

DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE:
Meet Goliath
Message 3
5547 Malachi 2:1-16

INTRO: We have been looking at the first point in these messages, which I titled, "The Sin Of Divorce And Remarriage." Under this point we have looked at the theological factors. We looked at the major unclear passages of the Bible, and then the numerous very clear passages. We concluded with the hermeneutical principal that the unclear must give way to the clear, and that the Bible makes no allowances for divorce in any circumstance. To be married to another partner while the first one is alive is to live in continual adultery.

Then we looked at the historical factors. We said that the OT closed with the liberal view of Rabbi Hillel, and the conservative view of Shammai. And then Jesus came, in Matthew 19, the Pharisees, seeking how they might trap Jesus and get rid of Him, by asking Him about divorce and remarriage, place Him between Hillel and Shammai. When Jesus had answered them, which, as I interpret it, was that divorce was never acceptable, the disciples could not believe their ears. They said, "In that case it is better not to marry!" By the way, right around this time, Rabbi Shammai passed away.

We further saw that the teaching of the NT brought about a great change on the subject of divorce in the Church, which began right after Christ ascended. And we saw that the early church, like Christ, held a very strict view, allowing for no remarriage as long as the first partner was alive. When Augustine endorsed that view, it was set in stone until the 1500's.

In the 1500's the reformation came, restoring the doctrine of justification by faith; but at the same time opening the door for divorce and remarriage. The permission to divorce and remarry is, undeniably, a Protestant doctrine. The failure to maintain the view of the permanence of marriage is the tragic failure of Protestantism.

This morning we want to take a look at some of the sociological factors of allowing for divorce and remarriage. Here we will get to see some of why the Scripture says God hates divorce. You

see, divorce which allows for remarriage, as I understand it, is a major sin. It is a state of continual adultery and it has very serious sociological factors.

Here is what I see happens. The family is one of the primary building blocks of society. There can be no question about that. When the family is undermined, as divorce and remarriage does, it affects the Church, which affects the culture, which affects the country. A civilized country is destroyed in that order. It begins with the family. We will look at these in that order this morning.

So we ask, just what are we talking about when we speak of the sociological factors regarding divorce and remarriage? According to Google sociology is, "the study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society: the study of social problems." In sociology, problems in society are a big issue. Another article says these problems are such as drugs, crime and other dangers to society. As we will see, divorce is a danger to society, but hardly given any recognition even among Christians, as a social danger.

C. The Sociological Factors

1. In families

Let us begin with families then. E.S. Williams has a chapter called, "Tears and Profound Sadness." Perhaps I could not do better here than summarize that chapter. He says that up until the 1950's everybody knew that broken homes were bad for children. But the experts went to work, and by the 1960's, they had determined that good divorces were better than bad marriages. It was better for the children. He writes, "The experts claimed that following the divorce children would rapidly adjust to their new family circumstances and the effects on them would be short-lived..This evidence spread the message that parents in an unhappy marriage should divorce for the sake of their children" (351) end quote.

Even today you can read articles about how resilient children are and that divorce does not have long lasting negative consequences for the children. It is

as Williams says, the studies showed what the experts wanted to believe. The outcome? He writes, "Therefore the argument that one should stay together for the sake of the children does not really hold up, for 'a bad marriage can do more harm than a broken home'" (353).

One of the earliest long term research projects on the effects of divorce on children was the California Children of Divorce Study. Follow up was done for 15 years, beginning in 1971. They wanted to know what psychological effects divorce had on children. They chose 61 families representing 131 children. The parents had been divorced an average of 11 years and the families were white families. The interviews occurred within the first year of separation with follow-up at 18 months, five years and ten years.

What did they find? For preschool children Williams writes, "At the initial interview after the divorce the researchers described the children in this group as 'frightened, bewildered and very sad. Their immature grasp of events swirling around them, together with their difficulty in sorting out their own fantasy and dream from reality, rendered them vulnerable... These children were especially anxious as night approached, when many 'became fretful, waking frequently, crying, and begging to be taken to the parent's bed."

