

Malachi 1-2

Hello, Church. Thank you for coming out tonight.

We are two teachings away from completing the Old Testament.

Now, and this is very important, because every year, I give this warning, and people are shocked when they come in here... Next week is VBS...

Our children's ministry team turns the whole church into a land of imagination, and their creativity hits every nook and cranny of the facility, including this sanctuary.

We let the kids take over their church, and next Wednesday night, the team invites you all to experience a night of VBS.

So, next week will be a special night, the kids will be in here dancing with you all, doing their special songs, and you will get a glimpse of what they are learning that week.

It is really neat: our Children's Pastor and a faithful group of helpers wrote out this year's VBS and created it from scratch.

So it will be unique, whereas we would typically do the same VBS that every church does.

What a wonderful thing to have such gifted servants to do this.

This year, they will go to prison with the Apostle Paul, and they will turn this place into the Roman Empire.

They will take the kids back to the first century and look at Paul's prison letters.

If you still want to sign up your child, please find the registration on the website.

With that being said, let's pray...

When Jess and I were first starting in our marriage... She went away on a trip, and as I was leaving work one day, I wanted to get her something nice to show her how much I missed her.

I got sidetracked on my way to the flower store because there was a Tool Convention at one of the hotels I drove past in Havasu.

I was going to look, see what I could put on my wish list...

Before I knew it, I had tools in my hand and was walking to the register, and guilt came over me: “Wait, I need to get something for Jess.”

It was then that I looked over and saw a nice set of Samurai swords. They were not flowers, but they had floral designs.

She would love to have those sitting on a shelf somewhere, or, as I imagined, as a centerpiece on our kitchen table.

Well, I bought the tools, and her swords...

I texted her to tell her I got her a special gift so she had something to look forward to.

I left them out on the table, where I was sure she would keep them... and she looked at those swords, I couldn't wait to hear, “My, those are so beautiful!”

And I could tell her how I immediately thought of her, and they were hers.

But she was not happy at all. The words that came out of her mouth were, “What the heck are those swords? I hope they are not the gift you got me.”

I realize now, looking back 22 years at that moment, that those swords communicated that I had spent more thought on what I wanted than on what she would value. The gift reveals my heart.

I said, “They have flowers on them, they will last a lot longer than real flowers.”

She told me to get them off her table.

So, I did what any man in that situation would do: I called my best friend over, we took those swords outside, and we started ninja-cutting all the fruit we had in the house.

I tried to defend my choice later that night, “At least I got you something, why are you so upset? A gift is a gift.”

She threw back at me, “The gift reveals how much you value me, and I am valued at 3 Samurai Swords?”

That won the argument... I had nothing... she was right... I had gotten it out of convenience and selfish motive... I knew she would at least let me play with them.

Well, this is exactly where we find Israel in Malachi. God was not upset because the sacrifices lacked monetary value.

He was grieved because His people were bringing the blind sheep, the lame sheep, and the diseased sheep – animals they did not want anyway.

Their offerings revealed what had happened in their hearts.

They were saying they loved God while treating Him as an afterthought.

Through the prophet Malachi, God essentially asks, “If you gave this to your governor, would he accept it?”

The issue wasn't sheep, it was worship. The issue wasn't sacrifice, it was affection.

Today, the question is not whether we are bringing lame animals to the altar.

The question is: Are we giving the firstfruits, our best to God, or does He get whatever is left in our lives?

The prophet Malachi is one of the prophets we don't know much about.

Malachi means "My Messenger."

We know that he was the last of the Old Testament voices to speak for God.

After him, God's Voice was not heard in Israel until John the Baptist came in the Spirit and Power of Elijah.

This is pretty fitting because one of Malachi's last prophecies concerns Elijah's return before the Day of the Lord.

We will look at it next time we come together, this relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist.

Look at verse 1 now...

Polluted Offerings to God

1:1 The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

Now, remember what has taken place here at the end of the Old Testament....

The children of Israel had been taken into captivity first by the Assyrians, and then, finally, the Babylonians came for the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

They were in Babylon for 70 years. Then the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon, and under King Cyrus's rule, the Jews were released to rebuild their Holy City.

Only a remnant chose to participate in this great step of faith... but the excitement and anticipation wore off as soon as they saw the condition of Jerusalem.

The devastation was far greater than they had anticipated, and after laying the foundation, they became discouraged and left to rebuild their own lives.

The Lord rebuked them through the prophet Haggai, and the people got busy at it again.

Then God sent Zechariah to encourage them in the work.

