

WHY DOES GOD HATE DIVORCE?

Text: Mal. 2:13-16

INTRO: Our subject this morning is, "Why does God hate divorce?" Recently I read an article 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. As I read that article a question struck me, and it was this: Why does God hate divorce? Or why is it wrong? Or put another way, why does God require marriage? I have studied all the major passages and pondered whether the Bible allows for divorce or not; but I have never asked this question: Why does God hate divorce? He plainly says He hates divorce. And I thought, Ok, God hates divorce. But why is that? That led me to wonder, why did God establish marriage in the first place? I think it is clear from Scripture that God loves marriage. He longs to see people marry. He wants the earth populated. He said, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

You see, marriage is practiced by mankind, not because man thought it would be a good idea. Marriage was God's plan. All mankind got the idea of marriage from God. So why did God set out marriage? God created man for the express purpose that man might reproduce and fill the earth. He wants the earth filled with mankind. So why not give them free reign in reproduction, like He does to all of the animal world? Surely He could have had the earth filled a lot faster if He had not restricted man by marriage. Why did God set out things in such a way that He required man to be married in order to reproduce? Why does He hate divorce? And we might ask, "Why does He love marriage?"

I came to these thoughts at the same time as I was rewriting the notes I use for teaching on marriage in the Catechism. And from that article, and from the questions I began to ask, I began to ponder, and then study this question. And from that study this message developed. Truly, such a question, and such a study is foundational to any discussion of marriage or unchaste physical acts and the subject of divorce.

And in this message, I want to seek to answer to some degree the question, "Why does God hate divorce?" Earlier Malachi 2:13-16 was read for us. Verse 16 says, "For the

Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce..." Let me just mention to you here that some believe that this verse does not say that God hates divorce. The ESV even translates it like this, " "For the man who hates and divorces, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts..." I think, however, that the majority of scholars would not be on the side of that translation. But I would say this, verses 15-16 give some extremely difficult words and phrases to translate.

I had planned to give two other messages on Deuteronomy 24, but as I studied for this message I decided to rather extend it to two messages and leave the other subject for another time. One's conclusion on why God hates divorce will have a significant impact on how one sees some of the difficult verses related to this subject.

I would have liked to give you an assignment before I did this message. The assignment would have been: Why does God hate divorce? If what you would have written down negative consequences or results of divorce, you would have done what I did. I began my research starting with negative consequences. It led me to what I believe is the core reason. So, what I intend to do in this message is seek to lay out what I see as the core reason why God hates divorce. Then, in another message, I want to look at some of the negative consequences. As we look at this core reason, I think there are three points that will help us understand this core reason. These are the nature of God; the creation of man; and the fall of man. All of these are greatly instructive to our question this morning and to see why this matter is under such demonic attack.

I. THE CORE REASON (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY REASONS?)

A. The Nature Of God

-Divorce violates God's nature and character

We begin then with the nature of God. In many questions we might have regarding life, if one can find the root or core of the subject one is a long way towards answering one's questions. We might ask, "Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?" And one might come up with many different answers. But it is helpful to find out the core reason why I am here. It will help more than anything else. When I learn that

God created me for His glory, and that I am to live to His glory; and I learn what it means to live to the glory of God, that is absolutely core.

We have a question before us: Why does God hate divorce? We could begin, as I began, and that is to find out what the negative results of divorce are and you will find a list of very devastating things. But, as I see it, they are not the core reason why God hates divorce, they are the consequences or results of divorce.

So, to find out why God hates divorce, one must, if at all possible get to the root or core of the subject. So let me give you my proposition as to the answer to our question: Why does God hate divorce? Let me give a two-fold answer. First, God hates divorce because it is contrary to His nature and character; and second, because it destroys the picture of God's faithfulness to His people Israel, and Christ's relationship to the Church. And let me just add to that, that marriage is permanent because God's nature is permanent and the picture of His faithfulness to His people is permanent. Divorce violates God's nature and character.

