

Malachi 2:10-16

Dishonouring the marriage covenant

Introduction

Greetings to you all. My name is Todd Khupe. I am a member of Christ Central Soweto. Join me as we continue exploring the deteriorating spiritual condition of Israel after their return from exile. When spiritual dryness infects the believer's life all areas of life are affected. In our last devotional we saw how the priests had had corrupted worship by condoning worship that instead of honouring God despised Him. Today, the prophet Malachi shifts attention to the men of Judah who, enticed by foreign and pagan women, divorced their Jewish wives to marry the pagan women.

Brothers and sisters I need to draw your attention to the fact that marriage is the first institution human that God created after He had completed the task of creating everything. It is an integral part of the creation plan and God's mission to rule over creation. The fact that marriage in the Bible is described as a covenant shows how important it is for God's salvation plan. "He created them in His own image male and female (Gen 1:26-27) and he mandated them to multiply and rule over creation (Gen 1:28). Through marriage God would multiply His image on earth and in partnership with man and woman, rule over creation. This points us to the fact that from the beginning the marriage covenant was never a just sweet-love relationship between a man and a woman but a covenant of three. Because Judah has corrupted the marriage covenant, Malachi condemns two things, interfaith marriages and divorce.

Interfaith Marriages condemned (10-12)

Malachi starts his condemnation by drawing their attention to their single source – one Father the Creator of all people. He says by being unfaithful to one another, being children of the same Father, they were profaning God's covenant. He condemns interfaith marriage as a pointer to Israel's infidelity to their covenant with the Lord. This puts marriage in the spiritual domain and Malachi is presenting a radical view of the marriage covenant. God warned the men of Judah not to marry foreign women when they got to the promised land, not because foreign women are bad but because their pagan religions would entice the men of Judah from worshipping God the Creator to worshipping pagan idols and bring pagan rituals to profane the temple of God.

Malachi has an important message for the church today. He is saying, when believers invite the pastor to officiate at their weddings to help them do their wedding vows, they are submitting their marriage to God. They are allowing God to be a witness and a partner to their marriage covenant which is not only a physical union, but spiritual. The union they are getting into involves responsibilities and privileges involving God as a witness. Why

should God be a witness to this union? Because only to God and not to the pastor nor the relatives and friends invited at the wedding are the couple permanently responsible. This is hard because verse 11&12 say that by marrying women who worship a foreign god, the men of Judah have blasphemed God's holy sanctuary. By marrying idol worshippers they have brought idolatry in the house of God and profaned His holiness.

Divorce condemned (13-16)

The consequence of desecrating God's sanctuary has caused God not to listen to their prayers, nor accept their offering. Though they cry for mercy before Him, He sees through their hypocrisy and does not accept their offering. They ask, but why? Because the Lord, as a partner in their marriage covenant is a witness to the treachery (betrayal) perpetrated on their wives. The prophet uses very strong language here to emphasise the gravity of the matter – God hates divorce! Divorce cuts across God's salvation plan – “to raise a godly offspring” (v 15). Divorce in God's eyes is not merely separation from an annoying spouse but a denial of the faith in God and thwarting God's plan to raise a righteous generation. It is going against God's original mandate to populate the earth with His image /His offspring. Believers are God's seed, because He is their Father.

The hard-hitting prophet goes on to warn them that violating marriage by divorce is perpetrating violence against women that they are supposed to be protecting (v 16). This the prophet describes it as betrayal and deceitfulness to their wives. Beyond that it is disloyalty to God. Malachi wants them to know that what they are doing is sinful. He appeals to them to watch the deceitfulness of their hearts, accept responsibility and find reconciliation and forgiveness from God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that Malachi uses the image of marriage here to bring out the problem of the sin of unfaithfulness to God. Our unfaithfulness to God violates the covenant of love God has with us and this is painful to Him. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Brothers and sisters, the covenant of God's love invites you and me to continually come to God for in humble repentance to receive His mercy and forgiveness.

May the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of God and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you.

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