

## Jason Upchurch - Malachi 2:15-16 - Don't Divorce Your Spouse - Part 2

This morning we continue our look at divorce. I mentioned last time that the big takeaway here is simply: don't get divorced. Divorce is the destruction of the union that God makes between a man and a woman in marriage. And since marriage is a God-designed picture of Jesus and the Church, divorce is an undoing of that sacred picture.

Divorce is not a new invention. It's not something unique to our society or our culture. It's been around a long time. And it's always been cruel and evil.

And as I was thinking about this I wondered what the first divorce in the Bible was. And it shocked me actually who the first person in the Bible to divorce was. Do you know? It's Abraham - the father of our faith. **Look at Genesis 16:1-6**

This is Abram and Sarai and Hagar. Hagar was Sarah's slave woman but she was united to Abram as a wife. We might call her a concubine, which is a slave wife. But she was a wife nonetheless. Notice the language here in Genesis. **Read 1-6**

Hagar becomes Abram's wife - that's the exact language used. And they have conjugal union to consummate the marriage. They are in fact one flesh and married.

An interesting side point: the way Moses words this section is almost exactly the same as Adam and Eve when they fell in the Garden of Eden. The woman wants something, she takes the initiative, gives it to her husband, the husband follows the woman, and the results are disaster. How it is written is parallel. They are both accounts of a fall.

In any case, Abram and Hagar are married. **Turn to Gen. 21.** We fast forward in time and Ishmael is older and Isaac - the son of promise - is born to Abraham and Sarah. But notice what happens. **Read 8-14**

So Sarah demands that Hagar and Ishmael are sent away. The word in **Vs. 15** for "send her away" is a term that is used elsewhere in the Bible for divorce. **Deut. 22:19** and **24:1-3** use it to refer to divorce. Divorce is a sending away of one's spouse. And it's actually Sarah who demands the divorce and again Abraham follows his wife's lead.

Interestingly here, God actually comforts Abraham in this by promising to bless Ishmael as well as Isaac. It is not as though Hagar will be utterly destitute as a result of this tragedy.

So all that to say, divorce has been happening since the dawn of time. And it has always been a tragedy and created complications. Later the Ishmaelites will persecute the people of God.

**Back in Malachi 2**, we continue on in our section. Again, the big picture is don't get divorced. And I mentioned that there are 10 reasons that Malachi gives. We saw 4 last time: divorce nullifies worship, it turns praise to weeping, it destroys companionship, and it destroys a covenant. Those were in **Vss. 13-14**. We continue on with the final 6 reasons for not getting a divorce here.

### 5) Because it destroys God's work in joining two people. Read 15

I mentioned this in passing a few times last week, but here we see clearly that what happens in a marriage is that God makes two people into one. This is so absolutely fundamental to marriage that we often take it for granted.

Marriage is fundamentally a spiritual union. When a man and a woman take vows together, there is a uniting that takes place that God does. And he does it for believers and unbelievers.

And it's obvious to most people who aren't even Christians. Most laws reflect the sacred unity of marriage - offering protections and rights and privileges for spouses that no one else on the planet would have. Why? Because your interests are intertwined together as one.

**Turn to Eph. 5** for a moment. This is the classic NT passage on marriage. And while there are many things we could highlight here, what I want to highlight is the oneness of husband and wife as the basis for loving each other. **Read 25-33**

The reason a husband is to love his wife so completely is because she is him. Love your wife like you'd love your own body because loving her is loving yourself. Obviously there are two separate bodies in a literal sense. But in the totality, loving your own spouse is tantamount to loving yourself because you have been made one.

There's no getting ahead of your spouse. There's no "Well, I'm trying to love them but I'm not getting anything back." No, when you love your spouse - regardless of the response - you are automatically getting a return because they are you. You are one.

The reason we nourish and cherish our wives is because they are our own flesh. When you berate your spouse you might as well be berating yourself. When you hate your spouse you might as well be hating yourself. Why? Because you are one.

This is the profound mystery of the Christ and the Church: that it is reflected in every single marriage.

Exactly how are we one?

