

A CALL TO TRUE WORSHIP – Part 2

Malachi 2:1-9

INTRODUCTION

I am one of those strange people in that mathematics was always my favorite subject. I remember being introduced to mathematical proofs in an 8th grade Geometry class – I loved learning about using “If ... Then ...” statements.

When we look at the Bible, in one perspective or one sense, the message of God to man could be viewed as one giant “If...Then” statement

From the beginning to the end, God tells us there is blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience (Lev 26, Deut 28)

There are decisions to be made **Josh 24:15** – “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve”

Proposition: A Fork in the Road → **2 Paths:**

- I. The Path of **Peril**
- II. The Path of **Purity**

False teachers versus faithful teachers.

The one path is characterized by **disobedience**.
The other Path is characterized by **obedience**.

The outcome of the one is the curse of God.
The outcome of the other is the blessing of God.

So That: Direct **exhortation** to the Pastor, the Elders, leaders
→ Powerful **application** for all.

READ Mal 2:1-9

Recall in the Book of Malachi, God has a series of ‘court – like’ scenes called disputes. 2nd dispute – 1:6-2:9
– Malachi has **3 Great Criticisms** of the Priests (1:6-14)

They have:

- **Forgotten His Fatherhood**
- **Forsaken His Worship**
- **Forfeited His Blessing**

Their forgetting of His Fatherhood is the **root**

Their forsaking of His worship and forfeiting of His blessings are the **fruit**

→ the **spiritual rot** in the tree is deep

The people are bringing worthless worship and praiseless praises and the Priests are accepting them.

1st Path ...

1) The Path of Peril Mal 2:1-4, 8-9

Point – On the path of peril, there is disobedience.

There is dishonor and destruction. There is curse.

Proof – ^{“1}**And now, this commandment is for you, O priests.”**

Malachi turns his attention from brief word to the people (1:14) back to the priests → judgment comes first to the leaders

Point – The “IF” - **Call to Obedience**

and the “THEN” - **Consequence of Disobedience**

A. The Call to Obedience “If”

Proof – ^{“2a}**If you do not listen**” – this is a common theme in Minor Prophets – this call to “Hear” or “Listen”

^{“2b}**and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name”**

The battle needs to be won in the heart.

“honor” – dAbK¹ → “glory” in **1:6**

“take it to heart” – the change must affect the inner being!!

True biblical listening registers in the heart and produces change.

Illustration – Jesus said, “He who has ears, let him hear”
(Matt 13:9)

Application – A question for us: Does the Word heard go in one ear and out another? Or ... does it go in one ear and then deeper into the heart???

B. The Consequence of Disobedience “Then”

Proof – “^{2c}**then I will send the curse upon you**”

This grammar is intensive – describing “hurl” or “throw”

God often pronounces judgment in primary areas of responsibility.

Illustration – **Adam** (cursed ground – sweat, toil) **Eve** (pain in childbirth).

In the same way, that is what God does here with the priests.

Proof – “^{2b}**I will curse your blessings**”

→ “ **blessing**” is the bread and butter business of the priests

The priests are the intermediaries between the people and God.

The people go to the priests to receive a “ **blessing**”

This 2nd dispute with the priests is draped in the language or terms from a specific priestly blessing in the book of Numbers, the Aaronic blessing in **Num 6:23-27**.

Most priests pronounced this blessing several times a day.

This priestly blessing became the only occasion in which

God’s covenantal name *YHWH* was pronounced in Israel.

Worshippers at the Temple regularly heard this blessing spoken to them at the end of the worship process as they were ready to exit the Temple. Everybody knew it by heart.

Point – God curses the priests using the language they themselves use in pronouncing their blessings!

Bless → Curse

Keep → Banish

Peace → No peace

Invoke my Name → “Despise My Name

“^{2d}**and indeed I have cursed them already because ...**”

The grace period has ended.

Warnings have turned into judgment

God colors this picture of His righteous judgment in verse 3:

- 1. Imminent**
- 2. Extensive**
- 3. Extreme**

1. Imminent

Point – Judgment is coming and it is coming FAST!

Proof – “^{3a}**Behold, I am going to**” – Better translated as “I am about to” → Imminent Judgment

for example, also **Zec 2:10 Mal 3:1** → Coming of the Lord!

Illustration – **Satchel Paige** – “*Never look back. Something might be gaining on you.*”

Application – The judgment of God is always right around the corner. Disobedience in your life?

→ Judgment is gaining on you.

The Judgment of God is **Imminent**, and it is ...

2. Extensive

Proof – “^{3b}**rebuke your offspring**” – to future generations – when there is corruption in leadership

Exod 20:5 – “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me”

The Judgment of God is **Imminent, Extensive**, and it is ...

3. Extreme

Proof – “^{3c}**and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts;” – contents of stomach, intestines of the animal**

Both ESV and KJV – “I will spread **dung** on your faces”

The grammar Malachi uses is not gently spreading dung on the faces of these leaders. God is going to smash dung onto their faces.