Also, Nehemiah was sent from the presence of King Artaxerxes to help the demoralized Jews.

He came with the king's command to rebuild the entire city, starting with the walls.

After the walls were built, Nehemiah returned to Persia to report to the king.

When he returned to Jerusalem, a spiritual decline began among the people.

They had begun to compromise on their marriages.

God told them to be equally yoked, and they took wives from the people of the land who did not know their God.

The people were even profaning the Sabbath.

Nehemiah was a strong leader and took matters into his own hands and got things re-established.

Many place the prophecies of Malachi approximately 35 years after Nehemiah cleaned house on his second visit.

This would be God's final Word for centuries...

So, the messenger of the Lord will bring this rebuke...

It is interesting, as we will see, this rebuke starts with affirmations of God's Love.

Trials will come, heavy trials... and those trials are causing the people to question God's Love.

God will affirm that Love for them, but still give them the hard truth they need to hear.

Starting now in verse 2...

Israel Beloved of God

2 "I have loved you," says the Lord.

"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?'

Says the Lord.

"Yet Jacob I have loved;

3 But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness."

4 Even though Edom has said,

"We have been impoverished,

But we will return and build the desolate places,"

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

"They may build, but I will throw down;

They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness,

And the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever.

5 Your eyes shall see,

And you shall say,

'The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.'

Here, God makes it evident that His love was shown in His election of the people.

It is interesting, Paul in the New Testament pointed to this in...

Romans 9:11-13 (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), **12** it was said to her, "*The older shall serve the younger.*" **13** As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*"

God points to these twin brothers and shows how their destinies were vastly different.

The descendants of Esau, the Edomites, are to be wiped out altogether, and their land will be desolate. Any effort they make to rebuild their land will be stopped, and it will remain a wilderness.

We just saw the land of Edom in January, and I tapped Pastor Jacob on the shoulder, pointed over to the mountains and desert, and said, "There is Edom, man."

He nodded his head, very unimpressed... Because, as God's Word states, it will be a barren wilderness.

Jacob's non-enthusiastic look at the land was only a testimony of the faithfulness of God's Word.

The Edomites suffered immensely under the invasion led by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army.

Later in their history, the Nabataeans came from Arabia and inflicted great harm on the Edomites.

It was Alexander the Great who brought the final blow that ultimately wiped them out.

And here God affirms His love for Jacob; He chose Jacob by election.

And the race of the Edomites would be exterminated... and the witness of this taking place would magnify the Lord.

The fate of the Jews will be much different; as they were able to abide in the Lord, they will experience the greatest glory in the Kingdom Age.

Some say it is not fair that God chose one and not the other.

Who are we to question the motives and the reasoning of God?

This is one handicap of our modern mindset... we believe if we cannot understand something, or something seems unfair in our heart and mind, well, I don't believe that part.

And because people do not like the Jewish people today, they make these verses sound unjust, unfair, and God is an angry Tyrant in the sky.

There comes a point when we must admit that we are so vastly limited in our knowledge and understanding of things that we cannot even compare to the knowledge and reasoning of the Lord... we need to accept it as Truth...

History and archeology testify to God's Word coming true...

You might protest, "I don't believe in a God that would do this, or hate anything, choosing one people group over another."

We are in no position to make God anything other than He is, and we know the God of the Bible, if the Edomites were ever in a place to repent, turn to the

One True God... He is willing to forgive anyone who comes to Him in Truth.

But the Edomites never did; they rejected the God of Israel, and this is their fate.

Fair or not... our opinion, does not change the facts...

When you create a universe, you can stand up and protest to the wisdom of God in all of this...

But His love is shown here as well...

The love comes before the rebuke to those who are His...

Polluted Offerings

6 "A son honors *his* father,

And a servant *his* master.

If then I am the Father,

Where *is* My honor?

And if I *am* a Master,

Where *is* My reverence?

Says the Lord of hosts

To you priests who despise My name.

Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'

7 "You offer defiled food on My altar,

But say,

'In what way have we defiled You?'

By saying,

'The table of the Lord is contemptible.'

8 And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice,

Is it not evil?

And when you offer the lame and sick,

Is it not evil?

Offer it then to your governor!

Would he be pleased with you?

Would he accept you favorably?"

Says the Lord of hosts.

So begins God's challenge to the Jews...

Notice, His choosing them does not relieve them of their responsibility here.

Under the Law, the children were commanded to honor their father and mother.

In this society, there was a tremendous respect and honor for the older generation.

