

MALACHI

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Malachi chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God and we begin the last book of the Old Testament. Now we don't know much about this prophet of God except that his ministry was some time after the Temple was rebuilt, putting him with the other post exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, probably some 100 years after Zechariah and I will talk more about that in a minute.

The name "Malachi" means "My messenger" and he was the last messenger of God, the last prophet of God until John the Baptist came on the scene. God was silent for some 400 years until He raised up John the Baptist and that silence was then broken.

And John the Baptist broke that silence by saying, "... 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'" Matthew 3:2. In fact, the book of Malachi closes with the promise of Elijah coming to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah and John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, preparing the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ! And we will look at this more as we finish the book next time.

Again, keep in mind that we are now some 100 years after Zechariah's prophecy and something had gone terribly wrong in Jerusalem and with God's people. And thus, God calls this man onto the scene to speak forth His message to His people. And what is tragic is that in the end, they did not respond to God's call for them and God is silent for some 400 years, until John the Baptist came on the scene as I said.

As you read through this book the time period of Ezra and Nehemiah seem to come to the forefront. The same things these prophets spoke against the Jews, so too did Malachi. Ezra's ministry was around 458 B. C., and Nehemiah around 445 B. C., which would put Malachi sometime after these prophets as they moved farther and farther away from God!

Just to give you an example of what was going on during this period of time, keep your finger in Malachi chapter 1 and turn for a minute to Nehemiah chapter 13 and let's begin reading in verse 23. It says, **“In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?’ And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!”**

Nehemiah 13:23-31.

Nehemiah was a tough guy. He struck those living in rebellion, pulled out their hair. I guess if I did that I would not have too many counseling sessions. There are times you just feel like doing that. But for Nehemiah, he did get his point across! Now as you have that for a background, the spiritual apathy that was taking place, God sends His prophet Malachi, “My messenger”, to awaken the people and get them back on track.

So Malachi really is the last of the old and the anticipation of the new. T. V. Moore says wisely of this book, “It is the transition-link between the two great dispensations of redemption - the last note of that magnificent oratorio of revelation, whose wailings of sorrow and breathings of hope were soon to give place to that richer song, which should be not only of Moses, but also of the Lamb; and tell not only of Eden and Sinai, but also of Calvary and Heaven.”

But make no mistake about it, this book is not just for those living in Malachi’s day. These words are very much for us today as people have a form of godliness, they are very religious, but they deny the power, they deny Jesus. They may use His name but they don’t have that intimate relationship with Him because apart from repenting of your sins and asking Jesus into your life, you are still dead in your trespasses and sins. Sin still separates you from God. James Montgomery Boice put it like this,

But Malachi is interesting for another reason also. It is true that it is a link between the old covenant and the new, between Judaism and Christianity. But in describing the Judaism of Malachi’s day the book also vividly describes the moribund religiosity of any era, including our own. We can go further. Perhaps more than any other Old Testament book, Malachi describes that modern attitude of mind that considers man superior to God and that has the audacity to attempt to bring God down to earth and measure him by the yardstick of human morality.

- James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 231

With that said let's begin reading in Malachi chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

MALACHI 1

VERSES 1-2a

1. First of all, did you notice who this message is to? It is to ***ISRAEL!*** What do I mean by that? Some will try to tell you that there are 10 tribes of Israel that are lost. Some even try to tell you that they are part of those 10 lost tribes. But the point they are making is that these 10 tribes represent the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But here in Malachi we see that they were not lost but they are there, part of the group that had returned home from the Babylonian captivity, ***ISRAEL!*** So Malachi or God is speaking to the 12 tribes of Israel!

2. This heavy burden or this heavy prophecy that Malachi is going to speak forth was coming, not from his own heart but from the ***LORD***, from ***YAHWEH!*** That is important for the words that Malachi will speak are going to challenge the faith of the Jewish people, and it did need to be challenged!

Today we are seeing over and over again man's ideas, man's words instead of the Word of God. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In a sermon on February 28, 2016, Andy Stanley told his congregation "if you don't go to a large church, you are so stinking selfish . . . and don't care about your kids."

Never mind if the church is doctrinally sound, never mind if your kids hear the Gospel preached from the pulpit. They need to go to a large church so “they can make friends,” and “go off to college and make friends.” From his tirade against people who prefer smaller, more intimate congregations, it appears that he believes the primary function of the church is friend-making.