By the way, in all ages, the children wished their real parents would get back together. Fear is almost always present in such children. There is so much information here, I can only give bits and pieces so you get the drift.

In children aged six to eight they worried about being left without a family. They missed their father. Williams writes, "Their longing for their departed father was similar to the grief caused by the death of a parent." Consider this now. In death they would be able to say goodbye. Now every day is a new death. Then he says, "In the opinion of the researchers,

these children were expressing 'inner psychological needs of great power and intensity'" (356).

Those who were between 6 and 8, and were interviewed again ten years later at ages 16 to 18, it says, "Their unhappiness, their loneliness and their sense of deprivation, the youngsters who were 16 to 18, ten years after their parent's divorce suffered more than any age groups in the study." Can you understand why such children shack up? They are afraid of marriage, and their divorced parents have instilled that fear.

Well, of children aged 13-18 Williams writes, "The interviewers tell of the 'profound sense of loss' experienced by these adolescents. Some reacted 'with profound grief' as if a person whom they loved very much had died. They reported feelings 'of emptiness, tearfulness, difficulty in concentrating, chronic fatigue, and very troublesome dreams, all symptoms of mourning" end quote. But listen, if a death had happened, the mourning could have come to an end. Now it must be lived day in and day out year after year. Divorce and remarriage is a high crime against the children and church and state both allow these crimes.

Williams further writes, "The interviewers describe how they were 'unprepared for the quality of anguish' that these children experienced, and particularly for the frantic appeals of the children for them to help restore their parent's marriage" (357). And again, "The anxiety among some children, according to the interviewers, that at times it bordered on panic."

Another problem was the children were torn between which parent to side with. The researchers said, "These demands of parents on the youngsters frequently led to despair, depression, and guilt. One fourteen-year-old began to sob: 'I am in the middle. It is my struggle.'" "

Well, 10 years after the divorce, and I quote, "A significant number of individuals, who were now young adults, still regarded it as the dominant influence in their lives. They retained memories of the unhappy events surrounding the breakup of their families"

(358). And again, "The young people stressed to the researchers how much they felt the need for a family structure, and how they wanted moral guidance and protection. Ten years after the divorce a significant proportion of the young men and women were troubled, drifting and underachieving" (359).

And all this is such a little part of the whole of the effect of divorce and remarriage in the children. You see, a parent who commits this sin of divorce and remarriage does this to their children. But that is not the end of the crime. These children will now most likely end up in the same sin or worse. Many are largely ruined by their parent's sin!

Now let me show you how firmly Satan has wrapped Americans into the freedom to divorce and remarry. Let me read to you from an internet article I found that mentioned me by name. It went like this: "There is a growing brood of divisive, devilish, defiling, evil and beguiling warlocks who pose as Christian ministers as they wield their witchcraft over the unlearned by pretending to hold the key of knowledge on this matter of divorce and remarriage. They do this while corrupting the message of our gracious, merciful heavenly Father. Beware! Any person who teaches that there's no such thing as remarriage is a false teacher and a wolf. Run!" Well, the writers were professing Christians.

And now, because the Church openly accepts divorced and remarried couples, the Church has to deal with something the Bible does not deal with. How to successfully have blended Christian families. However, what the Bible does deal with is the real cure. Repent! And if you repent, you won't have a blended family. And when we do have blended families, we have taught every child in that family that divorce is an acceptable Christian practice. No matter how much our mouth says, "No", our actions say, "Yes."

2. In churches

We have looked at what divorce does in families. What does it do in churches? By allowing for this sin, Satan has been allowed into the Church in a big way,

and through this he will destroy the church. The problem of blending families is but a small problem compared to inviting Satan into the church.

In the OT God's people failed again and again. Idolatry was the big problem. The northern kingdom was removed first in 722, and in 586 the southern kingdom went into the 70 year captivity. When the captives came back, Ezra found that many of them had taken forbidden wives. Those who greatly feared God put away their pagan wives. Their marriages were illegitimate marriages. In a later message we will read that.

