

# Malachi #3: Defiling the Table and Dividing the Redeemed

by Ed Miller

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*God is addressing the issue of a lack of joy in ministry and the symptom of a great fatigue in the work of the Lord, reminding His people of the importance of a vital relationship with Him and the goal of ministry to satisfy His heart.*

**Duration:** 1:08:33

**Scripture:** Malachi 1:6, Malachi 2:4-5

**Topics:** "Reverent Worship", "Pleasing God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of serving God with reverence and awe. He highlights the covenant between God and Levi, where Levi revered God, walked in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity. The speaker emphasizes that the goal of ministry is to please and satisfy God, and that the only thing that truly satisfies God's heart is His Son. He warns against treating the work of God as a drudgery and encourages believers to offer their whole hearts to the Lord, finding joy and fulfillment in serving Him.

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## Transcript

Well, we have worshipped, and actually much of our worship was the indispensable principle. We are singing it over and over, just calling on the Lord to minister to us. Many of the songs we sang were about the finished work of our Lord Jesus, and the Lamb.

And recently, within the last, oh, I would say four months, I did a special study, not connected with any teaching, but just in my time with the Lord. And I was tracing Lamb, just through the Scriptures, and just seeing God's heart on the Lamb. And a verse that had touched me some time ago, but just once again was quickened to my heart.

And, you know, we are talking about the Lord being unchanging, never changes, always the same. And one thing that means is that everything He ever was, He is right now. But it also means that everything He will ever be, He is right now.

And I know someday in a full manifestation, He will be King of kings and Lord of lords and so on. But He is King of kings right now, and He is Lord of lords right now. And He was the Lamb from before the

foundation of the world.

And in history, He was the Lamb. And we read that forever in heaven, He will be the Lamb. But there is this mixing of metaphors.

I've got a whole group of mixed metaphors from the Bible. Very interesting. They wouldn't be allowed in an English class, but I love when God mixes metaphors.

Built up and rooted in Him. That kind of thing. The Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings.

If He had said healing in His rage, but healing in His wings. And we have such a metaphor. Let me give you that.

Because everything He will be, He is. And so this will become our prayer as we look into God's Word. It's in the book of Revelation.

And I thought I marked it. Chapter 7 and verse 17. It's speaking about that day that we'll know in a few hours.

And it says, For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will be their shepherd. Isn't that a great verse? The Lamb will be their shepherd. The Lamb who is in the center of the throne will be their shepherd.

And He will guide them to springs of the water of life. And God will wipe all tears from their eyes. It's not too much to ask that the Lamb, present principle, who is in the center of the throne right now, who is the shepherd, the Lamb who is the shepherd, will lead them to living waters of life.

Let's ask the Lamb to do that. Our Heavenly Father, how thankful we are again for Your precious Word and for the Holy Spirit whose ministry and pleasure it is to unveil the Lord Jesus. And we would ask now that the Lamb would be the shepherd and would guide us to rivers of living water.

And that God would wipe all tears from our eyes. Search us, O God. Know our hearts.

See if there be any wicked way in us. And lead us in the way everlasting. We ask in the all-prevailing name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. I'll ask you to turn again, please, brothers, to the book of Malachi. We will share what the Lord has shared with me, put on my heart.

I can blast the trumpet and I can shout, but He's got to bring the walls down. All the shouting in the world is not going to do that if the Lord doesn't speak. And so we have that forerunning ministry.

We baptize with water, but there comes one after. And if He doesn't come after, you're wet. That's all you are.

And we need Him to come after and baptize with life, with the Holy Spirit. We're looking at this wonderful book of Malachi. I'm so used to teaching a week spaced in between, and I'm big on review.

And it's hard when we're meeting like this because my temptation is to chew my tongue to a stomp. And not trying to review because I'm so used to doing that. But anyway, this much review, God is addressing in this wonderful book of Malachi, His remnant, His people, those that have responded to His grace, those that have desired to be delivered from captivity and return to the land to be right with God and surrounded

with the knowledge of God.

They had tasted the Lord. They had seen His goodness. But as I pointed out in the historical background, there were some years in between that revelation of the Lord and where they were at the present time.

It had been a long time ago that they had had a vital revelation of their God. And because it had been a long time ago, and because there were no special demands on their life at that time, and because there was no special crisis going on which is designed to crowd us to Christ and to lead us in that helpless dependence, because of those things, they had begun to cool down. Their bodies were still going through the forms.