- <http://pulpitandpen.org/2016/03/03/andy-stanley-if-you-dont-go-to-a-big-church-youre-selfish-and-dont-care-about-your-kids/>

Is that Biblical? Do you find that in the Bible? No you don't and yet, I have had people tell me that over the years in regards to why they don't come here to Calvary, because we are a small church and don't have a lot of different activities for the kids. But what does God say about small churches?

We don't have to guess because Jesus tells us in Revelation 2:8-11, **“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.’”**

This was a small persecuted church and God does not rebuke them but He does encourage them.

But listen to what the Lord says about a big church in Revelation 3:14-22, **“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”**

You see, they were big, they had it all and yet they missed one thing. Jesus was on the outside of the church knocking to get in. Now let me say this. Not all big churches are bad, evil and not all small churches are good. The key is the Word of God, is it being taught and is it being taught correctly. Healthy doctrine needs to come forth and if it is, your children and you will be blessed!

3. Now we need to keep in mind that times were not easy and because of that they were questioning God's love for them. But God affirms His great love for the Jewish people. God said it and yet, they are not going to believe it! Now don't be too harsh on them, for we do the same thing. God has given to us many precious promises in His Word and we too doubt what He has said many times. May we learn to trust that what God has said is the truth and He will bring it to pass!

And listen to how Morgan translates this, God is saying to Israel, His people, "I have loved you, I do love you, I will love you," says the Lord." And that same love is extended to each of us. May we never lose sight of the fact that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus! (Romans 8)

VERSES 2-5

1. I think for the most part, many of us have thought about this, we had this in our heart, but we don't ask. The question is simply, "God, if you really love me why are things the way they are?" And I think the problem is that we are looking at the bad and forgetting all that God has done for us. God is going to remind Israel of that very thing and I think as we read the Word of God that we too are reminded of how much God loves us!

But they let the difficult situations that they were facing to cloud over and block out God's love for them, they could not see it any longer. Don't let our problems grow so big that they block out the Son of God in our lives, that we don't see how much He loves us!

And when you look at the questions that they are asking, it shows how much they doubted God's love for them and they were discouraged and that is what sin will do in our lives. There are seven questions here in Malachi that the children of Israel are asking the Lord and they are as follows:

In what way have You loved us? (Malachi 1:2)
 In what way have we despised Your name? (Malachi 1:6)
 In what way have we defiled You? (Malachi 1:7)
 In what way have we wearied Him? (Malachi 2:17)
 In what way shall we return? (Malachi 3:7)
 In what way have we robbed You? (Malachi 3:8)
 In what way have we spoken against You? (Malachi 3:13)

And God is going to answer each of those questions. May our hearts be open and may we be teachable in these things.

2. Now here is a difficult statement by the Lord, "**Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated.**" And as you read that you wonder how God can hate anyone! First of all, God is speaking about election here, that He chose Jacob over Esau before these twins were even born.

In Romans 9:11-13 Paul speaks of this when he says, "**(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'**" It was not because one was better than the other, but God's sovereignty.

Now how can we reconcile this when the Bible tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son! Some say that this verse is just saying that God loved Esau less than He loved Jacob. Sounds nice but there is more here than that!

Keep in mind that God is Sovereign and He did choose the children of Israel to bring forth the Messiah. But they were not better than anyone else. And thus, God, being all-knowing, knew what Esau and his descendants would be like and He could rightly say He hated their actions, for God does love the sinner but He does hate the sin!

On the other hand, Jacob and his descendants weren't perfect, but they at least had a desire to serve the Lord. God hated their actions, but He does love sinners and came to die for them. And what we may see here is that difficult concept of election and free will. It is all God and yet, we do have a choice. I can't explain it, but it is what the Scriptures tell us.

Now some may say that this is not fair, but make no mistake about it, it is totally fair for our God is a holy and righteous God and Paul continues to say in Romans chapter 9, **“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”** Romans 9:14-16.

Esau and his descendants had choices to make, to either submit to the Lord or reject Him and they rejected Him. Thus, God hated their actions and they were judged for their sin! They had a choice to make and they made the wrong one!

