

***Malachi 2:13-14***  
***Broken For all the Wrong Reasons***  
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*Sovereign Grace Fellowship—5/3/09*

***Introduction***

Today we are continuing our trek through the book of Malachi. If you remember we are in the third section of the book of Malachi (2:10-16). God's primary concern with Israel in this section is their lack of faithfulness to each other. Ultimately what we have seen thus far is that Israel's lack of faithfulness against each other is ultimately a lack of faithfulness against God. To put it another way, Israel's sin against each other is ultimately sin against God himself. After all, at the very heart of the covenant that God made with the Israelites, he commanded them to faithfully love himself and to faithfully love each other. Thus, our sins against each other are ultimately sins against God himself, because faithful love is the standard that he set, and the command that he gave.

We spent the last two week looking at vss. 11-12 where we saw that the Israelites disobeyed God by marrying foreign, idol-worshipping women. This morning we are going to move along in this third section. We are going to be focusing on vss. 13-14. God's concern with the Israelites in these two verses is their faithlessness specifically against their wives. Although some see the issue of marrying the daughter of a foreign God in vss. 11-12 and the issue dealt with here regarding the Israelite men divorcing their wives in vss. 13-16 as separate, I prefer to see theme as two sides of the same coin. This is highly debatable, however it seems to me that Israelites were divorcing their wives primarily for the purpose of marrying these foreign women. In essence, they were trading their wives in like a man trades in his old car for a younger, healthier, less-wrinkly, newer one. They were breaking the covenants that they made with their wives in order to marry these foreign women.

***Malachi 2:13-14***

When I was growing up my parents did everything they could to make sure that my mom did not have to get a job. Both of them felt that it was important for her to stay at home. Things always ran much smoother when she did—when my mom did work a job the tension in the house was always high and the house was always a mess. However, there were a few times when it was necessary, for whatever reason, when my mom had to get a job. Well, while I was in middle school my mom had to get a job, and things went as usual. At one point she got so frustrated with me and my two brothers for our lack of participation in keeping the house clean that she warned us that if we had not picked up our mess(es) she was going to throw away anything that was not picked up and put away, whether it be clothes, video games, school books, and even homework.

Well, the very next day after getting off work mom came home, got out a big black trash bag, and began to fill it with all of the stuff that was still not yet picked up. After coming home I remember each of us looking for the very things that mom threw away. "Mom where is my math book, I remember that it was sitting right here on the table." She nonchalantly, as if it were a piece of accepted common knowledge, said, "Oh, It's in the trash." You can then imagine our reaction; "What! It's in the trash, how in the world am I going to get my homework done?" She would then in a nonchalant way look

back and say, “I don’t know what you are going to do. I guess you are going to have to figure something out. You really shouldn’t be surprised. I told you last night that if you didn’t pick your stuff up that I was going to throw it away.” As you can imagine, we got angry and start muttering and complaining.

This is the same sort of thing that we find here with the Israelites; we see them grumbling and complaining to God because of his apparent lack of response to their sacrifices and prayers, he was not honoring their attempts at obedience. Look at the text with me.

*And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. <sup>14</sup>But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*

Do not the Israelites here resemble my brothers and me when we would get all upset at our mom when she bagged our stuff up after warning us that she was going to do so if we didn’t pick up! You get this sense that the Israelites were surprised by God’s lack of attention to them in their attempts at pleasing him—it seems that they were in a moment of crisis. It seems that they saw God’s lack of response and activity as an injustice on his part. Look at God’s response to the Israelites temper tantrum in vs. 14. The Lord’s response was much like my mothers, “Are you serious? It really shouldn’t be that much of a surprise as to why I am not regarding your offerings, have I not commanded you to be faithful to one another; have I not warned serious judgment against you if you should be faithless against each other? Well... I have been a witness between you and the wife of your youth. I have noticed how you have been faithless to her by divorcing her, and especially for the sake of marrying foreign, idol-worshipping women. Why are you so surprised?”

