. Examples:
 - a. “The White House issued a statement” represents the president, not the actual house.

b. "Wall Street is worried about the economy" doesn't mean the actual street.

3. A close example for our text is the example of Ruth and Boaz.

a. Boaz covered Ruth with his garment, and that represented more than a blanket but symbolizes marriage, intimacy, and the safety that went with it.

b. God uses the same imagery here.

B. For a husband to place his garment over a woman was to display his protection of her, as should be expected in a marital relationship.

1. The husband's garment was far more than a physical garment.

2. It was his promise, a mutually agreed covenant to love, protect, and cherish.

a. To echo Ephesians 5, "Husbands, love your wives..."

b. These men had promised to love and be faithful.

C. But they were breaking their faith with the women they married in their youth.

1. And the women had no choice, no say, and often nowhere to go.

a. The Woman that Jesus met at the well in the Book of John understood this well.

b. She had been married 4 times, but not by choice but desperation.

c. Something was wrong with her, at least that is what they told her.

d. They would enjoy her for a while and then send her on her way.

e. Jesus shows great mercy because what had happened to her was an injustice.

2. And what the sons of Israel was doing was wrong in God's eyes.
3. Therefore, the authority, respect, and character of the men (their garment) was covered with injustice.
4. God couldn't see the offerings the men were sacrificing because the man was covered in injustice and sin.
5. One translation goes as far as to describe the cruelty as "putting on a victim's bloodstained coat."¹
6. The men were destroying their wives and flaunting it before God.

6. What can we do... Guard your Spirit!!!!

Malachi 2:15–16 (ESV)

¹⁵ 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. 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."

A. Sin damages our spirits:

1. Our mind, will, and emotions are negatively affected when we sin.
2. When we dishonor our spouse, permanently separating ourselves from them, we injure our spirits.
3. Our spirit (mind, will, and emotions) cannot help but be affected when our closest relationships are damaged and betrayed.

¹ NIVAC , 260.

B. This is partly why divorce and sinful marriages grieve the Spirit of God.

1. When two people unite in marriage with the Spirit and then walk away, of course, the Spirit is grieved.
2. The Spirit grieves when spouses inflict pain on each other.
3. The Spirit is grieved by the pain families endure.
4. The Spirit is grieved witnessing the death of dreams, the relinquishment of futures, the discarding of memories that happen when spouses hate each other and choose someone else. (If a husband hates his wife and divorces his wife...) Vs. 16

C. This is why the command to guard your spirit is proactive:

1. Guard yourselves, so you won't be faithless.
2. Guard yourselves so you won't fail.
3. Guard yourselves so that you won't give into temptation.
4. GUARD YOUR SPIRIT.

D. Put up boundaries that protect what belongs to you, your spouse, and your God.

1. Put up shields that do not allow temptation to penetrate.
2. Men of God, why is it we feel a responsibility to guard our homes with the use of force if necessary, but we fail to guard our hearts, our emotions, and our spirits?

E. Can you hear the heart of God in this passage?

1. Yes, God calls out sin.
2. And He offers hope.
3. What they were doing was not inevitable.
 - a. Where they were going was not predetermined,
 - b. What Israel was experiencing was preventable.

c. Israel had been unfaithful to God all her life, yet God never did forsake His people.

7. What do you know about this?

A. Julie and I have been married for 20 years.

1. But that doesn't mean we haven't had our struggles.
2. Publicly, I joke about some parts of our marriage.
3. But we don't publicly discuss our difficulties.

B. I will say that we have experienced very dark days and really hard years.

1. There will be times in life when you must rise and declare that your love for Jesus and your commitment to the covenant of marriage will not submit to the pain in your marriage.
2. There will be times in your marriage when everything is stripped away and it feels like everything is shaken down to the barest of foundations.

C. At that point, you discover and determine what your marriage is built upon.

1. If it's romantic love and raw sexuality, that won't sustain you.
2. Children are a terrible foundation for your marriage, and if you build your marriage on your kids, your marriage will likely crumble after they leave home.
3. Peer pressure, money, and physical attraction are not foundations.
4. The only sustainable foundation for marriage is a foundation that integrates the self with the Spirit.
 - a. Where TWO becomes one flesh.
 - b. Where the Spirit is the third cord, not easily broken.

D. Malachi 2 states that the priests are expected to lead with knowledge and faithfulness.

1. There is so much about leading and ministering I'm still trying to figure out.
2. There are so many gaps in my abilities.
3. However, I can say that 20 years into our marriage, it is the best it has ever been.
4. Please hear my heart:
 - a. Don't give up what God has given you.
 - b. Don't sell your marriage like Esau sold his birthright.
 - c. God is gracious, kind, forgiving, and loving and yet some consequences remain even though they are sought with tears.
 - d. Remember how Malachi opens with "Esau I have hated..."
 - e. Listen to how the New Testament applies this:

Hebrews 12:16–17 (CSB)

¹⁶And make sure that there isn't any immoral or irreverent person like Esau, who sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, even though he sought it with tears, because he didn't find any opportunity for repentance.

