

Date : 23 February 2025

Theme : Building a strong foundation for the family

Topic : The Marriage covenant

Passage : Malachi 2:10-17

Key Verse: You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Malachi 2:14

Introduction

When the Lord created the world, He did so for the purpose of populating the world with families to enjoy wellness. ...*That it may be well with you and your children...* Deuteronomy 5:29, 12:28, 30:19 is repeated throughout the first five books, outlining God's plan for the world.

Malachi is the last book which sums up crucial factors for this plan to succeed.

God desires godly offspring from marriages based on covenant.

Understanding the marriage covenant and keeping it matters to God.

1. What is the marriage covenant?

Old Testament examples of covenant carry the idea of sacrifice and shedding of blood.

Marriage is a solemn agreement between a man and a woman, made publicly and symbolised by the exchange of rings.

- Covenant making and keeping as taught in Scripture is in 3 areas:
 - Covenant with the Lord as in *Exodus 19*.
 - Covenant with other believers in the church body.
 - Covenant between the bride and bridegroom.

(All three areas involve a sacred relationship whereby failure to enter / break the covenant is described in terms of adultery and severe consequences follow).

- A covenant seals the marital union.
 - The marriage covenant is something that the Lord ordains.
The book of Malachi uses language that references back to Genesis and the original vision for marriage – not just a fleshly union, but a spiritual union.

God instituted both marriage and covenant making so as to deal with the fallen nature of mankind and man's tendency to go back on his promise.

(Derek Prince made this observation. ...*Without the solemnity of covenant commitment, most men would commit adultery. Those who don't honour their covenant commitment usually end up by committing adultery...*).

- A covenant of marriage is something that God values.
It is God's idea. It is the context for spiritual and physical intimacy. A picture of the covenant union that God has with His people. The men of Malachi's days treated this covenant more as a breakable social contract. They conveniently divorced their lawful wives to pursue a more advantageous union with foreign women who were idol-worshippers.

2. How does God defend the marriage covenant?

The Lord is the covenant witness.

...the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth... Malachi 2:14

a) As Enforcer of the covenant

The covenant witness is a person who watches over the proceedings when a covenant is made. (We have witnesses at weddings who sign their names to prove that this holy matrimony, between this man and this woman, has taken place).

- In the bible, the covenant witness is an enforcer of the covenant – God Himself. He witnessed who has been sworn and has the power to judge the unfaithful party and to avenge the injured party.

Marriage is a responsibility for you are taking an oath before the living God. That means you are placing yourself on an altar of judgement. Violate the vow you make and you are calling down God's wrath upon you. That's serious.

- Marrying someone who does not have faith in Jesus Christ is unfaithfulness to yourself, unfaithfulness to the community of God's people and a profaning of the covenant.
...dealing treacherously... (= covenantal unfaithfulness) Malachi 2:10-16

(A marriage is a wonderful thing. It is always accompanied by feasting.

Covenant-making is a joyful thing; but being joyful and being frivolous are not the same thing).

b) He determines the covenant purpose *...He seeks godly offspring... Malachi 2:15*

This is what God is seeking from marriage – a seed for God, a seed of God. A people set apart for Himself. (This is not to say that Malachi expresses the whole purpose of marriage – the rich design of God for marriage starts in Genesis where the original creation of woman in *Genesis 2* is companionship).

Your marriage is not your own, God is the Enforcer. Your children are not your own, they are the Lord's *...as arrows in the hands of a warrior... Psalm 127:4*.

c) To guard man's spirit

...take heed to your spirit... Malachi 2:15

...because your garment is covered with crime... (= covenant-breaking treachery...) I, (God) will not regard your tears... Malachi 2:16

3. Why does covenant keeping guard our spirit? *Malachi 2:10-16*

i) Our actions towards our covenant partner either uphold or profane the covenant.

By treachery (betrayal, abandonment, neglect, dishonesty, unfaithfulness) of the covenant partner, we have profaned (show disrespect, desecrated) the covenant *verse 10*.

ii) How does God view keeping / breaking of covenant?

Breaking the covenant is detestable to God. *verse 11*

iii) How serious are the consequences?

It has serious consequences

- Cut off from God's people. *verse 12*
- Our offerings will be rejected. *verse 13*

iv) Why is God a covenant witness?

He holds us to account when we break faith with the wife of our marriage covenant and failure to honour her as our covenant partner. *verse 14*

v) Why did God unite 2 people in marriage?

God united both people in marriage to fulfil His purpose of godly offspring.

vi) What did God warn?

God warned twice in Malachi against breaking faith and to guard your spirit *verses 15 & 16*. (Adultery is a spiritual temptation).

Application

My Response

To guard your spirit from adultery,

Trigger points

- Be aware of your own vulnerability.

Every one has emotional 'hot buttons' that can ignite strong desires, such as:

- Childhood experiences of humiliation predispose one to feel hurt intensely when the spouse makes one the butt of jokes.
- Predators listening to your sharing may take advantage of you. eg. Hunger for affirmation makes a woman fall for flattery.

- God's Word warns us of the devil's devices. Satan exploits weaknesses:

- Resist temptation to get rich quickly.

Selfish ambitious make one vulnerable. Predators who want to take advantage of us will give the impression of having great wealth and offer baits to luxury. A wise response is to realise there is no such thing as a free lunch. Every predator has a long string attached.

- Resolve conflicts before sundown.

Quarrelsome spousal relationships where both spouses fail to honour one another, to fulfil their part of mutual submission. Such quarrels ignite easily. *Ephesians 5:1*. Don't let it simmer. Resolve the conflict as soon as possible. Do not go to bed without addressing the conflict.

- Check your emotions.

You will always be able to meet someone who seems more attractive than fleeting flirtations. Love is a choice. Assert your will to choose to love your spouse and value the journey and teamwork you have thus far enjoyed.

- Examine your bloodline for adultery and divorce.

Past curses of broken marriages have to be broken by prayer.

- Serve the Lord.

Do not allow boredom and idleness to suck you into illicit affairs.