The nation was restored and also the temple. Malachi wrote his book about 100 years later. He was also the last prophet God would send until John the Baptist came. Why was he the last prophet? In a few short years they had corrupted so badly that God left them.

Turn to the book of Malachi. In Malachi 1:2-2:15 the Lord has six sessions with His rebellious nation. Each session begins somewhat like 1:2-3 (read). The second one begins in 1:6 (read). They had no idea how they had despised God, so God spelled it out for them in 1:7-2:12. They had offered defiled food on the altar. They had offered blemished offerings, among other things. So look at verses 10-12 (read).

Judah had profaned the Lord's holy institution. How so? They had made marriage a light thing, just like the reformers did, who said it belonged to the secular world. But they went far beyond that, they married wives who worshipped other gods! Now look at verse 12 (read). Was a large part of the reason God rejected Israel because of this?

But, look now at verses 13-16 (read). You see, not only did they marry women who worshipped false gods, but they divorced their own Jewish wives! And she was the wife by covenant, and God had made them one! And why does God make husband and wife one? Because of the children! And what is the hope of the future? The Children!

Well, Christ came and Israel was scattered and Jerusalem was destroyed. And God set up a new work, the Church. And for 1500 years the Church held a standard on divorce and remarriage. And for the last 500 years, mostly through Protestantism and the Evangelical church, divorce has gained popularity until we are now where Israel was when Christ came. What we have now is described by E.S. Williams as 'mass divorce.'

Today the church is under a curse. This is evidenced by the recent seeker friendly church movement, which, as I see it, threw doctrine to the wind. Because of that, we were ripe for the emergent church movement, which is nothing shy of total apostasy. It could not be said that divorce and remarriage has not had a big hand in this. When the Church is corrupted, it becomes a destroyer of culture and civilization, which destroys countries. That is where we are today.

3. In Culture

So we look at the effects of divorce and remarriage in culture. When a society is more advanced, we call it civilization. And we ask, just what is civilization? Here is a word very hard to define and its definition depends on one's view of life in general. Perhaps the Funk and Wagnall's dictionary gives us a general idea of what civilization understood to be. They say, A state of human society characterized by a high level of intellectual, social, and cultural development."

If we look at what civilization means from its opposite, barbarianism, we might get a better understanding of it. The Online free dictionary says barbarianism is the condition of having no civilizing influence or refined culture; ignorance or cruelty. So it is to be uncivilized. To be civilized means, according to Webster's original dictionary, the state of being refined in manners, from the grossness of savage life.

Who was it that did the refining of manners and bring people out of savage life in the first place? It was the influence of the Bible brought to various countries that produced what we call civilization. I think there is little doubt that if you want to get to the bottom of what civilization is, it is that which is brought about by the morality of Christianity.

I believe that any unbiased study on the subject will show that marriage is one of the main foundational building blocks of civilization. After God had made the first man and the first woman, He brought the woman to the man. And then God said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Here is also the first human institution.

When man does not obey God in this first building block of civilization, he has put himself on the level of the animals which are not personal beings and therefore only live by instinct. Man is a personal being, a being made in the image of God. And as such, is able to override instinct through the human will. And when man once civilized by the Bible degenerates and lives like the animal, he becomes barbaric, and is once more in need of civilization. We have seen some of our own Mennonites almost turn into barbarianism.

Now civilization based on the Bible brings about a culture that is high in morals and refinement. It will hardly fail, but to bring about a prosperous country. And marriage is the foundational building block of a godly culture. When a culture develops, which disregards marriage, that culture will regress. We can see this in our own country, so that in a sense, we have now outdone the animals. And furthermore, while most animals protect their young, degenerated man is now destroying them. We are becoming barbaric and cannot answer why we are where we are, or why we are regressing rather than progressing. One of the major reasons, foundational to all civilization, is man's view of the sacredness of marriage. And man's view of

the sacredness of marriage is based on the Bible, the foundation of civilization. And men like Martin Luther and other Protestants took much of the sacredness out of marriage.