Their bodies were still going through the mechanics of it. If you had taken them aside and queried them, they would have probably said, everything's okay. I'm doing fine.

Thank you. God is blessing. And indeed He was.

But in their hearts, as you know, God sent His messenger, God sent His prophets to discover to them that even though on the outside it looked okay, way down in their beings, there were these whisperings. There were these stirrings. There were these issues.

And God said, we must deal with those issues. And because God was also using that remnant to write a Bible, they didn't know that. God had engineered the situation so that those big things which for 3,500 years He had been expressing in His heart, He could now bring them all together very much like He did with the seven churches of Asia.

That He might bring all of those issues together and be able to lay them out in Scripture so that every age and every generation might know the whisperings of the heart when we have issues concerning God's love and concerning His work and concerning His people and concerning His ways and concerning His faithfulness and concerning the glory of the Lord. And so that He might deal with that in picture form as He closed the Old Testament. He engineered that situation and now He takes through Malachi, His messenger, His prophet, He takes His people aside, brings them into a private room and He says, we need to talk.

And He digs down and He begins to expose because of His great love, because He loves us far too much to let us go on with these issues. He deals with them in order that He might give in each case the perfect answer. You know the book, how it's laid out.

God speaks and they speak back. I say to you, but you say. And there's always this response and God lets them get it all out and He talks to them.

It's a personal interview. It's a communication between God and His people. And then after they've said what they can say, He presents the perfect answer that deals with that issue and as they embrace that answer, that issue is gone forever.

It's God's answer for that issue. Now, when we come to the New Testament, He'll expound on that and He'll give it in fully developed form. But now in the Old Testament, He just gives these pictures.

I've divided it down. You can look at those notes again into these six issues. As I say, some see more than that.

I don't know any that see less than that, but some see more than that. And so that's where we are. Now we've been going through these.

The first whisper had to do with harboring a suspicion. I've loved you, says the Lord. And they said, how have you loved us? You sent the devourer into our lives.

And how can you say you love us when this? And so He gives a word. He says, look at your brother Esau. Look at Edom.

Take a good look at somebody I hate. And they were able to see that as they looked out their window, the devastation. We went to the New Testament.

What shall we say then to these things? He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all. How will He not with Him freely give us all things? And once you see Him, once you see the one that God hated for our sake, our brother, our twin, our flesh and blood, our kinsman redeemer, then we'd be persuaded that nothing will ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Sweeping that away, we began to look in our discussion at Malachi 1, verse 6 to 2, 9. The inward thoughts of the heart concerning the work of God.

Follow along, please, as we read these verses. Chapter 1, verse 6. A son honors his father. A servant is master.

If I'm a father, where's my honor? If I'm a master, where's my respect? Says the Lord of hosts, to you, O priests who despise my name. But you say, how have we despised your name? You're presenting defiled food upon my altar. But you say, how have we defiled you? In that you say, the table of the Lord is to be despised.

He addresses the priests in order to reveal the attitude of the heart concerning the work of God. Verse 13. You also say, my, how tiresome it is you disdainfully sniff at it.

That is the ministry, the work, says the Lord of hosts. That's where we left off. The service of the Lord, the symptom that there was an issue in the heart, the service, the work of God had become tedious.

It had become a burden. It had become a drudgery. It had become very difficult, very hard.

They had lost their joy in ministry. That was the symptom. And I suggested to you that the real problem, we didn't touch yet, but the real problem was so intertwined with God's perfect answer that you almost can't give the answer without giving the problem.

And so we just looked at the symptoms so far. And the symptom is a great fatigue in the work of the Lord. We illustrated it this morning.

I want to say one more thing about the symptom before we look at God's perfect answer. God's heart in all of these issues was very burdened. God did not want them to be burdened with His work.

That's why He addressed it. He did not want them to have this as a great drudgery. That's why He sits them down and talks to them.

That's why He sent His messenger. Before we look at the perfect answer to that second whisper, let me tell you another reason it's so serious to have that symptom. Not only because it hurts God, it hurts the

Lord.

But look, if you would, at chapter 2, 1 and 2, and we'll come back to this in another connection. And now this commandment is for you, O priests, if you do not listen, if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. And indeed, I've cursed them already because you're not taking it to heart.

It's that expression in verse 2, I will curse your blessing. See, you've got to tie that into the ministry of the priests in that day because after they did their service, after they offered the Lamb, after they did their priestly service, then they would come out because God accepted that and they would bless the people. That's how it worked.

