

Broken Relationships - Malachi 2:10-16

Introduction: Tonight, we're talking about 3 human relationships: (1) Our relationship with our Friends; (2) Our relationship with our Father; and (3) Our relationship with our Family.

We like to think of these relationships in terms of being healthy and wholesome. But in our text, Malachi uses the word "*break*," "*breaking*" or "*broken*" 5 times in these verses. The word means "*to betray a trust, or to be unfaithful to a commitment.*" So he is describing these relationships as broken

He also uses the words "*profane*" and "*desecrated*" in vs. 10 & 11. The words mean "*to destroy the value of something by defacing it.*" It means that the people were destroying the value of these important relationships by their unfaithfulness.

Now let's notice these three relationships in which Malachi speaks of their unfaithfulness. First, we see:

1. They were Unfaithful to Their Friends! (10)

In vs. 10 Malachi speaks of "*breaking faith with one another.*" Instead of living together in unity, the people of Judah were living like the Hatfields and McCoys. Apparently there was some backstabbing going on. There was some finger pointing and slander taking place. There were some jealous, coveting, and envious relationships between people that was causing hard feelings and suspicion. Whatever the unfaithful actions were, they were obviously causing much harm to the family of God. Malachi said they were "*profan(ing) the covenant of our fathers...*"

Something was destroying their peaceful and harmonious relationship. Paul Billheimer writes: "*Disunity in the body of Christ is the scandal of the ages. The greatest sin of the Church is not lying, stealing, drunkenness, adultery, not even murder - but the sin of disunity.*"

Once there were two men who were stranded on a deserted island. After about a year, they were rescued. The rescuers noticed three huts on the island and asked them what they were for. One man said that they both shared one hut to live in, one hut was his church, and the other hut was where he used to go to church before he got his feelings hurt!

I found a poem the other day that goes: *To dwell above with the saints we love, That will be glory. But to dwell below with the saints we know; Now that's a different story.*

But God's design and God's delight is for His people to be united in fellowship. Ps. 133:1 (NIV) says, *"How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"* Malachi gives 2 reasons for unity and harmony among God's people.

A. We Have The Same Father. In vs. 10 the question is asked, *"Have we not all one Father?"* Of course, he was talking about their father Abraham, but as for Christian unity - God is our Father. We all have different backgrounds, cultures, personalities, careers, and different ideas about things, but the one thing that we all have in common is that God is our Heavenly Father. When we come to him in repentance and faith, He adopts us into His family. According to John 1:12 (NIV), we are all His children: *"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."* And the closer his children get to Him, the closer we get to each other.

But there's a 2nd reason as to why there ought to be unity among God's people:

B. We Have The Same Faith. Vs. 10 also says, *"Did not one God created us?"* He was talking about their Jewish ancestry, but also their Jewish faith. As it applies to Christians, our unity is borne from the fact we have the same Father and that we have the same core beliefs. We may differ over a few methods and modes, but true children of God will have unity in what we believe about the essentials of the faith: God, Christ, Salvation.

There was an American doctor who was traveling in Korea. He knew just enough of the language to get around. On one trip, he was seated by an elderly Korean carrying a package wrapped in a white cloth. Soon the Korean began to speak to the doctor. The doctor replied with the only sentence he had memorized, *"I do not understand Korean?"* But the old man persisted. He was jabbering away when the doctor thought he had detected the man saying something about Jesus. The Korean pointed at the doctor and asked, *"Yesu? Yesu?"* The doctor nodded agreement, *"Yesu, Yesu."* The Korean opened his package and proudly displayed his Korean Bible. Then he put his finger on a verse. The doctor couldn't read it, but he figured out the approximate place in his own Bible. And in 1 John 3:14 (NIV) *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers."*

Malachi said they unfaithful to their friends, but he also said:

2. They Were Unfaithful to Their Father! (11-12)

Now Malachi addresses the problem of how even their marriages revealed their unfaithfulness to God.

Read vs. 11-12.

What is going on here? Well, there were certain marriage regulations that God had decreed that were being ignored by the people. God had given them certain marriage regulations that condemned intermarriage in some cases. They were not to intermarry with the nations that occupied Canaan. **Deut. 7:3 (NIV)** *“Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.”* In Duet 23:3-4, God had told them not to intermarry with anyone of an Ammonite or Moabite descent. They were also not to intermarry with an Edomite or Egyptian.

Yet, despite all these prohibitions, they had violated God's command, and ignored the law God had given them. They had married women who worshipped idols. The word *“married”* is translated *“ba-al”* which means *“lord, master, husband.”* Baal was the false god that was worshipped by the Cannanites and Phoenicians. But the Hebrews were supposed to worship the one and true God. So this intermarrying with the worshippers of false gods, signaled a departure from their faith in God.

They were disobedient, rebellious and unfaithful to God's commands. They were guilty of putting a question mark where God put a period, and God was not pleased with them.

Do you want to know how to be blessed in your Christian walk? Just be obedient to God's commands. It's like John Sammis wrote in that great hymn: *“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word what a glory He sheds on our way! Let us do His good will; He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey.”*

Now why was this particular command given to the Hebrew people? Well, these inter-marriages were condemned by God because of the result they would have. They would pull their hearts away from God.