3. Listen to what Warren W. Wiersbe wrote in His commentary, *Be Amazed*. He wrote,

Someone said to Dr. Arno C. Gaebelin, the gifted Hebrew Christian leader of a generation ago, “I have a serious problem with Malachi 1:3, where God says ‘Esau I have hated.’” Dr. Gaebelin replied, ‘I have a greater problem with Malachi 1:2, where God says, ‘Jacob I have loved.’” We certainly can’t explain the love and grace of God, nor do we have to, but we can experience God’s grace and love as we trust Christ and walk with Him. The Lord is even willing to be “the God of Jacob.”

- Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Amazed*, p. 141

And Spurgeon made a similar comment. “A woman once said to Mr. Spurgeon, ‘I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.’ ‘That,’ Spurgeon replied, ‘is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob.’” (William Newell in his commentary on Romans)

And God was doing this to encourage His people and show them that He did love them, they just need to take a good look and see, but they refused to see so often as we do!

4. And for the Edomites, God is saying that the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, will be wiped out. They may think they will recover, but they won’t, the race of the Edomites will be done away with. That is the fate of the Edomites.

On the other hand, God will restore Israel, they will see their greatest restoration in the Kingdom Age and in their restoration, the Lord will be glorified. He will be magnified, as His promises to Israel will come to pass! What an encouragement, at least it should have been!

VERSES 6-8

1. First of all God speaks of how they were honoring their father and mother. How they honor their masters or those who were over them. And God says, ***“If you call Me ‘Father’ then where is my honor? If you call Me ‘Master’ where is my reverence?”***

They gave that honor, that reverence to people but not to the Lord! And make no mistake about it, the Law said they were to honor their father, a servant was to honor his master, and yet, the giver of those laws they did not honor, they did not respect! How did they respond to what they Lord said to them?

They end up challenging the Lord by saying, **“In what way have we despised your name?”** Talk about your hutzpah or rudeness! They asked the question and God lets them know how they are dishonoring Him, how they are not respecting Him! If you don’t want to know the answers you should not ask the question, but they did not to see the error of their way!

Notice how they did this. First of all, they offered **“contemptible”** food to the Lord. And they ask the question, **“In what way have we defiled you?”** They had become so hard to sin and so comfortable with their religion that they did not see the wrong that they were doing.

And this defilement of food on the altar was not speaking of the Table of Showbread in the Holy Place, but the bread that was offered to God on the altar.

And please understand that God is not chastening them for not doing it, but how they were doing it, the attitude of their hearts, and thus, that was unacceptable to the Lord. You see, the priests weren’t grateful for their ministry, for their work before the LORD. They whined about what the people gave and the trouble of being a priest, the hours or whatever and God rebuked them for it.

But that was not the only problem. You see, they were not only giving to God out of the wrong heart, but they gave to Him that which was worthless, of no value to them. They gave animals as sacrifices to the King of kings and Lord of lords that were blind, lame, sick and God says that was evil. He tells them that they would never give animals like that to a governor and yet they are giving them to Almighty God!

And if they would not give them to their leaders, why are they giving them to God? I remember several years ago now, when the Mississippi River overflowed its banks and many lost their homes, they lost everything, that there was a great need for help.

And this is what was truly sad. Several women from a local church decided to help out and they were collecting used underwear for the flood victims. Can you imagine, used underwear! You would not give them to God so why give them to man as His representative!

When we put together the welcome bags for the women who come into the Women's Domestic Violence Center we purchased new things, we wanted them to have the best, to be blessed because as we are serving them we are serving the Lord!

2. Now since we are speaking of ministers, pastors here in this section, I like what Richard Baxter, a great Puritan writer and what he wrote regarding the walk of a minister. He wrote, “But consider plainly that 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 - distinct from that of Christ - make us neglect our duty and lead us to walk unfaithfully in the great trust that God has given us? Is it not true that we serve God too cheaply? Do we not do so in the most applauded way? Do we not withdraw ourselves from that which would cost us the most suffering? Does not all this show that we seek earthly rather than heavenly things? And that we mind the things which are below? While we preach for the realities which are above, do we not idolize the world? So what remains to be said, brethren, but to cry that we are all guilty of too many of the aforementioned sins. Do we not need to humble ourselves in lamentation for our miscarriages before the Lord?” (Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*)

Not much to add to that!

VERSES 9-11

1. As we have seen, their attitude was bad, they gave to God that which is worthless. Now keep in mind that this is not a call back to God, even though that was what was needed. The idea of “**But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us**” is more sarcastic. I think Moffatt’s paraphrase sums it up for us correctly. He put it like this, “Try to pacify God and win his favour? How can he favour any one of you, says the Lord of hosts, when you offer him such sacrifices?”