They would do their service and then they would bless the people. On the level of earth, this scares me to death because is it possible because of a whispering in my heart, because of some attitude in my heart, I can do some service of the Lord that I intend to be a blessing. That's the purpose of it.

And then God, because of something in my heart, curses the blessing. I tell you, brothers, no matter what the service is, if it does not have the anointing of the Lord on it, it not only does not bless, it does the opposite of that. It hurts.

It brings a curse. And so this is a very serious thing. Not only dishonors the Lord and hurts Him that His work would be a drudgery to His people, but even after that drudgery, you would say, well, I did it anyway.

I went through that. I didn't enjoy it. It was hard.

Now God will bless it. No, He won't. No, He won't.

See, that's why this thing is so serious. And all of that happens, my brothers, in here. I don't have to depart from orthodox theology to have that going on.

Oh, may God search our hearts. Is there an answer, a perfect answer, for boredom and barrenness in the work of God? Indeed there is. Indeed there is.

That's the glory of this book. He doesn't just take you down and whip you to death. He gives us the perfect answer.

He points us to the Lord in a way that's alive and takes us out of this. So let's look at that perfect answer. He doesn't come right out and give the answer.

He drops hints. Let me isolate three hints He sort of drops to get you to the answer. The first one He mentioned right away in verse 6. A son honors his father.

A servant is master. If I'm a father, where's my honor? If I'm a master, where's my respect? You see, right at the beginning, as He sits them down, they don't know the problem yet. It's wearisome.

It's tiring. It's so hard to serve the Lord. Again, over and over again, another phone call, another letter to write, another visit, another gift to give.

Oh, it's just getting so old. And they're not responding. And nobody appreciates me.

And why do I have to go through this? That's where they are. That's the symptom. And God begins as He starts to talk to them.

He introduces something. It should ring a bell. Relationship.

A son and a father. There's a relationship. See, they forgot something.

And now He's beginning to drop some hints at what's wrong in this whole service thing. A master and a servant. There's a relationship.

He goes deeper. He drops another hint. There's a word that He uses over and over.

As you study the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, pay close attention to recurring expressions or recurring words. If God says it once, it's enough. If He says it twice, it's enough enough.

If He keeps on saying it, there's probably some reality there that you need to focus in on. I'm going to just give you the recurring word. Chapter 1, verse 6. My name.

Your name. Verse 11. My name will be great.

Same verse. My name. Same verse.

My name. Verse 14. My name.

Chapter 2, verse 2. My name. 2, 5. He stood in awe of My name. He sits Him down.

They don't know the problem yet. And He begins to say, there's relationship. You despise My name.

My name. My name. My name.

My name is to be great in the world. My name. Look what you've done to My name.

What does He mean, My name? He's not talking Bill and Ed and Pete and Bob and Doug. That's not what He means, My name. He's using this in the sense of Isaiah 9.6. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty, God Everlasting Father.

His name is who He is. That's His name. It's Him.

It represents the person. And in this section, it's different than the rest of the book. What's His name in this section? Glance again.

Verse 6. Lord of hosts. Verse 8. Lord of hosts. Verse 9. Lord of hosts.

Verse 13. Lord of hosts. Verse 14.

I'm a great king, says the Lord of hosts. Chapter 2, 1. Lord of hosts. 2, 4. Lord of hosts.

2, 7. Lord of hosts. 2, 8. Lord of hosts. Am I making this up? It's right there.

And He sits them down. They don't know there's a problem. All they know is they've been burdened down with the work of God.

And He comes in and He says, We need to talk. We need to talk relationship. We need to talk My name.

Lord of hosts. I am the God of the armies of heaven and earth. That's what Lord of hosts means.

I'm the God of the armies of heaven and earth. Do you know who I am? We're talking about serving Me. He's getting down under their heart.

And He says, We have a problem. Relationship. We have a problem.

Me. You forgot Me in all this service. In all this work.

You forgot Me. My name. Do you know who I am? I am the Lord of the armies of heaven and earth.

Did you get it? He says it again. The Lord of the armies of heaven and earth. Do you understand? The Lord of the armies of heaven and earth.

Again and again and again. One, two, three, nine times. And then He drops another hint.

In case they didn't catch on. Chapter 1, verse 7 and 8. You're presenting defiled food upon My altar. You say, How have we defiled you? In that you say, The table of the Lord is to be despised.