I have come to see that marriage is based on the nature and character of God Himself. That is why He required marriage of man in the very first place and why He can use marriage as an illustration of His relationship to His people as we will see later. His nature and character is unchanging.

So, let us look at this. God is a Triune God, but He is one. That is His nature. In Deuteronomy 6:4, the most oft quoted words of the OT by the Jew it says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one!" He is three Persons but one God. If the Triune God could be divided, or the members divorced from each other, God would truly die. Death is a division. And there is nothing, nothing more horrible to think of than a division between the members of the Triune God. The union between the members of the Godhead is the most intimate union in God. There must be complete agreement among them to maintain that union. Thus in marriage, the most intimate God ordained union between two people, an agreement must be made

by the two. That agreement is the marriage covenant Malachi speaks of. Both parties in the marriage relationship must agree to the covenant. Here we have marriage based on the nature and character of God. This is the highest and holiest relationship possible and it is grounded in the very nature of God Himself. This is the core reason why God hates divorce.

When God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, was that a reflection on His own triune relationship? That is well possible. So when God had created Eve, He brought her to Adam. There is marriage. And Scriptures says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Now man and wife are one flesh. So Jesus said, "What God has joined together let not man separate." When husband and wife are divided or divorced, the marriage relationship dies. So the primary reason why God hates divorce, is because it is contrary to the nature and character within the Triune Godhead, and thus contrary to His will.

Divorce does destroy the picture of God's relationship with His people. But that is not the primary reason. The primary reason is that that picture is based on God's holy and righteous nature and character. Therefore divorce is contrary to the nature and character of God, and thus destroys man's view of God. Thus, I believe, divorce tends to reduce the fear of God with regard to physical sins and is probably the main reason why many children of divorced homes lose their moral discernment.

Let me add here, that as I see it, divorce violates and breaks, not the bond of marriage, but the marriage relationship. And it goes beyond that. It then replaces that marriage partner with a substitute or with some substitute sin. In Scripture, idolatry is the spiritual counterpart to adultery in the physical realm. And idolatry breaks man's relationship with God and replaces Him with another, or a substitute. This, I believe, is the core reason why God hates divorce. He does hate it because of its consequences. But the negative consequences stem from the fact that divorce is contrary to the nature of God in the first place. So the core reason is the

violation of His character and His glory. In divorce, God's character, which in this regard shows His relationship to His people, and possibly His relationship within the Godhead, is violated.

Now, all of this falls precisely in line with the doctrine of sin. What makes something sin? What makes anything sin is that it is contrary to the will and character of God. Why is lying wrong? It is not wrong, first and foremost, because it does harm to man. It is wrong first, because it is contrary to the will of God and this will is based on His character. Lying makes us come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God!" Lying does have bad consequences for man, but that is because it is contrary to the will and character of God. All sin is sin for one reason; it is contrary to the will and character of God. It should not have come as a surprise to me then that marriage also is wrong for the same reason. On the other hand, why is telling the truth right? Because it is in line with the will and character of God.

So we ask, why does God hate lying? Is it because lying has such negative consequences? Yes, but is that the core reason? I think the core reason is because lying is totally contrary to the nature and character of God. It has negative consequences for man because it is contrary to the nature of God. Out of all this we can begin to see that God's commandments are for the good of man. "Thou shalt not bear false witness" is a command that is for our good. The command to marry and no allowance for divorce is for our own good. And it is for our good because it is based in the righteous character of God.

So, why did God choose that man should be married in the first place? Because it is in line with His will and character. Why does He hate divorce? Because it violates His character. Therefore I would conclude that marriage was designed by the will of God which in turn was based on His character or nature. God chose that man should marry because it is based in His will and character. Divorce is a violation of the will and character of God.

