

# A Call to be Faithful (Malachi 2:10-3:5 & Hebrews 12:1-13) 04-Nov-18 <sup>1</sup>

So this morning [evening] we're continuing our series on the OT book of Malachi (the last book of OT)

So it would be good to have your Bibles turned to Malachi chapter 2 beginning at verse 10 and we're going through to chapter 3 verse 5

There's the usual sermon outline, in your bulletin, if you'd like to jot down notes.

Just a warning too - that some of the topics today might trigger past and current hurts - so if you need to talk something through with me later - please do.

Let me pray for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

## **Intro/Covenant**

The topic this morning [evening] is "A Call to be Faithful"

So what is being faithful?

[PowerPoint 1a-faithful]

Being loyal or devoted to a person (or cause)

What about unfaithful?

[PowerPoint 1b-unfaithful]

Being disloyal, not devoted to a person or cause

How do we know whether we are supposed to be faithful to someone?

For that we need to have a relationship

In our society today we define a whole heap of relationships by contracts.

These contracts could be formal or informal - and they help to specify what happens when there is a failure in these relationships.

Say for example, a patient fails to keep an appointment at the doctor's, the doctor is not obligated to call the house and inquire, "Where were you? Why didn't you show up?" The Doctor just goes on with their next patient and has the secretary make a note of the patient who didn't keep their appointment. The patient may find it harder next time to see the doctor - because the patient broke an informal contract.

God did not establish a contract with His people. He created a **covenant**.

A biblical definition of a covenant is:

[PowerPoint 2-Covenant]

An agreement which brings about a relationship of commitment between God and his people. The Jewish faith is based on the biblical covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David.

There is a difference between a contract and God's covenant. Contracts are broken when one of the parties fails to keep their promise - whereas even if God's people break their promise - God still honours His promise.

For example - Isaiah 49:15=16a God says this:

[PowerPoint 2b=covenant example]

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast  
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?

Though she may forget,

I will not forget you!

<sup>16</sup> See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;

In the Bible a covenant is more like the ties of a "good" parent to a child than it is a doctor's appointment. If a child fails to show up for dinner, a "good" parent's obligation, unlike the doctor's, isn't cancelled. The parent finds out where the child is and makes sure the child is okay. One member's failure does not destroy the relationship.

In Genesis 12 God made such a covenant with the OT character, Abraham - He called Abraham out of his hometown and promised Him 3 things: Many descendants, a new land and blessings. And God also promised that sometime in the future - someone from Abraham's family-line would be a blessing to the whole world (Romans 4:13-17; Galatians 3:29) - namely Jesus!

In Genesis 15 - God reiterates His covenant with Abraham. Only this time God graciously reassures His promise with a visual sign of His presence. He asks Abraham to find and kill a heifer, a ram, a goat, a dove, and a pigeon. Then, Abraham was to cut them in half (except the birds) and lay the pieces in two rows, leaving a path through the center ([Genesis 15:9-10](#)).

In ancient Near Eastern royal land grant treaties, this type of ritual was done to "seal" the promises made. Through this blood covenant, God was confirming the three promises He had made to Abraham. A blood covenant communicated a self-curse oath. The two parties involved would walk the path between the slaughtered animals as if saying, "May this be done to me if I do not keep my oath."- a bit like saying "may God strike me dead if I don't keep my promise"

However, there was an important difference in the blood oath that God made with Abraham in [Genesis 15](#). When the evening came, God appeared in the form of a "smoking fire pot and flaming torch [that] passed between the pieces of animals" ([Genesis 15:17](#)). But Abraham had fallen "into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him" (verse 12). Thus, God alone passed through the pieces of dead animals, and the covenant was sealed by God alone. Nothing depended on Abraham. Everything depended on God, who promised to be faithful to His covenant. "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater than Him to swear by, so He swore by himself" ([Hebrews 6:13-18](#)). Abraham and his descendants could trust, count on, and believe in everything God promised

### **Breaking Covenant through unfaithfulness (Malachi 2:10-17)**

The covenant God made with His people continued through each generation

And it required the people to be faithful to God

Even though ultimately God will always keep His promises

So in Exodus 19:5 - in the time of Moses as God gives His 10 commandments -

God said this to His people

[PowerPoint 3a-Ex 19:5]

<sup>5</sup> Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

So God is expecting **obedience** from His people

As we come to Malachi's time in Malachi chapter 2 verse 10

We see **problem #1**

### [PowerPoint 3b-#1]

The people have broken this covenant that God made with Abraham  
 Because they have been unfaithful to each other  
 And God reasons in v10 - that He is their Heavenly Father and their Creator -  
 they would not exist without Him - He has ownership of them  
 So why would they be unfaithful? That's His argument.

But they have been unfaithful...