“^{3d}**and you will be taken away with it**” – You will be banished from My presence and taken away to judgment

The refuse/dung was removed prior to roasting on the altar.

The priests will be carried with the dung from the Temple off to the dung heap where to be dumped and burned (**Lev 4:12**)

→ God is responding with a *quid pro quo* justice
You think you will profane My Name? ... I will profane you

Malachi is likely giving this message in the Temple, perhaps during a sacred feast when the crowds are the greatest.

Application – For someone who has been damaged by pastoral failure, for someone who has given up on church because of the hypocrisy of her leaders ... how absolutely tragic.

→ Friend, God has said He will smash dung on the faces of the hypocritical leaders. How absolutely tragic to let them drag you to hell with them. Don't let pastoral failure and hypocrisy drive you away from the truth of the perfect, sinless Lord and the free gift of salvation that is available only through Christ – only through faith alone – in Christ alone.

“^{4a}**Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you**”

“**know**” – [dy – a deep experiential knowledge and understanding

Illustration – In the same way as Edom! **Ezek 35:4, 9, 12, 15**

God used the exact same language to describe judgment on Israel’s perennial enemy. He uses it here on the leaders of Israel!

Most fascinating turn here now →

“^{4b}**that My covenant may continue with Levi, says the LORD of hosts.**”

Levi (3rd Son of Jacob and Leah) – “Father” of the line of priests. Moses and Aaron were from the tribe of Levi

What is this “**covenant**” with Levi?

The Levites stood with God during the golden calf (Exod 32)

Jer 33:20-22 – “covenant of Levites”

Neh 13:29 – “the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.”

→ **Num 25:11-13** – given to the Levitical line through

Phinehas – he stood ground against the hypocrisy

Illustration – In my Ordination, books are given themes to be memorized – Malachi’s theme was “The Disintegration of a Nation”. This disintegration will allow a new purified people to form.

God extracts the cancerous so the courageous may grow.
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God says that this imminent, extensive, and extreme judgment is necessary for continuation of His **covenant with Levi**.

Why???? Simple – God removes the rubbish and the chaff to pave the way for the right stuff.

The corrupt leaders have to be swept away and carried to the dung heap so that the covenant will stand.

Point – This is a **purging**. This is not a **deletion**.

Illustration – I used to run software on a VAX/VMS machine running UNIX. Every now and then, I would have to purge my files – get rid of older versions to make room for newer versions. This would keep the most recent version of the file though.

→ Now, this **purging** is very different than **deleting** the file.

Application – In the same way, God is not deleting Israel. He is not replacing Israel with the Church. He is purging Israel.

God prunes and God purifies so that He will prepare a people

What kind of covenant is this with Levi???

“^{5a}**My covenant with him was *one of life and peace***”

This sets the stage for the ...

2nd Path ...

2) The Path of Purity

Mal 2:5-7

Point – On the path of purity, there is obedience. There is deliverance. There is blessing.

Marks of a Godly leader or follower on the path of purity:

A. You Fear God

B. You Proclaim the Truth

C. You Live the Truth

D. You Guard the Truth

E. You Rescue the Lost

A. You Fear God

Point – What is the starting point of preaching? The Bible?
The call to preach? What is the starting point of evangelism?
The Word of God. The call to evangelize.

But even before these ... the starting point is the **fear of God**.

Proof – “^{5b}**and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me, and stood in awe of My name.**”

“**he revered Me**” – *arey*” – awe-inspiring exhibition of power
→ trembling

“**stood in awe**” – basic idea is “to be broken”; shattered

Now, some people try to say the fear of God is not that kind of fear of which we normally think → the “to be afraid of” kind of fear.

... Well ... it is more than this ... but it is never less than this.

→ There are different kinds of fears: there is the fear of evil men, evil ISIS, an evil bully. The fear of God is not this kind of fear.

→ There is the fear of impersonal, indifferent things (getting eaten by a shark while snorkeling, falling and breaking your body while climbing). The fear of God is not this kind of fear.

→ There is the kind of fear the guilty criminal has when he is cornered by officers of the law, when he appears before a righteous judge to receive the penalty due his crime.
The fear of God is like this for an Unbeliever.
But the fear of God is not like this for a Believer.

→ For the Believer, the fear of God is the reverential fear of love and discipline in a family.

Application – Beloved, God blesses those who fear Him: with goodness (Psa 31:19) and mercy (Psa 103:11) ... with provision (Psa 34:9), protection (Psa 33:18-19), and promise (Psa 145:19).

B. You Proclaim the Truth

Proof – “^{6a}**True instruction was in his mouth**”

“**instruction**” – ḥr'AT – Law → The Bible

“**True**” – reliable, trustworthy, genuine, accurate, authentic

Psa 19:9 – “The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;”

- It is true instruction, true law

We sometimes forget the roll of teaching as part of the responsibilities of the priests ... **Deut 33:8-10**. At the center of the ministry of elders, pastors and teachers is teaching. At the center of the role of priests was teaching as well.

