

Malachi 2:11-16 –

A review of what we've learned so far on the Biblical definition of marriage, as well as the basis for divorce: Marriage is a divine institute intended by God to be a lifelong (as long as both live), one-flesh relationship that is moored in a witnessed contract that includes binding oaths/vows that both parties promise to perform toward one another with all diligence. The one-flesh relationship is to display the glory of God and to be an image to the world of Christ's love for the church, His own body. Vows include promises to emotionally and physically love, to provide for one another's basic physical needs such as clothing, home and food, etc., and to be faithful and monogamous. Each partner has command over and legitimate stewardship of the the body of the the other partner. Genuine repentance and forgiveness for sins and oath infringements is strongly encouraged. But because of human frailty and sin, God allows divorce by the injured party for persistent and unrepented violation of any of the vows. Generally these violations should be validatable by independent/disinterested, wise third parties. Violation of one's vows is a serious sin before God, and corrosive to the witness of Christ in the world and the institution itself. Dangerous abuses of vows may require help and protection for the injured party and rebuke of the aggressor. Remarriage is allowed for the injured party, without prejudice, after a divorce obtained on those grounds. In other words, a divorce on proper grounds is not itself sin, though the events that lead up to it always involve serious sin by at least one party. God deals firmly with oath-breakers. "For any reason" or no-fault divorce, is not seen by Jesus or Paul as valid for believers.

Takeaway: *Marriage is a wonderful arrangement, bringing great joy and fulfillment and usually the begetting of children, and is capable of displaying the love and glory of God in a unique way, but it requires sticking by oaths, sometimes at great personal cost. Be an oath-keeper yourself, and marry only maturing believers that demonstrate wise oath-keeping characteristics.*

The problem in human nature: Selfishness and Pride

Malachi 2:11-16

Here the LORD points out the behaviors and faithlessness of Judah, all while claiming to be spiritual. In particular, they've *divorced their faithful Jewish wives and gone after the daughters of pagan worshipers*. They are hypocritical in their claim to being spiritual people.

V14, Here the people say, "WHAT!? WHAT!? Why won't you hear our prayers and accept our offerings?"

The LORD answers – and take note of this – He has been a witness of both their original marriage vows, and then their later treacheries to those wives, by dumping them for other women who worship the gods. *Note both the blessing and the covenant duties.*

V15, This is very interesting! See who it is that remains faithful to their wives, and who it is that deals treacherously! *The one who have a remnant of the Holy Spirit remain faithful. This is a key to understanding Christian marriage in this dispensation!* We'll talk about that in a minute.

V16 is a classic, and often used incorrectly to condemn divorce itself. Not so. What is condemned is the evil motivations and sinful actions of marriage partners that lead to oath-breaking, which then results in divorce. The LORD hates, yes. The end of v16 is the thing which should set the believer's priorities in the right place: Take heed to your spirit – your own spiritual walk and your affections and what you do with your thoughts.

The solution in divine nature, in the Holy Spirit:

Galatians 5:13-18

v13, the flesh points to and is oriented in one direction, towards one magnetic pole, destructive of everything that is good and right and holy and joyful. It promises freedom but results in slavery.

The opposite magnetic pole is real love, which submits to and serves others. It is this pole that is to be the spiritual orientation, the compass of believers.

V14, the fulfillment of godly morality is to love one's neighbor as oneself. Married partners, we should pay attention to this in our relationship with our spouse! Many problems would be solved if this was on the front of our minds.

V15, tells us what happens when the flesh becomes the compass orientation!

V16, The Golden Path! *The means of keeping our vows and building joy into our marriages is to walk by the Spirit!*

V17, If you want for the Lord to point your compass to North, walk in His Spirit! He'll do the work and make the changes, because He is infinitely more powerful and energetic than the flesh! Note that “the things that you please” here are the deeds of the flesh.

Which way is your compass pointing?

V19-21. Pointing to the flesh

v20-22, Pointing to the Spirit

Helping one-another out of the trap of destructive relationship

Gal 6:1-2

Breaking free from the controlling power of sins in relationship

1 John 1:7-2:2