

## **Intro**

Opposites attract. Sounds good. Catchy soundbite. But not really wise. Especially when it comes to spiritual values.

We've all heard positive stories. Apologist Greg Bahnsen told a story about a friend he advised not to date a Mormon. They ignored his counsel, dated the Mormon, and the Mormon converted to Christianity. Just because the end result was good doesn't mean rejecting God's counsel is right.

We've likely heard more negative stories. I had a friend date a non-Christian posing as a Christian. It led to sexual immorality, no more Bible study, no more church attendance. Fortunately, after about a year later he repented by breaking off the relationship and coming back.

We have a deeply relevant matter this morning. Hear me out.

Let's turn to Malachi.

## **READ PASSAGE**

**BIG IDEA: Remember God's blessings to prevent faithless living.**

This is the larger principle behind mixed marriage.

## **Body**

### **Passage Focus**

A theme is running through Malachi. **The people are treating God casually by being casual with his commands.**

Failure to fear God is affecting how they do marriage. Some are marrying foreign women who worship other gods.

Unlawful marriage is a symptom of deeper heart problems. The word "faithless" stands out.

### **Point 1: Faithless by unlawful marriage (2:10-12)**

This is the problem Malachi addresses.

***Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?***

The "we" and the "us" are Israel.

### **Father**

God is father to Israel uniquely. He's adopted Israel to be his nation. Like a father adopts a child.

### **Creator**

Yes God created the world. But Malachi's talking about God creating Israel the nation.

***Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?***

Israel, if God is our Father and Creator, why are we profaning (treating as common) his covenant? If God has blessed us so well, why are we unfaithful to him? **Remembering God's blessings should prevent faithless living.** Israel forgot their blessings.

### **What is "the covenant"?**

The Old Covenant (or Mosaic Covenant). Contents of this covenant are found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

In the Old Covenant, God entered into a relationship with Israel.

- 1) God determined the terms of the relationship.
- 2) God bound himself to act in certain ways.
- 3) Israel consented to God's terms.
- 4) Through obedience to covenant stipulations Israel would experience blessing: health, crops, military success, security in the land.
- 5) Through disobedience to covenant stipulations Israel would experience cursing: sickness, loss of crops, military defeat, exile.

Malachi's saying Israel failed to keep the covenant stipulations (faithless). In other words, **they're treating God casually by being casual with his commands.**

***Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.***

Israel is "faithless" because the men are marrying women who worship other gods ("daughter of a foreign god").

**Abomination** = a sinful act that God abhors, loathes, detests, hates. Abominations are sinful acts God finds offensive, grotesque, repugnant, repulsive, disgusting. Abominations go against God's moral impulse.

You're in a Sunday school class and someone sneezes all over your neck, you're in the bathroom and you see someone who fails to wash their hands and then you're asked to shake their hand right after. God is disgusted when his commands are violated. That's abomination.

### **Why is marrying an idolater a problem?**

<sup>3</sup> *You shall not intermarry with them [the people who possessed the promised land before Israel], giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, <sup>4</sup> 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.* – **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**

- 1) Marrying idolaters was a violation of the Old Covenant = flagrant disobedience.
- 2) Marrying idolaters was spiritually destructive for one's children.
- 3) In Solomon's case, idol-worshipping wives turned his heart away from God.

*For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. – 1 Kings 11:4*

## Exceptions?

Apparently, there were exceptions. If a Moabite like Ruth were to turn to God in faith, marriage was permissible (Ruth 1:4, 16). The command was don't marry idolaters.

## The point isn't God's a racist

In Revelation 5:9, it says of Jesus, "*by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*" Jesus died for people from all nations.

***May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob, any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!***

The word "descendant" = "any who wakes and answers." (see ESV note.) The point is Malachi the prophet affirms God's curse on covenant violators and calls for God to judge. Cut off = removal by execution, premature death, or other means.

## Application (mixed marriages, congregation, those desiring marriage)

### General application

If we've repented and believed, God is our Father. Adopted into his family with rights to an eternal inheritance. And God has made us a new creation. Born again. A new heart. No longer a slave to sin. God is working in us new desires by his Spirit to make us a new and unique people set apart for his honor, like Israel. **Blessings received should move us in a direction of faithfulness.**

### Marriage

We find similar instruction given to the church.

*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup> What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?* – **2 Corinthians 6:14-15**

This doesn't specifically address marriage. But the principle would surely apply.

*A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.* – **1 Corinthians 7:39**

If a Christian woman finds herself in a situation where her husband has died, she is free to remarry. But she is only free to remarry "*only in the Lord*" = only to a Christian. Per New Testament instruction, Christians can only marry Christians.

### What if I find myself married to a non-Christian?

Some of you are a Christian and find yourself married to a non-Christian.

I know that for some of you this isn't a fun debate to figure out. It's real life. And if you're honest, it's hard.

My purpose isn't to shame anyone. My purpose isn't to drudge up the past. My purpose is to set forth God's instruction. Hear me out. I'm trying to help.

Note that a Christian can find themselves in this situation for a variety of reasons.

