

A CALL TO TRUE WORSHIP – Part 1

Malachi 1:6-14

INTRODUCTION

In Malachi 1:2-5, in the first dispute of six that God has with the nation of Israel, God asserts His love for the nation of Israel in a shocking, ominous, sovereign fashion – His love for His children is: free, spontaneous, and uncaused.

God’s love is unconditional, but it is not without requirement.

In His second dispute in our text, Mal 1:6-2:9, God turns His attention from the nation of Israel as a whole to the Priests, the spiritual leaders of the nation.

His attention is focused on those men who had been given the charge to lead the nation in its pursuit of holiness and worship of God.

READ Mal 1:6-14

Proposition: 3 Great Criticisms of Malachi – The priests (leaders) of Israel have:

- I. **Forgotten His Fatherhood**
- II. **Forsaken His Worship**
- III. **Forfeited His Blessing**

So That: Blistering criticisms over their defiled worship, but with a view to **correct**, a view to **call to true worship in Spirit and in Truth**

1st Great Criticism of Malachi – They have ...

I. Forgotten His Fatherhood Mal 1:6a

Point – In Scripture, immorality is a fruit. It is not a root. It is a symptom; not the disease.

They had forgotten the Fatherhood of God – that is the source of the rest of the accusations of God in this passage

Proof: “**to you O Priests**”

There is a change in address from the first to the second dispute → having previously addressed the nation as a whole, Malachi now turns to those who have the greater privilege, the greater responsibility, and thus, the greater accountability before God.

Here God issues His most personal, His most blistering accusation of all six disputes. His harshest words are reserved for the spiritual leaders. This is the longest section in the book - 18 of 55 verses or 1/3 of entire book.

Priest – supposed to be God’s man on earth – the mediator representing the people before God

“**a son honors his father and a servant his master**”

Statement that would be accepted by all

- **Exod 20:12 – 5th Commandment**
- even among pagans of the time, this was in the The Code of Hammurabi

“**Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect (fear)**”

God’s nature as **Master (Adonai)** or **Lord** is less of an intimate role than that of Him as **Father**
→ a multi-faceted snapshot of God.

Application – composite picture guards against over-familiarity on the one hand and a too distant subjection on the other → captures both His **Immanence** and **Transcendence**

Honor – as Father Fear (Respect) – as Master

Point: A pagan gives honor to his father and master.

→ You aren't even giving honor to Me!

“**honor**” – dbk – glory

- same situation as **1 Sam 4:21** – Ichabod – “no glory” because the glory had departed

They had forgotten the majestic Fatherhood of God

Now, their **adoption** made them God's children above all other nations → connected to special love of God back in 1:2.

God is Father, He is the Father of the nation of Israel in a special, loving, electing, preserving kind of way – in a relationship with Israel unlike any other nation

Illustration – I have a measure of love for all children. When I go into a children's classroom, or when I teach a Sunday School class, I have a general love for all the children. It is a real love.

- But I have a special love for my children that is far and above the general love directed to all the other children.
- God's love for Israel is like that.

Now, we can imagine all the priests nodding in agreement with Malachi's words in vv. 2-5 – maybe even up to the point in v. 6 ... right before they walked right into his right hook

With the priests exposed, on their backs ready for their tummies to be rubbed, Malachi comes in with the knockout punch

“**who despise My name**” – grammar here is a participle (“are despising”) – Malachi uses grammar here and throughout this Dispute → usually, continually, habitually
→ characteristic habitual action– they are despisers of God

“**My name**” – the name of God represents His presence, His character, His authority – it is used 8 times in Malachi, 7 of those times in dispute with the Priests

– they are foremost in despising the name of **hwhy**

The responsibility of the leaders, the priests, in Malachi was to point people to God ... to be **mediator** ... to be **messenger** ... but instead they were the **mutilators** of the worship of God – that is the concern

The problem of the nation is traceable to failure in the personal life and devotion of those whom God had called to serve Him.

Ezek 9:6 – “Utterly slay ... and you shall start from My sanctuary. So they started with the elders who *were* before the temple.”

Illustration – Friend in Maryland

– “*Mankind is one giant herd heading south toward hell.*”

Application – God, as your **Majestic Father**, wants to brand this truth of His Majestic Fatherhood on your heart and separate you from the herd.

Our concept of fatherhood is almost always lopsided, skewed towards either fighting against authoritarianism on the one side or effeminacy on the other. The biblical model of a godly father worthy of honor and respect in his leadership, authority, tenderness, wisdom, and purity is often lost.

The Fatherhood of God is brought to bear here to shock, arrest, and correct. There is confrontation between the Majestic Father and the mangy sheep and broken legged goats.

Illustration – I remember hearing a father say to his teenage son, in an extended family situation, “*You’re going to start respecting me right now!*” It broke my heart.

→ You can’t demand respect on the spot with your words.

Application – You fathers should live your life in such a way that it demands love, affection, and reverential fear.

The healthiest, happiest, and holiest children in the world are ones who have a father whose life demands tender love and reverential fear.

The priests have **forgotten His Fatherhood**, ...