-The picture of God's relationship to His people

Let us consider secondly, the concept that God hates divorce because it destroys the picture of God's faithfulness to His people. When we were in the Philippines we ministered on two subjects; Christian leadership, and the Christian home. And when J. Mark spoke on the matter of the home, he gave a message in which he gave a thought that was new to me. I called him and he sent me that message. Here are the words that struck me: "Furthermore, it is critical to our understanding of this purpose to notice that God did not create the union of Christ and the church after the pattern of human marriage. Instead it is just the opposite. He created human marriage on the pattern of Christ and the church. Paul writes that the mystery of Genesis 2:24, written by Moses, is an illustration of Christ's relation to His people that has been planned in eternity past."

When I first heard J. Mark Horst's explanation that marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship to the Church; it caught me up short. I had always thought that when Paul spoke of Christ's relationship to the Church as being pictured by marriage, that he was using human marriage to help us understand Christ's relationship to the Church. But if J. Mark's view is correct, then marriage is patterned after Christ's relationship to the Church. Could that be why God chose that man and woman should be married before living together? Could that be why God hates divorce? I pondered that concept. It was very new to me. It was this that ultimately led me to the first point I made.

Well, as I was studying this subject I read a message which said somewhat the same thing and I began to study this more closely. Here are several quotes from that message, "The reason God hates divorce has to do with God's character and glory. Divorce tells an enormous lie about God. A couple breaking their marriage covenant implies that God is or at least may be a covenant breaker." And again he said, "The Book of Common Prayer wedding ceremony begins by reminding the couple and the congregation, '[Marriage] signifies to us the mystery of the union between

Christ and his Church.'" And to that this pastor said, "Nothing more important or profound can be said about marriage." And again he said, "Just as each human is made in the image of God, every marriage is made in the image of God's faithfulness to his people." And one more quote, "Divorce smashes the mirror and in doing so portrays God's fidelity and love as fickle and changeable rather than immutable and eternal. This lie that divorce tells about God's character veils and distorts his glory", end quote. Now this pastor believed that divorce was permissible in some cases but still he viewed divorce as being this serious.

Now you will know that I hold to a 'no divorce' position. In the future some time I plan to do two messages on Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to show that this very key passage on this subject does not allow for divorce after a marriage is consummated and it is sure the wife has not been unfaithful during the time of betrothal or engagement. As I pondered all this, I considered that if divorce is permissible after marriage, that would picture that God could divorce Israel. The picture of the relationship between God and Israel is that God married her. The book of Hosea pictures Israel as committing adultery after her marriage to God, and yet God pictured in Hosea that He would take her back. God and Israel have been separated. They are separated today. But God did not divorce her. When Israel repents, God will take her back. Why? Because marriage is permanent and He pictures His relationship to Israel as being married to her.

Furthermore, if divorce is permissible, it would picture that Christ could divorce the Church after He has taken her to heaven and she has become His wife. That is unthinkable. But that is not a danger because marriage is permanent because it is based on the permanent character of God.

So, in conclusion to this point, divorce destroys the picture of God's relationship to Israel and Christ's relationship to the Church.

B. The Creation of Man

So, in light of that, let us now go back to creation to see how God worked His will and character into the creation of man and how He brought about marriage and established its permanence. From creation we learn a number of very important things. Go with me to Matthew 19 for one moment (read 3-6). Their question is whether divorce is permissible. Jesus answered thus, "Go back to creation and you will find the answer right there." And according to Jesus the answer is, "No! You may not divorce, as creation plainly teaches."

God's will and character as regards marriage are revealed in creation. In creation God shut the doors to all substitute gods. It says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." And He said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness." Then He brought about marriage and shut the doors to all substitute relationships as we will see from the creation account.

And so, from creation we can learn a number of very important things. On the sixth and final day of Creation God created one man. In all other species of animated beings, He created male and female. But when He created man, He made the male only. Why? Well, there is a lesson for us to be learned here as there is in all the rest of creation. And what is the lesson for us? Genesis 2:20 says that among all of God's creation there was not found a helper suitable to man. A very horrible sin is denied man here. I do not want to go into this other than I think I should mention it. The sin of bestiality is more common among mankind than one would think and it has been very destructive in history past. I typed in on internet, "How common is bestiality?" This may surprise you. The answer was, "Very common." They said Beastforum.com has 874,000 members, enough to fill 20 baseball stadiums. In the OT this sin reaped the death penalty. You might be surprised that it is legal in 19 US states and in countries such as Sweden. But we do not get past the first part of creation to learn that this was not God's plan.

