

WHY DOES GOD HATE DIVORCE?
Malachi 2:11-16

INTRO: Our subject has been an unpleasant one. Why does God hate divorce? What lies before us this morning is unpleasant as well. In the first message we looked at divorce, in a sense, from a divine perspective. We concluded that God hates divorce because it is a violation of His character. Marriage is grounded in the nature and character of God. The reason God set out marriage in the first place was not to restrict man from something that he could otherwise freely enjoy. Like all other requirements and commandments God has given man, marriage is for man's own good. In the last message I mentioned an article I had read recently that talked about people wanting their freedom with regard to whether they chose to live together without marriage, or if they chose to leave one partner for another, or if they chose to be unfaithful to their partner. I understand that desire for such freedom. But I understand from the Word of God as well, that such freedom will have very negative consequences in mankind because it is contrary to the will and nature of God. It is contrary to His character and nature, and man is made in the image and in the likeness of God. Man bears a likeness to God.

And so, we looked in the last message at the core reason why God hates divorce. It was because it violates the character of God. And we said that it has negative consequences because it violates the character of God. And so, in this message we want to briefly consider those negative consequences. One message can never do justice to the pain and misery created by divorce. One message could not do justice to the pain caused by a partner finding out their spouse has been unfaithful, never mind all the rest that goes with it. But I believe God hates divorce because of the destruction it brings to mankind. It has very negative consequences.

II. THE CONSEQUENTIAL REASONS

A. Consequences In The Home (Malachi here somewhere?)

1. For the couple

Let us consider then first, briefly, the negative consequences in the home. We begin

with the couple involved. You see, before divorce ever happens, a lot of pain has already taken place between this couple. Take, for example the partner that discovers their partner has been unfaithful? Very few pains exceed this one. You see, divorce has forerunners. All of these are bad. It begins, it seems to me, with dissatisfaction which then it leads to disintegration through sin, and then it moves to devastation and finally to the dissolution of the marriage. When a married partner discovers that their partner has been into various kinds of physical unfaithfulness it is devastating. Of all discoveries by the partner, adultery is the most devastating. The pain that lies in our country alone would, no doubt, would fill volumes.

Divorce has consequences reaching far beyond the devastation of the discovery of unfaithfulness. There is tremendous emotional damage. I read of one woman, whose husband was a serial adulterer, and she put everything into earning money and trying to make it work and she said that more than anything else, she felt like a failure. Her husband was the adulterer and she felt like a failure. There is a tactical trick of the devil. And she said this feeling stayed with her for years. One article said, "A US government report notes that studies have 'documented that increases in depressive symptoms after divorce are long-lasting and that the prevalence of these symptoms remains elevated years after the marital breakup.'"

For professing Christians, there is the creation of another problem. One pastor wrote, "Then spiritually, Christians who divorce have a need to justify God's 'leading' them to divorce the very person God 'led' them to marry in the first place. Of course, many unable to tolerate the cognitive dissonance this creates drop out of their churches and the faith altogether."

Then there is the problem that divorce does not bring about the desired happiness. This same pastor said, "You would think, perhaps, that despite the emotional, physical, and financial sacrifices those who leave unhappy marriages would be happier in the end. You would be wrong. A 2002 study by the Institute on American Values stated: Divorce was never associated with an increase in the emotional well-being of unhappily married spouses. Divorce did not make unhappily married spouses personally happier, or reduce depression, or increase personal mastery, or self-esteem... " end quote.

Then, for couples, there is a huge economic fallout. One study showed a 73 percent reduction in wealth through divorce. There are all kinds of legal expenses, expenses of child travel and on and on. For the government, divorce creates a lot of expense and a lot of problems. Oh, the pain divorce causes is unfathomable. It is excruciating for the couple.

Divorce, like sin, promises so much and delivers so little; if not the reverse. Many couples have many meetings in the courts over who gets the children. They have to decide how to divide their possessions. Then, when they are alone, by and by they find another partner. This partner is quite often divorced as well. And now they have to try to bring two families together. So professing Christian churches that accept divorce have to try to help what they call 'blended' families. And blended families are a blending of problems which create new ones.