8. What about me?

A. God is sensitive to those who have experienced divorce.

1. I am fully aware that in a sermon like this, I can't do justice to the depths of God's love and grief over sin.

2. Like all other human situations touched by sin, Jesus empathizes with us in our pain.

3. We all must recognize that God created marriage perfect and holy, but sin has made marriage hard at best and sometimes impossible.

4. Just like sex, God created sex to be a beautiful and holy expression of love and relationship to be enjoyed by a husband and wife.

5. Yet, Sex has been wrecked by sin, and that explains why sin can sometimes be painful, abused, perverted, and sinful.

B. When is divorce justified?

1. When there is abuse.

2. When there is adultery. (That doesn't mean you should automatically divorce) (MATTHEW 19)

3. Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. 1 Cor. 7:12-13.

C. We must also acknowledge that many divorces occur before someone becomes a believer.

1. You weren't living for Jesus.

2. You didn't know God or the importance of marriage.

3. You didn't know marriage symbolizes the unity of God and the loving Oneness of God.

4. It's safe to say that many of us in the room still don't fully grasp the significance of marriage.

D. I can't adequately address the complexity of divorce this morning.

1. But I think we can all agree that:

2. Even when divorce is justified, it is always painful.

3. The severing of one flesh, the cutting away of another person, is supposed to be painful.

4. It's supposed to hurt because it was never God's intention.
5. Even the most justified divorce is still painful.

E. Thankfully, Divorce is not the unpardonable sin.

1. The only sin that can't be forgiven is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
2. If divorce is part of your story, then run to Jesus.
3. Confess what needs to be confessed, grieve what needs grieved, repent, forgive, and throw yourself into the arms of the Lord of Heaven's Armies who is always faithful.

Apply. What should I do?

1. For those who are married, invest everything you can in your marriage.

Investing deposits with the expectation of growth and reward.

Spending withdrawals without replacing.

Are you investing in your spouse or spending your spouse?

2. Review your marriage

A. If you are struggling or simply surviving, consider asking:

1. Is my marriage tired, weary, or wounded?
2. Remember these questions from a few weeks ago?

B. If your marriage is tired:

1. Go on a date night.
2. Get a babysitter.
3. Invest time in each other.
4. Bring your Bible to the kitchen table and don't take your phone to bed with you.

C. If your marriage is weary (wanting to quit).

1. Get a counselor.
2. Spend time in prayer, worship, and gratitude.
3. Delete some obligations from your calendar and stop worshipping your kids social and school calendar.
4. Prioritize your time with God and with your spouse.

D. If your marriage is wounded:

1. Get a counselor.
2. Ask God to help you forgive, grieve what has been lost, or repent of your sins.

3. Parents, pray for your children's marriage (no matter how young or old).

A. The Book of Revelation tells us that the prayers of the saints are held in bowls by the elders in heaven.

1. The prayers of godly parents and grandparents don't go to waste.
2. PRAY for your kids and their spouses.

B. Model godliness in marriage.

1. Does your marriage point the "nations" to God?
 - a. Before asking what the community thinks about you, ask what God and my children think of me.
 - b. If you win everywhere but at home, you lose.
2. Or does your marriage deface the love and wholeness of God?
3. Our marriages should model a love, joy, and faithfulness that is humanly impossible because our source is the God of Heaven's Armies.

4. Learn to fight fair.

1. Take the “D” word out of the conversation
2. Do not cuss at your spouse.
 - a. Profanity devalues your spouse.
 - b. Profanity defames the image of God in the other person.
3. Do not hit or throw things.
 - a. The only difference between punching a wall and punching your spouse is that hitting your spouse is a crime.
 - b. The line is crossed too quickly, and the consequences are eternal.
 1. When you abuse your spouse before your kids, they can’t see God’s love and intent for marriage.
 2. When you abuse your spouse, your friends and colleagues can’t take your God seriously.
 3. When you abuse your spouse, you are spitting in the face of the God who gave him or her to you.
 4. You are covering your garments with injustice.

Prayer

As I lead us in prayer, I want to ask for two things:

1. First, I’m going to ask you to stay seated and if you are sitting with your spouse, grab their hand.
2. If you aren’t with your spouse today, I’m sorry.
 - a. Some of you today have spouses who have passed away.
 - b. Others of you want nothing more than to have your spouse sitting right beside you.

c. If that's you, I encourage you during prayer to simply turn up your hands in prayer, in a sense saying "God my hand might be empty in this moment but I know it is held by you."

3. Second, for those God is speaking to today, maybe because you have walked through divorce or your marriage is terrible and painful, I want to give you two options:

a. I will be with the prayer team in the first classroom after service for a while.

b. If you want prayer, guidance, or support, come see me.

c. If time doesn't allow or you would rather not do that on a Sunday, text me this week or drop a prayer card into the box on the welcome desk and someone will reach out to you.

Prayer