

# Malachi chapter 2:11-17

Sunday evening, 25th April 2021 | Deal Christian Fellowship | Simeon Forder

Reading: Malachi 2:1-17

Good evening. **Let's pray.**

## Introduction

We are studying our way through Malachi, the 39th and final book of the Old Testament. And this man, whose name means "messenger", is certainly delivering a powerful message. Not his opinion, but God's. Indeed, as noted in the last two weeks, the majority of this book, in fact 47 of the 55 verses, are direct, first-person speaking from God - so if we find ourselves wrestling with what is said in it, we would do well to remember it's origin. And of course, the 8 other verses are also Holy Spirit inspired, God breathed scripture too.

As also mentioned in previous weeks, this message was written around 2500 years ago to a rebellious nation of Israel, but remains incredibly applicable to us today. And the four chapters of this short book can be summarised as follows:

### Chapter overview

1. Israel is loved by God, but has despised God
2. Corrupt priests, broken relationships
3. The coming messenger, we must not rob God
4. Justice will be done - the day is coming

Last time we began chapter two, and zooming into that chapter it looks like this:

### Summary of chapter two

- The responsibility of Godly leadership
- Our response to Godly leadership and His Word
- Ungodly relationships
- Broken marriages

So, in chapter one we saw how the people were offering unacceptable sacrifices to God - they were offering the worst they had, rather than their best. And as we began chapter two, we saw the priests rebuked because they should have put a stop to that - but comfortable with what they received out of it, they did nothing.

Rather than the priests being those who upheld the law, they had failed to teach it, even causing the people to stumble at it. The consequence? Both the priests and the people's relationship with God had broken down. And what follows? The breakdown of their earthly relationships. They have dishonoured the Lord in their offerings, and now they are dishonouring Him in their lives.

We left off at verse 10 last time which says:

***Malachi 2:10***

*Have we not all one Father?*

*Has not one God created us?*

*Why do we deal treacherously with one another*

*By profaning the covenant of the fathers?*

How had the people dealt treacherously with one another? Let's turn to verse 11 where we read...

## Chapter 2:11-17 verse by verse

### ***Malachi 2:11***

*Judah has dealt treacherously,  
And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem,  
For Judah has profaned  
The LORD's holy institution which He loves:  
He has married the daughter of a foreign god.*

These are serious words - Treacherously. Abomination. Profaned. **What** is the issue? They had married the daughter of a foreign God.

**Why** is this an issue? Is this about so called inter-racial marriages? Not at all. God is not upset by skin colour, accent, hair colour, or facial features. The problem was not marrying the daughter of a foreigner but of a foreign **god**.

For what that brought to Israel time after time, was idolatry. And it'll do the same to you if you marry a non-Christian. Your priorities will not be the same.

Like us, no doubt Israel had prioritised the wrong things that the other person would bring to a relationship - they're funny, they're cute, they're attractive, they have the same hobbies, likes, dislikes, they like the same movies, music, and food as us. They love me, they get me, they're so nice. That may all be true, and it's not that those things don't have their place, but what we're ignoring is that the other person's priorities are completely different.

To the non-Christian, family time is more important than church time. Saving for a holiday is more important than giving to the church. Hobbies are more important than serving practically at the church. And there is no agreement on the things that really matter - from how you conduct yourself in a relationship, in marriage, in business, in life. From how you raise your children, to how you treat others. And in how important the Bible is.

### **It's like this - trainspotting example**

For Christians, being married to a non-Christian will cause conflict in the use of your time, your finances, your home, how you raise your children and in your relationship with God. If it doesn't then your relationship with God is already in trouble.

Friends, there are two very clear things the Bible teaches on this subject. **First**, a Christian marrying a non-Christian is wrong. It is clear here in this chapter, and it is clear in 2 Corinthians 6 where we read...

### ***2 Corinthians 6:14***

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

The idea here is that of yoking a donkey and an ox to a plough – that unequal yoking, where one wants to press on, and the other doesn't, results in the pair of them going round in circles.

The **second** thing the Bible is very clear on, is that if you are married to a Christian – don't leave them! We read in 1 Corinthians 7...

