

## Malachi 2:1-9

### Let's Talk: Leaders that Honor God

Hey good morning RCM – so very good to have you with us. For those joining us online – good to have you. I encourage you if you're online – make a priority to get here when you can. Don't let the convenience of online viewership replace the priority of gathering with the local church.

This morning we're continuing our study through the book of Malachi. If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn with me to the book of Malachi chapter 2. It's the last book in the Old Testament, about 2/3 of the way through the bible. If you're using a device – make sure you're in the CSB.

Where we are in the book of Malachi – remember where God's people are – they've returned from captivity, they've rebuilt the temple, they've grown disillusioned to their current position – and it's showing up in every aspect of their lives. As if they see the covenant faithfulness of God over them, but they just don't care anymore. They're walking around saying "WHATEVER" to God. So God sits them down for a talk – and usually when someone reaches out to you and says they need to have a talk – it's not a good thing.

We saw a few weeks ago that God, through Malachi, starts with declaring His love for them, and reminds them that He chose to pour out His love on them. Not because they were great, but because God is great. Even in spite of their questioning His love – He reminds them of the greatness of His love.

And then last week we looked at the state of their worship. It was pathetic. Priests and people – only way to describe it is pathetic. To the point where God tells them He's just assume lock the doors – He didn't want them in His presence. They were making a mockery of worship.

This week – the text turns specifically to the priests, with a warning and a reminder. The priests

John Maxwell – pastor and "leadership guru" – is famously quoted as saying everything rises and falls on leadership.

Leadership is still a buzz word – and for me I don't really like it. Like at my kids' school they stopped having student of the month, and replaced it with leader of the month. Absurd, but whatever – I refused it, I kept calling it student of the month because I'm grumpy middle aged Gen-X'er.

Too often we rush to specific competencies when we think about a leader. And competencies matter – don't mishear me – **but character matters more**. I can teach people how to do a job – I can teach people how to study the scriptures, I can teach people what I know about public speaking – I can even teach people how to work a crowd (even though I personally hate doing it). But what I'm WAY more interested in is your character and your integrity.

In business – give me a 5\* character guy or gal and I'll teach you the art and science of corporate finance. In pastoral ministry, give me a 5\* character guy and we can teach you the specific competencies needed for pastoral ministry.

Because if Maxwell is right – if everything rises and falls on leadership – You'd have to say that the leader's character is foundational to everything he or she does.

In Malachi 2, God through Malachi rips the priests – and rightfully so – but He also reminds us of the example.

### **READ Malachi 2:1-9**

“Therefore, this decree is for you priests: <sup>2</sup> If you don't listen, and if you don't take it to heart to honor my name,” says the Lord of Armies, “I will send a curse among you, and I will curse your blessings. In fact, I have already begun to curse them because you are not taking it to heart.

<sup>3</sup> “Look, I am going to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread animal waste<sup>[a]</sup> over your faces, the waste from your festival sacrifices, and you will be taken away with it. <sup>4</sup> Then you will know that I sent you this decree, so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the Lord of Armies. <sup>5</sup> “My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave these to him; it called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. <sup>6</sup> True instruction was in his mouth, and nothing wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity and turned many from iniquity. <sup>7</sup> For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should desire instruction from his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of Armies.

<sup>8</sup> “You, on the other hand, have turned from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have violated<sup>[b]</sup> the covenant of Levi,” says the Lord of Armies. <sup>9</sup> “So I in turn have made you despised and humiliated before all the people because you are not keeping my ways but are showing partiality in your instruction.”

### **PRAY**

What a challenging text for us this morning – and specifically for me, and anyone that would desire any type of leadership among God's people.

#### **1. Their Call / Our Call**

##### **If you don't listen & take to heart**

- The idea here is not just to hear God's call to them, but to listen, absorb and ACT!
- Listen – Absorb – Act
  - To take something to heart ALWAYS requires action.