2. For the children

But the damage brought about in the couple is only one aspect of it. It is most natural, I suppose, when divorce happens that we focus our attention on the couple. It may be a friend, or a cousin, or a brother or sister, or even one's own child. But it is the

children, I maintain, where the most damage is done. They are the ones who usually suffer the most. The parents, the responsible adults for the divorce, are the ones who create the pain for the children. I read some years ago that many times the children feel responsible for their parent's breakup. It is horrendous how the devil will use divorce to destroy as many as he can.

By the way, according to Joseph Webb, our modern view of divorce had its origin in Desiderius Erasmus. He lived from 1466 - 1536. That was right during the time of the reformation. He was an influential scholar in Greek and he was a humanist. Now Erasmus was a humanist. My dictionary says of humanism that there is a special emphasis on human interests rather than on religion. I think it is possible that his views affected the writers of our Catechism in the divorce question. From him came the view that the innocent party may remarry. Webb writes of Erasmus like this, "In his treatise, Erasmus introduced the idea that any marriage was capable of being dissolved. It seemed monstrously cruel to him that a couple should be compelled to stay together in the flesh, when they no longer, and perhaps never were, united in their spirits" (89).

I purposed when I got married that if ever my wife left me, I would remain single until she died. My resolve has not changed. I would encourage every married person to that resolve and if we did that we would have no or very few divorces. I am sincerely, totally committed to this.

The pain of divorce in children is a hellish pain. It seems to me that something very devastating happens to many children when their parents divorce. The amount of damage done may depend somewhat on the age of the child at the time the divorce occurs and what kind of stability there was in the beginning. But many children are destroyed right there. Their moral compass has been ruined. It is a

tragedy beyond tragedies. It is horrible. Children of divorced parents are more likely to have behavioral problems and are more likely to use illegal drugs. They are more likely not to get a good education or obtain good jobs or find themselves happy as adults. They are more likely to be physically promiscuous or expect a child before marriage, said Jim Tonkowich, the pastor I quoted in the first message.

Tonkowich writes, "Elizabeth Marquardt, herself a child of divorce, conducted a study of the inner lives of children of divorce. Marquardt writes, 'Using hard data and a control group of young people from intact families, we discovered that divorce causes deep and lasting struggles for children even when they manage to survive it and look 'fine.' This is reflected in what becomes a negative feedback loop. Women who had experienced parental divorce in childhood were 59% more likely to divorce than women who had not experienced parental divorce. The likelihood of divorce in marriages where both spouses come from divorced homes was 189% higher than in marriages where neither spouse had experienced a parental divorce. These divorces, in turn, harm the next generation of children increasing the likelihood that they too will divorce. This is just a small sample of the vast body of findings on how divorce harms children" end quote.

I checked the internet regarding the damage divorce does in children and was surprised that numerous articles said it was not nearly as bad as many others had said it was. One article even said that the damages it was claimed divorce does in children is a myth. Then in one article, a woman who had studied the effects of divorce on children for some 25 years, agreed with my view that the facts were being downplayed, and she gave the reasons. She said, "If the truth be told, and if we are able to face it, the history of divorce in our society is replete with unwarranted

assumptions that adults have made about children simply because such assumptions are congenial to adult needs and wishes." She is saying that we have come to such conclusions for the benefit of the adults.

Then she says, "The myths that continue to guide our divorce policies and politics today stem from these direct attitudes.

Unfortunately it seems that adults have put their own needs and happiness before the happiness of the children justifying this by buying into the myth that children are resilient and that time heals all wounds" (<http://www.children-and-divorce.com/effects-of-divorce-on-children.html>). Her conclusion regarding articles that down-play the negative effects of divorce on children, is that they are myths, and we believe them because we want to believe them, not because the facts verify them.

Why does God hate divorce? It ruins the children. So turn briefly to Malachi 2 (read verse 15). When the offspring are ruined, what happens to future generations? Well, think for a moment; how do most primitive cultures function? Consider heathen nations, and the answer is very plain. You see, it is not that they have not known better some time in the past. Somewhere they all come from a background where godliness and marriage was taught and practiced. And they all degenerated horribly. Why does God hate divorce? The consequences are very bad and long lasting.