“^{6b}**and unrighteousness was not found on his lips;**”

Your words are a viewport into your character and your life:

“^{7c}**he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts**”

– %a;l.m; – messenger, angel, herald → You are a herald

There is a difference between a **lecturer** and a **messenger**.

A lecturer comes with information.

A messenger comes with a → “Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

The King has said ...!”

C. You Live the Truth

Point – There is no successful ministry of the Word without **devotion** and **holiness**.

There is no such thing as a Godly man or woman without...

Proof – “^{6c}**he walked with Me in peace and uprightness**”

You are on the narrow path. You follow the way of salvation.

“**peace**” – ~A|V’ – “absence of strife” but also much more

- completeness, wholeness, harmony, and unity.
- restored relationships

“**and uprightness**” – level, straight, just, law-keeping

- “Walk the straight and narrow.”
- a quality of heart and mind

Job 1:1 – “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.”

Does “**true instruction**” come out in your praying and your playing?

Illustration – Like a **compass** drawn to the magnetic North?

Illustration – Like a **weather vane** blown by heavenly winds?

D. You Guard the Truth

Point – We could say, the **root** of the spiritual tree is the fear of God. The **trunk** of the tree is the proclamation of the truth.

The **branches** of the tree are the public living the truth before people and the public living the truth before God.

The protective **bark** around the tree is guarding the truth.

Proof – “^{7a}**For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth**”

“**preserve**” – comes from root word meaning eyelid

- watch, observe, keep, to guard
- used of Cherubim in **Gen 3:24** – “to guard the way to the tree of life”

Illustration – If it wasn’t for our eyelids, we would all be blind.

Application – In the same way, God designed you, as a child of God, to guard the truth. Certainly, the leaders of the church,

but also every single member of the church has a role in guarding the truth.

Illustration – The priests in Malachi’s day failed to guard their own lives

Application – When you **guard** the **truth**, you protect against the kind of spiritual rot that had penetrated deeply into these priests.

E. You Rescue the Lost

Point – The **life-giving fruit** of the tree is the salvation of many.

Proof – “^{6c}**and he turned many back from iniquity.**”

“**iniquity**” – twisted, distorted, warped, crooked, perverted
guilt, punishment, ruin

→ both the deed and its consequences

This is turning away from iniquity and turning toward God
→ Repentance

Not just **evangelism**, but also **discipleship**.

- turning the wandering believer away from ensnaring sin

The great danger in preaching is that the voice of God would be drowned out by the voice of politics ... or the voice of economics ... voice of social justice issues ... or marketing ... or fame

Application – My charge is to deliver the oracle of the word of God to the people of God.

Your ministry can save. Your ministry can destroy.

Proof – “^{8a}**But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts.**”

These men had left the narrow way of salvation and entered the broad way of destruction.

Illustration – My most beautiful wife Margie and I were married 2 days shy of 30 years ago on Aug 22nd 1987. This was a time of massive adulterous failures of high visibility “pastors” (Baker, Swaggart)

The following quote appeared in a 1987 issue of Christianity Today, – *“The leader who philanders has broken a trust placed in him by a wide community—trust in his vision, reliability, wisdom, and veracity. And the essence of leadership is that trust. So, a leader who violates trust in a fundamental and public manner is ipso facto no longer a leader.”*

That was Christianity Today in 1987. I’m not so sure we would see something so on point in “Christianity Astray” in 2017.

When a pastor commits adultery, it is grotesque and does terrible damage to the witness of Christ and church.

But ... the worst pastoral failure is doctrinal.

→ **Hos 4:6** – “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

These priests, you see, shut the book of God and opened the book of their own imaginations, and values, and priorities.

“⁹So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways, but are showing partiality in the instruction.”

This has come full circle from 1:6 – “you despise My name”

The People will see the shame, the debasement of the corrupt leaders.

Illustration – I remember when Jim Baker was being led away in handcuffs. He was whimpering like a baby and babbling about seeing animals.

quid pro quo justice – you live by the sword – shall die by the sword

Point – Now you might be asking, “How can I avoid this?”

“I want to rescue the lost.”

“I don’t want to cause many to stumble”

Application – I guarantee you, if you fear God, proclaim the truth, live the truth, and guard the truth

→ God will use you to rescue the lost!

CONCLUSION

Illustration – There is a reason why you haven’t heard me say anything about Charlottesville. The reason is this. I don’t need to.

Application – How many times have you heard me say from this pulpit there is only one race? How much evidence do you see every Sunday at our church this truth being lived out in our pews and in our Orphan Care ministry?

This is why I don’t need to make commentary every time some new thing, nor some new sin, or some new manifestation of social injustice comes across the pike.

→ By God’s grace and mercy “**true instruction**” is in this pulpit, in our small groups, in our other ministries - and this church walks “**in peace and uprightness.**”

Application – If you are a preacher, a teacher, don’t you dare show up with anything less than a message from the Lord of Hosts.