And that idea continues on in verse 10 when it speaks of shutting the doors. The idea here is don't continue this worthless worship any longer, close it down, shut the doors and the Lord tells them, "**I have no pleasure in you.**" He is not accepting this false worship and I wonder how God feels about worship today?

And that goes for the teaching of God's Word today as well. If you are not teaching the Word of God or you are adding to it or taking away from it by bringing in the philosophies of the world, close it down, shut the door! Why? Because God gets no pleasure and you are hurting people by giving them the empty philosophies of this world and not Christ!

2. In spite of all that false worship that Israel was bringing forth, God says that He will not go without worship! If they will not worship Him in Spirit and truth God will find worshippers among the Gentiles!

And He has done that! Blindness has come upon Israel because they have rejected the Messiah, Jesus and Gentiles have been grafted in. And looking on into the future, when Israel will be restored, we will see that in the Kingdom Age, that "**... 'For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,' Says the Lord of hosts.**" Malachi 1:11. That day is coming!

VERSES 12-14

1. Notice their attitude towards the things of God. There is no love, only a work theology and they hate it. They are only interested in their own wellbeing. They are trying to make a profit off of God!

And I think when we lose sight of God and the work He has called us to do, we get weary as the Lord says. We start complaining about it and we complain what others are not doing. And what we are doing is we are not giving our best, it is a lackadaisical attitude that we give, and it ends up being work and we get frustrated and many times we do even less or complain as I said.

But when you are serving the Lord, I am not saying you are not tired physically, but there is tremendous joy in serving the King of kings and Lord of lords. Dwight L. Moody came home one time, and although he was very weary, he was going to another meeting without taking time out to rest. His family begged him to cancel it because he was so weary, but he said this, "I get tired *in* the work, but I never get tired *of* the work." Amen to that!

And the key to all of this and to serve the Lord correctly, and we are all servants of God ministering to the people of God in many different ways, is that He is "**a great King**" and His "**name is to be feared among the nations.**" Serve with that in mind and you will honor the Lord in all you do!

It is as Psalm 47:1-2 says, "**Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; he is a great King over all the earth.**" May we, as Christians, not forget that and may we not give to God that which is blemished or out of a wrong heart attitude! God wants our best and He deserves our best!

MALACHI 2**VERSES 1-3**

1. God is speaking to the spiritual leaders, that they need to honor God, take their position seriously. In fact, it is not a profession, it is not a job, it is a calling by God! And the consequences of not taking it seriously, not honoring God, is that He will send a curse upon them. In fact, it has already begun.

I will say this in regards to what the Lord is saying here. If you don't take Him seriously, if you don't honor Him, you won't have a respect for His Word, which leads to all kinds of liberal ideas, making the Scriptures say what you want them to say instead of what God wants. Be careful!

And what they were sowing they were going to reap. In other words, as they brought dishonor to God He would bring dishonor to them. And the Lord illustrates that for them by saying He is going to spread dung, refuse on their faces. Not a pretty picture, but it was what they needed to see.

And what a warning today for those who are dishonoring God by not teaching His Word! God will hold them accountable. And as they move away from God's Word we see all the false worship, the false teaching come flooding into the church and, as God said to those in Israel He is saying to us, I “**. . . will spread refuse on your faces, The refuse of your solemn feasts . . .**”

VERSES 4-7

1. God used the tribe of Levi as His priesthood before Him. And they feared the Lord because they knew Him, they honored Him. And He instructed them to give to the people life and peace that is only found in God and His Word.

Today God still offers to us a covenant of life and peace that is only found in Christ. It is as Jesus said in John 5:21, **“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”**

Also, in Romans 5:1 Paul tells us, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** That is what God has for us and as representatives of Him, we can give to others that same life and peace that is found in Christ!

Now, as ministers of God we are to speak forth the Word of God. It is that simple. Speak the truths of God found in the Word of God that the people of God may turn from their sin and live in peace not only with God, but with his fellow man.

David, in Psalm 119:9-11 speaks of this very thing, how the Word of God keeps us on the right path and when we fall, it exposes our sin. David said **“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!”**

2. One of the problems today is that man does not fear God and we see the results of that. But look at what God said of Levi, who feared the Lord.