What happens when man disobeys God's command regarding marriage? Let me illustrate. Let us say you buy a new car. And you read the manual and it says that when the change-oil light comes on you need to change the oil and they tell you what kind of oil your car needs. Well, oil change time comes and you don't have the required oil, but you do have oil and so you put it in. And you drive and it works fine, and then, after a while it is not working so fine. It is a new car and you take it in for warranty work. They take out the engine and they find you have put the wrong oil in the motor and they say there is no warranty in a case of such failure to follow the manual. And you jump up and down and get upset, and you say that at least you had the oil part of the manual right; but, no warranty.

God gave us a manual for marriage. The manual said that marriage is a divine institution, and to accomplish what man was made for, a couple needs to marry and once you marry, you become one flesh. So you marry, and things do not go well, and you decide to divorce and remarry to see if it will work out the second time. And it seems to work for a time, for some, for a lifetime. But God made you one flesh with your first wife. And in time that abuse shows up in damaged children which then shows up in society. When man disobeys God in this first and major institution, he ruins that which God made for a specific purpose. Like the wrong oil in the motor ends up ruining the motor, so divorce ends up ruining society. And you might say, "Well, Lord, at least I did the marriage part right. I remarried. And to top it off, I was the innocent party. And beyond that, my pastor said in my case it was OK." And the Lord says, "No warranty. The manual clearly instructed you on what to do?" And society begins to crumble.

America, by all definitions of the word would be classed a civilized country. The culture of the country was based on Christianity. Donald Trump wants to make America Great again, but I don't think he wants to go back to that which made America great. And

now we talk about the culture war in America. What culture is under attack? The culture brought about by the influence of the Bible.

David Raegan of Lamb and Lion ministries wrote recently, "The Sunday after the Supreme Court's horrendous decision affirming the legality of the abomination called same-sex marriage, my pastor, Glenn Meredith, proclaimed that **we as Christians need to face up to the fact that we have lost the culture war** that has been raging in our nation for the last 60 years.

"The loss of that war is a reality that is hard to face up to, but it is the truth. We will, of course, continue to speak out against the rampaging immorality in our society. We have to. Jesus Himself called us to be salt and light. But increasingly, **we are going to be pushed aside and written off as marginal and irrelevant. Worse still, we are going to have to face increasing persecution for our biblical beliefs.**"

I ask, how long did he say this war has been raging? The last 60 years. Go back 60 years, and where are we? We are at 1955. Divorce took a sharp spike upward right about that time. And from 1970 to 1990 it literally sky rocketed. We did not enter the culture war because of homosexuality, homosexuality entered because we lost the culture war when we succumbed to divorce and remarriage 60 years earlier. And the Church largely embraced that sin, and now we cry because we have lost the culture war. I believe it is mostly the fault of the Evangelical Church, the conscience of the nation, that we are where we are.

Albert Mohler, the ninth president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes like this: *Mark A. Smith, who teaches political science at the University of Washington, pays close attention to what is now commonly called the "culture war" in America. Though the roots of this cultural conflict reach back to the 1960s, the deep divide over social and moral issues became almost impossible to deny during the late 1970s and ever since. It is now common wisdom to speak of "red" states and "blue" states and to expect familiar lines of division over questions such as abortion and homosexuality.*

In the most general sense, the culture war refers to the struggle to determine laws and customs on a host of moral and political issues that separate Americans into two opposing camps, often presented as the religious right and the secular left. Though the truth is never so simple, the reality of the culture war is almost impossible to deny. And yet, as Professor Smith surveyed the front lines of the culture war, he was surprised, not so much by the issues of hot debate and controversy, but by an issue that was obvious for its absence – divorce.

"From the standpoint of simple logic, divorce fits cleanly within the category of 'family values' and hence hypothetically could represent a driving force in the larger culture war," he notes. "If 'family values' refers to ethics and behavior that affect, well, families, then divorce obviously should qualify. Indeed, divorce seems to carry a more direct connection to the daily realities of families than do the bellwether culture war issues of abortion and homosexuality."

