

# Malachi 2:10-16 God Hates Divorce

by Carl Carmody

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*God hates divorce because it is a form of treachery, a travesty, and a trauma that can have devastating consequences for individuals and families.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:24, Deuteronomy 22:10, Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:5, John 3:19, 2 Corinthians 6:14

**Topics:** "Marriage And Divorce", "Family Relationships"

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## Description

Carl Carmody preaches on the sobering subject of divorce as addressed in the book of Malachi, highlighting the devastating impact it has on families, individuals, and the church. The sermon delves into the treachery, travesty, and trauma of divorce, emphasizing God's strong disapproval of this act that profanes the sanctity of marriage. Through biblical examples and real-life stories, the sermon underscores the importance of maintaining a right relationship with God to strengthen marriages and families, warning against the dangers of being unequally yoked and the ripple effects of divorce on future generations.

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## Transcript

The book of Malachi is a very sobering one because it deals with subject matter that is very close to our hearts. Chapter 2 verses 10-16 raises the spectre of divorce, but not in the secular world, where we expect it, and where it is glibly accepted as part of life, but in the church, amongst the faithful.

Not only is Malachi raising a very thorny issue in the church, but tragically he is pointing out that it is a major phenomenon within the leadership -- the priests of Israel. These were the men who were supposed to be leading by example, but were treating their marriages as a disposal throwaway commodity. They were divorcing their wives without any concern for the effect on them or their children or the people they were allegedly serving, or indeed how it offended God. Marriage was being trivialised, as it is today.

This is illustrated for us in the humorous story told by Chuck Swindoll in his book "Growing deep in the Christian life". A lady wanted to marry four different men in her lifetime. She saw each one would help her with four things she needed most. First she wanted to marry a banker. Second a movie star and then a clergyman and finally a funeral director.

When asked why she thought this was necessary she answered, "One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready and four to go."

As humorous as that is we can all bear testimony to the devastation of divorce in our families, as well as the enormous upheaval it has caused. Back in chapter one it began with the burden. Malachi was deeply troubled by what he saw happening amongst the priests and the people and their incredible indifference towards spiritual matters. The priests and the people had grown cold in their love of and devotion to God and as a direct result, this spiritual demise had a trickle down effect. First it was their love (attitude towards) of God. This was illustrated in their polluted offerings. Then it was their love of God's word in the beginning of chapter 2. This in turn affects their love for each other and in particular their love for their wives.

Just recently I read an article relating to research done in churches in the USA. George Barna's research discovered the depth of the acceptance of divorce in the Christian church when he came up with the amazing fact that the divorce rate in so called Christian churches in America was fractionally higher than the national average of 1 in 2.

Interestingly the same article carried a most encouraging statistic related by George Gallop, another Christian statistician that couples who pray together four times or more a week, have a divorce rate of 1 in 1052. In terms of the secular world this is a negligible result, but it clearly illustrates the impact of a right relationship with God on our marriages.

Sadly due to this lack of relationship many marriages are being torn apart by selfishness, self-centredness, egos run amuck, lack of responsibility and the notion that obedience to our wedding vows are only optional, instead of binding, except in the most dire of circumstances. Even then God ultimately is seeking healing of the relationship both to Him and each other.

These seven verses can be broken up into three key thoughts as to why God hates divorce. By the way, it is not often that God uses the word hate. It connotes a very strong dislike for divorce because

1. Divorce is treachery, verses 10, 11, 14-16.
2. Divorce is a travesty verses 11-12 and
3. Divorce is a trauma.

Five times God uses the word treachery or similar. The Hebrew word is Bagad and means to act covertly, fraudulently, secretly, deceptively, to cheat or betray to afflict to spoil or to offend. So you can see it is a very strong term.

Recently I was lying in bed with my wife Carolyn and we were chatting about our relationship. I can honestly say that I love my wife more today than ever, because Christian love is a dynamic. As I was chatting I was taken by the thought that Carolyn knew more about me than anyone else, except God of course. As we have grown in our love for each other it has been like a flower coming into full bloom.

Then as we continued our discussion I said to Carolyn that to open up to someone like her was a joy, but at the same time I became very aware that to do so meant making oneself incredibly vulnerable. You see I come from a family that has experienced enormous upheaval. Some 35 years ago my mum and dad split up thus laying down a subliminal pattern that was to have incredible consequences. Mum was married 3 times, then my eldest sister and younger sister married twice.