**1 Corinthians 7:12-16**

*But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?*

So again, if you are married to a non-Christian, don't leave them. Love them, pray for them, and do all you can to lead them to the Lord.

But if you're **not** married, don't put yourself in that situation. Look at how strongly Nehemiah dealt with this...

**Nehemiah 13:23-27**

*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?"*

The person you marry has such an impact on your life and your relationship with God, that as a church we have not and will not marry a Christian to a non-Christian. To do so would be to act contrary to the Bible.

Of course, we can offer all kinds of excuses for compromise... but God made no exceptions here to allow for people growing up in Israel where dodgy sacrifices were being offered. The problem is always in the heart.

## DATING

But of course, the question that should follow is; what happens if you find someone of good character, but they don't love the Lord - that is, they are not a Christian - **can I date them?**

Well, the answer is sure it's *possible* to date a non-Christian, but why would you want to? That sounds harsh, because there are some wonderfully kind, sweet, generous, loving people in this world who are not Christians - and it's so easy to say that you'd never be interested in a non-Christian until all of a sudden you find you are. Some people are very likeable! So why then wouldn't you want to date someone of good character?

Well, the problem is different standards will surface even before marriage. To the non-Christian, having sex before marriage is normal. Whereas to the Christian, that is sinful. To the non-Christian, dating is mating. To the Christian, dating is to get to know someone with a view to marrying them. To the non-Christian, Sunday mornings are for lying in, cleaning the car, going to the beach. To the Christian, Sunday mornings mean being at church.

That different foundation will cause conflict sooner or later - and the eventuality is that that will happen in marriage. But you say - "I'll never marry a non-Christian, but I'm happy dating one". There are some that are comfortable with this idea - I've even heard it called missionary dating. But there's two major issues:

- In all the cases I have seen among my friends, **ALL** those that have dated a non-Christian have been pulled away from the Lord. Without exception.
- Second, if you would only marry someone if they become a Christian, what happens if they don't? At what point do you break up? **If you can't hold back from dating them now, what makes you think you can hold back from marrying them then?** What makes you think you would break up then over something that you're happy to push to the side for now?

And if they profess to have become a Christian, how do you know that it is genuine - and not because they know it's the only way to be with you? That's so risky.

Simply put, if they don't care about your soul, they're not your soul mate. And if you don't care about theirs, how can you say you love them? You have ask; what about their **salvation**? Is that not the **priority** here? If you love them, then surely **this**, and not dating is what you should pursue and pray for first.

It is not so important what someone's background is, compared to where they are headed. If they do not know the Lord, they are destined for hell. If you believe that, then your priority will be converting them not dating them. If your priority is not that, then I think that exposes either how shaky your relationship is with God, or how little you love them.

You have to keep the long term in mind. I remember listening to a Christian radio show once, where some pastors were answering questions and praying for those who called in, and an 8-year old boy called in to ask for prayer for his daddy to be saved. THAT, was one of the hardest things I have had to listen to on radio.

Why put yourself, or your (potential) kids in that situation?

I was reading J Vernon McGee's comments on this, and he wrote:

Any girl or any boy who flies in the face of God's very definite and specific instructions in this connection is just flirting with trouble.

**J Vernon McGee**

**If you are unmarried**, but desire to be, find strong Christian friends who can be a counsel to you in your relationships. Give them permission to say anything. And listen. I can't tell you how much I have needed counsel of my closest friends in singleness, in dating, and in marriage.

As a rule, don't date someone your pastor, your parents, your close Christian friends, and most importantly, the Bible does not approve of.

Believe me, I know first-hand this isn't easy. I know what it is like to desire to be married - I was single for 15 years as an adult, and it was hard. I had my non-Christian friends saying I was too picky, or suggesting this or that person to me. And it was hard to not give up hope. It was hard not to give in. But it can be done. Others have done that too.

I know what it is like to say no. And you need to be willing to say no too. Not just to dating non-Christians. But saying no to dating Christians with a poor walk with God. One of the hardest conversations I ever had was to look a girl in the eyes and say, "I love you, and I want to be with you, but your relationship with God is a mess and that's more important than your relationship with me." And that was it. I hoped her relationship with God would turn out differently. But that's not what happened.