That logic is an indictment of evangelical failure and a monumental scandal of the evangelical conscience. When faced with this indictment, many evangelicals quickly point to the adoption of so-called "no fault" divorce laws in the 1970s. Yet, while those laws have been devastating to families (and especially to children), Smith makes a compelling case that evangelicals began their accommodation to divorce even before those laws took effect. No fault divorce laws simply reflected an acknowledgment of what had already taken place. As he explains, American evangelicals, along with other Christians, began to shift opinion on divorce when divorce became more common and when it hit close to home.

When the Christian right was organized in the 1970s and galvanized in the 1980s, the issues of abortion and homosexuality were front and center. Where was divorce? Smith documents the fact that groups such as the "pro-traditional family" Moral Majority led by the late Jerry Falwell generally failed even to mention divorce in their publications or platforms. End quote.

And now we ask, why did we have a culture war? We had a culture war, I believe, because we gave in on divorce and remarriage. Divorce and remarriage degenerates society. Abortion and homosexuality are a sign of an already degenerated society. And what does the sin of divorce and remarriage do to families? Well, when the experts took over as the conscience of the nation, and the Church relinquished its responsibilities, guess what the experts said? Let me reduce their philosophy to one sentence: A good divorce is better than a bad marriage. Articles began appearing about how resilient children are and how some come out even stronger because of their parent's divorce. And what did the Church say? Nothing. The Church played the Mennonite; *de stile im Landee*, the silent in the land.

But divorce destroys families and there is no good divorce if it includes remarriage. Researchers might tell us that a good divorce is better than a bad marriage. That is because they found what they wanted to find, not what was actually there. When the family is destroyed, it destroys God's people, and when the salt of the earth is destroyed, culture corrupts. Pagan countries became civilized in the first place because of God's people. And when God's people disobey God, the culture once more becomes pagan.

At the beginning of Mohler's article he wrote, "Evangelical Christians are gravely concerned about the family, and this is good and necessary. But our credibility on the issue of marriage is significantly discounted by our acceptance of divorce. To our shame, the culture war is not the only place that an honest confrontation with the divorce culture is missing." And then he said, "Divorce is now the scandal of the evangelical conscience."

So, when the family is destroyed, the Church is destroyed, which destroys the culture, which then destroys the country.

4. In entire countries

a. Israel

So let us consider a few countries that had great godly influence on the world and were or are being destroyed. We begin with Israel. What did divorce and remarriage contribute to the fall of the Jewish nation? I have little doubt that it played at least a significant role in their fall, if not a major part. And why did they become lax on divorce and remarriage? Malachi answers that question. They left the Lord, and divorce became a major problem.

Well, 63 years before Christ came, the Romans conquered the Jewish nation. And 40 years after Christ ascended, Jerusalem was destroyed. By then Rome had become the fourth world power. So we'll look at Rome.

b. Rome

It is not certain exactly when Rome fell but a close date is 476 years after Christ. In the 1700's a man by name of Edward Gibbon, a British historian wrote 6 volumes on the fall of Rome. In 1776 the first volume was published, and the last in 1789. So it took him 13 years to write these six books. He gave five major reasons why Rome fell. In the children's story being read here on Sunday mornings, the people in England at that time claimed that taxes would be the death of the British. Taxes is the second reason given by Gibbon for the fall of Rome, but divorce is the first.

It must be understood that Gibbon was no friend of Christianity. At bare minimum, as in Israel, we can say that divorce was a major cause of the fall of Rome.

c. England

What about England, the land that because of Christianity became the greatest nation on earth? It was said they ruled the seven seas, or as some say, the waves. The other day the Russian president

snubbed the British by floating his warship right under their nose. Of the British it was also said that the sun never set on the British nation. Well, we cannot yet say that the nation has entirely fallen, but it is certainly in decline as a world power.

In 1857 there was a debate in the House of Commons in England on the subject of divorce. We are talking about over 150 years ago. E.S. Williams has a chapter called, "Yes, it is a Protestant doctrine!" I would like to read the whole chapter, but I'll give you clips of what happened.