Once we deal treacherously with our wives/ husbands it has a far higher cost than we can even begin to imagine. To divorce is to profane the sanctity of the marriage institution. The word profane in the original Hebrew further illustrates just how deeply God feels when two Christians, who are described as one flesh in Genesis 2:24 are divorced. The Hebrew word is *chalah*, which means to defile, pollute, and prostitute to make common or to break. Ultimately it means a desecration of something which is holy, which is set apart for God's glory. That is what marriage means to God.

2. However, the treachery of Israel deepens into travesty in verses 11-12 when they add to the sin of divorce the sin of intermarriage to pagan women, who worship what seems to be anything but the true and living God. God describes it as an abomination which has the primary meaning of doing something which is morally disgusting. This takes on incredible significance when Malachi declares that the marriage institution is something that was not only created by God, but also loved by God, verse 11. When divorce happens in the Christian church it can often be traced back to one or the other drifting from their spiritual moorings. Speaking to a pastor recently I asked him how many of the couples he counsels for marriage problems had stopped reading their Bibles and praying? He estimated that 90-95% fitted that category. The depth of that spiritual drift can be clearly seen when the priests and the people saw nothing wrong with divorce and even worse nothing wrong with being unequally yoked. We have become so complacent in our reverence for God's wonderful gift of marriage. It's a bit like the unhappy spouse who said to the marriage counsellor

"When I got married

I was looking for an ideal

Then it became an ordeal

Now I want a new deal"

Unfortunately for far too many Christians this new deal involves marrying non-Christians. It involves being unequally yoked. The New Testament passage on this is 2 Cor 6:11-18. In the context of this passage the unequal yoke picture not only includes marriage, but business, wrong friendships, boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, syncretistic ecumenism etc.

Note however, the stark contrasts that Paul draws on. Firstly Paul draws from Deut 22:10 that an ox and a donkey should not plow together. Why? Because they differ in shape, size and mentality. Thus Paul strings 4 contrasts together to bring home to us the danger and futility of being unequally yoked. What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? One is motivated and lives by the power of God, whilst the other is motivated by the world, the flesh and the devil.

What communion has light with darkness? They are opposites just as righteousness and lawlessness are. Those unsaved prefer darkness to light. John 3:19, And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

And what accord has Christ with Belial? Answer -- none. Satan wants to usurp the authority of God in your life and mine. Often the way he does it is to get you unequally yoked in marriage, business or friendships.

The church that my wife and family and I are in membership is a good church and certainly committed to the Word of God. However, not long after we arrived we met a lady and her daughter. This lady was divorced, but had recently become a Christian. Not long after she met a man who was not a Christian.

Soon she was very much involved with him. He apparently made some profession of faith. Soon after they were married. Problems arose when this man began to seek God for healing for a long-term ailment that he had had, but became somewhat upset when it didn't happen on cue. He then sought healing in all sorts of inappropriate non-Christian ways and places.

Anger and frustration began to surface in this man's life and he stopped going to church. It became apparent that his alleged commitment to Christ was not genuine. His wife continued to attend church intermittently, until she stopped altogether. That same scenario repeats itself again and again in churches all over the nation.

This so often happens when the Lord's people doubt the love of God as Israel did in chapter 4. Once we begin to doubt the Lord it opens the way for all sorts of temptations from the devil.

What accord has a believer with an unbeliever? Once again motivation is important, but also desires come into it as well. If as a believer you are walking with God then your desire will be to please God in all that you do, say and think. For the unbeliever the opposite is true.

What agreement does the temple of God have with idols? The classic illustration of this is Solomon in 1 Kings 11. Verses 1-3 says But King Solomon loved many foreign women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites, from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods. Solomon clung to these in love'.

Then in verse 4 we read the telling results of Solomon's disobedience. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not loyal to the Lord, his God, as was the heart of his father David.

Note the consequences didn't reveal themselves immediately. This has the effect of us thinking that what we have done is acceptable before God or indeed that we have managed to get off scot-free. Also note that when we compromise the Word of God we become the devil's willing agents. Who would have thought this to be true of King Solomon? -- but it was.

Verse 6, Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David.

3. Thirdly we see the awful trauma of divorce in verses 13-16. The action of the priests wrongly, sinfully divorcing their wives rendered their worship unacceptable. Divorce not only separates us from our wives, but it separates us from God and our ability to effectively worship God. However, these priests saw no problem with divorcing their wives, but also saw no problem with the impact it had on their relationship with God.