A. We are one legally. The state, the community and God recognize the unity. That's why two people who just live together in sin isn't marriage and no one recognizes it as such. It's more than just a legal union, but it's not less than a legal union.

And we know that because people will often say that marriage is "just a piece of paper." Then just go get the piece of paper. They get awfully defensive about "just a little piece of paper." Just saying that it's a piece of paper acknowledges what they're doing gives them no legal standing, and recognizes there's more anyway.

B. We are one financially. All of your assets are intertwined. Your money, property, your belongings, your future assets. Everything.

It always surprises me when Christians tell me they have separate bank accounts from their spouse. I still remember listening to Dave Ramsey when a private detective (of all people) called in to ask why a husband and wife had to have the same accounts. And Dave basically said that if husbands and wives had the same bank accounts this guy would probably be out of a job - to which he agreed!

You are not separate individuals financially. You are one. God joined you as one. Husbands need to love their wives with the bank account and wives need to respect their husbands with the bank account.

C. You are one physically. There's a literal sense, of course, that intercourse is a uniting of two bodies. That's why Paul says in **1 Cor. 6** Christians cannot go to prostitutes because it makes them one flesh. Not in the sense that they are married. But in the sense that they are creating a unity that is reserved only for marriage. And when someone commits adultery they are sinning in a very specific and grievous way that Paul says is a sin against their own body because you are forcing a oneness that is not designed to happen. It's like trying to smash two magnets together with the same pole. They're not designed to go together like that. The physical, sexual union is a oneness that is only enjoyed in marriage.

D. You are one relationally. What does that mean? It means that as far as any other person is concerned, you are one entity. You leave your father and mother, and you now a sovereign family unit. Your marriage now trumps all other relationships in your life, even the relationships with your own biological family.

The biggest threat to most marriages is not the outside world. One of the biggest threats to marriages is your immediate family. Your mom or dad or his mom or dad who still think of you as primarily their son or daughter or granddaughter or cousin or whatever. People who still might view you as independent of your spouse and your family. So they will often drive a wedge between you and your spouse. And they might not even mean to or know they're doing it. But they do.

And so your highest priority as a married person is not to your mom or dad or close relatives or your best friend or your kids. It is to your spouse who is one with you - and should be your best friend. And God makes it clear: there is a severing of the familial unity of parent child in marriage. That severing gives way to a relational uniting to a spouse.

If you're married, you need to be 100% united with your spouse against all threats foreign and domestic to your marriage. Your spouse is your highest priority because you have been joined together. You and your spouse are a sovereign family unit and you do what's best for you as a unit to the glory of God in your marriage. The goal isn't to necessarily cut people off - though you might need to. But it is to ensure your marriage thrives no matter what.

Just a note for parents and grandparents: respect the sovereignty of you child's marriage. You should always defer to the husband as the lead in the marriage. And if your connection to your married child takes a massive back seat - so be it. Your goal is to ensure they flourish in their own marriage even if that means you're not involved.

So you're one legally, financially, physically, relationally and all that is done by the work of God. **Turn to Mark 10.**

Here Jesus is asked about divorce. Notice how this goes. **Read 1-4**

So can a man divorce? What did Moses say? The Pharisees say yes! Just write a certificate and you're good to go!

Jesus says: Not so fast. Moses conceded because of hard hearts. But the concession wasn't divorce, but a certificate. The dissolution needs to be as official as the unification. So he commanded there be a certificate. A legal notice that it had happened. But that was never God's design. Here's what God commanded. **Read 5-9**

God commanded on page 2 of the Bible: you leave parents and hold fast - cling - to you spouse. And you're one because God joined you. And if God joined you, don't separate. That was radical for Jesus's day. There were religious leaders who would sign off on divorces for almost any reason. And the disciples knew it so they ask him again later. **Read 10-12**

If someone divorces and remarries they commit adultery. Not fornication - which is sexual sin between unmarried people. No, when they get remarried and consummate the marriage in intimacy, they commit adultery which is a sin against their spouse. There seems to be a sense in which the first marriage is in some way still binding until the next marriage is consummated.

Now, to be clear, I don't believe that it's perpetual adultery. But I think that first act is clearly adultery as Jesus says. Which is why he says no to divorce. Don't do it.