When you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? When you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Would he receive you kindly, says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 1, verse 12. You're profaning it in that you say, The table of the Lord is defiled.

And as for its fruit, its food is to be despised. You also say, My, how tiresome it is. You disdainfully sniff at it, says the Lord of hosts.

You bring what was taken by robbery, what's lame and sick, you bring the offering. Should I receive it from your hand? says the Lord. Cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it and sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.

I'm a great king, says the Lord of hosts. My name is to be feared among the nations. Don't read that la-la-la.

In the Old Testament, the animal sacrifices were a picture. Of who? We can't forget that. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, we only have a picture. The reality is infinitely greater than the picture. That's just a picture of Jesus.

And they were offering an imperfect picture of the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, in the picture, the fire consumed the lamb. When you get to the reality, the lamb will consume the fire.

The fire, blessed be the Lord, the fuel for the fire is our sin. And when that was done, the fire went out. That's the lamb.

Blessed be the Lord. And that's what they were doing. This morning I told you in Leviticus chapter 21 that five times the offering was called the food of God.

The animals pictured Christ. And that's called the food of God. That was His meat.

That was His feast. That was what God fed on. That's His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

In one of the ceremonies, they took the lamb and the priest ate some. And then God said, give some to the people. And the people ate some.

And God said, burn some. And the part that was burned, God ate. And it's a picture of God sitting down at the table with all His people.

And the priest ate some, and God ate some, and the people ate some. And they were all at the table feasting on the lamb. That's what's pictured here.

Something happened when they started to view God's work as a burden. Something happened that changed their attitude toward the sacrifice. And they began offering a lamb with a mangled ear.

And they began offering a lamb that was lame, that was crippled, that was defiled in some way, blemished. Why would they do that? Some suggest it was mercenary. They just wanted the good lambs for themselves.

I don't know. They're in enough trouble. I hate to blame them for that.

I don't know why they did it. I think their attitude was, when I touch the problem, you'll see this more clearly. I still haven't mentioned the problem.

But when the work of God becomes a burden, you become slipshod in the work of God. And you don't give your best because you're tired. And because you're weary.

And because it's old hat. And so it's them, alright, well, I spoke on that once before. Where are those notes? Get those notes.

And you just give a mangled lamb sometime. I don't know. Maybe it was mercenary.

I wouldn't put it past some priest to do it just for what they could get out of it. But I'm inclined to think that they just became careless because of the ministry. What was so serious about offering the Lord an imperfect sacrifice? Let me nail it down to two things and then we'll see the problem.

Of course, the first is obvious. And you can see it in the book. It did not satisfy God's heart.

When you talk the work of God, when you talk ministry, when you talk Christian service, you better have in your heart that great truth that the end, the goal of ministry is the pleasure of the Lord. It's to serve Him. It's to satisfy His heart.

And the only thing that satisfies His heart is His Son. That's His food. That's what He eats.

And they were handling His food. Their attitude toward the picture of the Lord was their attitude toward the Lord. And they were handling that which satisfied God as if it were nothing.

And they were bringing an incomplete Savior to Him. That's the first thing that makes it so serious. It doesn't satisfy God.

The second thing we've already touched on in the expression, I'll curse your blessings. And that's this. Because it didn't satisfy God, He didn't accept it.

Now you say, well, that affected the priests. That affected the priests, but who else did it affect? It affected all the people because that was their ministry. You see, you need to understand that in God's original intention, God's original blueprint, He chose the priest to represent the people.

And He was in between. And He was to take one hand and hold the Lord, and the other hand to take the people, and by God's grace, He was to bring them together. That's ministry.

And in the picture, that symbolic temple, that holy of holies, that's where God was. And out there in the outer court, that's where the people were. And in the middle, that's where the priest was.

And that's His ministry to take Him and to take them and to bring them together. And how'd they do that? By offering Him a precious Lamb. And as they offered Him a precious Lamb, He was satisfied and the people were brought into union.

Let me ask you, if that's happening, I'm just offering Him His Son. And God is using me to bring them and Him together. Any weariness in that? Any bondage in that? When that happens... And so now I'll tell you what the problem was.

May God help us with this. The work became a burden because the work became their work. The work of the Lord became the work of man.

And when God's work becomes man's work, I tell you, you'll be crushed under the burden of that thing. There's no greater burden that I know of than to make His work my work. To make His work your work.