- 1) You married a non-Christian when you were a Christian knowing it was wrong. You ignored spiritual counsel. You violated your conscience.
- 2) You married a non-Christian when you were a Christian without knowing it was wrong. You sat under poorly trained pastors who advised you against Scripture. You didn't know your Bible.
- 3) You were a Christian who thought you were marrying a Christian. After marriage you discovered your spouse wasn't actually saved.
- 4) You were a non-Christian who married a non-Christian. But you repented and believed. You are now a Christian married to a non-Christian.

A Christian can wind up married to a non-Christian because of disobedience, ignorance, or because God saved them (a good thing).

If sin was involved, what do you do? In Colossians, one thing I highlighted is that we continue in the Christian life the way we began. In faith and repentance. God wants all of us to be **exemplary repenters**. (all of us not just mixed marriages!) This is how we grow. When faced with Scripture and our failure, we own it. We confess it. We acknowledge the wisdom and rightness of God's instruction. Then we remember God's forgiveness in Christ. If we've trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of sin, we know Jesus' death was worthy to cover all our sins. Past, present, future. We lean on God's mercy when we sin. And last, when we find ourselves in place where obedience is hard, we remember the power of the Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out. We resolve to honor God **today** in the strength he supplies. **We don't let past failure prevent present faithfulness.** Forgive yourself. God has.

If you were poorly trained or ignorant, and you didn't sin, what do you do? Forgive those involved where necessary. As Christ forgave you. And forgive yourself. You didn't knowingly disobey God.

If your salvation (a blessing) created a mixed marriage, rejoice. A good thing happened! Desire what you experience for your spouse. Trust that God saved you at the right time in the right circumstances. When a person is saved, there's always a disruption of relationships. This is a disruption God saved you for.

Whatever category you're in, Paul directly addresses your situation.

*To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. <sup>15</sup> But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. <sup>16</sup> Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?*

– **1 Corinthians 7:12-16**

If you find yourself in a mixed marriage, God says:

- 1) Stay married to your spouse.
- 2) Your spouse is made holy because of connection with you. ≠ they're saved or forgiven through marriage. Rather they're in close proximity to what is holy (you) much like Moses was on holy ground in Exodus 3 because God was near. Your spouse and your children are in a sacred

environment because God's Spirit dwells in you. You're not unclean because of your spouse. Your marriage is acceptable to God.

- 3) Your children are made holy because of connection with you too.
- 4) Your marriage might be the cause of your spouse's conversion.
- 5) **There's a way to be faithful in mixed marriage!**

God is with you in this. In fact, God planned this for you. God's empowering grace is sufficient!

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them. – Psalm 139:16*

God formed David's days before he ever was. Including Bathsheba, Absalom, etc. God formed your days before you were. Including the day you married your spouse. God is working all things for your good, including your marriage (Rom 8:28).

And God is with you every step of the way.

### **Congregation application**

The pastor feels pressure because mixed marriages "doesn't apply to everyone." Then I meditated. If we're self-centered individuals yes that's true. If we care about the circumstances of others in the body, then mixed marriage applies to all of us.

The person in a mixed marriage faces unique challenges. They need the support of the local church. They need friends who will listen and counsel and pray with them. They need elders/pastors who have wisdom to speak into complex situations.

They need people in the church to befriend their spouse and children. Maybe it's inviting the family into our homes. Maybe it's a church picnic where their family can come and interact with Christians in a natural way.

The application to all of us is care for those in mixed marriages well. They face unique challenges. They need a local church.

Talk with me or send me an e-mail how I can pray for you. If you want counseling, reach out.

### **To those desiring marriage**

Children, singles.

- 1) Only marry in the Lord.
- 2) This means you need to be able to detect who is and who isn't a Christian.

Let me give an ironic illustration. At a former church, one week the pastor was telling a beautiful story about a man who said a prayer, accepted Christ as a child and proceeded to be a homosexual prostitute for decades. He then came back to God after 30 years of flagrant rebellion. The pastor said he was saved the whole time and merely backslidden.

Several weeks later the same pastor is teaching on dating. This time not everyone who claims to be a Christian is a Christian. You can tell who is actually saved by their fruit. He's strongly warning singles in

their 20's (I think women especially) not to be duped by fake Christians who want to date you. Don't pay attention to what they claim. Pay attention to what they believe, church attendance, sexual purity, etc.

If you've understood me correctly, you know I believe salvation makes a radical difference in a person's life. If a person trusts Jesus, it will affect how they do life. If a person is born again, it will affect how they do life (see Matthew 7 and James 2).

Doctrine matters! Doctrinal conclusions always affect practice. How you understand conversion affects what you tell your children about dating.

3) When you're dating only date Christians.

Why would you date someone you know you shouldn't marry? Don't attach your heart to someone you can't commit to.

### **Non-Christian**

Maybe you're a non-Christian married to a Christian. Awkward sermon right? Maybe you're going through some struggles right now and wondering if God can help. Not exactly what you were looking for.

What you got was a pastor talking about mixed marriages. What can you glean?

- 1) God blesses sinners through Jesus.
- 2) Our problem is failure to honor God. God calls it sin.
- 3) There's mercy for sinners through Jesus. And only through Jesus.
- 4) If you understand your sin and Jesus' work on the cross (he died as a substitute for sinners), turn from rebellion to trust in Jesus' death and resurrection. Repentance is critical.
- 5) More questions. Ask one of us.

**Conclusion: Remember God's blessings to prevent faithless living.**

Marriage is one of many realms where there's opportunity to be faithful to God.