Because God's supernatural work in bringing two people together is what's being destroyed in divorce. And look at one more thing about this **back** in **Mal. 2. Read 15a**

How does God make them spiritually one? Through a work of the Holy Spirit. The oneness bond that is created in marriage is specifically a work of the Spirit who binds two parties together in covenant.

When you become part of the body of Christ, you are baptized into the body of Christ. You are immersed into it spiritually through the work of the Spirit. There's a union that happens through the work of God the Holy Spirit.

And a similar type of spiritual union happens in marriage - all marriage. The Holy Spirit binds us together as one.

Divorce destroys God's work in joining.

6) Divorce destroys God's design for godly children. Read 15-16

One of the tragedies of divorce is that destroys the design of God in having children. Here's God's design:

Get married.

Have kids

Train them in the Lord.

They get married.

Have kids.

Train them in the Lord.

Lather, rinse, repeat til Jesus comes back.

When I was first married I really believed that kids were sort of an optional feature. Like a sunroof or leather seats in a car. It might be a nice add on, but it's expensive and not necessary. But when you look at Scripture, barring providential hindrances, children are central to God's design for marriage.

This is God's kingdom plan to bring the gospel to all nations and all peoples. Yes, the Kingdom expands through evangelism of the lost. But I think the primary way the gospel advances throughout the ages is in the homes of faithful Christians.

It's dads leading their families in worship and teaching their kids what a leader and provider is through example and instruction. It's moms nurturing the next generation and making the house a godly home, being the helpmate to her husband.

It's the Pollyanna vision that we all actually have or should have of marriage growing up. It's the good life, the flourishing life. And that life that God designed he did so with children in mind. Children are not an afterthought of marriage. They're not an add on. Notice, God says the very purpose of marriage, of him making them one. What was he seeking? What's the point of all that? What's the goal? **Read 15**

What God was seeking in the covenant union of a man and woman in marriage was godly offspring. Not children just for the sake of children. He wants **godly** offspring. Children that grow up loving Jesus.

**Deut 6:6-7:** God says that these words (the Law, God's commands) that he is commanding today must be on our heart and we must - must - teach them diligently to our children.

That word "teach" literally means repeat. We must repeat them to our children over and over and over and over. Parents you ever feel like all you do all day is repeat yourself? You give the same command and same teaching and same rebuke over and over and over? Well, good job! That's exactly what God calls you to do. Because that's how you have godly offspring.

**Eph. 6:4:** Fathers do not provoke your children to anger but raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

The discipline of the Lord is what not to do. Son, these are things God hates.

The instruction of the Lord are the things God wants us to do. These are the things God loves.

That's our template: All day we're telling our kids what God does not want them to do and what he does want them to do. And Paul makes it clear that the primary lead in that instruction is the fathers. Obviously moms do this too as they're with the kids most of the day. But fathers bear the main responsibility.

As John Piper once said, if God were to come and knock on the door of the home to investigate how things are going, he'd ask to speak to the man of the house. Men this is your calling direct from God.

And just like you are to gently bathe your wife in the water of the word, so too you are to gently bathe your children in the water of the Word.

What divorce does is to shred that environment. Divorce obviously shreds the ability to even have children. Can't have children with your spouse if you're divorced from him. And any children that come outside of the marriage covenant you're probably not going to be diligent to teach them the way of the Lord anyway.

But one of the tragedies of divorce is that when there are children involved, the clearest picture they will ever get of the gospel is shattered. The husband and wife union is the picture of Christ and the Church and when that is torn apart the picture of the gospel is torn apart.

And what should have been a wholesome environment to learn about the Lord, and watch godly parents, and grow up with instruction in the gospel is gone.

Now, that's not to say all hope is lost. Plenty of people come to faith in Jesus who also grow up in divorced homes. So it's not as though all hope is gone for salvation and sanctification. God is amazingly merciful in toward us even in the midst of tragic circumstances.

But divorce is an attack on the very design of God for kids through marriage.

### 7. Divorce destroys faithfulness. Read 15

Marriage is a pledge of faithfulness. Faithfulness is the ability to rely on someone at all times. You know they are going to do their part while you are doing your part. And you don't always know what's going to happen.