- Like, most of us don't take to heart the speed limits unless we see a police car or FHP. We think we know better than the FDOT, or whomever sets the speed limits.
- We may have listened to it, we may have absorbed it – but unless we act we're not taking it to heart.
- Ultimately the priests existed – and you and I exist – to bring honor to God's name – remember from last week that God's name is a phrase that encompasses His entire character – all of who He is. And to bring Honor to His Name – is to listen to Him, to absorb what He says, and to ACT in a way consistent with His Revealed character. Not just the priests then or the pastors today – EVERY SINGLE CHRISTIAN has breath today to bring honor to God – to glorify God. The chief end of man – to glorify God!

Deuteronomy 10:8 – the priests were to represent God to the people and the people to God – to pronounce blessings to the people in the name of the LORD – BUT because of their consistent failure in taking it to heart – God had already begun cursing their blessing.

Nothing short of a complete leadership failure. They had a job – they didn't care. They had a calling – they didn't care. They had a special seat at the table – they said "WHATEVER".

**And God rebukes them for it.** V3 says God will spread animal waste over their faces – that's a gentle translation of the word. Other English translations use the word manure or dung.

The point is – the priests' failures was ENORMOUS – and an ENORMOUS failure of a public leader calls for an ENORMOUS rebuke. They led the people to make a mockery of worship, and God would make a mockery of them.

But unlike human vengeance – the purpose of God's rebuke or God's judgment was to preserve.

## **2. Purpose of the Rebuke/Judgment**

V4A - Then you will know that I sent you this decree

God's purpose was the continuation of the priesthood – not just to wipe them all out and end it – and He wants them to know that it is from HIM! Not from people

The end of V4 and V5 Malachi writes about the covenant with Levi. We have to go back to Numbers 25 and Deuteronomy 10

Because of Phineas' zeal for God, God gives him a covenant in Numbers 25

### **READ NUMBERS 25:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore declare: I grant him my covenant of peace. <sup>13</sup>It will be a covenant of perpetual priesthood for him and his future descendants, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the Israelites."

### **READ DEUTERONOMY 10:8-9**

<sup>8</sup>“At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the Lord’s covenant, to stand before the Lord to serve him, and to pronounce blessings in his name, as it is today. <sup>9</sup>For this reason, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance like his brothers; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God told him.

### **3. Levi’s Role & Response**

So we see Levi’s Role was to be a representative of God to the people, and the people to God.

His response was to revere and fear God – not fear like a servant and master, but fear like a son with a good and gracious Father.

### **4. A Path For All Who Would Lead:**

- Fear God
- Teach Rightly – V6A - true instruction was in his mouth and nothing wrong
- Walk with God in Peace and Integrity
- Call to repentance
- Guard knowledge

And then, if the indictment isn’t yet complete, God through Malachi reminds the priests of their complete failure

### **5. One More Reminder**

Re-Read V8-9

- They have turned
- Their teaching causes others to fail
- They are not keeping God’s ways
- They are showing partiality

This is a complete and total failure of the priesthood before God. Men that had been called to a special position of service – who absolutely failed. Their character was corrupt, and God’s not going to have any of it.

**6. CHARACTER Matters – Even more today.** Knowing that God calls men to pastor churches, knowing that at times the weight of caring for people’s souls can be absolutely crushing – I just encourage you to (1) pray for us, (2) work with us, (3) hold us to the standards, (4) be quick to extend grace – especially to our families.

God’s standards are high for those who would lead His people – OT and NT standards.

### **7. JESUS AS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST**

God's standard for them was high – because hear me – their role was like an picture of the One True Great High Priest that would come – Jesus – who would be the last and great and final High Priest – representing the people of God to the Father – making a perfect once for all time sacrifice to offer salvation to all who by grace through faith believe.

**READ Hebrews 7:23-8:1**

<sup>23</sup> Now many have become Levitical priests, since they are prevented by death from remaining in office. <sup>24</sup> But because he remains forever, he holds his priesthood permanently. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them.

<sup>26</sup> For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all time when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup> For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever.

1 Now the main point of what is being said is this: We have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

Trust in Jesus today – as your true and final High priest.