In the months that followed, the song "Worth it all" became so dear to me because of the chorus - "I let go of all I have just to have all of you, and no matter what the cost I will follow you. Jesus, everything I've lost I have found in you. And when I finally reach the end I'll say You are worth it all".

And you know what, that is absolutely true. I have tested and proved that. Everything I lost, I found more in Him. More in Jesus. I'm not talking about meeting and marrying Siân, as wonderful as she is. I'm talking about my relationship with Jesus. Trust me, you will not find someone that will satisfy you like Jesus will.

**Now, if you are married**, I beg you, make yourselves available to be a good counsel to your unmarried friends. Take the time to read what the Bible says about this, and pray for wisdom to offer practical advice. Don't be missing in action when your unmarried friends need you.

Now, continuing in verse 12, we read:

***Malachi 2:12***

*May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob  
The man who does this, being awake and aware,  
Yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!*

This is why I spent so long on verse 11 this evening. You need to be aware of how seriously God views this, and how much it will impact your life.

Israel had been told so many times away not to marry the daughter of a foreign god, but they had not listened, and so the man who was unequally yoked with a heathen woman, who violated the Word of God concerning marriage was to be cut off from the tents of Jacob, from the blessings of God.

Therefore, don't enter a relationship or marriage with someone who is not a Christian, and expect God's blessing to be on that relationship or marriage.

Likewise, don't sleep around during the week and come and praise God on a Sunday. As I quoted recently, if your lives don't worship God, neither do your lips.

In verses 13-14, we see our next, but connected topic:

***Malachi 2:13-14***

*And this is the second thing you do:  
You cover the altar of the LORD with tears,  
With weeping and crying;  
So He does not regard the offering anymore,  
Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.  
Yet you say, "For what reason?"  
Because the LORD has been witness  
Between you and the wife of your youth,  
With whom you have dealt treacherously;  
Yet she is your companion  
And your wife by covenant.*

What was happening here was that the Jewish men were divorcing their wives to marry heathen women. And God was not pleased. Here He says "Look, it doesn't matter what you bring me, whether things or tears - your life is not right, and you need to sort that now!" God wouldn't honour their sacrifices while they treated their wives with contempt.

Likewise, men, you must make sure you are treating your wife well. For Peter makes the same point in 1 Peter 3...

### **1 Peter 3:7**

*Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

I'm not just aiming at the guys. Our culture talks much of finding "the one". Well, once you've married them, they are "the one". And you need to be a godly husband or godly wife to them, regardless of how you feel on any given day.

We continue...

### **Malachi 2:15**

*But did He not make them one,  
Having a remnant of the Spirit?  
And why one?  
He seeks godly offspring.  
Therefore take heed to your spirit,  
And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.*

Here, Malachi gets to one of the reasons that God and therefore Christians hold marriage in such high regard - because it is the foundational building block of society. One man. One woman. For life. That makes a safe, strong, and secure environment in which, should you wish and be able, to bear children that you can nurture in the ways of the Lord.

And the devil knows how important this is. For if you can destroy a marriage, you cause an untold number of problems for the children. Indeed, they are often the biggest casualties in that situation. Often the ones who really pay the price.

But the devil isn't done there. He's not content with destroying marriages, but marriage itself. And we have seen how the Biblical model of marriage has been attacked in recent years in our own country. And he's not finished yet, for I believe the next battleground will be polygamy - that is, being about to legally marry more than one person. There have already been BBC news articles on this. Yet, as Christians we must stand firm. We only need to look to the Bible to see the problems polygamy caused to Jacob, to David, to Solomon and more. Indeed, if God had wanted more than one wife for one man, he would have created more than just Eve for Adam. And of course, the Bible is clear that a man should only marry one wife, and vice versa.

Why should the devil put so much effort into destroying marriage? Well first, because it destroys families. It ruins childhoods. It causes difficult relationships for life.

What is our response? Stick to what the Bible says. The world will do what the world wants to do, and should we have opportunity we absolutely must advocate for the Biblical principles of marriage, but the one thing we absolutely **can** do is to stick to the Bible as Christians.