3. Extended families

But not only are the parents and the children of divorced parents affected negatively. The extended family and friends affected. When you live in a community like we do here, with close knit families, and divorce enters one family, it affects and infects a large amount of people. There are parents that undergo extreme agony. Especially in a religious community like we have. I can hardly imagine

one of my children in divorce. And now those parents have to make horrible decisions. Decisions regarding their son or their daughter; or regarding their son-in-law or their daughter-in-law. They are having to make decisions they should never have to make. Then they have to make decisions regarding their grandchildren. One of the young people here, who's grandparents are divorced said, 'Divorce affects the grandchildren too.' And nobody who is so closely pained by divorce does not begin to question whether in fact it is really so bad.

Then, usually, there are brothers or sisters involved on both sides of the divorce. All of a sudden they are pressed upon with all kinds of stress. You see, divorce tears, and tears and tears. And sometimes there is an innocent party. I believe that happens. And when it happens, siblings will have to make decisions they should never have to make. And when they make any decisions that do not favor those who divorce, they have become the villains. If they stand against the divorce biblically, they have become the problem; and yet it had nothing to do with them in the first place.

I have pondered this. Why is divorce so terrible? Why is it a sin beyond many others? Consider it for a moment. Let us say a person is a drunkard. Now that can do a lot of damage in a home. It causes a lot of pain as well. But when a drunkard quits drinking, everybody except, perhaps, his drinking buddies is happy about it. And even some of them would be happy to see that. The wife is rejoicing. The children are restful. It is wonderful when a drunkard quits drinking.

When a liar quits lying, it is wonderful. People that could not trust this person now find a new and better person. They can now trust him with things. His wife is happy. His children are happy. What about when a jealous person overcomes their jealousy. Oh it is wonderful. Everybody who knew them rejoices.

But what about when a divorcee repents? What about when they want to quit their adultery? What about when new children have been introduced into their relationship? Now you have confusion in our society. What do people say to this? Well, they say things like this: "What are they supposed to do, divorce a second time? Unthinkable." Or, "Two wrongs don't make a right, you know." Or, "You can't split up a family." But they could split up the first one and we allowed that. So divorce is one sin that creates more problems when the adulterer repents. It is so wonderful when people repent of their sins, except this one. Why does God hate divorce? Because very few, if any, sins are people as unlikely to repent of and come out of as adultery committed by divorce and remarriage. It is a very binding, entwining sin. The consequences of divorce are very hard on families, extended families, friends and on society in general.

Divorce entwines. Think about when divorce happens in the family. And let us say that family has one or more Christians in it with the firm conviction that Jesus words in Luke 16:18 are literally true? Luke 16:18 says, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery." And if adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God, as the Scripture plainly says, this leaves devastating decisions before the believer in such a family. And what if the one who has divorced is your brother or sister, or even your son or daughter? And what if they also claim to be Christians? And what if a pastor did the ceremony? And what if the one who believes Luke 16:18 is true, and he reads in 1 Corinthians 5 which says that a Christian is not to eat with someone who is an adulterer? Why does God hate divorce? It is a sin with consequences much worse than many other sins.

And when divorce enters the family, slowly by slowly, out of the pressures it creates on family members, it is accepted more and more and it becomes normal. The abnormal becomes the norm. And then there are family reunions or gatherings, or special events and they all are to appear as one big happy family; what does the one do who has convictions about these things? And when the rest of the family looks at this one who cannot accept all of this, that one with the convictions who stays far away from such sins, that one has become the problem. Purity becomes the problem. Godliness becomes a problem. What is such a believer to do? Why does God hate divorce? Why, does God hate divorce? These are some of the consequential reasons.

You say, "Pastor Phil, it is the best for me when I don't hear messages like this. This upsets my life. I do OK until I hear messages like this and then stress enters. I don't like to hear things like this. It is so much more peaceful when we don't stir these kinds of issues up. I wish you would preach on faith, or love, or...?"

When the Apostle Paul was planting churches where they had never heard of Christ he exhorted them to continue in the faith and he told them, "... that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). We want to enter without tribulation.

To the young pastor Timothy he said, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). And Jesus had said before, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies *will* be those of his own household.'" He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or

daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:34-38).

May I ask you this morning, what has your Christianity cost you? Maybe it is time to check.