This was a patriarchal society... and you could be a 70-year-old grandfather, but if your 90-year-old dad still lived, you would still answer to him.

Today, the respect and honor of the parents is an afterthought to my wishes and my dreams... my wants and my, my, my...

We think mostly of ourselves, and this brings immense dishonor to our parents...

Even if your parents are terrible people, you honor them as unto the Lord, for the Lord to see and bless...

But God says here, "If I am truly your Father, where is my honor?"

They did not obey or reverence even the Lord.

He notes that even the priests have despised His Holy Name.

They replied and asked for the specifics.

“When did we do this?”

God points to their offerings... the bread offered was polluted.

They wanted more specifics...

It was their attitude toward the Lord that made everything unacceptable to God.

Listen, our hearts and attitudes are very important in God's eyes.

The Jews were supposed to be a light, God's messengers to the world for truth.

Yet, their negative attitude toward the things of the Lord was evil.

They brought God the defective offerings... when they were called to give God the firstfruits and the best...

They are offering God something they would not even give to a friend or worldly leader.

This is still a great many people's way of relating to God.

They give Him the leftovers, the castoffs, the things that are not necessary to them any longer.

Chuck Smith told a story of when someone wanted to give an old rocking chair to his church, because it was their grandma's, and it did not mesh well with their new furniture, but they still wanted to be able to look at it sometimes, so they hoped the church would use the ugly thing somewhere so they could see it from time to time.

People often offer their cast-offs to the Lord.

God wanted the offerings to be sacrifices without blemishes.

Now, during the time of Christ, the Pharisees developed a system that was very strict about this, regarding inspections and what people could bring. But they had ulterior motives...

God wants honest worship from His people; He will bless those who honor Him first with a pure motive.

Look at verse 9 now...

9 "But now entreat God's favor,

That He may be gracious to us.

While this is being *done* by your hands,

Will He accept you favorably?"

Says the Lord of hosts.

10 "Who *is there* even among you who would shut the doors,

So that you would not kindle fire *on* My altar in vain?

I have no pleasure in you,"

Says the Lord of hosts,

"Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.

11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,

My name *shall be* great among the Gentiles;

In every place incense *shall be* offered to My name,

And a pure offering;

For My name shall be great among the nations,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

God tells them specifically what they have been doing. And He asks, “Now you think God is going to act on your behalf?”

This is the problem with us as humans... We tend to think the universe revolves around us... that everything happening in this world is about us and our well-being. But it is about God, and it is hard for us to break the offense of that...

No, if there were a God, I would have a better life, no hurt, no trials, God would not allow the pain in my life...

And our doctrine of God is based on our happiness... But this is His universe...

He desires a worship that is genuinely responding to His Love...

The Jews at this point were only doing the motions of their worship because they hoped to receive something in return for it.

We must understand that God is worthy of our worship regardless of what we get from Him; He is worthy of the best of our lives, even if we get nothing in return...

Here is a gnarly reality to consider: He is worthy of our worship even if we go to hell at the end of our lives...

He is worthy regardless... and we have to break this cultural mindset of offense and bitterness toward anyone or anything that does not bend to our wishes or will.

God is not pleased with performance religion; attitude is everything for Him.

He wants all the worship, the offerings that you give to Him, to be given without restraint or pressure, and given cheerfully unto Him.

This is one reason we don't have any pressure giving or the shoving of a plate in your face...

Jess and I went to a Church early on in our walk with some friends... and goodness, the bulk of the worship time was about giving money...

And they laid the pressure and the guilt out thick...

Me being raised in the Church let me see through the gimmickry of it all...

And they put that basket in front of me, and the guy wasn't moving until I dropped something in it...

And it was a complete standoff... My stubborn heart was set against his manipulation... and I would not budge...

Finally, my friend leaned over and told me, "You need to touch the basket if you don't have anything to put in it so that you can receive financial prosperity."

And another standoff began, because that was the most ridiculously unbiblical thing I had ever heard, and finally, after enough awkward seconds passed, the man moved onto the next person...

God does not want us to give out of compulsion, but with a willing and generous heart.

Not grudgingly or with the selfish attitude that I will get something for doing something for Him.

It is an act of worship...

God did not want anything out of the wrong heart and motive...

If you bring your offering into the church, and you are thinking, "Man, I could go to Chili's with this money after church." And you are not joyful in the worship, you are better off going to Chili's with it.

I have had people tell me that is the reason they will not support the work God is doing here... because they cannot give to God with a cheerful heart...

