

Mal. 2:10-16 "Treacherous Dealing"

For the Children: Some of you would know that many of the children in NZ don't have both their dad and mum living in the same home with them. This is a very sad situation. Sometimes it happens in the church, too. The Lord wants us to be aware that He rules our family-life. He is our Father, who tells us the kind of person to marry, how to live as a family, and how we must stick together. Listen to Him, so that one day you might make a godly husband or wife for someone, and a godly father or mother for your children. **Questions:** What were the sins of Israel that Malachi warns about? What is wrong with marrying an unbeliever? What about "going out with" an unbeliever?

Introduction:

First Point: A Sin Against God

- 1) One Father-Creator: The sins of marrying an unbeliever, and unlawfully divorcing a believing wife in order to do so, were common in Israel. God has a special relationship with His people: as our Father, Creator and Redeemer. We are His possession. He has the right to allow or forbid certain types of marriage. He has forbidden marriage with unbelievers (Gen. 6:1-3, 2 Cor. 6:14f; Ex. 34:15-16; Is. 52:11)
- 2) Profaning Sanctuary and Covenant: The actual Tabernacle/Temple in the OT was profaned by bringing Gentiles into it. Now the believer and the Church are indwelt by the Spirit as His "temple." Bringing unbelievers close to our hearts profanes this relationship with God. Similarly, the covenant is profaned when God's commands are ignored and the world is mixed up with the covenant community
- 3) Ignoring God's Witness: God is the witness to our marriage vows (v. 14). These vows are a marriage *covenant* (an oath-bound promise). When this covenant is broken by unlawful marriage or divorce, God is made witness to a lie. The 9th and 3rd commandments are thus broken

Second Point: A Sin Against Brethren

- 1) Against the Covenant Marriage Partner: Unlawful divorce harms one's spouse. An oath to her is broken. The husband needs to view his wife as he once did, as the "wife of his youth," the one with whom he wanted to covenant, and his closest companion. Unlawful divorce is also a great injustice, that "covers his garment with wrong" – especially when the victim is more vulnerable. God hates such injustice!
- 2) Against Covenant-Children: Where children are involved, these covenant children are harmed by unlawful divorce; also, by being placed in a religiously mixed home through marriage with an unbeliever. Part of God's purpose for the union of believers is that godly offspring will continue to bless the nations. Both mixed marriages and unlawful divorce threaten this goal
- 3) Against the Covenant-Community: Mixed marriage and unlawful divorce harm the whole church. They set a bad example. Covenant-families can be harmed in their service to the Lord. Worldly behaviour is brought into the midst of the covenant-community that is designed to be separate from the world

Third Point: A Sin with Consequences

- 1) Loss of Spirit: Given the above aspects of these sins, it is no wonder they are called "treachery" (5 times!), "profaning" (twice), "abomination" and something God "hates." Those who persist in such sins, without repentance, risk God's Spirit being withdrawn from them (v. 15)
- 2) Rejected Offerings: Those who do such things will find their other attempts at service to God rejected. V. 13 pictures the guilty men in Israel weeping because they don't understand why their offerings are rejected. The Lord does not want empty rituals: He wants a humble, obedient heart, moved by His mercy in Christ
- 3) Cut Off from the Tents of Jacob: Malachi calls on God to cut off all such sinners from Israel (v. 12). Today we carry out this judgement by excommunication when sinners refuse to repent. Therefore we must "take heed to your spirit" *(vss. 15, 17), so we remain obedient to the covenant and repent when we stray in thought, word or deed

Conclusion