There is a great weariness in being involved in any religious operation when God is not in it. I'll tell you, that's what they were experiencing. And all of a sudden, the work of the Lord which was to offer Him that which satisfied His heart and be used by Him to unite a sinful people with a living God, that was ministry.

But all of a sudden, that wasn't ministry. Now it was cutting up the land and getting the wood and making the fire and getting the incense and fixing the table and trimming the candles and getting all of that cleaned up and getting ready to do it again. And it became the work of man.

Here's how you can tell. Here's some of the talk. You see, you're sliding into this.

I'm the teacher. These are my students. I'm the pastor.

This is my flock. I'm the elder. This is my responsibility.

I'm the director. This is my group. I'll tell you, we make ourselves ten gods.

It's tragic when we take on the work of God. It's His work. It's not our work.

And the clergy is taking over. Some have seen that a little bit, and so they're trying to solve the problem. And they say, well, we need to understand it's not really your work.

It's our work. That's not solving the problem. That's not solving the problem.

So I step aside and let the other brothers and sisters have gifts. Let them come and let them do it. Because it's not my work.

It's our work. And so we should share the burden. Brothers, may God help us not to share the burden.

Drop the burden. It's not my work. It's not your work.

It's not our work. It's His work. It's His work.

It's the Lord's work. It's the Lord's ministry. Remember in Matthew 16, Jesus did the same thing.

He took His people aside because they had started to miss it. And He said, my name, my name, my name, my name, me, me, relationship. Who do people say that I am? And they say, well, some say you're John the Baptizer and some say you're Elijah and some say you're one of the prophets.

What do you think, Simon? Who do you think I am? And he looked up to heaven and God gave him an answer in his heart, revelation of God. He said, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. Usually we stop there.

You know what the next verse says? I'm paraphrasing. It says, good, you see it? Get out of the way, I'll build my church. That's the context.

It's my work. I'll build my church. And it's based on that revelation.

When it becomes your work, when it becomes my work, it's a great, great bondage. It's an awful thing, brothers, for a frail human being to try to take on his shoulders the work of the Lord. Only God can do His work.

I say there's no greater burden than trying to do God's work. Let me give you the other side. There's no greater joy than watching God do His work.

No greater joy than watching the Lord do His work to bring people into union with Him. That was the second whispering. I'm going to ask you to turn please to chapter 2 as God summarizes.

After He identifies the problem, after He shows them it's not my work. That's what I mean. They're blended together.

It's not your work. It's my work. It's what I do.

It's 2 Corinthians 2. We are a fragrance of Christ to God among men. It's the same thing. We offer Christ to God.

And those who perish, they smell it. And those who don't perish but receive it, they smell it. It's offering Christ to God.

And God uses that to unite sinners. That's what ministry is. That's what this service is.

And God reflects back. And as He's talking to these people, they're sitting down in the counseling chair. You forgot relationship.

You forgot all about my name. You forgot who I am. You didn't understand that you can't give me a mangled Savior.

I'm not satisfied. And it won't help them. We cannot give anything but a complete Savior.

We've got to give a whole Christ to the people, to the Lord, so that God can bring the people. And that's what He'll accept. And God reflects back as He's talking to the people.

And He said, you know, that's how it was at the beginning. And He talks about the covenant of Levi. I won't hardly make a comment.

I just want you to read these words as God looks back and says, now this is what service is. Chapter 2, verse 5, My covenant with Him was one of life and peace. I gave them to Him as an object of reverence.

He revered me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in His mouth.

Unrighteousness was not found on His lips. He walked with me in peace and in uprightness, and He turned many back from iniquity. The lips of a priest should preserve knowledge.

Men should seek instruction from His mouth. He's a messenger of the Lord. Chapter 2, verse 4, He longs that this covenant continue with Levi.

That's what it's all about. He said, He revered me. He stood in awe of my name.

He walked with me in peace. That's the solution. Perfect answer.

Perfect answer. You say, what if the work becomes a drudgery? Lay hold of a full Christ and begin to offer that to the Lord. And your heart will dance.

You'll frolic. It will be amazing. You'll spin around in sheer delight as you watch God do His work and God build His church.

Once it becomes your work, you're dead. Once it becomes my work, it's all over. It's all over.

Don't get into that Christless struggle. Alright, so much for that. Now I'm going to ask you either to look at the handout sheet or just pay attention as we introduce this next whisper.