Really, the Old Testament law is replete with commandments regarding husbands and wives being faithfully and sacrificially committed to each other. What is one of the ten commandments; “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). As with all of the ten commandments, this commandment is stated in a negative way (you shall *not*). If this commandment were to be put in a positive way what would it be? Would it not be “You shall be faithful to the wife of your youth”? Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22 state that if a man and a woman were to be caught having an adulteress affair both of them are to be stoned to death. There are many other laws in the Old Testament to protect the relationship between a man and his wife (Leviticus 18; Numbers 5:11-31; Deuteronomy 21:15-17; 24:1-5). God warned the Israelites that if they were to break his covenant by being faithless to each other that he was going to judge them. And God warned the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28 that if they were to break the covenant that he had made with them that he was not just going to disregard their offerings, but that he was going to become their enemy and destroy them. And what was at the heart of this covenant that God had made with them, faithfulness to God and to each other. Those Israelites who were faithless to their wives should not have been surprised at God’s lack of attention to their offerings and prayers.

And as we saw earlier when we were going through Malachi 1, they were blaming God for the consequences of their own sin. The Israelites should not have been surprised at God's silence and inactivity. It was not an injustice for God to reject their offerings. The Israelites should not have been surprised.

*Serving and Asking with Wrong Motives*

Notice the sincerity on the part of the Israelites in vs. 13. I believe that those were real tears that they cried. They really were a distraught people. I do not believe that this was some sort of sob story on their behalf. They were truly broken! This is not like a flop in basketball or soccer, this was a true charge, a true foul. Why then did the Lord not heed their prayers, offerings, and tears? Doesn't Jesus say in the sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4)? It has everything to do with what they mourning over, what they are broken over. One of the things that you can see here is that the Lord does not always respond to people when they are broken. Do you remember what James 4:2-3:

*You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

Motivation is a huge issue here. The Israelites should have been broken, they should have been "weeping and groaning," but they were weeping and groaning over the wrong things. They should have been weeping and groaning of their sin, over their lack of love for God, over their faithlessness toward each other and especially toward their wives. The Lord would have received them if they were broken over their unlawful divorces. What was it that they were weeping and groaning over? Well, the text does not identify exactly what caused them to be broken. However, it is quite clear that the Israelites in Malachi's day were a sorry bunch of people—they had lost everything that they ever had, they were small (they once consisted of 12 tribes, however at this point in their history they consisted of only one tribe, the tribe of Judah, and about half of the Judahites were still in captivity), poor (although they inhabited Jerusalem, they were paying tribute, a rent of sorts, to the Persians), had no king, no palace, no kingdom (at one time they possessed the whole nation of Israel, however at this point in their history they only possessed the small city of Jerusalem, and even Jerusalem was in shambles because of the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC), no military (and thus no protection), nothing that could provide them protection and/or security. These were their concerns. They had no heart for God, no desire for holiness, and no concern whatsoever to make God's name great in the world. They were not broken over their sin; they were broken over their physical poverty. Their physical poverty brought them greater tears than their sin. Their eyes were on themselves and their own selfish desires and 'passions' (in the words of James).

One of the questions that has always racked my mind as I have read throughout the Old Testament is this: Israel made it very apparent that they had no concern for God, his glory, or his righteousness; they made it very apparent that they had no regard for his covenant, why then did they continue to offer sacrifices on his altar; why did they continue at his temple? The answer to this question is quite easy; they wanted to keep him at hand if they should need him. They wanted him to be close enough to call upon,

yet not close enough to be inconvenienced by his abiding presence or his many laws. We see people doing this today, in Seminary we call them C and E Christians, those who profess faith in Christ and only come to church on Christmas and Easter (thus C and E). They want to be religious enough to be able to call on God in times of trouble, but they want nothing of his abiding presence and influence in their lives. They want the convenience of his protection and provision without an ounce of his righteousness. They want to keep him at arm's length.

