

Faithful  
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Malachi 2:10-16

Promises, promises! When some of us were little kids (and before some of you can remember) Dionne Warwick recorded a song by that title written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David. It was from the Broadway play by the same title. The musical was based on a 1960 movie called “The Apartment.” The plot of both the movie and the play was simple: A young executive tries to climb the corporate ladder by loaning out his apartment to his bosses for them to conduct affairs. The whole play is about adultery. There’s the irony of the title: “Promises, promises.”

The lyrics of the theme read:

*Promises, promises  
I'm all through with promises, promises now  
I don't know how I got the nerve to walk out  
If I shout, remember I feel free  
Now I can look at myself and be proud  
I'm laughing out loud*

*Oh, promises, promises  
This is where those promises, promises end  
I don't pretend that what was wrong can be right  
Every night I sleep now, no more lies  
Things that I promised myself fell apart  
But I found my heart*

- The show and the song should have been titled: BROKEN PROMISES.
- That’s what today’s lesson in Malachi is all about.
- The idea here is stronger than “promises.” The word is COVENANT.
- **How is a COVENANT different than a promise?**
- **What are examples of covenants in every day life?**
- Marriages, friendships, or business partnerships often end with one failing to honor the commitment to the other. **Why do people break their covenants?**

- In this morning's text, God through the prophet Malachi takes the people of Israel to task for breaking their covenant with Him and with others.

Here's the BIG IDEA: Rejection of God's covenants and the covenants he ordained WILL have terrible consequences. You can't live a "faithless" life and expect God to bless it.

Let's go through this text beginning in verse ten and explore it's meaning to us today.

Malachi 2:10–17 (NLT)

A Call to Faithfulness

10 Are we not all children of the same Father? Are we not all created by the same God? Then why do we betray each other, violating the covenant of our ancestors?

11 Judah has been unfaithful, and a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. The men of Judah have defiled the Lord's beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols.

- **Verse ten: What does Malachi remind the people about their relationship with God?**
- **How did this apply specifically to Israel? How does it apply to us today?**
- **Last part of verse ten: What were the people doing wrong?**
- Your translation may say: being "faithless" or "dealing treacherously" with one another.
- **Anyone have the NIV translation? How does it render verse 10?**
- People acted "*deceitfully*". *It is the opposite of acting with integrity or with dependability.*"
- In that day (and in this day): Covenants no longer meant anything to people, even the people of God. There was a general trend of violating promises made to God and to other people just because that promise didn't suit you anymore.
- **Why would people not keeping promises with each other be a big deal to God?**

John Piper gives an excellent overview of this problem (emphasis mine):

*“Malachi makes clear for us two alternative ways for people to try to live in a community.*

*One way is what you might call covenantal order—it's what the OT means by shalom. All relationships are made peaceful and pure by the fulfillment of covenants and promises and oaths and contracts and commitments. Children to parents, and parents to children. Husbands to wives and wives to husbands. Employer to employee and employee to employer. Citizen to state and state to citizen. The peace and prosperity and joy—the shalom—of the community is held together by the deep strong spirit of covenant-keeping that pervades the community. The very fabric of the community is the trustworthiness of its people. Do they keep their commitments?*

*The other way for people to try to live together in community is the opposite of covenantal order; it's what you might call the disorder of self-indulgence. In this community the spirit of commitment-making and commitment-keeping has been replaced by a spirit of emotional and physical impulse. The moral fabric of faithfulness to covenants and promises and contracts is unraveled and what's left are the individual strands of private gratification.”*  
<http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/let-none-be-faithless-to-the-wife-of-his-youth>

- Which way do you and I live? Do we keep our commitments to others? Or do we bail on them whenever our feelings change? **How should a follower of Christ live in this area? Why?**
- This “unfaithfulness” or breaking of covenants went deeper than general relationships.
- **Verse eleven: What “detestable thing” were the men in Judah (Israel) doing?**
- **Why was this a major problem for them?**

Deuteronomy 7:3–4 (ESV) (Refers to unbelieving people overtaken by the Israelites)

3 You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

- **How does verse eleven apply to a Christian today?**
- **Why is marrying an unbeliever a big deal?**
- Many quote Paul in 2 Corinthians six. A verse that goes beyond marriage to any relationship.

2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

- This was serious enough that it put a barrier between them and God.

12 May the Lord cut off from the nation of Israel\* every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the Lord of Heaven's Armies.

13 Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure.

- Does marrying an unbeliever ALWAYS result in a ruptured relationship with God? No.
- **What if I become a believer and my spouse isn't? Do I divorce them?**

Quoting John Piper again:

*"Don't hear more than the text is saying here.*

1. *It is not saying that it's impossible in every case for an unbelieving spouse to be converted. It is not impossible. We have seen it happen and 1 Peter 3 says that we should live so as to make it happen.*
2. *It is not saying that if you are married to an unbeliever, you should get out. Five hundred years later some believers in Corinth drew that conclusion and Paul wrote them to tell them precisely not to pull out (1 Corinthians 7:12–13).*

*Rather what this text is saying to us clearly this morning is this: if the choice of marriage partner still lies before you, settle it in your mind right now never to marry anyone that does not love the Lord Jesus with all his or her heart."*

- In our class most of us would be dealing with this issue in guiding our grown children.

- Marrying an “unbeliever” is dangerous enough. The problem in Malachi’s day was worse.
- Sadly, it’s a story as old as time. A middle aged man decides he wants a new, younger, more exciting wife so he dumps his first wife. In this case Jewish men were drawn to younger, foreign women. **What other covenant were they breaking?**

14 You cry out, “Why doesn’t the Lord accept my worship?” I’ll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows.

15 Didn’t the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his.\* And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. 16 “For I hate divorce!”\* says the Lord, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,\*” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.”

- There is not enough time in a Sunday School lesson to adequately unpack the issue of divorce and remarriage. Sadly, in some circumstances divorce is appropriate: adultery (Matt. 5:32) and abandonment (1 Cor. 7:14). But verse sixteen makes it clear. God HATES divorce.
- I want to focus quickly on something important in verse fourteen.
- When someone gets married there must be witnesses to the ceremony. **If it’s marriage as ordained by God who does verse fourteen say is the REAL witness?**
- When you destroy a marriage God witnessed, you destroy not only a covenant between the spouses with each other, but both in covenant with God. If at all possible, we need to avoid divorce.
- That being said. Divorce is a reality for many and we need to show love and grace.
- **How would Jesus want us to treat those who have been through divorce?**

## So, What's the Takeaway?

- I could sum it up pretty simply and we could be done:
  - Don't back out on your commitments
  - Don't marry an unbeliever
  - Don't divorce your covenant spouse
- But there's a larger point we need to leave with this morning.
- We can't live "unfaithful" lives as followers of Christ and expect God to bless us.
- Our God is a God of covenants. He keeps His promises to us, His people. We need to follow His example in keeping our covenants to Him and to others.