So God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable, or comparable for him" (Gen. 2:18). And why did God make a helper comparable

to man? Well, there is more than one answer, but first and foremost, God revealed in Genesis 1:28 that He wanted the earth filled with people. Thus God created man with a very great need for fulfillment with a partner of the opposite gender. And from all of what God set out at creation, man was to learn that there are no other ways to find fulfillment for that need other than the way God provided in creation when He made a woman for man.

So, God put the man to sleep and created a woman from the man. That too is a lesson. She was not created of the dust of the ground, but from the man (Gen. 2:21-22). She was created from the man and she was created for the man (Gen. 2:18-20). After God had created the woman, He did something very, very significant. He brought her to the one man (Gen. 2:22). There, in its bare basics, we have a description of the very first wedding, officiated by none other than Almighty God Himself. And after this the Scripture says, "Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh." One man. One woman. One flesh! Why does God hate divorce? It violates this very basic creation principle which is grounded in His nature! It makes no difference whether that man or woman is a believer or an unbeliever.

And so, when God created man, He made man in His own image. And when God had said it was not good for man to be alone, He created Eve from Adam, and brought her to him for a wife, and thus He brought about marriage and they became one flesh. Marriage is designed after the character of God. And in marriage God pictured His relationship to His people. In the OT marriage pictures God's relationship to His people, Israel. In the NT, marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the Church. And all of this was designed after the character and glory of God. Idolatry, on the other hand, is a picture of adultery in marriage. And idolatry is that which destroys God's relationship to His people, Israel. Idolatry is the most devastating of all sins between man and God. Adultery is the most devastating of all sins in marriage. So idolatry is sometimes likened to adultery in Scripture. When adultery happens, and if divorce is allowed, it will ruin mankind as surely as

adultery ruins marriages. When marriages break up, it pictures what sin does to God's relationship to His people. When marriages break up, that brings about every other kind of sin. It causes pain, far and wide and ultimately destroys society.

In the message I have quoted from by Jim Tonkovich, he said, "The reason God hates divorce has to do with God's character and glory. Divorce tells an enormous lie about God. A couple breaking their marriage covenant implies that God is or at least may be a covenant breaker", end quote. This same writer asked a very interesting question regarding the book, the Song of Solomon. Now if you have studied the Song of Solomon and have questioned why God had this book put in the Bible, you will have found different views. The questions are whether this book is written to deal with human love or whether it is written about God's love for Israel or Christ's love for the Church? Was it about God's relationship to Israel, Christ's relationship to the Church, or man's relationship to his wife? And this pastor said, "Take for example the Old Testament book the Song of Solomon. Is it a book celebrating erotic love between a man and a woman or is it a book about God's love for his people? The answer is it is a book celebrating erotic love between a man and a woman precisely because it is a book about God's love for his people." That was a captivating thought to me, since I have studied the Song of Solomon in some detail.

And so the answer to our question, "Why does God hate divorce", ultimately may be summarized like this: God hates divorce because it is a violation of His character and glory. The permanence of marriage is based on the permanence of His character. And it destroys the picture of His relationship with His people. When we lie, we come short of the glory of God. It is sin. It condemns. When we steal, it is a violation of His character. It condemns. We have failed God. When we divorce, we have failed in one of the greatest of all matters that have to do with God's glory. Like idolatry before God, or adultery in marriage, it wants to ruin the most precious of all relationships. And the consequences are absolutely devastating to mankind.

What is the bottom line to our question: Why does God hate divorce? The bottom line is it is because it distorts the character of God and destroys the picture it was designed to give of God's relationship in Himself and His relationship to man. As idolatry destroys man's relationship to God, so adultery wants to destroy the marriage relationship, and divorce destroys that marriage relationship.

