

Attitude Matters

Malachi 1:1-11

When something is going wrong, the first thing that people usually say is "stay strong" and "stay positive." These little affirmations sometimes work, and it's important to remember that words can go a long way during a hard time, but in order to stay strong and positive you first need the right attitude.

For example, we all know that if you're going to accomplish anything of value in life you need to know your "why." But knowing your why is just the beginning, it's actually your attitude that drives you to complete something.

In fact, attitude is the driving force behind the way we live our lives. It determines how we view our circumstances, what we think, what we pay attention to, and what we choose to ignore.

Our attitude can even influence the people around us or vice versa. Attitude matters because it influences how we see life, how we view people, and even what we think about God...

What we think about God influences our attitude towards Him, and if we're honest, sometimes our attitude isn't very good. It can often be one of complaining, questioning, or even resentment. The good thing is that even if we feel this way, God doesn't just let us stay there. In fact, as we get to know more of His goodness, His character, and faithfulness, our attitude towards Him naturally changes.

I believe this message is important because our attitude towards God reveals what we truly believe about Him, and what we believe about Him impacts how we live our lives.

In our time together I want to show us why attitude matters when it comes to our relationship with God by looking at a few points...

- What we believe about His love
- What we do with His Honor
- What we offer Him in Worship

The book of Malachi is the last OT book before the New Testament. Nothing is really known of Malachi the author, but his name simply means messenger or messenger of God.

- At the time this book was written, it was 100 years after the decree of Cyrus was given, to allow Israel to go back to their homeland in 538 B.C. This was after Israel had been defeated and taken captive by the Babylonians. On top of that the temple was destroyed.
- When they returned to the land, God encouraged the people through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to rebuild the temple. God also promised this battered nation that He would bring back their prosperity, peace, and His presence (Haggai 2, Zechariah 1:16-17).

But considering their current situation these promises only seemed like a cruel joke. In contrast Israel faced a devastated economy, prolonged drought, crop failure, pestilence and opposition from their enemies.

This leads us to our first point

What we believe about His love (V1-5)

Can you sense the bad attitude here? After God says that He loves His people Israel, the response is *"In what way have you loved us?"* I believe there are many of us sitting here today who can relate to how Israel is feeling and may even feel qualified to ask God the same question. *"How has God loved me?"* If we look back at **Malachi 1:2-3** we see God's response - *"I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the Lord. "Yet Jacob I have loved; ³But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness."*

God says, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" **What does this mean?** In context love here refers to "choice" rather than "affection" and "hatred" refers to "rejection" than "animosity." This is speaking of the great ancestors of Israel and Edom being Jacob and Esau, who were brothers.

- The point that God is making to Israel, is that He could have chosen anyone to be the patriarch of Israel, but He choose their great ancestor Jacob. God is simply saying that Israel had nothing to do with Him choosing them to be His people.

Ephesians 1:4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

- Before the universe was created God choose to be in a relationship with us, it had nothing to do with our merit, but by His grace and love for us. God through His love draws mankind to Himself, and people either choose to respond or not. This means that even when we respond to Gods love, it's because He initiated it. We didn't do anything but respond to it.

What is God talking about in verses 4-5, when He said that He would break down Esau's descendants, the Edomites? It's a reference to when Israel was being destroyed by the Babylonians. The Edomites, who were relatives of the Jewish people, didn't help them in their time of need, but profited from their destruction.

- God is showing Israel a great contrast. Edom will be destroyed, and they will try to rebuild but He will throw them down, but when Israel rebuilt, they were preserved. His love is evident for them in the fact that they are still around.

God does the same thing with us. *1 Corinthians 6:19* tells us that we are the *temple of the Holy Spirit*, meaning that God is with us everywhere we go. Because the Spirit is in us we are encouraged in *Ephesians 4:30*, to *not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*.

- Here's my point, because the Spirit is with us all the time, He knows the sinful thoughts of our hearts, and He's seen the sins we've committed.
 - Yet by God's love and grace He continues to allow us to live another day. Not to continue in sin, but so that we would respond to His grace and seek Him. **Titus 2:11-12** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*

What we are seeing here is God explaining to Israel how He has loved them, but Israel denying His love. For us, when we ask the question "how has God loved me?" We are basically saying that He hasn't done enough to convince us of His love.

- I think we could all sit here and think about all the simple things that God has given us already, like breath, food, family, income, etc. But the main way that God has expressed His love for us is by sending His son to die for us!

The truth is, if God never did anything else for us that would be enough to convince us that He loves us. This act of love communicates to people that the love of God isn't just some sweet religious sentiment, but it's a love that brings satisfaction. **Isaiah 58:11** *The Lord will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.*

- If our attitude towards Gods love is that it's some empty religious metaphor, then of course it won't satisfy us! But when we believe His love and press into Him with all our hearts, His Love becomes real to us, and we will be satisfied with it.
 - You might be thinking, well how do I practically get there? Start by believing what His word says about you, and His Love will become real to you.

Attitude matters because a cynical heart towards the love of God blinds you to how great His love is for you. It is only by believing His love that makes it real for us.