2nd Great Criticism of Malachi – They have ...

II. Forsaken His Worship Mal 1:6b-9

Point – Defiled worship – they have a worthless worship

Proof – “^{6b}**But you say, ‘How have we despised Thy name?’⁷You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled Thee?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’”**

“**But you say**” – repeated twice

- they were blind to their own sin
- they respond to God’s charge with rolling eyes and crossed arms.

“^{7a}**You are presenting defiled food upon My altar**”

“**presenting**” – habitually and continually, actions that characterized their behavior and ultimately their hearts

“**defiled**” – contaminated, stained – physically unfit

The priests display contempt and disdain for worship by willfully and deliberately presenting unacceptable offerings

God cuts through the veiled innuendoes, feigned innocence, and blame-shifting. He makes clear what is **in the heart**.

“**In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’”**

“**the table of the LORD**” – used only in the OT by Malachi and only here (1:7, 12) – synonymous with the **altar** on which the defiled food and unfit animals are sacrificed

→ **points to the guilt of the priests** – He doesn't describe the defiled sacrifice at the door where the people bring it, but on the altar where the priests offer it up.

In Haggai, the emphasis was on the **Temple**, “build the Temple.” In Malachi, the emphasis is on the **Altar**.

They are corrupt in **deed** and they are corrupt in **word** because they are corrupt in **heart**.

- Their actions speak louder than their words.
- This is the difference between a professed faith and a possessed faith

As Malachi continues his indictment of these priests, he unfolds **3 characteristics** of worship that is forsaken and worthless → **hollow, heartless, and hypocritical**

- without substance
- without heart
- without integrity

“⁸But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly? says the LORD of hosts.”

The mechanics, the rituals, may be different today, but the characteristics have not changed and the danger is as grave.

God loves unconditionally, but He wants love in return ... and this love is returned in the form of worship ... worship with substance, worship with heart, worship with integrity

→ In short, worship in Spirit and in Truth

God had set a crystal clear standard **Lev 22:17-22**

“but when you present the blind for sacrifice ... lame and sick”

They are deliberately and willfully violating the requirements God put in place. And, they had the audacity to question God

They are offering non-sacrificial sacrifices! They are offering to God as sacrifices what they do not want themselves.
→ They are offering worship to God which cost nothing.

The priests are presenting these defiled offerings. The people are also guilty because they are bringing the defiled sacrifices.

God does not exempt the whole people from blame or guilt on the account of the failed leaders. The most grievous guilt belongs to the leaders. The priests were accepting them when they should have been rejecting them.

“Why not offer it to your governor” – governor appointed by the Persian King. Literally in the form of a command
– “Go offer it to your governor!”

Illustration – Imagine inviting your boss to your house for a meal with the intent of asking him for a raise. Are you going to give him a maggot-infested piece of meat with curdled milk to drink?

→ They have the audacity to offer to God what they would not dare to present to their governor.

“⁹But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly? says the LORD of hosts.”

Better rendered – “Why don’t you try?”

“will He receive any of you kindly?” – No!

- same phrase as v. 8

Illustration – Would you bring a bag of garbage to church on the Lord’s Day and put that in the offering plate? Or, how

about you Bible Study leaders giving your study a “one hour special”? Or the preacher who gives his congregation on Sunday morning what is called the “Saturday Night Special”?

Illustration – In 2 Sam 24, David took a census of his people. He shifted his trust from God to his army. → Visible plague

In **2 Sam 24:24**, Araunah wanted to give David the materials for the burnt offering – “However, the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing.’”

<p>Application → True worship has a cost, BUT the return is infinitely greater.</p>
--

“**says the Lord of hosts**” – 11 times in 1:6 – 2:9 (24 times in Malachi) bearing down on these priests, these leaders

They have **Forgotten His Fatherhood**, they have **Forsaken His Worship**, ...

3rd Great Criticism of Malachi – They have ...

III. Forfeited His Blessing **Mal 1:10-14**

Point – 2 parts to the verdict rendered by God

Negative – God turns from the leaders of Israel and the nation of Israel

Positive – God turns to the Gentile nations

1st Part of the Verdict, the Negative, ...

1:10 God **Turns From** the Leaders (and Nation)

Point – There is a time limit on all empty worship. God will not be mocked forever. God will not allow hollow religion that brings shame on His name to go on forever.

Proof – “¹⁰**Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you, says the LORD of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from you.**”

The setting of Malachi’s challenge might have been a feast day in the Temple. God would rather have the temple doors closed.

The doors were permanently shut when the Romans under Roman General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70

Point – Their mechanical act of sacrifice is worthless before Him. Their fire is worthless, their worship is useless and God will not accept their offering.

→ **It is better to have no sacrifices than vain ones**

“It is better to be speechless than to blaspheme. It is preferable to experience the agony of being far away from God than to deceive oneself by assuming that God will listen to the appeals of a hypocrite.” (Brandenburg)

Point – Beloved, Friend, when you turn your back on God, you will fall in love with the world.

Illustration– If a hypothetical person had never seen the sun, a lampstand is pretty impressive. If you’ve never seen a thunderstorm, a sparkler would be pretty cool.