That puzzles me somewhat... Thinking of the torment of hell that Christ went to the cross and suffered on, to save me, the sin that He saved me from, that I was in bondage too, the wrecked relationship Jessica and I had coming into marriage, and His redemption of our lives...

There is no place I write a check to that I have more joy giving to than the work He is doing in my Church...

A tithe, ten percent, that is not enough for what He has done for me...

How can a person be so selfish about their pocketbook, their finances that only bring temporary security in this life, that they cannot find joy in giving to the work of the Lord in worship?

To me, a cheerful is no problem... I love writing that check each week.

I marvel that some of the biggest takers from what happens here in the ministry are often those who don't contribute one dime to the work.

We do it because He is worthy, not because we will get something in return...

The people of Israel were called to be a light to the world, to make God's name great among the Gentiles. But they despised His name...

Notice there in verse 11, this prophecy of the Church Era, where the Spirit of God is poured out among the nations.

And here we are tonight, honoring the name of the Lord and worshipping Him in this place tonight.

This, of course, is only a glimpse of what it will be like in the Kingdom Age, when all the world's worship will be centered upon its King.

Look at verse 12...

12 "But you profane it,

In that you say,

'The table of the Lord is defiled;

And its fruit, its food, *is* contemptible.'

13 You also say,

'Oh, what a weariness!'

And you sneer at it,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

"And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;

Thus you bring an offering!

Should I accept this from your hand?"

Says the Lord.

14 "But cursed *be* the deceiver

Who has in his flock a male,

And takes a vow,

But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished —

For I *am* a great King,"

Says the Lord of hosts,

"And My name *is to be* feared among the nations.

This is a very sad state of heart.

They looked at the things of God with disdain... and, really, it is a testament to the Grace of God that they were not just wiped out.

I think that about myself at times... It is a wonder He doesn't wipe me out... His Grace is something to behold...

Often, it is in seasons that I mostly don't deserve His Grace that His blessings pour out over my life.

It is such a humbling thing to behold, the Grace of God.

But they are accused of Beholding weariness in their attitude toward God... thinking serving His Will is weary, because it gets in the way of their will.

They had a life, and God was just an inconvenience to it.

So if they were going to offer God anything, it would be that which was torn, lame, or sick...

They chose to give God roadkill over what God wanted.

They were only to offer male animals under the Law.

And they were seeking to deceive the All-Seeing Lord of the universe by saying, "I don't have any males; all I could bring is a female."

Deception in our worship is a terrible thing... "I vow to give such and such to the Lord," then coming in and saying, "I cannot afford to give to the Lord."

God's own people here are turning against Him.

But notice how verse 14 ends, "For I am a great King, and My Name is to be feared among the nations."

And the Jews rejected their God when Jesus came to this world. He was despised and rejected... but today Jesus has been accepted by the goyim, the nations.

And again, we are here tonight, giving honor to the King of kings.

Jess knows when my thoughts get away from me, and I need to take them captive, I start singing, "Our God is an awesome God, He reigns."

And I meditate on how awesome our God is... and I sing it, until my mind is healed of the thoughts swirling through it.

He is an awesome God Church, and I think you know that, that is why you are sitting there tonight.

Look now at verse 1 of Chapter 2...

Corrupt Priests

2:1 "And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If you will not hear,

And if you will not take *it* to heart,

To give glory to My name,"

Says the Lord of hosts,

"I will send a curse upon you,

And I will curse your blessings.

Yes, I have cursed them already,

Because you do not take *it* to heart.

God now directs His message to the spiritual leadership of the day.

It is terrible when a person enters ministry as a profession, when the paycheck is their motivation for the work.

They have no regard for the Word of God, or what it means for their life...

They become, oftentimes, well spoken, deep thinkers, well dressed, but they are charlatans.

They have learned an act in the ministry, where they can tell others how to live, often with eloquence and conviction, but they don't do anything they teach.

It is a tragic thing when a person can work in a church, or in the ministry, or serve in leadership, and they tell others to give glory to God, but they themselves are so far from Him.

God tells the priests here that they will be cursed for such treachery.

They did not take the God they claimed to represent seriously.

Verse 3...

3 "Behold, I will rebuke your descendants

And spread refuse on your faces,

The refuse of your solemn feasts;

And *one* will take you away with it.

4 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you,

That My covenant with Levi may continue,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

5 "My covenant was with him, *one* of life and peace,

And I gave them to him *that he might* fear Me;

So he feared Me

And was reverent before My name.