There was *REVERENCE* towards God – **“So he feared Me; And was reverent before My name.”**

They knew *GOD’S WORD* – **“The law of truth was in his mouth.”**

They manifested *GODLY CHARACTER* – “**And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity.**”

He *PRESERVED* and *PROMOTED GOD’S WORD* – “**For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth.**”

Leaders should be knowledgeable messengers of God’s word. And as you look at what God expects of His ministers, you see that very thing. That they give His people the Word of God and there is no getting around that, nor should we try!

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 11:23, “**For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you . . .**” You see, you can’t give to people what you don’t have. Thus, as I teach the Word of God, as God speaks to me, I give to you what He has shown me. If you are not giving people the Word of God, then what in the world are you giving them? *NOTHING!*

And we will see that next, how they moved away from God’s Word!

VERSES 8-9

1. The priests should have held the word of God in knowledge, reverence, and obedience. Instead, they departed from the way and therefore caused many to stumble at the Law. And because they did not give to the people the Word of God, the people held them in contempt or they were disrespected!

And there are other consequences to not giving people healthy doctrine, sound doctrine, many of the people stumbled, they fell! We are told in Amos 8:11, “**Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.’**”

Truly, in the church at large, there is a famine in regards to the teaching of God's Word. People have itching ears, they want to be entertained, and they are starving to death, spiritually speaking. And the result of that today is we see many stumble and fall!

Paul warned Timothy of these days we are living in and what Timothy was supposed to do no matter what the people wanted. He wrote, **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

You see, just because it may not be popular to teach the Word of God, Paul is telling Timothy to continue on, don't give up, fulfill the ministry for which you have been called into. And I believe that is what needs to be done with all my heart, the teaching of the Word of God to keep the sheep healthy and strong! We need a healthy diet to be strong, to be healthy physically and we also need a healthy diet of God's Word to be healthy, to be strong spiritually!

Now in the days of Malachi, like I have said, because they negated God's Word and were more interested in being people pleasers instead of God pleasers, God caused the people to turn against them. They tried to give the people what they wanted and it didn't work, God did not allow it!

If you are in the ministry, this is an important lesson to learn. You will never please everyone and to try, you will go crazy and you will have to compromise what you believe, to negate the Word of God to be popular, and in the end, it won't make you popular and it is displeasing to God.

Paul makes this point when he says in I Thessalonians 2:4-6, **“But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.”** May we not forget the lesson!

VERSE 10

1. God's rebuke against His people is that they are dealing treacherously, taking advantage of each other, when God has created us all, and to go against His people, you are going against Him. May that stop the bickering, backbiting, gossip, put downs, and-so-on in the body of Christ!

And please understand that this is not saying we are all children of God or that all are saved, not at all. What Malachi is saying is that we were made in the image of God and thus, we should respect each other. But we don't see that happen because man's heart is evil and apart from Christ it is amazing the atrocities that they can do upon each other!

VERSES 11-12

1. This is another sad statement. The men of Israel were divorcing their Jewish wives and marrying Gentile women, and in God's eyes, that is wrong. And the implication seems to be that in their actions, they are being drawn away from God and towards the gods of their Gentile wives. And the men that are being spoken of here were the priests! That is who he was speaking about.

God holds the institution of marriage as something that He loves and look at how we have degraded it and are trying to destroy it today. Israel was doing nothing less. They were forsaking what God had told them in regards to marriage. And please understand that when God spoke against these mixed marriages that were happening in Israel it had nothing to do with race, but everything to do with faith.

Let me say this, there is only one race to begin with and that is the human race. It has nothing to do with the pigment of our skin. But it does have everything to do with faith and we are not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever! And keep in mind it is not that Jews couldn't marry Gentiles. One of the best examples that I can give to you is that of Ruth, who was a Moabite and she married a Jewish man by the name of Boaz. The key here is that she had forsaken the gods of Moab and turned to the true and living God! (Ruth 1:16)

But as we see here, God is not going to ignore their sin. He will deal with them, cutting them off. And do you see how blind to their sin they were? They did these abominations before the Lord and yet they were going through their religious activities, offering sacrifices to God, and God says that He won't accept them.

VERSES 13-16

1. Keep in mind that these divorced women were the wives of the priests. And they came before God's altar weeping over what has happened to them. And on the other end of the spectrum were these priests who had divorced their wives and they offered sacrifices to God on the same altar!