They saw God, as I have said before, as their Divine butler, their Genie in a bottle. He was there primarily for them. They saw him as their servant. They didn't give a rip about God. Religion was a tool for them, a tool to get what they wanted—and what they wanted was not God nor his righteousness nor his glory. They saw their prayers, tears, and sacrifices as a sort of currency. They saw their sacrifices as a currency that they could use to buy blessings from God. In essence, they used the sacrificial system as a tool to make God their debtor. They thought that God was obligated to respond to their offerings regardless of their motive. God never set up the sacrificial system as a tool by which people could purchase blessings from him.

Often times we find people doing this with quiet times and prayer times and evangelism and church attendance. There is a superstitious value that Christians often put on these things. They feel that if they miss their quiet time that the Lord will somehow curse their day. Others feel that God owes them something if they are consistent with their attendance or devotions. Others suggest, “Surely God will answer my prayers exactly how I want them to be answered if I stay up all night and pray hours on end.” Others uselessly read their Bibles in a mindless fashion out of duty for the sake of receiving something in return. They put all of their hope in their performance of the discipline. They believe that it is the discipline that works for them. It is in essence their spiritual work and then God compensates them for what they have put into it. What a horrible place to be.

You go to church not to see the name of God lifted up, not to be challenged and equipped to live your life for his glory, but rather you go in order that you might fulfill your minimal religious duty in order that you might receive some sort of a blessing from God. You mindlessly read your 2 chapters out of the Bible every morning not to be challenged and shaped more into the image and likeness of Jesus, but rather in order to fulfill your minimal religious requirements so that you might receive some sort of a blessing from God. In other words, you use your church attendance and devotionals as a currency with which you, in essence, buy blessings from God. “Here you go God, I will give you something—I will offer this bull and this goat on your altar so that in return I can pray to you and ask that you might send some rain on my crops so that I might have a rich, bountiful harvest this coming fall.” Don't get me wrong, God does bless obedience; however he does not bless those who attempt obedience without a concern for Him and His glory. He does not bless a mere formal obedience motivated by selfishness.

Notice that I keep using the phrase “*minimal* religious duty.” This is the greatest evidence that you are in need of a thorough spiritual tune up, when you only give God what you have to. God does not honor sporadic, duty-driven obedience. God only honors a heart that is sold out for him, his glory, and his agenda. He does not respond to those who only do their *minimal* religious duty in order to get something from him. He does not respond well when we approach him as a used car salesman approaches a potential buyer.

God does not respond to prayers and sacrifices that are made out of selfishness. God only responds to prayer, worship, and sacrifice when his name, his righteousness, his glory, and his agenda are the primary motivation. In Matt 6 Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. One of the unique features of this prayer is found in vs. 10,

*“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Jesus teaches us that a desire for God’s agenda, God’s will, ought to permeate our prayers. In fact, John says in 1 John 5:14-15,

*<sup>14</sup>And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <sup>15</sup>And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

### *Is He Your Treasure?*

Really, the Israelites were using God as a means to their own ends. God does not delight in religious duty that does not see Himself as the end. God is our ultimate end, he is the source of all our satisfaction and happiness. Whenever our religious duties are aimed at something other than delight in him, they are completely stripped of any value that they might have had otherwise. The Israelites did not pursue God, his glory, and his righteousness as an end in itself. No, their greater treasure was found in status and land and earthly prestige, and they used the fount of life as a means to that end. No wonder God turned his ear from their prayers and rejected their sacrifices. God is an end in itself. After all, he is source of all life, joy, happiness, protection, provision, and satisfaction. To come to him looking for something else is to degrade his glory. The Israelites saw no inherent quality in God, the only thing he was good for was to fulfill their self-centered, worldly desires.