6 The law of truth was in his mouth,

And injustice was not found on his lips.

He walked with Me in peace and equity,

And turned many away from iniquity.

7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge,

And *people* should seek the law from his mouth;

For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

God had established the Levites as the priesthood.

He had a covenant of life and peace with them.

He chose them because they had great reverence for God and His Name.

When Moses called for the Israelites to stand with him to confront the false worship surrounding the golden calf, it was the Levites who came to him.

God established a covenant with them.

God offers us a covenant tonight as well, of life and peace in Jesus.

Remember, on His last night here on earth with His disciples, He took the cup, and said, "This is a New

Covenant in My Blood shed for many for the remission of sins.”

And tonight, God is offering us eternal life.

He will enter into a covenant with you if you believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Allow Jesus to be Lord of your life...

And through Jesus, you are given peace with God, peace in your life, and life abundant here, and eternal life to come.

The Levites had their covenant, but it was contingent on their bringing the Word of God to the people and ministering in Truth.

There should have been a place where people could have gone to find knowledge about God, and to know what God is saying about them.

The priest was the messenger and servant of God.

God has given His Word to communicate to this world...

It is interesting to me when someone believes they hear God, and it is something completely different than what His Word says.

They speculate on what God is saying... They say things like, “I believe God is telling me to tell you this...”

I have found that just sticking to the Word, what the Bible says, is the surest way to hear the Lord.

As a teacher of the Word, I never want to stand up here and speculate on what God might be saying.

I have seen speculation my whole Christian life: a war happens, and people speculate; a crisis comes, and people speculate; they try to put puzzle pieces together and guess what might be happening...

I like what Paul said in... **1 Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you:**

As a pastor, this is the safest ground to stand on...

We have received the Word of God, and my calling is to deliver it faithfully; that which I received, I deliver to you.

We could draw more people in if I started speculating, creating drama around certain events, and engaging in political speculation in particular.

But I am only comfortable in this lane, giving out what the Spirit has given us through the Word of God.

I know I will stand before the Lord one day, and give an account, and I want to be able to see, "I did not shun to give them the whole counsel of Your Word."

The priests in Malachi's day were giving opinions, their own words, and disregarding their calling.

Look at verse 8...

8 But you have departed from the way;

You have caused many to stumble at the law.

You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

9 "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base

Before all the people,

Because you have not kept My ways

But have shown partiality in the law."

Now, in Jesus's day, the religious leaders had gone beyond the Law and created traditions that they held higher than God's Word.

They had departed from the way God had established, and put forth heavy burdens for the people.

Jesus brought things back to the simple Word of God when He taught this...

Matt 5:17-20 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **19** Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes

and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, today, we relate to God through His Grace... and it is not my righteousness by obeying the Law that justifies me before God.

My righteousness is imputed to me through Jesus Christ.

But Church, understand something, the heaven and earth are still here, that Law is still there, God's Word still stands.

Paul said,

Rom 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

The Law of the Lord is perfect. The Law actually doesn't stop us from doing one decent thing.

The Law protects us from harm and from things that pull us away from God, and even promotes health...

The Law is meant for good.

And there are a great many who cause people to stumble over the Law, because they misuse it...

The Law does not make us Holy or Righteous.

That happens through faith in Jesus.

And it is through Jesus that we have the power to live according to that Holy Standard...

Apart from the Holy Spirit, none of us would have a chance to live right.

The Law is a tutor that shows us our incompleteness and leads us to the One who came to fulfill the Law.

Now, things in the Law need to be taken in context as well... and the prohibitions in the Old Testament need to be held up to the New Testament revelation, because some of those Laws are specific for the Covenant people...

Dietary Laws, the Feasts, and other matters are dealt with clearly in the New Testament.

Verse 10 now...

Treachery of Infidelity

10 Have we not all one Father?

Has not one God created us?

Why do we deal treacherously with one another

By profaning the covenant of the fathers?

11 Judah has dealt treacherously,

And an abomination has been committed in Israel and
in Jerusalem,

For Judah has profaned

The Lord's holy *institution* which He loves:

He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

12 May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob

The man who does this, being awake and aware,

Yet who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts!

13 And this is the second thing you do:

You cover the altar of the Lord with tears,

With weeping and crying;

So He does not regard the offering anymore,

Nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands.

God is our Father in heaven.

He made all of us... The question is asked, "If God created all of us, why do we deal so treacherously with one another?"

Is there not one Creator? We all come from the same God...

Yet, look at the turmoil in the world today, the bloodshed, the wickedness...

