

Read Malachi 1

You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' Mal 1:7

How many times have I asked my kids to clean their rooms? I'm sure that by this point in my life, it's been several hundred. So they have an understanding of what I expect when they take on this task, which is even more frustrating when I see their efforts. So then I have to go into their room and say, "You didn't do everything you're supposed to do." "What did I not do?" Then I point out the clothes on the floor, toys under the bed, trash not in a trashcan and ask them if they think it's clean. After my inspection, they finally admit there is some work yet to do.

I've heard this passage preached on before, but never have I seen the answer of the priests really thought through. The issue is not that they have defiled God's altar, but that they are either ignorant or indifferent to their actions. The priests were representatives of the people before God, and not only had the sacrifices become a job to them, they had also become a joke. A sacrifice that is less than your best, is not a sacrifice, and these priests were allowing people to go through the motions without challenging them and encouraging them to take their relationship to their God more seriously. **Have you grown indifferent to the Lord? Think about your prayer life or your consistency in being engaged with God's word. Think about the people you failed to share the gospel with this week. Think about your level of sacrifice in money, time, and abilities. If God were to tell you today that your level of commitment is lacking, would you argue with Him about it, or yield to His conviction? Honestly, that's one of the basic choices we deal with everyday.**

Read Malachi 2

But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that one do* while He was seeking a godly offspring? Mal 2:15

Bringing our first child home from the hospital was probably one of the three scariest moments of my life (the other two involve fireworks and a drill sergeant). After my wife finished her recovery in the hospital, the nurse put Tyler into a car seat and brought him down to our car. She made sure he was buckled in securely and then she walked away. I thought, "Wait, you're just going to leave this thing with me?" It was a huge reality check and I was jittery for days that I was going to harm this child in some way.

As the years have gone on, my children are now able to do most things themselves, yet their need for me is probably greater now. I have a responsibility to teach my children who God is, not just by my words, but by my actions. And in this chapter of Malachi, we actually see that God indicates why He brought marriage together. It's not for the satisfaction of the partners, but so that godly marriages would produce godly offspring. However, our selfishness has caused our society to discard marriages, which scar children and drive them far from a God who would allow such heartache. **If you're married, do you recognize the greatest responsibility you have is to make a mark for the**

Kingdom with your kids? And what if you're unable to have children? Have you considered adopting one of the millions of children who are in desperate need of a parent? Or if that is not an option, are you being supportive of those who have children by encouraging them and serving them? Maybe you're not even married, but the reality is that marriage is a Kingdom-building institution. Is your marriage building up children for the kingdom, or are you failing to disciple your own children?

Read Malachi 3

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. Mal 3:16

William Gurnall was a 15th century author, most known for writing a very practical work on the armor of God from Ephesians 6. At a time when many were writing for theological edification, Gurnall stood out in his attempts at writing a practical and accessible book for his readers. And in this mindset, we read a quote today from Mr. Gurnall that sets up the application for our own passage here in Malachi; "We fear men so much because we fear God so little." Gurnall's point is that we often become so involved and overwhelmed by the physical world we live in, that we are often uninvolved and underwhelmed by the spiritual world we also live in.

Malachi 3 is more known for being a passage pastor's use to preach on tithing. And while the concept of robbing God is an important one, it really comes down to more of a heart issue. As Malachi wraps up this chapter, we see that the change was not what people gave or didn't give. The change came in their heart attitude towards God. They chose to fear (revere) God and to esteem His name. In other words, they stopped putting their attention on the world and focused their attention on God instead. **We can never fear and esteem Him by what we do, but by our motivations. Two people can give an offering, but that does not indicate two people truly gave to the Lord. Think about what you did "for the Lord" this past week. Did you do it out of a sense of duty or a passion for Him? How have you esteemed His name in your workplace, church, family, or personal time? Stop focusing on how much you're giving, reading the Bible, or praying. Start focusing on your motivations.**

Read Malachi 4

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." Mal 4:1

"I will lose some weight this year!" That was my new year's resolution several times in a row, followed by an epic failure and resolution renewal year by year. Over the years I realized that I couldn't just want to lose the weight, but I had to choose to do it. As I write this, I'm coming up on my 33rd birthday tomorrow and I can truly say I am in the best

shape I've been since coming home from the Army. I weigh less now than I did when I married my wife almost 12 years ago and have lost 45 lbs in the last year and a half. The change was always possible, but I had to make the choice to not just be discontent, but to take action.

The word "will" is used in this verse alone 3 times. When I included "will" in my previous resolutions, it didn't guarantee anything. But God is guaranteeing that one day there will come a final day of judgment that will affect every person who's ever lived. And as believers in Jesus Christ we are saved from the judgment of that day. We have chosen to stop living for ourselves and start living for Him. But what about all those people walking around us? What does eternity hold for them? **Believers are people who live knowing that God will bring judgment on the world. So what does it say about us when we don't share such vital news to the lost world around us? Does it indicate that we are afraid to share, or that we don't really believe it? We need to look at the people around us and see a world that is headed towards a judgment. It will happen regardless of how good some of these people are. They don't need goodness, they need godliness and Jesus is the only one who can bring it into their life. But how can they hear unless someone tells them?**