If God had not set out marriage as the divinely approved behavior for mankind, we do not know if marriage would ever have developed. And if it had, there would have been nothing to keep man from disobeying, except human opinion. Maybe man would have lived like the animals and go to whomever or whenever they could or wished. And it could well be that if that had been man's course of action, that he would not have survived until today. Disease may have wiped him out. You see, man was not created to be like the animals. He was created to have dominion over the animals. Without the marriage law, man might have been constantly killing each other off, or because of such a life-style, they might have died out from diseases. Malachi says that when man divorces, it tends to cover one's garments with violence, or violence becomes one's garment (2:16). Divorce leads to many other sins.

But at creation God set man above the animal and instituted marriage. And this institution rings true in all hearts, even today. It is amazing the security marriage brings to a family and the security it causes when the children do not have to fear divorce. And it is amazing the insecurity divorce causes in families. Some years ago I read that one of the highest fears in the life of a child is the divorce of their parents. After creation, God did not wait for marriage to develop or for man to find out by experience that it was bad for him to live without marriage, and be like the animal world. He instituted marriage right at the very first. That is a lesson for us. And He gave careful instruction that a man was to leave father and mother when he married, and he was to cleave to his wife. A new family is created at marriage. This message, since it was practiced from the very first, has remained in many cultures. If it had not been set out at creation, the concept

of marriage would surly never have been practiced as widely as it has been, if it would have developed at all. And now, 6,000 years after creation, marriage is still practiced in many cultures. One can hardly overemphasize the importance of marriage.

C. The Fall Of Man

But we must consider one more point. It is the fall of man. At creation, God's plan was in place. Man and woman, based on His divine will and character; would marry, become a family, and fill the earth. This marriage was to be permanent and was based in God's character and it pictured God's relationship with His people. So God created man in the image of God, and man was created to marry and live in harmony with his wife for life. But then, some time after creation, another very significant event took place, an event that would greatly and negatively affect the most special of all human relationships. Eve was deceived by the devil, and Satan used her to lead Adam into sin; and through Adam the sin nature and death passed upon all mankind. And I think it would be safe to say that this sin nature has wreaked havoc in no other area of man's life as much as it has in that very special relationship God created and intended to exist between a man and a woman; the relationship of marriage.

You see, the home is the first and most foundational of all divine institutions. That is as true today as it has ever been. When the home is healthy, it affects everything. When the home is unhealthy, that also affects everything. And divorce is, I think, the greatest destroying factor there is to the home. Divorce is devastating. It is horrendous. People say of the divorced person, "Oh, how can you expect them to live alone." And our feelings go out to the married persons, the ones involved and responsible for the divorce. And by doing so, we often fail to see the children, the place where this sinful behavior does its biggest damage. It is the children that suffer the most. I believe the damage done in children by divorce, far exceeds the pain a divorced person who faces life without a marriage partner has to deal with. That is why God hates divorce.

Well, marriage problems are no respecter of persons and so it enters the lives of professing Christians as well as those of the world. And because divorce has affected Christians, Christians have sought every possible way imaginable to find room in the Scriptures for divorce. The most significant passages are Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-12. These passages are the heart of the issue. I have dealt with those in other messages which are available on sermonaudio.com/lhec.

Why does God hate divorce? He hates divorce because He created one man and one woman so that man would learn that marriage is between a man and a woman. He did not create two men or two women. We should need no further instruction in that regard. Why did God institute marriage? He instituted marriage, in order that man would reproduce and fill the earth in such a way that it would glorify Him. He made man to glorify Him. And man would glorify God by marriage and thus fill the earth with godly people. So Malachi asks, "Why did God make husband and wife one?" And the answer he gives is, "He seeks godly offspring." And because of the fall of man, divorce and every other kind of sin entered this most special relationship. As soon as divorce enters, so does every kind of evil and vice and man ceases to produce godly offspring. God wanted the earth filled with such people as would bring glory to Him. Divorce destroys that purpose, and the fall of man constantly lends itself to the destruction of man.