I can tell you that this is something that I struggle with as a student of the word of God. I have to keep myself in check. When I approach the word of God sometimes my greatest desire is not to intimately know him and communion with him through the written word, rather my primary purpose is to gain knowledge in order that I might become something large on the Christian scene—so that I might become some sort of a Christian guru who has all the answers—the sought after author and speaker. This is an offense to God. It is using God and his word as a means to something perceived to be greater than fellowship with him.

I just want to ask, “What motives your Christian obedience, what motives you to pray, study Scripture, or go to church?” Do you do it out of a desire to know and be known by God or do you do it for selfish reasons? God will not hear the praise choruses sung from a heart that does not treasure him.

God rebuked the Israelites not because they were weeping, but rather because of what they were weeping over. They were weeping not because of their sin, not because they had offended their maker and God by breaking his covenant, not because God was absent. They were weeping because God was not giving them what they wanted?

What in life makes you most sad, what grieves you the most? Your emotions say much about your heart. Now we are all different, without a doubt. Some of us are extremely unemotional people—I cry annually, about once a year. Others, however, have

enough emotion to cover for the rest of us—they cry weekly, and even some, daily. Thus, it would be inappropriate to set up a model or standard in this regard. However, I believe that Paul Washer was correct when he said, “It is impossible to love Jesus with a poker face!” Think about it. If you were to go home today to find your house burnt to the ground would you be unaffected emotionally? Of course not. We have seen this of late haven’t we? People have been struggling financially as of late; their houses and 401k’s have been slipping through the cracks of our broken economy. Is it possible to lose your your assets and savings and yet remain emotionally unaffected? Of course not, these are our earthly treasures! If your wife or husband were to die tonight how would you respond—could you grieve your wife’s death with a poker face? No! Why, because you treasure her. Can you rejoice in winning the lottery with a poker face? No, because money is earthly treasure. Just the other day I was randomly selected as a winner of a free \$30 or less Zondervan book because of a drawing that I entered myself in on one of my favorite Christian blogs (Koinonia). When I found out that I won the prize I was stoked—I was all smiles, and I stayed up late that night to make sure that I picked the best book that I could find. Why did I get so emotionally excited over a book—because I treasure books. This is not to say that we should not be emotional when we lose or gain the things of this world, it is just to prove that it is impossible to be emotionally unmoved by our treasures.

You cannot mourn over your sin, knowing that you have profaned God’s righteousness, with a poker face; you cannot delight in Christ with your poker face. The Israelite’s emotions betrayed them—their emotions exposed the true condition of their hearts. They were weeping over all the wrong things.

Have you ever wept over your sin? Have you ever wept because of God’s absence in any given trial? Look with me at Matthew 5:4 and Psalm 139:136.

*“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted”*

And

*“Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed.”*

Why were the Israelites mourning? It definitely wasn’t because of their sin, because of their faithlessness to each other. Were they mourning because of God’s absence? Well... yes and no. I say “yes” because they knew that only God could give them what they wanted. I say no because it wasn’t God’s presence that they were wanting. The only reason they were mourning God’s apparent absence was because they knew that they needed him to give them what they wanted. They were infatuated with the gift and yet had no concern whatsoever for the Giver. They wanted the giver to be there, but not because they found any sort of delight in him. They wanted the giver to be there to fulfill their evil passions.

### ***Conclusion***

Folks, motivation is everything in the Christian life. If Christ is your treasure—if he is the your end, he will delight in your praises and sacrifices, and he will be attentive to your prayers. However, if he is nothing more than a means to some other end, he will not regard attempts at obedience. You parents imagine if when your son turns 35 the only

time calls, writes, or visits is on Christmas and his birthday. Would that not reveal the treasure of his heart? It would be evidence that he does not love you; he loves the things you give him. He only comes around when he has to, gives the minimal requirement in order to secure what is rightfully his by virtue of being your son. This is exactly how the Israelites approached God, there was no delight in him and no brokenness when they offended and sinned against him. They were broken for all the wrong reasons.

If you were to find yourself weeping at the altar, what would you be weeping over? Whatever your answer is to that question is most likely your treasure.