All of this pressing and all of this probing and all of this heart searching is not negative. God's not out to get you. He doesn't dig down to make you feel badly.

He does not want you having suspicions of His love. He does not want you burdened down by shouldering something that's never been intended for your shoulders. And so now, once again, He digs.

They're whispering now about the people of God. This is one of the areas, and may God help us, where the Lord really convicted me. He did a number on me really in a lot of these.

But how He ministered to my heart in this. May God help us. Because our Lord Jesus, when He walked on the earth, He walked in a seamless garment.

And He wants to do it again. The problem here with God's people, may God help us as we look at it. The third whisper.

Chapter 2, verse 10. Do we not have one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously, each against his brother, so as to profane the covenant of our fathers? He begins by giving us two pictures. The first is this.

Do we not have one Father? One God has created us. I've read various commentators, and they're trying to identify that Father. Some say that's Abraham.

Father Abraham. He didn't create us. It's Father God.

And what God is forcing His people to see, it's Old Testament. It's an illustration. But He's forcing His people to see that the whole world, every person, was made by Him, and we are all brothers by creation.

We are all in one family. A human family. He's not talking church.

Not here. He's saying, there's one God, one Creator, and we're all in one big family. Why can't we get along? That's basically His illustration.

And He gives a second illustration in verse 14 of chapter 2. Yet you say, for what reason? Because the Lord's been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you've dealt treacherously, though she's your companion and your wife by covenant. But not one who's done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel. And him who covers his garment with wrong, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

This is an illustration. Do not make the illustration the point. Make the illustration the illustration.

As you come in the Bible, you come up with an illustration, say this is an illustration, but what does it illustrate? And so we have to look at the point God's making. Now clearly in the context, if you knew the background here, you would know that at this time there was a tragedy. God's people were putting away their wives and they were taking heathen wives for whatever reason.

Nehemiah 13 gives you the awful details of that if you wanted to look it up. The prophet relates it to the Lord. He says in chapter 2.14, and this is one part that got me.

He said, I was there when you made your wedding vows. That's chapter 2.14. I was there. I was a witness when you made your vows.

It's not 100% clear in verse 13 whose tears those are that cover the altar. Some people think they might be the hypocritical tears of the husbands who are like Esau without repentance, and yet they're crying for some kind of a blessing. Some think it might be the tears of the poor women who've been divorced and dumped.

This is an accurate description of what was happening at the time. I couldn't say it this well, so I jotted it down. I got this out of a commentary.

I don't give you the names of the commentaries because some of these I can't recommend across the board. Anyway, he's describing the situation and this is accurate. She whom you thus wronged was the companion of those earlier and brighter days when in the bloom of her young beauty she left her father's house.

She shared your early struggles. She rejoiced in your later success. She walked arm in arm with you along the pilgrimage of life.

She cheered you in its trials with her gentle ministry. But now, when the bloom of her youth has faded and the friends of her youth are gone, when the father and mother whom she left for you are now in the grave, now you cruelly cast her off as a worn out, worthless thing. You insult her holiest affections by putting another one in her place.

That's what was going on. It may be that God was a witness to those early vows and the witness of the tears of those who were divorced. Glancet Malachi 2.15. I want to just get by this verse.

It looks complicated. It's really as simple as it seems complicated. I think the New American Standard actually confuses it a little bit.

Not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while seeking a godly offspring? What does that mean? Listen to the ASV of 1901. And he did not make one.

And did he not make one although he had the residue of the Spirit? Wherefore, why? He sought a godly seed. Therefore, take heed to your spirit. And King James is very close to that.

I think his point is this. If you disagree with me, that's alright. I think he's saying this.

When God made Adam and Eve, He made them one. And after He created Adam, and after He created Eve, did He still have power to create more if He wanted to? Did He have a residue of the Spirit? Was there extra power in there? Then, wherefore, why? Why didn't He make two wives for Adam? Why didn't He make three wives for Adam? Why didn't He give her ten wives or twenty wives if He still had power? If He still had a residue of the Spirit, wherefore, why? That He might have a godly seed. That's what that's saying.

And He's talking about the illustration. And He's given two illustrations. And the two illustrations are these.

I am the Creator. There's one human family. That's one illustration.

Marriage. I hate divorce. I made them for one union.

There's a picture there. That's how I made it. He gives those two illustrations.