But, we might ask, since God desired to have the earth populated with people, could He not have filled the earth even faster by giving man free reign with his natural drives? The answer is a resound, "No, He could not have". He created man to glorify Him. And to glorify Him, man would need to obey God with regard to marriage because it is grounded in His nature and character. And the way man was created, if God gave him free reign with his desires; because of the negative consequences of coming short of the glory of God in this area, man would have either destroyed himself, or have stunted reproduction. When free reign with these desires is expressed by man anywhere, for any extent of time, it wants to end up destroying that which was already reproduced. It does

not enhance reproduction. That which is reproduced ends up destroying itself in other ways. Man does that by either killing each other off in violence, or by the health hazards such life-styles bring about. Because man was created in the image and likeness of God, free reign with man's desires breaks down societies and defeats the purposes of God. It causes horrendous grief in homes and children suffer great agonies. Man was not created to have free reign with these desires. He was created to obey God with these desires. That is what brings glory to God. But the fallen nature of man constantly seeks free reign with these desires.

Let us take an example from another area to show this principle of creation. Man invented smoking. But God did not create the body for smoke. And man said, "What is wrong with smoking?" And so man smoked. But God had not made the body for smoke. And soon man began to pay the consequences of smoking. And then, as time progressed, doctors discovered that smoking is not good for the body. God did not have to instruct us in the Bible that smoking is wrong. If it is destructive to our bodies, it is contrary to the nature of God. And you only have to go to the body to learn that it destroys the body. Natural revelation teaches us it is bad for the body. And so, when man learned from science what smoking does to the body, man began to put in place rules to guard others from the unhealthy smoke made by smokers. And there are many other such examples that could be used. And so, when it came to marriage, an area God was vitally interested in, He gave instruction for it right at creation. But the sinful nature of man is constantly arrayed against the will of God.

And so, at creation, God said it was not good for man to be alone so He created a helper suitable for him and then He brought the woman to the man. There they were married. And God said the two should be one flesh and cleave together and Jesus said no man should separate the one flesh. And God indicated man should marry. Divorce or other physical acts contrary to the will and character of God, for which the marriage relationship obviously was not designed, would destroy, rather than enhance healthy reproduction. Such acts would do tremendous damage to

the relationship of the two involved, and to their offspring, and many others around them, and so God called these things sin. And so, to guard this very special part of His creation, God set out those basic rules we find in Genesis 1-2 to regulate marriage.

Why does God hate divorce? It goes directly against His nature and character, against the way He designed man, and it destroys the purpose for which He made man. When you use a car like a tractor, soon it will wear out. Why? It was not designed for that. When you divorce, soon all of life wants to go wrong. Why? It is contrary to the way God designed man. Divorce destroys. Divorce is usually first caused by promiscuous living, and it ultimately leads to the most shameful conduct man can be involved in; sins such as have become legalized in our societies in North America today. Before homosexuality is allowed, divorce must be allowed. When divorce is not allowed, it is most unlikely that sins beyond that will be allowed.

CONCL: So we conclude. Why does God hate divorce? I have concluded that the core reason, the primary or root reason is that it is a violation of the will and character of God and it destroys the picture God gave of His relationship to His own people. God created man and woman to be united in marriage and to fill the earth. As soon as marriage is destroyed, it destroys a picture of the character of God. It destroys a picture of His relationship to His people. And when that happens, especially in this particular sin, it opens the flood gates of sin.

Divorce veils and distorts the character and glory of God and destroys the picture of God's relationship to His people. And when man divorces, it always has negative consequences, and in this case very destructive consequences. And in the next message I want to deal with the consequential reasons why God hates divorce. You see, when we violate the character of God it always has negative consequences for us. God's commandments are based in His character and they are always for our good. Sin comes short of the glory of God and is always bad for man.