One thing I love about football is the trust between the quarterback and their receivers. The quarterback will often throw a ball to a receiver who hasn't even looked back and might not look back for the ball for 10 more yards. The QB trusts that the receiver will run the correct route. The receiver trusts the QB will throw the ball exactly where it's supposed to be. There's trust that they're both faithful to do their job.

That's how it is in marriage. There's a lot of trust that we each do our job. That we are fulfilling our roles well and getting better and better at our roles.

Divorce is just the opposite of trust. It's faithlessness. Really, the word here means treachery, deceit. NKJV/NASB says treacherous.

And this is basically what happens when divorce happens: treachery and deceit becomes the basis for the relationship. The companion of your youth becomes your greatest enemy. They lie, they deceive, they steal. They are treacherous.

I know a couple right now going through a divorce. It's nasty. Hiding money, secretly hiring attorneys, using the trust of the unsuspecting spouse to exploit them. Making divides between friends, stealing assets. And everyone plays innocent before the court.

Treachery is when you gain the trust of someone only to use it for your advantage against them later.

God says of Israel in **Jer. 3:20**: surely as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.

Israel's idolatry, their rejection of God, was likened to a treacherous wife who stabs her husband in the back to divorce him. She acts treacherously.

You guys have all seen the crazy antics and treachery when people get divorced. None of that is God's design.

### 9. God hates divorce. Read

This is the classic passage where God says "I hate divorce." Now, of all the translations, the ESV does the clumsiest job of translating this verse. It takes them 2 footnotes to even get to the Most major translations render it simply: For I hate divorce says the Lord and him who covers his garment with violence.

But the gist is simply that God hates divorce. He hates it. How can God hate anything? God hates unrighteousness. He hates sin. He hates the ending of the very union that reflects the Covenant of Jesus and the church.

There are very few things in the Bible that God says he hates: lying tongue, haughty eyes, feet that are swift to shed blood. When you are zealous for righteousness, you hate unrighteousness.

God hates divorce. And that should give us pause for anytime someone is even remotely heading down that road. Why would someone do what God hates?

There's a lot of people who try to justify getting a divorce because they have a peace about it or they prayed or a whole bunch of other really spiritually sounding nonsense.

I just stole that Ferrari because I had a peace about it. God wasn't telling me no when I prayed. No, we don't steal Ferraris - or any other car for that matter - because God hates theft.

And we shouldn't get divorced because God hates divorce.

#### 10. Divorce is violence against your spouse. Read 16

How does violence enter in here?

Well, biblically speaking there is only one reason a married person can get remarried. It's when their spouse dies. At that point the covenant is gone and they can enter into a new covenant.

What divorce does is essentially do the same thing as death to your spouse. It's a form of murder toward them because what is desired is their death so that they can move on to the next person. Since they won't die, they are doing something tantamount to murdering them in divorce.

When someone divorces they are doing grave violence to their spouse - in essence murdering them - so they are free to move on. And we certainly see that in their heart because almost always the heart of a divorcing spouse is one of hatred and hardness. And hatred, as Jesus says, is just murder in your heart.

This is actually a shocking claim that Malachi makes. The one who divorces covers himself with violence. But that's what is happening in the act of divorce.

What do we do with all that? Well, the big takeaway is don't get divorced. But notice what Malachi says at the very end. **Read 16**

So what do we do? We guard ourselves in the spirit and don't be treacherous.

Guard yourself from anything that would cause you to hate your spouse. Anything that would jeopardize your marriage. Any sin or any temptation that is leading you from your role as husband or wife, any sin or temptation that is an attack on your spouse.

And don't just guard on the outside - guard your spirit. Guard what's happening in your heart.

And Malachi says don't be faithless. Don't be treacherous. Don't ever act on treachery. Don't ever speak out in treachery. Never use the trust you have in marriage as a weapon against your spouse.

So what Malachi is calling us to is a total dedication, inside and out, to our spouse. Our covenant companion to whom God has joined us together through his Spirit.

One man, one woman, for life, to the glory of God.

**Pray**