If you place a cube of lead on a cube of gold, the two metals will inevitably begin to penetrate each other, and the gold will lose its purity. This is precisely what would happen to the worship of the true God by the Hebrews. As they began to violate God's command not to inter-marry with the Canaanites, their beliefs and practices soon began to be intertwined with the beliefs and ways of the Canaanites, and over time the people's hearts began to turn from the one and true God. These intermarriages led them into idolatry.

1 Kings 11:1-2 (NIV) is a good example of what happened. It says, *“King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter--Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, “You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.” Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.”*

The people were disobedient to God and departed from God. Our unfaithfulness is no different. When we disobey God's Word we allow other things to pull our hearts away from God. Our prayer ought to be that which Robert Robinson expressed in his great hymn *“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”*

O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be! Let Thy goodness like a fetter Bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander-Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart - O take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above.

They were unfaithful to their friends, unfaithful to their Father, and finally:

3. They Were Unfaithful to Their Families! (13-16)

I've got a couple of jokes to tell right here because we need to lighten up the mood a little.

Once a little girl was telling the story of *“Snow White”* to her mother and when she got down to the part where the prince kissed Snow White, the little girl said, *“Do you know what happened next?”* The mother said, *“Why yes sweetie, they lived happily ever after.”* The little girl said, *“Oh no, they got married.”*

One husband complained to his wife, *“When are you gonna learn to cook biscuits like my Mama does?”* She answered him, *“When you start bringing home the dough like my Daddy does?”*

Let's read vs. 13-16. Not only were the men marrying heathen wives, they were also putting away their Hebrew wives to do so. I'll explain what that means in a minute, but for now, let me say that every marriage – even the good ones - has its ups and downs. So, I'm not saying that there is such a thing as a perfect marriage. If there was, the people would be perfect, and we know that's not so. We're all imperfect. But in these verses, Malachi gives insight into God's design for a blessed marriage and God's displeasure of a broken marriage.

In vs. 13, he describes the people bringing their sacrifices to the Lord and their offerings being rejected of the Lord. Then in vs. 14, they asked why. This opens the door for Malachi to give God's ideal for marriage. First, he says that:

A. God Attends the Marriage Ceremony. In vs. 14 Malachi is saying that when there is a wedding, God is present. Marriage is ordained by God and is observed by God.

When God arranged the first wedding, He and Adam were talking. Adam said, *"God, I'm so lonely. I need to have a companion."* God said, *"Okay, I'm going to make you a perfect woman. She will be beautiful, intelligent, and meet your every need."* Adam said, *"That sounds great. What will it cost me?"* God said, *"An arm and a leg."* Adam thought for a moment and then said, *"That's kinda steep. What can I get for a rib."*

Seriously though, God believes that marriage is serious because it is spiritual. It not only involves the uniting of mind and body, it involves the uniting of spirit. Secondly:

B. God Authors the Marriage Covenant. Marriage is called a covenant in vs. 14. It's a relationship that involves certain conditions and requirements that have been established and declared by God.

In vs. 15. Malachi takes us back to the first marriage and shows that God made two people one and they entered into a relationship of one man for one woman: *"Has not the Lord made them one?"* One man for one woman. And this relationship was to be permanent.

In vs. 16, Malachi says that God hates putting away. Some have translated this as divorce, but that is not the pure meaning here. When we think of divorce, we automatically think with our western minds. We think of the legal means of ending a marriage. One party, for whatever reason, decides to end the marriage. They go to a lawyer and have the papers drawn up. The papers are served to the other party. A court date is set. They go before the judge, and if there is not reconciliation before that, it's pretty much a done deal, and the parties are legally divorced.

Now, while that is not a pretty picture or an ideal result of a marriage that has lost its luster, it is nevertheless the legal way to end a marriage. In fact, it is the method God said He allowed under certain circumstances, and had Moses pass along to the people. God is surely not pleased that any marriage ends up in failure, for it is not what He instituted or intended marriage to be.

But Malachi is saying that the thing God hated is not so much the legal divorce, it's the illegal *"putting away."* That was something entirely different. We're not accustomed to the idea of *"putting away"* in America. We're accustomed to the way I described earlier.

“*Putting away*” was a term used for the practice in a male-dominated society of a man literally kicking his wife out of the house. And he didn’t even have to have a valid reason. If she didn’t clean the house, or keep the laundry washed, or didn’t cook his meals properly, or even if the man just wanted her out, in a male-dominated society, he simply put her away - no writing of divorcement, no legal document, no nothing! The tragic thing about this practice was that it left the woman with no legal rights. She was forbidden to ever remarry, because there was no legal divorce. And if she did remarry, she was considered an adulteress. That is what Malachi said God hated. So, Malachi issues a stern warning to the men - “*Guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.*” (16b).

Conclusion: Nothing hurts worse than the heartbreak of a broken relationship. Whether it is a relationship with friends, with family, or with God, the hurt and disappointment and result is the same. You’ve got nothing left but shattered pieces that we try to pick up and do something with. Put them back together after they are broken? It’s as easy as throwing a bag of flour into the wind, and trying to put it back.

Unfaithfulness to your friends, your family and to your Father will cause a broken and shattered relationship. Perhaps your relationships are not where they should be. God is calling for faithfulness on your part: He’s saying, let’s be faithful in our relationships. Don’t break your faith.