

God's Design for Christian Marriage, Preached on November 9th, 2014

By Pastor James Moriello, Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket RI

“Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make *them* one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.” (Malachi 2:14-15)

Our text is taken from the larger context of Malachi 2:13-17. The Lord was witness to the marriages that were being ended by men divorcing their wives for no good reason. Perhaps they cited irreconcilable differences, which is not a biblically recognized reason for divorce. The truth of the matter was that the people were excusing their own sin in neglecting their wives and families. After God, their wives and families should have come next, but this people honored neither God nor family.

We have three applications which arise from our text. First, your spouse is your companion. Second, your marriage is a covenant. Third, your family is to incubate godliness. These applications can only apply to the Bible's definition of marriage as the covenant union between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5). Those who are living in any other arrangement (other than singleness) are living in sin, and should seek to make things right in their lives before God.

First, your spouse is your companion. Your spouse is your companion in the physical sense, the spiritual sense, and the practical sense. The Apostle Paul addresses the physical aspect in his First Letter to the Corinthians in response to their questions about it. "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Spiritual companionship is also vitally important for successful Christian marriage. We have it in our text: "But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit?" (Malachi 2:15). It is implied here that the union is between two believers, something that the Bible also stresses elsewhere. An unequal spiritual yoke will surely place stress on the marriage, and it is forbidden for a Christian considering marriage to marry outside the faith (2 Corinthians 6:14). The principle is for the Christian to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). Many of you may be wondering what happens when one becomes a Christian after having been married as and to an unbeliever. Well, the Bible has something to say about this

as well. "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:10-16). The unbelieving spouse and children are sanctified in the sense that they benefit from the prayers and example of the believer in the household. However, this is no guarantee of salvation, for each is accountable to the Lord for his or her own decision about Jesus. The new Christian should seek to model Christ in the home, share God's truth when opportunities arise, and not cease praying for unsaved family members, knowing the final destination of those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unmarried friend, you can spare yourself much heartache in this area by heeding God's counsel on how to choose a mate. The third area of companionship in marriage that we will consider is practical. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-11). Christians should be available emotionally and practically in order to help our spouses in time of need, and not leave them feeling rejected and alone.

Second, Christian marriage is a covenant. Let us pick up in the book of Ecclesiastes where we left off on our last point by quoting the next verse. "Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). There are times when even the strongest of marital unions are tested. In these times, Christ is to be the 'third fold in the cord'. When Christians seek solutions apart from Christ for marital issues, we are depriving ourselves of the One who can truly help us the most. The two have been made one through holy matrimony, and this new compound 'one' ought to abide in Christ just as individual believers should, if they expect to bear fruit (John 15:1-5). Marriage is a covenant. We have it in our text: "Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant" (Malachi 2:14). This covenant is the vow before each other and God in heaven to love and cherish each other for the duration of days on earth (Genesis 2:24;

Matthew 19:4-6). Scripture even goes so far as to compare the marriage covenant on earth to the New Covenant which Christ instituted between Himself and His church. Consider the following passage, as it is instructive with regard to living out the covenant of marriage. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:22-33). Just as Christ loves His church sacrificially and unconditionally, so too ought we to love one another.

Third, the Christian family is to incubate godliness. I like that word "incubate" because it reminds me of the place where they put babies in the hospital to protect them from environmental factors that are not good for their proper growth and development. When it is the appropriate time, the baby will be taken out of the incubator and begin to be exposed to the elements of the world a little at a time. We see in our text that one purpose of God in Christian marriage is that "He seeks godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15). To be sure, Christian parents must explain the gospel clearly and in terms that can be understood to their children. But the old adage that 'more is caught than is taught' is true. The Bible has something to say about the lifestyle of the godly parent. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Mom, Dad, if you don't get with the program, you can't expect your children too either. Even if you are not a parent, or don't have children together, or even if you do, consider what the witness of your lives and home are to the watching world. Would Jesus be pleased to be your guest?