Now, in verse 16 we read...



### ***Malachi 2:16***

*"For the LORD God of Israel says  
That He hates divorce,  
For it covers one's garment with violence,"  
Says the LORD of hosts.  
"Therefore take heed to your spirit,  
That you do not deal treacherously."*

Why does God hate divorce? Well, first, because of the damage it does to the family. But second, and just as important, it breaks the model that should be pointing to Christ and the church. Where God loves sacrificially, and the church loves submissively. One gives up its will, because the other gives up its whole.

You see, in the Old Testament, when a man married a woman, he took his outer garment and put it over her. This lovely custom was to signify that he was going to protect her. We see this played out in the book of Ruth, and it is a beautiful picture of Christ's relationship with the church. Indeed, the Bible holds women in high regard. Their husbands should be willing to die for them, just as Jesus did for the church. But here the people were losing sight of that. We must not do the same, but rather, get our perspective right. I like how Matthew Henry put it:

The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

### **Matthew Henry**

God does not want this model broken because a strong marriage helps us understand Him more, just as His relationship with the church helps us understand how to act in marriage. And we should note that breaking models cost Moses the opportunity to enter the promised land. God is serious about this.

So, what is the solution? Well, pay attention to all of this verse, for while it lists the problem, it also offers the solution. "Therefore take heed to your spirit". That is, keep your feelings in check. Do not "follow your heart". That's stupid. Your heart, as Jeremiah 17:9 says, is desperately wicked. Following your heart has the capability to get you divorced, to ruin your career, to lose your house, to have your children never talk to you again. Don't do it. Rather, let your heart be led by the Lord.

Of course, divorce is a horrible thing. No-one enjoys it. No-one wins in it. So, we must not be ridiculous and pretend God is OK with it. For even where it is permitted by scripture, it is a truly sad thing. But we must also note that it is divorce that God hates. He doesn't say he hates the divorcee or the divorcer. If someone has sinned, they need to repent. If someone has been wronged, they need to forgive. But knowing that that God hates divorce, let us do all we can to prevent it. Let us do all we can to protect our own marriages, and those of others.

Beyond our salvation, one of the biggest battlegrounds is our relationships and our marriages. But with both, it is our hearts that are the important thing. Not whether we are following our hearts, but whether our hearts are following Jesus.

We read in verse 17:

***Malachi 2:17***

*You have wearied the LORD with your words;  
Yet you say,  
"In what way have we wearied Him?"  
In that you say,  
"Everyone who does evil  
Is good in the sight of the LORD,  
And He delights in them,"  
Or, "Where is the God of justice?"*

First the people were wearied by what God said. Now God is wearied by that they say. Another way of putting it is **if you are not interested in what God says about your life, why should God take interest in what you say to Him about your life?** For God doesn't always hear our prayers. Shocking? No, Biblical. We read in Psalm 66:18

**Psalm 66:18**

If I regard iniquity in my heart,  
The Lord will not hear.

We must get our hearts right with Him. That is the hope we have for our relationships, for our marriages, for our families and for our nation. And we need that hope, for oh how our nation, our world, fits this description in Malachi right now - people are saying evil is good, and that God is happy about it! Right is wrong, and wrong is right. White is black and black is white.

But as we start to close, think about the effect of the early church - turning everything the right way back up.

**Acts 17:6**

*But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."*

You want to see the same happen now? Then do as the early church did back then, and perhaps, Lord willing, He may do the same through you.

## Summary

There is much to ponder from what we read in chapter 2...

### **Summary of chapter two**

- The responsibility of Godly leadership
- Our response to Godly leadership and His Word
- Ungodly relationships
- Broken marriages

We need faithful teaching, faithful listening, and faithful application of God's Word. And with that in mind, I want to leave you with some application questions to note, and to think through over this coming week.

### **Application questions**

- As an unmarried person, who will you go to for counsel about your relationships?
- As a married person, how can you best prepare to counsel your unmarried friends?
- As a church family, how can we protect our marriages?
- As Christians, how can we best model and stand up for what God wants in marriage?

**Let's pray.**