When we believe His love, it impacts...

What we do with His Honor (v6-8)

God is specifically addressing the Priest here, because their negative attitude is influencing the people. The word "despise" in verse 6 means - to look down upon with neglect, or to regard as unworthy of one's notice or consideration.

It wasn't that the Priests were causing the people to engage in idol worship, but something just as evil, they influenced the people to neglect God's honor.

The Priests had an apathetic attitude towards God, and it was evident in how they served God. The people saw this and followed their example.

They offered defiled food on the altar, what does this mean? It means that the Priests were offering animals for sacrifice unto God that were not up to His standard. This was a clear violation of what God had commanded in the Law. **Deuteronomy 15:21** *But if there is a defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God.*

This was important because the Priests were supposed to be honoring God by their service to Him, but because of the Priests negative attitude, they were actually mocking Him by their service

The Priests thought that "just showing up" was good enough, but just showing up has one big flaw, because it leaves the heart out of it, and that's what God wants more than anything. **Colossians 3:23** *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.*

- In whatever we do, we are called to serve as unto the Lord. Meaning that the quality of our work reflects the honor we give Him. This is directly connected to our attitude, because just showing up, isn't what God is looking for.

Attitude matters because how we serve Him reflects the amount of honor, we desire to give Him in our lives.

When we seek to honor Him, it impacts...

What we offer Him in Worship (9-11)

What we see in verse 9 is not a serious call to repentance for the Priests, but God is using some sarcasm. God is basically telling the Priests, "Yes, please ask me for favor while you disrespect me by offering." We have to understand that the Priests were well aware of the proper sacrifices that God wanted, but they choose to offer sacrifices were insulting to God.

- Part of the problem was that the Priests had an attitude of bitterness towards God. They have been defeated by other nations, their economy was bad, and life overall wasn't as good as it used to be. But this wasn't God's fault. These things happened because they rebelled against God by their sin.
 - Instead of owning their part in this, they bitterly blamed God for their problems, but still demanded that He bless them.

This is not a fun place to be...But it's an easy place to get to. Living with an attitude of bitterness and blaming God for the consequences of our bad decisions. I'm not talking about decisions that we were unaware of the outcome, but I'm talking about decisions that we knew wouldn't be good for us.

Galatians 6:7-8 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

The decisions we make are like investments. And with our investment we get a return. Meaning that if we spend our lives making decisions that sinfully appeal to our flesh, we can expect to receive the consequences for those decisions. But if we invest spiritually (obeying God's word), we live in the strength of God's Spirit and produce fruits of the Spirit.

- But what if you feel like you've lived your life making the wrong decisions? *Joel 2:25a* *So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.* If you feel this way the only correct response is to seek the Lord, because only God can redeem a life. He is able to change us so that the life we live unto Him now is better than the time we spent living for our flesh.

In verse 10 God says something shocking. He's basically saying that if this offensive worship of the Priests is going to continue, it would be better that they close the temple doors and stop worshipping Him.

- The reason He is being this extreme is because the bitter attitude of the Priests was influencing the people. The attitude of the Priests communicated that God was only concerned about religious duty, and not the condition

of the heart. This caused the people to just go through the motions in worship, rather than praising Him from their hearts.

We have to be careful of this, because we set an example for those that are watching our lives. If we're communicating by our attitude that worshipping God is just religious routine, then others will copy that.

It's not that God doesn't care about worship, He desires that we worship Him, but He cares more about the condition of our hearts as we worship. **Luke 18:10-14** Jesus uses an analogy of this by saying *"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'*

¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

- Both of these men came before God, but it was the heart of the tax collector that God recognized, not the religious routine of the Pharisee. In the same way, God is always looking at the condition of our hearts when we offer Him worship.

God tells Israel that if they will not worship Him properly then He will go to the Gentiles and receive proper worship from them. Jews had taken God for granted and it was evident by the worship they gave to God. This is a danger for any believer, who has known God for a while. We can get to a place where we take our relationship with Him for granted, and our worship can reflect that.

- My example of taking worship for granted – Worship like you're at His throne! (Not attention to self but worshipping with your whole heart).
 - God doesn't just want us to offer Him worship on Sunday, but with our lives! It's the everyday stuff He cares about. What does our worship look like at home? With our neighborhoods? People at work? Or anywhere else? He desires worship even in these places by how we live our lives.

Attitude matters because the way we live offers God the worship He desires.

In conclusion:

Attitude matters because it...

- Causes us to recognize God's love for us
- Makes us intentional about bringing Honor to Him
- Helps us to remember that worship is about the heart

Attitude ultimately reflects what we really believe about God, and what we believe about Him impacts how we live our lives. The truth is, that God doesn't want to be some religious routine you believe in because your Pastor does, He wants your belief in Him to be grounded not only in His word, but in your own heart.

If you're a believer and you feel like you don't have the right attitude towards God today, understand that your attitude will change as you seek more of Him. Ask Him to reveal more of Himself to you as you seek Him.

Maybe you don't know Jesus. If you want to know Him and have the right attitude towards Him, it begins by giving your life to Him.