There is a word of warning for those of us, who are leaders and how we conduct ourselves in our marriages and families. Leaders need to recognise that their congregation is a mirror image of their leadership. If leadership is weak, lacking in spiritual integrity, that is exactly what will be produced in your church. If you have leadership that models godliness, commitment to the Word of God, prayer, evangelism etc it will be clearly reflected in your church.

The priests of Israel were modelling totally unbiblical behaviour in divorcing their innocent wives. Tragically the people picked up their trivial lax attitude and ran with it. The men were betraying the wife of their youth. Betraying the love, commitment and companionship of their wives.

Obviously this raises the whole trauma of divorce and Malachi, and ultimately God is using key words to bring home to any person the enormous cost of divorce. Some years ago I read an article by Jerry B Jenkins in Moody Monthly magazine on the subjects of fidelity and divorce. One of the key points he raised was the issue of the cost of divorce to the individuals involved. One of the clear realities that came through to me was that most men or women do not count the cost.

Jenkins challenged men in particular to count the cost of infidelity and divorce. One of the costs was loss of companionship. Someone we have involved in and them in us over a number of years. Companionship speaks of intimacy.

Billy Rose told a story about a man who, after twenty years of marriage, decided to divorce his wife. In preparing for the financial settlement, he began to rummage through his old cheque books. As he glanced through them, one after another stirred up memories of a long forgotten past. The cheque to the hotel where he and his wife had spent their honeymoon; the cheque for their first car, the cheque for the hospital bill for their first daughter's birth, the cheque for the \$2000 down payment on their first home.

As he continued looking, it all got a bit much for him, so he pushed all the paperwork aside and reached for the phone and rang his wife. He told her that they had invested too much in each other just to throw it all away. So he asked her if they could start afresh. Which they did, I'm assuming.

This man inadvertently began to count the cost of dissolving his marriage, and losing not only his wife but faithful companion. Jenkin's article went on to list a number of other key areas of loss. For example divorce often meant loss of family, job, friends, church family and fellowship, finances, home, stability, health etc.

Verse 15 then brings up another vital concern of the Lord. He wants Christian parents to bring up godly offspring. Divorce can have a devastating impact on our children. Just recently a good friend of mine related to me the sad story of the breakdown of his son's marriage. It has been a particularly acrimonious split on the wife's behalf, but his son has wanted to reconcile.

As I spoke to him he related how the grandchildren had recently visited and when it came time to leave they hugged him and didn't want to let go. It was clear they were very unhappy and feeling very sad and insecure.

One day my middle daughter Micah came home from school and asked me just out of the blue, "Dad are you and Mum going to be divorced?" I responded by saying 'no' and queried why she had asked me. She related that one of her friends at school had experienced her mum and dad break-up. It clearly concerned Micah.

Upon further discussion with my friend he went on to relate how his son's two eldest children had gone off the rails because the familiar secure moorings of family and marriage had been ruptured and they were like a rudder-less boat out on a vast ocean.

Then In verse 16 the trauma of divorce is pictured for us in the words, For the Lord God of Israel says, that He hates divorce. Why? For it covers one's garment with violence. Violence once again is a strong word. The Hebrew word is *chamac*, meaning oppression, wickedness, wrong, cruelty, false injustice, damage.

When I made this observation I inserted a list of things that experience violence as a result of divorce. God took me back first of all to Genesis 2:24, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined

to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Then we read in Matt 19:5, 6 the words of Jesus "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.

To separate two people that have become one flesh requires a severing, a cutting apart. Some time ago I remember coming across two pieces of pine joined together with liquid nails. I vaguely remember trying to separate them, however, it proved tougher than I had expected. Eventually I succeeded but I didn't get them apart without damaging both pieces, such was the effect and quality of the glue. What God joins together takes some getting apart, but the tools of neglect, selfishness, greed, jealousy, competition, cruelty, abuse and arrogance, can do the job, but create enormous violence.

Other forms of violence are the betrayal of trust in a marriage, and in a family. This often goes hand in hand with deep emotional and physical trauma. When my eldest brother's first marriage came to grief, he was deeply emotionally affected, and for weeks suffered physically dropping over a stone, oops, 6 kilos in weight.

It goes without saying that divorce is enacting a huge violence on the church with its associated impact on the church testimony. Divorce also enacts a huge violence on society. Family trees have become so distorted, and serve as a picture of the lives affected by divorce.

So God sounds the warning bell to Israel in verse 16. So take heed to your spirit.... He is sounding the warning bell to the church today, "take heed." We are facing the consequences of diluting our biblical stance on divorce. Like Israel we are glibly accepting what God calls an abomination. Let's not devalue what God calls a "holy institution".

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