And look at how bad it was. These priests who brought their offering to God are weeping because God did not accept their sacrifice, their offering! Please understand, this is not a heart of repentance here, only a heart of weeping over what the Lord was doing to them. They did not get back with their wives but continued in their sin and yet they wanted God to accept them anyway! God does not accept us according to our standards, but His!

And as you read verse 14 the reason they were divorcing their wives is because they were going after someone who was younger, they were not staying with the wife of their youth, who was now older. That is what Clarke tells us as well, "They kept their wives till they had *passed their youth*, and then put them away, that they might get *young ones* in their place."

And we see the heart of God for marriage here. He hates divorce. Why does God hate divorce? First of all, they broke the marriage covenant they made with their wife. The vows they made were not real, but empty words. And we see that so often today. I believe it was the governor of Oklahoma who said a few years back, "It is easier to get out of a marriage contract than it is from a Tupperware contract!"

We are seeing divorce rates exploding across this nation and what is happening outside of the church, is also happening inside the church! Those words, “Till death do us part” are meaningless today. What we really should say, because that is what we believe, is “I’ll stick with you until I have found someone prettier, younger, richer, stronger” or whatever reason people find to break their marriage covenant! “Hey, God wants me to be happy, right?” No, He wants you to be holy!

This marriage covenant is not only between the man and the woman but it is between them and God. And God never intended that covenant to be broken but because of the hardness of man’s heart He allowed it but only for adultery and if you are married to an unbeliever but that should not be the reason you get divorced because by your actions they may come to know the Lord. Don’t look for loopholes, God sees through that!

2. And in verse 15 we see that the union of a godly husband and wife produce godly offspring or godly children. Does that mean all children born to godly parents will grow up loving the Lord? Of course not, but they do have a better chance, and divorce can destroy that!

And because divorce is so prevalent today we all know someone who has been divorced and we see how it destroys lives. And not just the husband and wife, but children, parents, relatives and even their friends!

And instead of covering your spouse with the love of God, you are covering her with violence. Instead of loving her as Christ loves the church and died for her, you are tossing her in the garbage! Harsh? Yes! But God hates divorce!

And I am sure I am going to make some angry at me here but so be it. This is what the Bible says and I did touch on it. If you don't have Biblical grounds for divorce then God still sees you as married and thus, any subsequent relationship is considered adultery. (See Matthew 19:8-9)

Now let me say this. If you have been divorced for unbiblical reasons it is not the unforgiveable sin. You need to repent and ask God for forgiveness and then move on. I remember years ago there was a gentleman who was divorced and remarried and his divorce was not on Biblical grounds.

And in this new marriage he had a child. And one day he came up to me and wanted to know what I thought about something. He felt that because he divorced his first wife and it was not a Biblical reason, he was going to divorce his new wife and marry his first wife!

Oh my gosh! First of all, two wrongs don't make a right. And what about this child you had with your new wife? I obviously told him he was wrong and why and a short time later I never saw him again!

Now I realize that this is not easy but if you are not going to be committed to the marriage, don't get married! And if you are married, sorry you are already committed! Don't be angry at me, take it up with God!

3. There is a solution though. What is the solution to this problem of divorce? Again, many won't like it but we are told, "**Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.**" Malachi 2:6. In other words, if you are having problems in your marriage don't blame your spouse, look at your own heart, your own spirit and deal with it, take heed to what God desires. You can change!

VERSE 17

1. Here is the fourth question, **“In what way have we wearied Him?”** They wearied God with their words that were contrary to His! And they brought God down to their level, saying that God will accept all in the end. He doesn’t really care what we do or if He really does, He can’t do anything about it! Make no mistake about it, “God is offended when people accuse Him of injustice.” (Boice)

In Isaiah 5:20 the Lord said, **“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”**

That is how God feels about evil, and when he says “Woe” He means it!

And in Psalm 7:11-13 David said, **“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he does not turn back, he will sharpen His sword; he bends His bow and makes it ready. He also prepares for Himself instruments of death; he makes His arrows into fiery shafts.”**

You see, God does care about evil, He will judge it, and don’t confuse His longsuffering with His inability to do anything about it. He will deal with it! But for those that have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, we are told in Matthew 13:43 **“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**

What a glorious promise that God has given to us, may we not forget that!

2. Let me close with this. The people in Malachi’s day were asking, **“Where is the God of justice?”** As we will see next time, He will show them!