B. Consequences In The Nations

Well, that is a very brief look at what divorce does to families. But I ask, does divorce have consequences for the country? When we do that which is contrary to the will and character of God, the core of all sin, there are negative consequences. And the sin of divorce has far reaching negative consequences. We saw a little of what it does to the home. The Canadian Encyclopedia says this of marriage in Canada today, "Marriage remains one of the most important social institutions in Canada, but overall the marriage rate in Canada is declining and the traditional portrait of a family is being transformed." And what happens to a nation where divorce is permitted? Did you know that before the 1960s you could not get a divorce in Canada? The government did not allow it. In our own province not too many years ago you could not work in any government office if you were divorced. What happens in a country that allows divorce?

Turn to Leviticus 18. In this chapter Moses gives us some very interesting insights. The chapter does not deal with divorce per se, but it deals with marital sins, which are the root of divorce. Look at verses 1-3 (read). Then in verses 6-18 we have sins of consanguinity. Then there are numerous other sins listed. In verse 20 we have adultery. In verse 21 is the sacrifice of children. In verse 22-23 are the sins of bestiality. Now look at verse 3 (read). All these sins were the sins of Egypt, the land Israel had lived in before and had now left. That is possibly one of the major reasons God dealt with Pharoah the way He did. And it is no wonder God so desperately wanted Israel out of that land.

Now look at verse 24 (read). All the nations settled in Canaan, the land Israel was now to enter and destroy all the inhabitants, and there were many, had defiled themselves with all these sins. May I ask you, when heathen nations commit adultery, is it sin? Yes! Well, remember that when you hear the next preacher preach on 1 Corinthians 7. They will say, "Oh, that was before they became Christians." But the reason God had the right to take the land of Canaan away from these nations was because of these very sins! So look at verse 25 (read).

I said in the first message that if God had permitted man to live like the animals with regard to such physical actions, man, instead of filling the earth may have destroyed himself already. Here is some evidence for that. Here we have evidence that many times God allowed war, and He may do so today as well, because of the physical impurity of those who live in that land. A land where such sins are allowed is a defiled land and eventually God visits such a land or nation. When divorce is not allowed, it puts a restraint on all kinds of other sins. At bare minimum such sins are kept hidden. Once divorce is allowed, it wants to open all closets.

How did God keep His land from becoming defiled? If a woman who was betrothed to a man in Israel was found to have been unfaithful during the time of betrothal, she was to be stoned to death. The NKJV says in Deuteronomy 22:21, "So shall you put away the evil person from among you." The word 'person' is italicized in the NKJV. The KJV says, "So shall you put away evil from among you." This is how you keep evil out. In verse 22 it says adulterers were to be stoned. And the KJV says, "So shall you put away evil from Israel." So serious did God see such sins related to marital life that He prescribed capital punishment for some of them.

Why does God hate divorce? It leads, ultimately, to all kinds of other such sins and together these sins destroy nations. There may be evidence in Malachi 2 that divorce leads to violence and thus even war. God destroyed nations in the OT because of such sins. In 1776, Edward Gibbons book, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" came out. An

internet article said, "Edward Gibbon's six-volume *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is a classic in the truest sense of the word. The first volume of this monumental work was published in 1776, with the remaining volumes following over the next 12 years, but Gibbon actually spent 26 years working on *Decline and Fall*. Gibbon's careful scholarship and exhaustive research have survived the test of time remarkably well. Many preachers and teachers over the years have drawn parallels between Rome and various modern societies, gleaning lessons from the great empire's fall and warning us that we may share the same fate. Modern historians frequently cite Gibbon's work as a primary source of information and scholarship for this important period of history."

Now a little history on Gibbons is worth while. He was not a professing Christian. He was of poor health as a young person. He later went to Oxford university and began to study history and converted to Roman Catholicism. That caused him to be removed from Oxford and he then came under the sway of Calvinism and renounced Catholicism. Later he renounced all religion and it was then that he wrote this classic work on the fall of Rome. You will be surprised then that in such a state he would give the reasons he did.

The article I mentioned earlier goes on to say, "You've probably heard or read a summary of the reasons Gibbon gives for the decline and fall of Rome (this one is from the [Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations](#))." So let me give you the five main reasons this writer gave why Rome fell:

1. The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of [the] dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society (Italics added).
2. Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.
3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.