What's the problem? He has sat His people down. He's given these two illustrations because He has heard another whisper. Chapter 2, verse 10, Why do we deal treacherously, each against his brother? We have one Father, one Creator.

Why do we deal treacherously? That's the problem. Man, each one against his brother. That's the story of human history.

Every man against his brother. As soon as man broke with God, in Genesis 3, he broke with man. Genesis 4, Cain rises up and slays Abel.

As soon as he broke with God, he broke with man. That's the story of society. Every man against his brother.

Nation against nation. Husband against wife. Father against son.

Mother against daughter. Neighbor against neighbor. But you know where we are.

We are not only won by creation. We are won by redemption. Every man against his brother.

This division. That's the problem with the people of God. This division that we're not one.

And that's the thing that is breaking God's heart. The Holy Spirit mentions the word five times in this section. Again, recurring expression.

Verse 10, chapter 210. The word is treacherously. Why do we deal treacherously? Verse 11, Judah has dealt treacherously.

Verse 14, Against whom you have dealt treacherously. Verse 15, Let no one deal treacherously. Verse 6, So that you do not deal treacherously.

Verse 16, It's bigger than not getting along. It's dealing treacherously. That's disunity in its fully developed form.

That's the worst kind of disunity. Supreme disunity. You say, what's treachery? A deceitful enemy? Somebody undercover? An evil? In this world we're living with treachery.

You get on a plane and you never know where that suicide bomber is. And he's got something under his coat or something in his shoe. You say, that's treachery.

That's not how it's used in Malachi. That's pretty terrible. You can't even turn around.

You see a little child running toward you. You don't know if the child's wrapped in explosives or something like that. That's treachery.

But that's not how it's used in Malachi. It's not some enemy who's camouflaged. In the book of Malachi, it's the treacherous husband.

It's not an enemy. It's a friend. It's the platoon leader.

It's your buddy. It's your neighbor. It's your sister.

It's your brother. It's the church. When a group of people professing the covenant of the Father, one by creation, one by redemption, the unique people of God, we are the body of Christ, related to Him by redemption.

It's not shocking with unbelievers. God tells us in Philippians, be nothing terrified by your adversaries. You expect it from the adversaries.

But treachery in the family. That's Malachi. Getting stabbed in the back by a brother.

By a sister. That's what this is about. And God said, I hear it.

There's a whisper. Something's going on down there. It's an awful problem of division among God's people.

If the devil has any wisdom in any of his operations, I detect it when he divides the people of God. It's an awful thing. The Bible doesn't just talk about it in one or two places.

God said, this is breaking my heart. This is the central issue I want to talk about. In all of these problems, He says, this awful problem of disunity among God's people.

And showing its extent by getting into the most intimate relationship on the face of the earth, even in marriage. Brothers, our unity was designed by God, as you know, to be the sign to the world that we belong to Him. And it was given as a sign to me to know that I've passed from death unto life because I love the brother.

It breaks God's heart. Is there a perfect answer? A perfect answer for this whole issue of disunity? Indeed there is. God passes by all the surface answers, you know.

How are we going to get along? Well, you know, you've got to try to communicate and try to understand the other person and learn their personality so you don't rub them the wrong way and be politically correct and make sure you avoid certain issues and don't say certain things. With so-and-so, you've got to use kid gloves. He bypasses all of that.

And He gives us the answer. Chapter 2, verse 15, Take heed then to your spirit and let no one deal treacherously. Verse 16, So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.

And so the key is in take heed to your spirit. What does that mean? Take heed to your spirit so you don't deal treacherously. If I've got a problem with my brother, I thought I was supposed to take heed to his spirit so I don't deal treacherously.

He doesn't say take heed to his spirit or to your wife's spirit or to your son's or your daughter's spirit or your neighbor's spirit or your elder's spirit or some brother or sister. Brothers, listen. Understand what I'm saying.

He doesn't even say take heed to your sin. He doesn't say that. He's going deep.

He's going deep. He's saying take heed to your spirit. Under the old covenant, this was a marvelous hint of what was coming in the new covenant.

What does it mean to take heed to your spirit? Well, I'll tell you the simplest thing it means. It's 100% sure it is. At least it means it's a spiritual problem.

Right? Take heed to your spirit. It's a spiritual problem. Take heed to the attitude of your heart, all of those emotions, hate and anger and bitterness and jealousy and revenge and vindictiveness and unforgiveness and all those things we're all familiar with.

