

The Lord's View on Divorce

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[0:00] Welcome to the website edition of our Wednesday night Bible study.

! It's good to be able to be here, miss everybody, and to look forward to the time when we can! actually be back together to do our study. But I'm grateful for this opportunity and this technique that we have now that enables us to go into every home that wants to do this.

And so we want to thank Dan for setting this up and making it possible for us. So, good to see you. Good to see you in such that I can't see you. All right. We've been in the book of Malachi, as you remember. Some of you may not have been in our study, but we have been traveling through Malachi's prophecy as God deals with the nation of Israel, his covenant nation, and deals with the fact that they have really turned against him and removed themselves from his blessings. And they, in turn, have been asking the question, how have we done that?

And so, God seems to be laying out his case before them as to what their sin actually is, and in light of the fact that they seem to be ignorant of the fact that they have done those things. We had been looking most recently in chapter 2, and chapter 2 then, God has been dealing with the sins of the sins of the priesthood and the defilement of sacrifices and those type things that that he brings against them that they have been doing in their office as priest in offering the sin offerings of the nation of Israel. But then after that, then, and God gives the consequential dealings about their sin, then we come to chapter 2 in the middle of the chapter, where God begins to deal with the men of the nation. And in particular, the sin of setting their wives aside in divorce for the purpose of marrying heathen women. And so, Malachi begins to deal with that, and very sternly.

And in this, we get a good look at the heart and mind of God as it deals with the marriage relationship. That relationship that's very precious, very special, one that God himself has instituted between man and woman. And so, as Malachi begins looking closely at their practice of divorcing their wives, he says to them that every instance of that practice was twofold. It was a violation against the relationship they had with their brothers or their fellow Jews. Being a part of the covenant nation, they were all interrelated, if you will, as Jews. And thus, when they sinned against God, they sinned against their fellow brothers, their fellow Jews. And so, he condemns that sin because of that for one thing. And then, of course, also, it was an offense against God. A desecration of the covenant that God had made with their forefathers in bringing them into that special relationship with him. So, the consequence of that sin was that they and their descendants as well would be cut off from the covenant nation. But not only that, but anyone, specifically in the priesthood, that would offer a sin of atonement for them, for their sins, would also be cut off from the nation. So, we begin to see the seriousness of the matter here, but mostly, we see the tremendous heart of God as he views and sees the marriage relationship that he has established between a man and a woman. Now, realize, sin never stands alone. Sin always leads to further sin. And that happens here in Malachi's dealings with the men on behalf in the matter of their divorce of their wives and marriage to heathen wives or heathen women. In this case, they had their sin was in, of course, the divorce, but against their wives in so much that they were creating a heart of sorrow, of grief, heartbreak, brokenness within their wives. God literally says, as far as their wives were concerned, that they have dealt treacherously against their wives. Now, in an attempt to justify what they have done, remember, they used Abraham as their example. Remember what happened with Abraham back when God had established with him the promise of making him a mighty nation. That he knew that would require that a son had to be born. In his old age, in his wife's older age, that had not occurred. They did not have a son. She had not given birth. And so, under the suggestion of his wife, Sarai, Abraham went into Sarai's hand-made. And there he gave to her a son. And that son was born. They named him Ishmael.

[5:54] And so, that was Abraham's attempt, if you will, to bring forth that promise of God, as if God needed any help. To bring forth that promise of God, to bring that son, that would be the fulfillment, if you will, of that part of the covenant that would bring forth that mighty nation. Of course, we know that was not God's design. That was not God's desire. And that son born to Hagar would not be the son of the promise. But nonetheless, the people in Malachi's day, the men were using that example as justification for their setting aside their wives, their Jewish wives, in order to marry heathen women.

But Malachi was quick to point out the difference. With Abraham, his desire was to bring forth that spiritual seed that would be the son through which God would bring forth the promise. In essence, the one that would come as Messiah. But as far as the men in Malachi's day, their problem was that their desire was not a spiritual desire. Their desire was simply a human passion that needed to be fulfilled because of what they had seen in the women of the day and of the land. And so, there was a stark difference there. Now, that's not to say again that Abraham's activity there and action against going into Hagar was blessed by God. It wasn't. That was against God's design, as we said. So, in essence itself, that was sin.

But the motivation behind that is what God deals with here. So, Malachi said there is then consequences to be paid for that. So, that brings us to where we left off in our last study here together.