4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within: the decadence of the people.

5. The decay of religion—faith fading into mere form—losing touch with life and becoming impotent to guide the people."

I mentioned earlier that the Canadian Encyclopedia says this of marriage in Canada today, "Marriage remains one of the most important social institutions in Canada, but overall the marriage rate in Canada is declining and the traditional portrait of a family is being transformed." In light of Rome, where are we going as a nation? And in light of Rome, what is the main reason? But today we must not only ask, "Where are we going as a nation?" We must ask, "Where is the world going?" This matter of divorce and sin in the home is becoming universal.

Why is there such a thing as marriage? Because God put it in place 6,000 years ago. And marriage is still a very widely practiced institution all over the world. But whereas years ago, individual nations degenerated and God destroyed them, today, the entire world is affected. Listen as I give you dates regarding the allowance or legalization of divorce in the world: In the United States, Maryland legalized divorce in 1701 while South Carolina did not do so until 1949. France legalized divorce in 1792 but in 1816 it became illegal again; Prussia, 1794; the German States, in 1875; Portugal, 1910; Russia, 1917; Scandinavia, between 1909 and 1929; Scotland, 1938; Canada in the 1960s; Italy, 1974; Brazil legalized divorce in 1978; China in 1980; Spain, 1981; Chile in 2004; the Philippines was one of the last countries to legalize divorce. And I ask you, what will this legalization of divorce lead to? Well, in the 1960s Canada allowed for divorce, and in 2004, in Canada, the first gay couple married. We have hit almost the bottom of the sin barrel. Today there is not even a stigma attached to being gay and in government. As a matter of fact, there is a stigma attached to being against it. Ontario recently elected a gay woman with the matter hardly even coming up in the election race.

CONCL: And so we conclude. Why does God hate divorce? Well, I have given as the core reason the fact that it violates the nature and character of God. He is a triune being, but He is one. That oneness is maintained by agreement among the members of the Godhead. But in marriage, He God, makes of two one. That oneness was agreed to by covenant (Mal. 2). That covenant cannot rightfully be broken but by death. But I gave second, the reason God hates divorce is because of its consequences, it ruins families. But it goes beyond that. In history past, it led to the ruin of entire countries! We saw that in the OT. Like a cancer, it eats into all of society. But today we live in what we call 'a global village.' And today, because of the information age in which we live, it is leading to the destruction of the world.

As we look out over the landscape of what lies before us, is there any hope? Can things be turned around? I read an article in the June 20:14 issue of the Midnight Call, an Evangelical periodical which said 80% of married people are unfaithful. Is there any hope? The greatest hope is in a spiritual awakening. And if we do not have that, Christians who have a stand on this matter of divorce need to keep that stand and not be shy about it. Those who get married need to stay married. The article in the Midnight Call recommended Proverbs 5 for married couples. They need to find satisfaction with their partner. The long and the short of it is this, "Learn to be satisfied with your marriage partner. Be content with the wife of your youth." And when you allow dissatisfaction to enter you become fair game for sin. And this kind of sin does horrendous damage.

In the article I mentioned, the writer said, "Why is our society so broken? Why are so many tears shed in so many families? Why do children suffer such mental anguish? Because it is not normal to have affairs" (21). And what does divorce lead to? A broken society. Shed tears. Suffering children. Why does God hate divorce? The writer then speaks of the many fears of the unfaithful and he says, "Why do married couples who are faithful not have these fears? And why are they glad in their old age that they were faithful to one another, while those who were unfaithful often regret it and have missed true happiness?" end quote. Why? Because, 6,000 years ago, in the Garden of Eden, God put this principle in place. It is based on His nature and character and has very negative consequences

when disobeyed. Adultery and divorce are as wrong as they have ever been.

One note of encouragement. My daughter sent me the results of a recent study by Harvard trained Shaunti Feldhahn as given in David Cloud's Friday news. The news is that among those who profess salvation in an evangelical sense, who go to church regularly, the divorce rate could be as low as between 7-10%. David Cloud says that agrees with his findings as well.

[One does have to be careful. I read somewhere something like this: Statistics say that 37% of statistics are frauds. In other words you don't even know if that statistic is a fraud or not. So one just needs to be careful about statistics.]