

Faithful | Malachi 1-2 | 5/24/15

- Introduction
 - The Christian might think at times they are revering God and doing exactly what He desires because we go to church, we pray at dinner and when we go to bed and when we get up, we give money to the poor we tithe. That we do the things that good Christians are expected to do.
 - In doing all of this it certainly “looks” the part it “looks” like we are being a good Christian. However it is possible for us to simply be going through the motions and doing our “rituals” and “good works” but lack the key component which is the reason why do these things which is out of our faith and reverence to God that should be in our hearts.
 - If are not doing these things for the right reason then we are being unfaithful to God because we are not doing them for the reasons that God desires of us.
 - **A Christian if they are not careful can treat their relationship with God as simply a religion that consists of dead works that lacks true substance.**
 - This is something that we must examine within us to be sure that our hearts are in the right place and that we are truly being faithful to God not just in our actions but in our hearts.
 - **This was a problem that affected the people of Judah** and especially the priests during the time of Malachi.
 - They to were going through their rituals and sacrifices but their hearts were not in the right place they thought their actions were good enough but in reality they were being unfaithful and disobedient.
- Our worship and our faithfulness to God must be true and come from the heart. It is not purely our external actions, rituals or good works but we must be faithful to God. | Malachi 1:6-14
 - This lack of faith, obedience and reverence to God was unfortunately taking place within the priests among the people of Judah.
 - The Priests at the time had felt that they were doing what was right before God by going through their rituals and sacrifices.
 - **However they were missing one of the major reasons for doing them. It wasn't just an action or ritual but it had to do with the heart.**
 - The priests were sacrificing the detestable to God instead of giving Him the best of their produce and animals.
 - **Read Malachi 1:6-14**
 - The priests in their eyes were doing what they were supposed to be doing they were bringing the sacrifices to God.
 - However they were missing the big picture with the sacrifices. God had previously stated to them what was required for these sacrifices that they had certain conditions that had to be met.
 - Leviticus 22:22
 - “Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar.
 - Deuteronomy 15:21
 - “But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.”
 - **The purpose of choosing the best sacrifice required them to have a right heart and to be truly faithful to God.**

- To sacrifice the best of what they had required them to actually make a sacrifice upon themselves because they had to be faithful knowing they were giving up something valuable and giving it to God.
 - To do this they had to be obedient and wilfully give up the best of what they had to give it to God.
 - This showed that their heart was in the right place.
 - But because they were giving God not their first fruits but instead the least of what they had they were not showing God respect, reverence, love and were ultimately being unfaithful.
 - God even pointed this out directly in that He knew that if they were required to give this sacrifice to the governor that they would not submit such and unworthy sacrifice. This showed that they would have respected man more than God.
 - However the priests because of their ill sacrifice showed God that their hearts were not in the right place.
 - Their inward self (the heart) which should have been the best and most important they overlooked and didn't make it count.
 - God has made it clear that obedience and paying attention to God is more important than their sacrifices.
 - 1 Samuel 15:22
 - “Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king.”
 - Obedience and paying attention to God's Word is more important than any of their ritualistic sacrifices.
 - While the physical act was important as God had commanded them to do it, it was also supposed to be something that happened in the heart.
 - Their hearts needed to be turned toward God, He desired that their sacrifice be done out of love and repentance and out of reverence for God. Not to simply go through the motions.
 - Malachi 2:2
 - **“If you don't listen, and if you don't take it to heart to honor My name,”** says Yahweh of Hosts, “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.**
 - **How do you see the relation between the condition of one's heart and the acts of service or works? Do you think God desires the works or does he care more about the heart?**
- The Christian sacrifice
 - While the Christian today is no longer required to make literal sacrifices as an offering to God we can certainly relate to this passage of Scripture.
 - Our offerings and our sacrifices today consist of how we as Christians show our faithfulness to God in everything that we do for God from our good works, our obedience, reading the Bible and our praise and worship of Him.
 - **However we can be like these priests where we are focused on performing the action but we disregard the condition of our heart.**