Humanity tried to hide, block, push down the truth about God...

And when God is removed from the equation, humanity is reckless, because they are controlled by that inner lust for more...

This leads to war and bloodshed... we convince ourselves the violence is justified, because it is in our country's interest...

You have oil, goods, and natural gas that I need. I will build my army to take it from you.

If the world would submit to God's Way and Rule, there would be love and peace...

One day, the human family will sit under the rule of Jesus as one family...

Here, the Jews had turned away, and those coming out of Babylonian captivity were sent there because they rejected their God.

Judah is here again profaning the holiness of God and turning again to marry the daughter of a strange god.

God is telling them now that He will cut them off, because these are repeat offenses, with no repentance.

They were doing it all again, breaking God's covenant...

Yet, they would come and cover the altar with tears and weeping.

In pretense, God would not accept it any longer, their polluted worship.

Again, God looks at the attitude it is offered.

They had an outward expression that did not match their hearts.

And when we are caught, there is a huge sense of remorse.

Many tears... but so often it is not over the crime but over the fact that we were caught.

It is the penalty that is feared, causing the tears.

But God tells them He sees their motives here... The offerings they are bringing will not be received.

Look now at verse 14...

14 Yet you say, "For what reason?"

Because the Lord has been witness

Between you and the wife of your youth,

With whom you have dealt treacherously;

Yet she is your companion

And your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make *them* one,

Having a remnant of the Spirit?

And why one?

He seeks godly offspring.

Therefore take heed to your spirit,

And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For the Lord God of Israel says

That He hates divorce,

For it covers one's garment with violence,"

Says the Lord of hosts.

"Therefore take heed to your spirit,

That you do not deal treacherously."

17 You have wearied the Lord with your words;

Yet you say,

"In what way have we wearied *Him*?"

In that you say,

"Everyone who does evil

Is good in the sight of the Lord,

And He delights in them,"

Or, "Where *is* the God of justice?"

When you stand before the pastor and give those Holy and Sacred vows.

You promise to love and cherish each other.

In sickness and in health, through the ups and downs of life.

You both say, "I do."

That is a sacred vow taken before God.

You promised that you would love each other no matter what life throws at you.

That forgiveness would rule and reign over your relationship.

And many through the years of trial, their hearts begin to look elsewhere, attraction and fantasy, and temptation comes...

Men and women deal treacherously with the spouse of their youth... going out on their marriages... abandoning their children... all for the selfish ravaging demands of their wicked heart.

God is saying here, He sees it all, He remembers the covenant you made... and He will reject your gifts, your worship, your words.

The treachery in the home pollutes your relationship with God.

The Lord has witnessed your rejection of the spouse of your youth... who was meant to be your lifelong companion.

That person stood by your side through all those difficult years, understood the assignment and covenant before God, that you two were to be One...

And you stepped out, broke up the family, created chaos for everyone in your home...

God says, "None of it escaped my eyes!"

God wants your home to be secure, a loving environment, a place where your children can grow up knowing Him, and be allowed to find their own faith.

So many of us sit in church, trying to relate to God as a Father, but the earthly father who raised us ruined that imagery forever.

How our homes need to be healed, how desperately the next generation needs to see a genuine expression of faith, a mother and father who, for better or worse, stick it out.

He made you one because He was seeking a godly seed, children to grow up in the way of the Lord.

The Bible tells you, husbands, to love her like Christ loves the Church, and you wives to respect and honor him.

Don't deal treacherously with each other...

Don't enter into a marriage ignorantly... look at her carefully before you say "I do," Make sure he is a man that will care for you as Christ did for the Church, giving himself for the Church.

If he is not that now, don't think he will change in marriage...

So many make the foolish error of going into marriage thinking they will change the person...

Nope, the one you stand at the altar with is who you get... for better or worse... some of you went into it knowing the worst was all he offered, all she offered...

We live in a day of selfishness, where everyone who does evil is thought to be good, and everyone who promotes good is thought to be evil.

There are huge consequences for the choices we make against God's Word and Warning...

Now, if you are here looking back at mistakes, there is Grace enough for you at the Cross of Christ...

But what should not happen is remorse over our sin, then going right back to bed in that sin...

Some will get out of a sinful relationship... come to the altar and ask for a cleansing, only to run to another bed with another person.

There is Grace, through genuine repentance, healing found in Christ... but like He told the adulterous woman, "Go and sin no more."

Believe God's Word above your own desires... come to Him in truth and heal tonight... **Let's pray...**