Let me begin with this quote, "Sir William explained (this is to the British House of Commons), that for the first 300 years of the Christian era there never was the smallest doubt in the whole Christian world in giving an interpretation of the exception clause in Matthew's gospel opposite to that which the House was now told to accept" (84).

And again, Mr. Henry Drummond said, and I quote: "Do you think, after taking such an oath, whereby you swear to protect a woman until death does you part, that you can qualify that oath by saying, 'until the House of Lords shall us part or 'or until an Act of Parliament shall us part?'" (85).

And again, Mr. George Bowyer said that which was stressed again and again, and I quote, "If they once broke in upon the salutary principle of the common and ecclesiastical law of England, they would not know where to stop. They would give rise to a universal immorality" (87). And that is where we are today, including England.

And again, one of them quoting another said that it might be quite severe not to allow for divorce at all, but in the end, and I quote, "...yet it must be carefully remembered that the general happiness

of the married life is secured by its indissolubility" (85).

You see, the disciples said, "If the case of a man is so with his wife, it is better not to marry." The man I quoted is saying what I have said, "Only in such a case is it safe to marry." If one does not allow for divorce and remarriage there will always be some unhappy couples. If you allow for it, there will be many more, and they will ruin the children in the process, and thus the Church and thus the country.

Williams writes again, "Mr. William Gladstone, the future Prime Minister and greatest politician of Victorian England now rose to address the House..." and I'll give you a little of what he said. 'I conceive it to be one of the most degrading doctrines that can be propounded to civilized men - namely that the legislature has power to absolve a man from spiritual vows taken before God.' Gladstone further said that when you allow for divorce and remarriage, and I quote, "You pass over a gulf which you know you cannot repass..." (89). And again, "This indissolubility of English marriage is an idea which has never been shaken in the mind of England" (90).

He also said, "No single age or country, or period has ever known a low of divorce like this (he meant a low number of divorces like England). None has ever gone so far, (allowing some divorce) without going further..." He said this proposal was an injustice to pastors, but much more, to God Himself" (90).

We are talking about the social affects on a country, here, namely England. In these meetings Mr. Samuel Warren addressed the house of commons, seeking to turn things around. Williams says, "He regarded the bill as one of enormous importance, permanently affecting the social and moral welfare of the country" (93). Was he right? History says he

was right, and what we learn from history is that we don't learn from history.

Over and over there were warnings that to take one step in this direction, firmly secured that the future would allow for many more steps; and history again says that is what happened.

Now let me read to you what is his most profound statement. He said once people realized they could divorce and remarry, and they could break the vows they had taken before the Most High God in which they said, "...for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part," that when they realized they could break these whenever they got tired of each other or one or the other of them was seduced, this is what he suggested might happen. And now I quote, "It might be that the future historian of the decline and fall of the British Empire would trace the first dawning of our decadence to the insidious weakening of those moral ties which had hitherto preserved us earnest in our work, and determined in what we undertook to do."

At that time England was the most powerful nation on earth, and he is saying that they had been preserved preserved by God because they allowed for no divorce. And if they allowed for it, they would fall. And after they fell, some historian might actually be able to trace it back to the very decision they made in court at that time to allow for divorce and remarriage. For a number of years now England has been in decline. A short while ago the Russians sent some of their warships right past the British, so as to snub their noses at them.

d. America

What about America? Well, we have spoken of this great nation before. Let us make no mistake about it, it was a great nation highly under the influence of Scripture. Even many, if not most, of

the cults contributed to the moral conscience of the nation.

I ask, when a future historian, if there will be such, writes of America, will they even recognize that divorce was a primary cause in the downward spiral of the nation? A word to Mr. Trump, I suppose he listens to us, right? Here is the word: You can't make America great again until you make that great which made America great.

CONCL: Divorce and remarriage, destroyer of families, of church, of culture, of civilization, and of country. And what does the Evangelical church do to stop it? Nothing! What does it do to promote it? Plenty. And what can be done about it? Or is it, perhaps too late to do something about it? We'll look at that in the next message. We have not yet met Goliath, but in the next message we will meet him.