God's commandments state - no telling lies, no cheating - when we tell lies and  
 cheat - we are being unfaithful to one another

God's commandments state - that we should worship God - when we don't  
 worship God properly -or not at all - we are unfaithful to God

**Challenge** - What areas of our lives are we being unfaithful to God and to each  
 other? What do we need to confess and repent of?

(pause)

Then in verses 11 and 12 - Malachi reports **problem #2**

### [PowerPoint 3c-#2]

The specific problem is that the people of the tribe of Judah have been  
 unfaithful - they've intermarried women who worship foreign gods

Why is that a problem?

Because by marrying women who worship foreign gods - the men were  
 influenced by their wives religion and worship practices and they abandoned the  
 worship of the one true God

King Solomon is a good example of this - he was led away from God by marrying many foreign wives who worshipped all different gods

Examples today - would be a Christian marrying a non-Christian, or marrying an Atheist, or Buddhist, or Hindu, or Muslim

A Christian in such a relationship could be in danger of being led away from their faith in Jesus because they try to please their non-believing partner ahead of God. Such a person needs to have a very strong faith

What would happen if a Christian wife is about to go to church with the children and the non-believing husband says - "hey kids - do you want to go to church with Mummy - or to Maccas for pancakes" - there's going to be difficulties.

The reason against a foreign wife or husband is not a racial thing - it's a faith and heart thing - the foreign wife's heart is not towards God - but towards other gods

There are examples in the OT of foreign women marrying Jewish men

Like Ruth (a woman of Moab) who married Boaz. But Ruth - became a believer in the God of the Jews

There is also the possibility that a believing husband or wife might lead their non-believing spouse to the Lord though too. For this to happen the believing spouse has to be totally faithful and devoted to the Lord.

**Challenge** - if our marriage is with an unbeliever - are we setting a Christian example which will lead them to Jesus - or are we being pulled away from our time with Jesus?

(pause)

**Problem #3** is in verses 13 and 14

[PowerPoint 3d #3]

The people are crying crocodile tears because God does not accept their sacrifices with pleasure because they are being unfaithful in their marriages  
How do they know that God doesn't accept their sacrifices - their conscience tells them so - because they know in their heart they are being unfaithful in their marriage?

At this point - it's worth explaining why faithfulness in marriage is important to God

To do that we need to go back to the beginning of the Bible

When God created the first man - Adam - God said to Him in Genesis 2:18

"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

So God gave Adam a suitable helper - a woman - Eve.

God didn't give Adam another man or a dog to help '

But a woman as a suitable helper

Men and woman are meant to work together and be fruitful for God

And God designed that it suited His purposes better for a man and a woman to marry and be together forever - not a man and a man - or a woman and a woman

And according to God - when they did get married

God said in Genesis 2:24

“a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”

The original Hebrew word for “united” here literally means “stuck together” - like being super-glued - they’re not meant to come unstuck

Marriage was meant to be a life-long commitment

And that’s the point Malachi is making in verses 15 and 16

God has 2 requirements for marriage in verse 15

That the marriage produce Godly children

And that the marriage be faithful

Because as v16 - says - in other translations

God hates divorce

Why?

- Because it breaks the marriage vow made before God
- It causes violence (harm) to the wife and any children from the marriage
- It destroys what God loves and designed for human beings to enjoy
- Marriage is a picture of the faithful relationship between God and his people
- Ultimately marriage is a picture of the sacrificial Love marriage between Jesus (the bridegroom) and His church - believers (His bride)

Therefore divorce is never commanded by God

It is allowed because of sinful or hard hearts - but not commanded

Ultimately God is for love - in fact God IS Love!

God is also for repentance and forgiveness and reconciliation

So even a marriage where there has been unfaithfulness may be able to be reconciled with repentance and recommitment and love

However there are Biblical grounds for divorce - it's not the unforgiveable sin that some might suggest.

Grounds for divorce - are unfaithfulness and sexual immorality (Matthew 19) and desertion of a believer by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7)

We can also include abuse as a grounds for divorce as this is also unfaithfulness. Physical, sexual or emotional abuse. No-one should have to accept that in a marriage. And note: unfaithfulness and abuse can occur with: drug use, alcohol, pornography and gambling

The Bible says nothing about the divorce of 2 non-believers. Yet clearly this is undesirable as it violates God's "one-flesh" life-long commitment

And we should also emphasize - for people who have been through a divorce - that God is for repentance and forgiveness.

As 1 John 9 says

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**Challenge:** Are we being faithful in our marriages - not just in our actions - but in our thoughts? (Matthew 5:27-28)

(pause)

**Problem #4** is in verse 17

[PowerPoint 3e-#4]

The people have wearied God

- By saying evil is good in God's eyes
- That God is pleased with evil
- That there is no justice with God - and that the evil go unpunished

This is similar to the modern day attitude of - anything goes - we only live once so as long as we're happy - that's all that matters - and God will understand if they believe in God at all! And some even think they are they're own god!

