

NOVEMBER 8, 2015

ANONYMOUS SPOKESMEN MALACHI – PART 1

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God Says – People Say

“I have loved you,” says the LORD.

“But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ ”

Malachi 1:2 (NIV)

It’s been around 70 years since the Temple was built. It was a great time, but the glory days are gone. As with a lot of second and third generation believers,

The people had __ regarding their faith, and __ in regard to their response.

When we settle, we don’t _____ and we don’t ___.

A GOOD PLACE TO START

“I have loved you” (1:2)

When we question God’s love based on circumstances, it’s because we believe __, _____

_, or ____.

“But you have shown contempt for me” (1:6-7) – A message for leaders

Leaders have a special responsibility to __, to __, and to t__n.

“You have wearied the Lord with your words” (2:17)

Saying God isn't serious about evil

God's answer to evil isn't in an __ it's in a __.

“Return to me and I will return to you” (3:6)

Their ____ demonstrated their _____
__.

__ was tied to ____.

“You have spoken arrogantly against me” (3:13)

Those who repented, __, _____
, and ____.

The people of Malachi's time didn't even realize they were challenging God by their actions. Look back over the issues that God raised with them. Is there one area that stands out to you as an area in which you might be challenging God without realizing it? What are you going to do about it?

Small Group Homework
For the week of November 8, 2015

Thinking back over the message

This week Jim spoke of second and third generation God-followers who had settled for less than a dynamic relationship with God. They weren't rejecting things they should reject and they weren't pursuing things they should pursue. Do you think that it is common for first-gen Christians to have more excitement and life than second and third generation followers? Why or why not?

Into the Study

God has some harsh words to say to wake up some people who don't even know they are lethargic. They aren't outwardly terribly evil in their behavior, yet something is missing. Why do you think God starts out like he does (Read Mal 1:2-3)?

Malachi 1:2–3 (NIV). "I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob, ³ but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

Read **Ephesians 1:11–12 (NIV)**. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

In place of personal pronouns, substitute your name. Jot down some thoughts that come to mind as you meditate on this truth. Then put down what you think the concepts in Malachi 1 must have meant to Jews who were wondering if God still loved them?

There are a number of statements that God makes

Malachi 1:2 (NIV) “I have loved you,” says the LORD.

Malachi 1:6 (NIV). “It is you priests who show contempt for my name.”

Malachi 2:17 (NIV). “You have wearied the LORD with your words.”

Malachi 3:7 (NIV). “Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. Malachi 3:13 (NIV). “You have spoken arrogantly against me,” says the LORD.

How do you reconcile such harsh words with God’s initial statement that he has loved them? Have you ever experienced pain that you later saw as God’s mercy in your life? Describe it.

Read **Malachi 3:7–9 (NIV)**. Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’

⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’

“In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

Why does God tie a spiritual return to God with giving?

Mark tells a familiar story about a widow in the temple, an offering, and two small copper coins. (Mark 12:41-44). React to the statement that generosity is not just an amount; it’s a quality of the heart.

Can you think generous thoughts and not be generous?

Finally, Malachi spoke of feeling futility when one sees how often the wicked seem to get away with being wicked.

Read **Malachi 3:14–15 (NIV)**. “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’ ¹⁵ But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.’ ”

Have you ever felt that way when you were truly a victim and serving God seemed to bring you pain? What got you through it?

As we close out the study, think of the ways we settle in to comfort and away from challenge to grow in the Christian life. In your excitement in the Christian life, are you crawling, walking, running, or soaring?