Application– When you become defiled in your worship, you will bend your knee and pay homage to your shadow.

2nd Part of the Verdict, the Positive, ...

1:11 God **Turns to** the Nations, the *Goyyim*

Point – Sacrifices – **defiled** vs. **pure** - contrast

My Name – despised & defiled vs. honored & feared

¹¹**For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place**

incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is pure*; for My name *will be* great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”

“from the rising of the sun even to its setting ... and in every place” – the whole earth → the universal reign of God

“My name will be great among the nations” – If Israel won't worship Him in Spirit and in Truth, the nations will. (cf. v. 5)

“is going to be offered to My name” – not by priests, but by believers across the face of the earth

**“pure” – the Hebrew word translated as pure is not usually used to describe acceptable sacrifices
→ it has a connotation of morally and spiritually pure as well as physically**

<p>Fulfilled spiritually, now, of the church. Literally, later, worship in the Millennium. Already and not yet.</p>

Integration of the nations into the Kingdom of God is throughout the OT, but **this is more of a focus on the sanctification of the whole earth.**

Isa 19:19 – “In that day (the “burden” concerning Egypt) there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border.”

“¹²But you are profaning it, in that you say, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’”

“But you” – contrast between “you” and “the nations” is emphatic, obvious, and strong

“you are profaning it” – “it” = “My Name”

- habitually and continually

Malachi moves from the general (1:6 – despising) to the more specific and intense (1:12 – profaning).

- You wanted to know how? This is how.

Illustration – You can despise any person, but because of the close relationship with your spouse, you can violate this relationship in a way much worse than the sin against a general person.

Application – In the same way, the offence and stench of sin is for more odious when coming from a professed child of God.

“**the table of the Lord**” – yn"doa] is used instead of hwhy table of hwhy in 1:7 table of yn"doa] here in 1:12
– highlights the rupture of the covenant relationship
– out of fellowship, out of good standing

“¹³**You also say, ‘My, how tiresome it is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it, says the LORD of hosts, and you bring what was taken by robbery, and *what is lame or sick*; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand? says the LORD.**”

– “**My, how tiresome it is!**” – the joy of restored worship in Jerusalem experienced almost a century ago is gone.
Now they “**disdainfully sniff at it**” → utter contempt!

What should be regarded as honor and privilege and holy is now looked at as a burden and trouble and vile.

“**you bring what was taken by robbery**” – Malachi strips away all self-deception and pretended innocence on the part of the priests by putting this in blunt direct language.

Notice the exclamation points in 1:13 – the screws are tightening!

Most severe tirade in the book is reserved for the leaders but Malachi inserts a STRONG word to the people in the middle.

They have forfeited the blessing of the Lord.

“¹⁴**But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock, and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and My name is feared among the nations.**”

The nation as a whole has been cheating God by offering inferior sacrifices. Both the priests and the people are responsible for their polluted offerings → as go the leaders, so goes the flock

Illustration – A recent news release from France: *“Hundreds of sheep in a herd belonging to a farmer in southwest France have plunged to their deaths in what appears to be a bear attack on one of the sheep. As the Guardian reports, the attack on one is believed to have frightened the 209 others, who sailed over a 650-foot cliff in an apparent bid to flee.”*

Application - God chose to call us sheep. We are the sheep of His pasture. With the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit we can do great things for His glory. But we must not forget that God called us sheep.

“**But cursed**” – what Moses predicted in Deuteronomy, unfolds in the Prophets

“**the swindler**” – one who plots, deceives, “the one swindling”
→ habitual pattern

“**a male in his flock and vows it**” – the male is designated for certain specific sacrifices (Lev 22:18-19)

“**but sacrifices a blemished animal**” – this word does not capture full weight of word. Different translations render it: corrupt, spoiled, unhealthy, worthless, defective, damaged, and ruined.

“for I am a great King, says the LORD of Hosts” – all of this is under the umbrella of God’s sovereign purpose.

→ **Father** → **Master** → **King**

It expands the composite picture from 1:6 – a detailed portrait of God the Father, God the Master (Lord), and God the King

If a person wouldn’t dare cheat his governor, how much more detestable to rob the King of the Universe.

“**My name is feared among the nations**” – feared comes from the same word as “where is My respect” in 1:6 → God will not depend on Israel for His worship

These leaders and people had forgotten the greatness of God. They had taken their eyes off the glory of God. But as an expansion of His mercy, the nations will fear Him.

Psa 25:14 – “The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear Him.”

Friendship with God casts out fear. It casts out cowering fear, paralyzing fear, hate-engendering fear, guilt-laden fear. And, it strengthens reverential fear of our Father in Heaven.

CONCLUSION

This was a people who had **forgotten His Fatherhood, forsaken His worship, and forfeited His blessing.**

Application – Beloved, may we not let our worship be without substance (hollow), without heart (heartless), without integrity (hypocritical). May our worship never be deemed worthless.

Only the best is good enough for our God: the best of our hearts, the best of our devotion, the best of our lives!

If He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. He is the Lord of all ... or else He is not Lord at all.
--