These assumptions are all wrong

The Bible says:

God is not pleased with wickedness and evil (Psalm 5:4)

The punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23)

That sin cries out for a savior (Romans 6:23b)

And that a Day of Judgment awaits everyone - and the wicked will be punished -

Heb 9:27

The Bible is also full of consequences for sin

**Challenge:** Have we fallen for the wrong assumption that 'evil is good in God's eyes' or that 'there is no justice with God and the evil go unpunished'?

(pause)

**Solution to unfaithfulness - New Covenant (Malachi 3:1-5)**

So we've seen how God established a blood covenant with Abraham

We've seen a catalog of unfaithfulness from God's people and some of it might also apply to us.

We've seen last week how the animal sacrifices offered by the priests for the people's sin was sometimes done improperly with diseased or disabled animals.

[PowerPoint 4a-New Covenant]

All of these things were only "copies," or "shadows," of the better covenant to come ([Hebrews 9:23](#)). The lives of animals could never remove sin; the life of an animal is not a sufficient substitute for a human life ([Hebrews 10:4](#)). The blood of bulls and goats was a temporary appeasement until the final, ultimate blood covenant was made by Jesus Christ Himself - the God Man ([Hebrews 9:24-28](#)). The [New Covenant](#) was in His blood shed on the cross ([Luke 22:20](#)).

The shadows became realities in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all of the Old Testament blood covenants with His own blood. Christians can be confident that the gift of eternal life that God gives through Jesus is the true promise to people of faith. As the apostle Paul explains, the covenant was established with Abraham and his "Seed"—singular. Paul interprets this as the singular person of Jesus Christ ([Galatians 3:15-16](#)). Therefore, all who are "in Christ" are spiritual heirs of the promises made to Abraham ([Galatians 3:29](#)).

To put it simply, a blood covenant is a promise made by God that He will choose a people for Himself and bless them. The covenant was originally for Abraham's physical descendants but was later extended, spiritually, to all those who, like Abraham, believe God ([Galatians 3:7](#); cf. [Genesis 15:6](#)). God's promise of eternal

blessing is given only on the basis of faith in the saving blood of His Son, Jesus Christ ([Hebrews 9:12](#)).

This New Blood Covenant in Jesus is God's solution to our unfaithfulness

And that's what God is promising in Malachi's day to implement this new covenant

See Malachi 3 verse 1

God promises to send a messenger v1 to prepare the way for God Himself

[PowerPoint 4b-John]

- That's John the Baptist
- He prepares the way for the Lord himself - Jesus
- The promised messenger of the covenant - in verse 1 - is Jesus - the author of this new covenant - and Malachi is saying to the people 400 years before Jesus - that this messenger of the Covenant - Jesus - will suddenly come to His temple

[PowerPoint 4c-Jesus/temple]

- Examples of how - the Lord coming to His temple - is fulfilled are: Simeon, temple at 12, cleans up the temple, teaches in the temple, curtain torn in temple - we are the temple of the HS when we believe

[PowerPoint 4d-refine and purify]

- Jesus' coming Malachi says will - refine and purify people (in verses 2-4)
  - Jesus purifies - Launderers soap - lye - beat with stick
  - Jesus refines - silver and dross - our dross burnt off

- We must endure trials to build character, remove flaws and to persevere and become more like Jesus
- This purifying and refining will make people righteous - so offerings to God will be acceptable

### [PowerPoint 4e-Judge]

- And Jesus will come again - Malachi says in v5 - to put people on trial - to judge (Heb 9:27-28) - judgment IS coming - And Jesus will judge sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, oppressors of widows and orphans, and the unjust and all those who don't fear God!

### Our Response (Hebrews 12:1-13)

What about our response to Jesus being the solution to our unfaithfulness?

### [PowerPoint 5a-Jesus]

- We need to come to Jesus - and believe in Him - if we haven't already - before it's too late!

### [PowerPoint 5b-discipline]

- We need to understand that God disciplines His children - as we struggle against sin - just like any good parent disciplines a child (as our NT passage from Hebrews 12:4-13) says - God disciplines us for our own good (v10)

All discipline is unpleasant at the time but it makes us holy and produces a harvest of righteousness and peace (v11)

So our Response is in Hebrews 12:1-3

See V1 - since we have in our minds eyes - previous champions of faith as spectators from Heaven as our witnesses - we need to:

## [PowerPoint 5c-responses]

- Throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that entangles us
- Run with perseverance the race of life - God has marked out for us - v2 - don't give up!
- Fix our eyes on Jesus - the pioneer and perfecter of faith - who endured the cross, scorn and shame - to give God the glory and accomplish our salvation
- So think what Jesus went through v3 - so we don't grow weary, lose heart and give up

## Conclusion

So Malachi is calling us to be faithful

Faithful to God

Faithful in our marriages

Faithful in all our relationships

Let me leave us with 1 Samuel 12:24

But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.

Let's pray