

## Malachi #4 - (2: 10-16) - Faithless

### Introduction:-

We are moving into a new section. In the previous one, Mal. 1:6 - 2:9, the Lord addressed the Priests. Beginning at Mal. 2:10, the Lord is speaking directly to His people as a whole. The reference in verse 10 is not to the universal fatherhood of God (i.e. that He is father to all people) nor to the brotherhood of all humanity ("*created*"). Malachi is referring to the fact that the Lord is a faithful Father of His special people, and that they have been created by the Lord as His special covenant community (the Church). This fact that the Lord is now speaking to His special people is further underlined by the mention of "*Judah*" (God's Nation), "*Israel*" (God's covenant Community) and "*Jerusalem*" (His particular dwelling place among His people). **So then, we move from thinking about the ways in which the priest-leaders broke faith with the Lord to consider how the people of God in general have caused offence to the Lord.**

Illustration - Albert Shaw = Dubliners nice to your face.

You will notice that the key word (theme) in this passage, **Mal. 2: 10-16**, is "**FAITHLESS(-ness)**" [x 5 in v. 10,11,14,15,16]. "**FAITHLESS**" comes from a word meaning (literally), '*to cover with a garment*'. And so it came to mean to deal or act in a hidden way = to be deceitful or '*deal treacherously*' [see KJV; NASV]. It means to be unfaithful (not true or genuine), deceitful or to cause offence.

Specific sin = faithlessness; Place = marriages in Israel. **Sin is subtle. Can remain hidden even when it is present. As we look at "**FAITHLESSNESS**" we will note it is tucked away (hidden but very real) within Marriage.**

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**Personalised Proposition (PP)** - What can you learn about faithlessness from Marriage?

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### **1). Faithlessness affects others (No Private/Personal sin) [Intermarriage = Getting Married] v.10-12:-**

The issue (problem) being highlighted is that some of the Lord's people had, "*married the daughter of a foreign god*" (v.11). This had been clearly forbidden in God's Law (Ex. 34: 11-16; Deut. 7: 3,6 in context), but the people had broken God's Law many times (Ps. 106: 34ff). And now the contemporaries of Malachi had been guilty of this same sin, with the officials and chiefs taking a lead! (see Ez. 9: 1-2; 10:2; Neh. 13:23).

We ought to pause so that we can understand what is being forbidden. It is not marriage on racial grounds, but for religious reasons. The emphasis is not on the word "*foreign*" so much as upon "*god*". Some Gentiles had joined the Lord's returned people in Malachi's day - see Ezra 6:21. They had separated themselves from their own gods and joined themselves to the Lord's people. This had been true throughout Israel's history. There were *outsiders* in Abraham's

house who were accepted into the covenant community of the Lord (Gen. 17: 27). Rahab was from Jericho, Ruth from Moab. **Inter-marriage on racial grounds is nowhere forbidden in the Bible. All human beings are of one blood (Acts 17:26). The church is composed of Jew and Gentile who have been brought together into the one community of Christ by His atoning, peacemaking blood (Eph. 2: 11-17). There are no racial barriers among God's people, the Church (Col. 3:11).**

The sin in Israel was religious not racial. By religious we mean it was spiritual in nature. It was because some of the Lord's people married foreigners who still worshipped their false, non-existent gods. For an Israelite to be joined to the worshipper of a false god was not marriage it was to engage in prostitution. God's people were to be holy (Lev. 11:45). Holiness means "separation". To be part of the Lord's holy people, therefore, is to belong to God alone, or to be separated *TO* Him. To be holy also includes the idea of being separate *FROM* sin, and that includes being joined to sinners or those outside the Lord's people (see Ex. 20: 3-6; 34:15-16; cf. Solomon's sin in 1 Kings 11: 1-13).

Returning to our focus in Malachi 2, the sin was intermarriage with those who still belonged to a foreign god. These foreigners hadn't accepted Israel's Lord as the one true God, Father and Creator of all. A key thing to notice is how the Lord understood this sin in Malachi's day. Intermarriage with those of a foreign god was understood by the Lord as being "faithless" (v.11). And we can learn from (v.12) that this sin was against God. All sin, whatever it's particular form, is always an offence committed primarily against the Lord (remember David, Ps. 51:4a?). However, sin is not only against God. When David said, "only" he meant in the first place, the most important sense. Look again at the Lord's view of the sin of intermarriage in Malachi's community, did you notice the reference in (v.10)? Intermarriage was viewed as the Lord's people being, "faithless with one another". **Any sin is not just a private matter between the individual and God. Sin has consequences for others. (Again think a. David - Uriah, Bathsheba; David's child; his on-going family tensions; Israel; or think b. Solomon - divided kingdom).**

This truth is highlighted by the use of the word, 'Profane'. It means to 'desecrate'; 'defile'; 'violate'. The intermarrying Israelites were guilty of **a).** doing violence to God's covenant v.10; and **b).** desecrating or defiling His sanctuary. The **SERIOUSNESS** of sin, this sin, any sin, shouldn't escape us. It meant expulsion, being put outside the Lord's community (v.12) - always a terrible concept in Scripture. Judas went outside and "it was dark" (Jn. 13:30). Outside is the place of absolute despair and hopelessness, the place of grief ("wailing"), separated from the loving presence of God. Such sin had to be dealt with decisively. The remedy for sinful intermarriage in those days was to put away the worshippers of foreign gods, which meant send them back to their pagan families (Ezra 10: 3,19). This was a very radical act in the context of the times. But it underscores how sin must be dealt with in radical ways.

