

DIVORCE AND THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

By Allon Maxwell

"When you vow a vow to God do not delay in paying it; for he has no pleasure in fools.

Pay what you vow.

It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.

Do not let your mouth lead you into sin,

and do not say before the angel that it was a mistake." (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6)

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING A VOW

In the verse quoted above the wise man says that to fail to keep a vow is to be a fool.

This places covenant breakers in the same category as those other fools who say that there is no God! ([Psalm 14:1](#))

The importance of keeping covenant is reinforced in [Psalm 15](#). There it is one of the qualifications for life in the presence of God.

For the Psalmist, keeping covenant is so important that it must be done even if it hurts!

It is better to honour a vow at great personal cost, than to break covenant and then be denied entry to the dwelling place of God.

This attitude to covenant keeping is amongst the character attributes which guarantee that life will be built on an unmovable (and therefore eternal) foundation.

GOD HATES LIES

To swear falsely is to tell a lie.

A covenant breaker has turned his promise into a falsehood. While he continues to be unfaithful to his covenant, without repentance, he makes himself a perpetual liar.

In [Proverbs 6:16-19](#), the wise man compiled a list of seven things that God hates. Untruthfulness appears TWICE!

Liars share the nature of the Devil who is the father of lies and of liars. ([John 8:44](#))

Those who love and practise falsehood, are classed with the homosexuals and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers. ([Revelation 22:15](#))

They can never enter the eternal City of God.

Liars of every kind will find their eternal place in the lake of fire which is the second death. ([Revelation 21:8](#))

GOD HATES DIVORCE

God also hates divorce. ([Malachi 2:16](#)).

Divorce is not only the product of the lie which is inherent in the breaking of a marriage covenant.

It is also surrounded by all the wrong human emotions; jealousy, anger, dissension, bitterness, resentment, hatred, unforgiveness, revenge, lust, selfishness, cruelty, etc., etc.

Jesus also says that remarriage after divorce, involves the parties in adultery.

These things figure prominently amongst the "Works of the Flesh" listed in [Galatians 5:19-21](#).

Those who do such things cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

The marriage covenant is a solemn vow before God and other witnesses.

It contains irrevocable promises made for life.

These are promises of love, faithfulness, care, and life TOGETHER, in every conceivable circumstance, good or bad.

Even in the worst possible case of unfaithfulness by one party, the other is still obligated by the words of their own covenant, to remain faithful, "until death do us part".

In such a case, this lifelong faithfulness will leave nothing less than a lifelong open door for repentance and reconciliation and a renewal of the shared life under God, which is inherent in the marriage covenant.

Followers of Jesus who find that they have "sworn to their own hurt", WILL NOT CHANGE. ([Psalm 15:4](#)). They have made a promise to the partner they love, before the God they love, making God a witness to their pledge of lifelong faithfulness, ([Malachi 2:14](#)).

Their commitment to their marriage covenant is as binding as their commitment to all other obedience, which is the mark of their love for Jesus. ([John 14:15 & John 14:21 & John 14:24](#))

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A husband and wife have promised faithfulness to each other for life.

The one who breaks this promise becomes a betrayer. If both break the promise, they betray each other.

This betrayal sets a barrier between God and the guilty party. ([Malachi 2:13-14](#)).

However if they are reconciled, the broken promise is restored, the broken marriage is healed, and any barriers to relationship with God are removed.

That is why the promise must be kept for life.

That is why Jesus forbids any remarriage for either partner, while the other is still alive. ([Luke 16:18](#)). That is why He calls such marriages adulterous.

That is why those who do separate must remain unmarried or else be reconciled. ([1 Corinthians 7:11](#))

There must be no closing of the door, no barrier to reconciliation, which makes it impossible for a guilty party to repent and set things right by returning to faithfulness to their promise.

How do you know, husband, or wife, whether perhaps your own continued faithfulness, will lead one day to repentance for your marriage partner, and then to reconciliation, and

healing for your marriage? How do you know whether perhaps you may become the instrument of salvation for the one you promised to love for life? ([1 Corinthians 7:16](#)).

CONCLUSION

It has become a great evil in the church to reckon that a marriage to which God is witness, (including that of unbelievers) can be made null and void by men; and that the partners can be free to be separated and married again, to suit the whim or lust of either partner.

We must determine not to commit this evil ourselves.

We must refuse to condone it in others.

When we do meet those who have already fallen prey to the evil, then, even in the face of rejection, we must find the grace to speak the words which will call them back to God.

If they will listen we have gained them for God and saved their souls from death.
([Matthew 18:15 & James 5:19-20](#))

"How shall they hear without a preacher?" ([Romans 10:14](#))