How are we going to deal with all that? Do I have to make adjustments to everybody I talk to and try to figure everything out? He's your Creator. He's your Father. He's your Groom.

Your Redeemer. I'm going to make a statement and I don't want you to misunderstand my statement. I never have a problem with Lillian.

You say, well, you've got a perfect marriage. I didn't say that. I didn't say that.

I said I never have a problem with Lillian. And you know why? Because my problem is always with Jesus. It's not with Lillian.

And what he's saying when he says take heed to your spirit is that this whole problem of disunity is a spiritual problem. And if you're right with the Lord, you'll be right with man. And that's what he's saying.

It's a spiritual thing. If you're right vertically, you're going to be right horizontally. You've got to be right with the Lord.

You say, well, I've been having such and such a problem with that person. Take heed to your spirit. Your problem is not with that person.

It's always with Jesus. That's the answer for this whole thing. I consider Ephesians 2 and verses 11-22 to be the greatest passage in the New Testament on dealing with the differences among the brethren.

And one of the great principles of that chapter is this. The war is over. It's all done.

He has not called us to make the unity of the Spirit. He's called us to keep the unity of the Spirit. Because it's already made.

We don't have to make it. It's already made. He's made the unity.

And those who are mentioned in that chapter who are far off from God and from each other have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. You may not like it, but I'm one with you. And you're one with me.

And we're one with each other. And we're one with every Christian on the face of the earth. And God hears the whispers when we don't show that oneness.

We're joined to each other as really as we're joined to Jesus Christ. And the only thing that can destruct that unity is when something happens to my spirit. Again, He turns us to the Lord.

To walk in union with the Lord. That's the answer. If this hand is living for the pleasure of this head, and this hand is living for the pleasure of this head, these hands are in union.

It's when there's something wrong with my head. You see, this arm, you can cut it off. I live.

The arm is dead. This arm doesn't have a life of its own. It shares the common life of the body.

The body only has one life. It doesn't have two lives. And every time there's conflict, somebody has their own life.

There's only one life in the body. And you know His name. It's our Lord.

It's the Holy Spirit of God. Our spirit has a door on it. You say, where do you get that in the Bible? It's amazing when you read how it's used.

And I'll tell you sometime, honestly, I can hear the door slam in my heart. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 6-11, he said, our heart is opened wide for you. Know what he's saying? The door is open.

I'm right with God and the door is open wide. And then when he gets to chapter 7 and verse 2, he says, will You make room for us in Your heart? What he's saying is open the door. Open the door.

Our heart has a door on it. Our spirit has a door on it. And you ever go to somebody's house and you know they're there and they don't want to see you and you knock at the door and they don't come to the door? That's happening in the body of Christ.

We've closed our door. Brothers, take heed to your spirit. This is a simple, simple truth.

I hope this never happens. I'm only giving it as a terrible possibility. But it's possible that someday because I take my eyes off Jesus, You may have to put me out of Your fellowship and out of the church.

And if You put me out of Your fellowship and out of the church, You still can't close the door of Your heart for me. That door stays open. At all times.

Take heed to your spirit. We are one. And that door is always open.

And God says this perfect answer, Take heed to your spirits that we do not deal treacherously one with another. Well, those are God's perfect answers. You're doubting His love? Take a look at the Lord Jesus on the cross.

You're burdened down with His work? It's because you've made it your work. And it's not His work. Come back again and offer Christ up to Him and watch God begin to work.

And you'll get the joy back. You've got problems one with another? Disunity in home, in the family, with your wife, with your husband, with your wife? I forgot where I was. And take heed to your spirit, brothers.

Take heed to your spirit. It's a spiritual thing. We need to always be focused on the Lord.

And we'll pick it up there tomorrow. Let's bow to God. Father, thank You so much for Your Word.

Thank You for the grace You have to come to us and sit us down and listen to our foolish rationalizations and denials. Thank You for probing and for discovering to us and showing us our heart. And then showing us our Lord Jesus.

O Lord, we don't ever want to try to offer You a picture of Your Son that's mangled. We just pray that we might ever be lifting up to You a Christ that's full and complete and perfect. We know that satisfies You and with that comes the blessing and You draw people unto Yourself and You bless us by using us.

Lord, work that in our hearts. And then Lord, we pray that we might see that You have made us one. Teach us common life and the headship of Christ.

Teach us to live for the pleasure of the head that we might be one. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you, brothers.

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