#### **Some Applications:-**

- 1. Marriage is not forbidden on racial grounds**
- 2. Dealing not with situation where 2 unbelievers are married and one is converted, but with a believer in Christ entering into marriage with an unbeliever.**

3. If marrying, Christians only ought to marry another Christian. See (1 Cor. 7:39). There is a principle of separation, which applies to marriage (see 2 Cor. 6:14). I would also say it is better to marry a Christian at a similar level of maturity in Christ. Very practical matters - how can one share at the most fundamental spiritual level with an unbeliever? Not united as one in Christ. No praying, studying, sharing. Maybe also called to compromise your actions.
4. No such thing as entirely private or personal sin. What you do, say or think affects others. Principle = faithlessness in v.10 (harbouring unseen bitterness; pornography, prayerless life ...). Your inner, secret sins will affect your marriage, relationships, the Church.
5. Sin is serious. Must be dealt with, not allowed to remain - even if hidden from others it is never hidden from the Lord. Need for reflection (genuine) and repentance (Gospel).

**II). Faithlessness is an attitude of mind (Decision not emotion of will) [In marriage = Being Married] v.13-16:-**

In (v.10-12) the focus of the sin of being *'faithless'* was with one another in the Church (community of the Lord's people). In (v.13-16) we see the sin of being *'faithless'* with regard to one's spouse, particularly directed towards a man's wife (x 3 - v.14,15,16).

If being faithless towards one's wife is the sin, it is important to notice the life situation in which this occurred. Men were going up to the temple or doing their private daily devotions but the Lord was no longer listening. God was not accepting their offerings of prayer and praise (v.13,14a). There must have been a dryness to their Bible reading. It must have been a boring and burdensome chore to have to get up to go to church again. **Have you ever had similar experiences? Are you just going through the motions in a spiritual sense - praying, reading the Bible, going to church - but it is dull, dry, a dead experience? Well, like the men in Malachi's day, where should you look for a remedy?**

Notice that deadness in worship was the result of deceitfulness (*'faithless'*) in how they treated their wife (v.14). The spiritual principle at work here has been expressed well by John Benton, "the frequent cause of spiritual barrenness in a person is a thought life which violates his or her marriage." [p.75; *'Losing Touch with the Living God'*]. **Is this true of you? Are you, or have you been experiencing spiritual coldness? Might it be due to not only how you are treating your spouse, but your thought life in regard to your spouse?**

Just look at the beautiful description (3-fold) of a wife here [how would you define a husband in a similar way?]. She is,

- "the wife of your youth" (v.14,15b) --> emphasises the long-term aspect of marriage. Here a man is looking back to his wedding day and remembering the beauty of his bride. But she has changed, grown older. She bears the marks of their marriage, the difficult

times as well the joyful and good. They've been through a lot together. But she is his wife. She is his wife for life; *"until death do us part"*. The ceremony of a true marriage points to all the various experiences and seasons of a marriage - sickness and health, richer and poorer times, life and death. The one thing that will never change is that she is *"the wife of your youth"*. What a beautiful phrase - illustration - Gene --> Gini Baillie.

- "companion" (v.14 - only occurrence = partner; consort). Emphasises that marriage is for companionship, not just procreation. In the original perfect Creation it was said everything was very good. But then in (Gen. 2:18), it is recorded that something was *'not good'* = that the Man was alone. Woman was created out of his side to be his companion, to complement him, to complete him. A wife is one's companion, to share everything with. That includes one's struggle with sin, one's inner conflicts.
- "by covenant" (v.14) - a husband and wife are bound together by oath (vow, promise). We express the extent to which a man is trustworthy and reliable by saying in English, *'your word is your bond'*. Making a vow and keeping that promise is the very basis upon which the stability of our society, our relationships are built. A man is bound to his wife in the sight of God, whether that man acknowledges it or not. *"This is a very high view of marriage, and in fact the most positive statement about marriage in the Old Testament"* [Peter Adam; *'Malachi'*; p.88].

We noted earlier that who you marry is an incredibly serious matter in the eyes of the Lord. Equally so, we see that how you treat the wife of your youth, indeed what your thought life is like, is an incredibly important and serious matter in God's estimation. For we see that,

- The Lord is a *WITNESS* (v.14) to your marriage. You may think you can fantasize about other women/men without consequence, or like the prodigal son you may wish your spouse were dead. But God sees every thought of your mind, every faithless desire of your heart. This is serious.
- The Lord is *SEEKING* (v.15) *"godly offspring"* in your marriage [**note this is another fundamental aspect of marriage**]. The implication is that were sin, even apparently hidden sin tucked away in the deepest recesses of a man's mind and heart, is present it will have consequences for the next generation. Inner sin doesn't only affect your spiritual life but has consequences for your children's spiritual welfare.
- The Lord *HATES* (v.16) divorce (literally, *"a putting away"*) [see NASV as opposed to NIV or ESV]. The seriousness of divorce is seen in that it equates to violence {to the Lord, one's wife and one's self}. [**note Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:1ff**].

**Some Applications:-** Based on the Lord's clear command, "*So GUARD yourselves in your spirit*" (v.15b, 16b).

1. Faithlessness of thoughts towards your wife in Marriage affects one's marriage (as well as other people too) ('*spirit*') - inner, "hidden" sin affects one's life and relationships - "*the frequent cause of spiritual barrenness in a person is a thought life which violates his or her marriage.*" [Benton; p.75; '*Losing Touch with the Living God*'].

2. Love in Marriage is not about feelings, it is a matter of the mind (decision of the will). You choose to love or not love. You are responsible for your choices and actions and their consequences.

3. You are given a clear command to '*guard*' = watch; take heed; be very careful (v.15,16).

**Conclusion:-**

Challenge for on-going influence of the Gospel (e.g. repentance) in one's life. Must reach to out inner most thoughts, heart attitudes, choice of life marriage partner and day-to-day living out of call to holiness in one's marriage.