- We can go to church every time the doors open but that doesn't mean that our hearts are right. To physically show up and sign on name on the attendance register is not worship to God.
 - To blindly follow along in worship without real love in your heart is not true worship.
 - To give to the poor or church out of obligation and "because it looks good" is not being faithful to God.
- With everything that the Christian does for God we must offer a pure sacrifice.
 - As with the proper sacrifice in the OT was for a pure lamb without blemish, the first fruits of the crops and the best of the bulls.
 - **God detest the sacrifice that is ones worthless items that shows no faith or love to God because they are giving something they detest.**
 - The Christian is therefore to give the best of what they have to offer to God. By doing this they show that their hearts are in the right place.
- The Pharisees show us how we are not to act
 - The Pharisees outward appearance didn't hid their hearts from Jesus
 - Matthew 22:23-36
- What does it look like for a Christian who gives a true meaningful sacrifice through their faithfulness to God?
 - When we go through our Christian lives our heart must be in the right place
 - Malachi 2:2a
 - **"If you don't listen, and if you don't take it to heart to honor My name,"** says Yahweh of Hosts, "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.**
 - Our actions before God must be out of reverence (fear) and in awe of Him.
 - God showed the priests the example that they were supposed to follow and what their actions and heart was supposed to look like.
 - **Read Malachi 2:5-7**
 - ***To do these things as God described required the heart to be in the right place these were not blind acts of service.***
 - We must show God honor in everything that we do otherwise we risk being no different than the unfaithful priests who did not have their hearts in the right place and were giving empty sacrifices to God.
- Examples of our faithfulness and pure sacrifice that comes from the heart:
 - We show our faithfulness in the first fruits of our time.
 - We are all very busy people who have numerous things going on in our lives.
 - It is rare to find a down hour let alone a whole day with the average schedule of most Christians.
 - So when we try to balance our schedules and put time in for God sometimes instead of giving God the primary slot of importance we give God the leftovers.
 - **This doesn't mean it has to be the morning over the evening etc. but that we give God priority and we devote time to Him each day where we are useful.**
 - If we give God the time when we are wore out and our brains are shut down and we are simply going through the motions of reading and praying then we are not really giving God the first fruits of our time.
 - This is different for each person because for me my prime time that I spend with God is generally 930-12AM. That is my best time to put aside the world and focus on God.

- Faithful in our time for prayer and Bible study
 - We all know that we are to read and study our Bible. However this is something that we often neglect.
 - It is easy to let the day get away from us and spending time in God's Word is the thing that is often pushed aside.
- Faithful in our time for good works
 - As Christians God has called us for good works but often do we set time aside for them? We strive to be sure that we do the work for ourselves that needs to be done but how often do we look at the time dedication to good works for others?
- Faithful in our time for church and small groups
 - Our time in church is not for a social club or to see friends, but it is a time that we set aside to worship God and to study His word.
 - All too often we neglect this time and we let life dictate if we will go to Church.
 - We must be sure that God is given the time and that we strive to be in our small groups so that we can learn more about Him.
- **How do you perceive your time in relation to your faithfulness to God?**
- **Is this something that we often overlook?**
 - We show our faithfulness in our tithe
 - Our tithe is probably the best modern day activity that God calls us to do that would most closely resemble the OT sacrifices.
 - For the people to give up their animals and harvest was the same as us going into our bank accounts.
 - It is very Biblical for us to tithe to give of our income over to God.
 - **This to is to be of our first fruits**
 - We are to give to God his portion first before we do anything else.
 - If we are simply tithing on what we have left over at the end of the month then we have it backwards.
 - This is why in a budget you should always tithe first and have it at the top.
 - If you have to take something out go somewhere else first.
 - We show our faithfulness in everything that we do each and every day.
 - There are many other things that we as Christians must do for God that we must be sure we are doing them with a pure heart.
 - We must always give God the best of what we have to offer and never just give him the leftovers.
- We must strive to not be hypocrites | Malachi 3:10-16
 - The Lord spoke against Judah for they were trying to be followers of God in their rituals but they were also being disobedient and unfaithful to God in several other areas.
 - **Read Malachi 3:10-16**
 - Specifically He speaks to the fact that the men had been marrying into other people who had false Gods which God had spoken directly against.
 - Then the men were divorcing their wives for no good reason other than for their own selfish desires.
 - The Christian must not be a hypocrite.
 - While the Christian can never live a perfect life and never be a hypocrite we can certainly strive not to.

- We cannot say to ourselves that we are being a good Christian and going to church, saying our prayers and doing the acts of a Christian that look good in public if we are at the same time intentionally being disobedient to God in other areas.
 - If our heart is not in the right place then a hypocrite we will be.
 - We will want to look the part of being a Christian in front of others but if we are doing them for the wrong reasons and our hearts are not in the right place as careful as we may try to be we will be actively sinning against God and the world will see this.
- The results of our hypocrisy and unfaithfulness
 - There are consequences for our hypocrisy and our unfaithfulness.
 - This does not mean that God is going to throw us to the side and disown us as children but it will certainly strain our relationship because He will not bless our empty actions.
 - Malachi 2:1
 - “Therefore this decree is for you priests: If you don’t listen, and if you don’t take it to heart to honor My name,” says Yahweh of Hosts, “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.”
 - Malachi 2:8-9
 - “You, on the other hand, have turned from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have violated the covenant of Levi, “says the LORD of Hosts.” 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.”
 - Malachi 2:13
 - “And this is another thing you do: you cover the LORD’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because He no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from you hands.”
 - If our hearts are not in the right place how do you expect God to bless your acts of service or your good works?
 - God will bless those who are obedient, those who give to the poor and to the church out of true love for God. Those who truly love others.
 - But if our heart is not truly in the right place and doing it for the right reasons, if our acts of service are not done out of our love and reverence for God than how can we expect him to respect them and bless them?
 - **Do you think that God will bless and reward your good works if your heart is not in the right place? What can we do to be sure that our heart is truly in the work that we do for God?**