And that was in verse number 16 of chapter 2. And here's where Malachi gives us a real indication of what the heart and mind of God is concerning the matter of divorce. So, in verse 16 of chapter 2, scripture says, For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away, for one covereth violence with his garment, says the Lord of hosts. So, the Lord, the God of Israel, says he hates putting away. He hates this idea of sending the wife away in divorce. Now, the word hateth there is just as we think it to be. Literally, it expresses an emotional attitude toward a person or a thing which are opposed, detested, and despised in which one has no desire then to have contact or relationship with. So, you see the strength of the word there as it pertains to God's attitude toward this thing of divorce. Now, there are a number of things in scripture that speak of God's hatred. In Proverbs chapter 6, verses 16 through 19, the scripture says, These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him, a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren. Now, in Deuteronomy chapter 16, verse 22, we see God's hatred of idolatry. He says in that passage, Neither shalt thou set thee up any image which the Lord thy God hateth. And then, in Isaiah 61, verse 8, we see that he hates robbery with burnt offerings. For I, the Lord, love judgment. I hate robbery for burnt offering. And I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Deuteronomy chapter 12, verse 31, of course, he says, Thou shalt not do, thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God. For every abomination to the Lord which he hateth have they done unto their gods, for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. And then, Amos chapter 5, verse 21, God speaks in there of the idea that he hates the idea of offerings being brought from those that have a sinful life.

[10:49] He says in that passage, I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will not smell your solemn assemblies. And that do, of course, to the sinfulness of their lives as the people of God. It's amazing to me how in their sinfulness, they still attempted to worship God because they didn't want to totally abandon that to give themselves the idea that they have abandoned God. But yet, they were blinded to the idea of what their sin actually was, and the truth of their sin. So that's why God has to bring that to life for them in order for them to be able to reconcile that with God.

Now, wherefore, God desires that a marriage be kept sacred. In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 19, and let's look at that just a minute. Matthew, chapter 19, and verse 3, the Lord Jesus deals with this. There are some that like to jump at the idea that some of these passages that we see here are simply Old Testament passages, and that under the day of grace, things seem to be different. And that's true to some degree. But in Matthew, chapter 19, the Lord Jesus Himself deals with this matter and makes it quite clear and quite plain to us what the heart and mind of God is.

So in verse 3 of Matthew, chapter 19, the Bible says, The Pharisees came also unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have you not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female? And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall

cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore, they are no more twain but one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let no man then put asunder. And they said unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away? And he saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives. But from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except that be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery. So that's pretty plain and simple, pretty straightforward as to what God's heart and mind is about the matter.

I think it's interesting here that Jesus, or the writer here, puts forward the idea that God had said, it's the one, you know, when Jesus said, Have you not read that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female? Given all of this, all of the origination of all of this, to the one who made us, and that of course is God. So it's not man's rules, not man's thoughts, but it literally is the heart and mind of God at work here. Now, there's a principle in Deuteronomy chapter 1, or chapter 24 rather, that deals with the matter too, that sometimes brings confusion and misinterpretation to a number of people.

[14 : 19] There's two laws in that passage concerning the relationship of a man to his wife. And the first part of that refers to the matter of divorce. And then the second is the idea of the remarriage, in particular, of the woman. Now, in that passage, God does not stipulate the right here. He doesn't establish a right for a person to be, for a man to put away his wife. Because in that passage, there's a statement that says, let a man, if the husband finds displeasure, if you will, in the wife, then let him write her a letter of divorcement. But then the idea is then that she is not to be, or if she then is remarried, and then that second husband puts her away, then she, that he, that he, the first husband, is not allowed to put her away. And there's reasons for that.

But the particular idea here is that, again, that idea of the man putting away his wife, if he finds that she's not pleasurable to him anymore, is simply based on tradition. And Moses allowed that because of the hardness of their heart. Because God, again, was, you know, when he stipulated the idea of a man and woman coming together in that marriage relationship, they then become one flesh.

And God said, what he has brought together, let no man put asunder. So we've got to be careful with some of the things we see, even in the scripture. Now, the idea here of the wife remarrying after she's been divorced, and then if he, the second husband divorces her, then she is, in essence, considered ceremoniously defiled. And that's the prohibition then of the first husband then remarrying her again. The real, the real basis of all of this lies in what the marriage relationship relationship is. It's unlike any other relationship that we find in human existence. In that relationship, remember, God said, let a man and a wife come together. And when they come together in that marriage relationship, the two become then one flesh. A one flesh relationship that we find.

And divorce then supposedly separates that marriage contract. But what does it do to the one flesh relationship? How do you break a one flesh relationship other than by death? And I think that's the picture that we see here. Now, even to show the extent of the value, if you will, or how the marriage relationship is cherished by the Lord, even in the law of God to the nation of Israel, it says that a man, when he marries, when he takes a wife, he is not to fulfill any military obligation. He is not to be engaged in business for an entire year. And the purpose there being so that he and his wife can then be together and establish that marriage relationship. And begin a family if they so desire to do so at that point. So it's a cherished idea here. Can you imagine a one year honeymoon, all right, that you have with your new bride, with your new wife, and that being, that being at the direction of the Word of God, the law of God, if, if you will. Now,

Moses was unable to entirely abolish that traditional custom. And he says again in Matthew chapter 19, verse 8, Jesus said it was because of the hardness of your heart that Moses allowed that. He just was not able to corral that in the life of his people here. Now, the second reason, of course, for condemning the divorce is given in those words in verse 16, for one covereth violence with his garment. The idea there, it could be rendered, he who puts away his wife covers his garment with sin, or sin covers his garment. And the idea is that wickedness will adhere irremovably to a man like that. And the picture that we have here is that it was thought that the outward dress of a man reflects the inward nature, or his inward life. In other words, if he dresses appropriately, if he dresses nicely, then that's a picture of a good inward nature. But if you have sin sticking to your garments, that's the picture of a sinful, ungodly heart. And that's what Malachi is saying takes place

with those that have that desire and that renders that activity of going and divorcing his wife, in particular for the idea of marrying a pagan or a heathen wife.

[19 : 59] Now, let me address something else here. We see, you know, in this generation, that's a hard thing for us to reconcile. Simply because divorce is so, so rampant now in our generation, acceptable by so many as now the norm.

But we always have to remember, always, it was in the heart and mind of God that one man and one woman come together in that marriage relationship forever or until one dies. Now, what about those that, and there are numerous people within the church, godly people, God's people, that have for some reason, whatever the circumstance may be, have had their lives involved in the matter of divorce. So what do we do about that?

In light of what the scripture says, how do we deal with that? What do we do with that? Well, the first thing we have to realize, again, is we need to see what God says about that.

How does he feel about that? Again, Malachi says, God hates divorce. So, we accept that as reality. So, if our life has been invaded, if you will, by this matter of divorce, and I realize many times, it's not the quote-unquote fault, per se, of one spouse or the other.

But still, if it's taking place in our life, we've got to recognize that's not what God wanted. So, we need to deal with God about that. And I think one of the greatest things we can do is get alone with God and say, God, you know what's happened in my life. You know that divorce has taken place. That with my former spouse, there were just things that transpired that brought that to pass.

[22 : 04] And so, God, I want to seek your forgiveness in that. I know through the blood of Christ and God's grace that he's taken care of that for me. But I want to confess that before you.

And then, secondly, after we've done that, and it's good, it's good to do that together. If you've been remarried, it's good to do that together with your second spouse here.

And just get that together so your heart and your mind can be cleared about that if you've not done that already. And then, second, remember and realize that through the grace of God that comes through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, that then we can move along and move ahead in our lives together, in our lives together with God, to serve God, to seek out his will for our lives as a husband and wife and satisfy whatever that will may be. And do that with joy and no regret and no guilt.

That's the blessing and goodness that we find about the righteousness of God that comes through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And that is freedom from not only the penalty, but freedom from the guilt of that sin, whatever the sin may be, divorce included.

And so I want to encourage you to realize that God's grace touches that part of your life. And so let it do that and then be able to move on with God to do the things that God's instructed you to do.

[23 : 37] I hope if you've not already done that, you can find some joy and goodness and grace in the midst of that. So realize again that God wants us to love him because he loves us.

And he wants us to know that he wants to utilize our lives together for his kingdom purposes and that he can do that.

I'm glad that now that we've been saved by the grace of God, God calls us or God sees us as his saints, as his sons, if you will. And we can then just move forward and move along with what he's got in store for us.

Now, that takes care of chapter 2. And next time we get together, we'll look at chapter 3. And in that, we see that they have wearied the Lord and they ask again, How have we wearied you? And he says that everyone does evil in the sight of good and he delights in them. That's what they're saying. Or, in essence, where is the judgment of God?

[24 : 45] Living like they want to live, not seeing the judgment of God and asking the question, Okay, if that's the case, then where is the judgment of God? We'll look at that next time.

Let's pray together, if you will. Father, we thank you today for your loving kindness. Thank you for your grace and your goodness to us. Lord, I'm so thankful for your word. Father, not only does it give us a picture of your heart and your mind about the things of life and the things in our lives, but Lord, also you give us indication here of how you have dealt with those things that are sin through the blood of your Son.

And so, Father, I pray that as we consider this, that we've seen today, that you will indeed speak to every heart, whatever the need may be, wherever they may be in this matter of divorce and remarriage, and that, Father, you will give them that assurance that you love them, that that sin has

been cleansed by the blood of Christ, and enable them to move forward in your grace and your goodness to work for you and to serve you.
And we'll thank you for it in Jesus' name. For his sake we do pray. Amen. Amen.