

WORTHY OR WORTHLESS

When it comes to God's people, right much of God's issue with them had to do with the quality of their worship. The worship they were offering Him really wasn't accomplishing what worship should. You see, when we worship we are saying something about God's worth before the world. Much of the time Israel's worship was considered worthless by God because of the attitudes of their heart when they engaged in worship. Worship really comes down to a matter of the heart. You can sing, lift hands, engage in religious rituals and even fast and pray. But if the attitude of our heart is not actively engaged and sincere in expressing God's worth, He is not impressed with the worship we offer Him. So today as we close out our final week of **Prepare The Way** and as we bring to a close our reading in the OT, I want us to examine the current state of our worship to determine if it's WORTHY or WORTHLESS.

Before we jump into today's text (which btw, is **Malachi 1** - the last book of the OT before you get to the NT) let me set the context for us. Jerusalem is in the process of being repopulated by the Jews since the completion of the wall. Nehemiah has returned back to Persia as he had promised the king in Nehemiah 2. Even though they are back in the Promised Land and God is seeking to restore them there is still widespread abuse of God's law taking place and an underlying hard-heartedness towards God's among the people and the priesthood. The words of Malachi are going to be the last words God will speak to Israel through a designated prophet until John The Baptist arrives on the scene and begins to lay the groundwork for the arrival of Jesus the Messiah. Which btw, is still over 400 years away considering the Bible timeline. In other words, following Malachi and prior to God's New Testament revelation, God will be silent for a period of 400 years. The reality is He has said all He needs to say to His people at this point. If you are someone who feels like God has been silent in your life, maybe the reason for the silence is because He has told you what you already need to know and you haven't been listening to Him. Malachi's writing will be the last word spoken to the Jews and his word will be ringing in their ears for the next 400 years. This will set the stage nicely for Jesus who when He comes will be the perfect example of what God is looking for from His people when it comes to worship that is truly worthy. As we take a look at **Malachi 1** and the final rebuke God has for His people, I want us to notice TWO HEART ATTITUDES we must avoid if we don't want our worship to become worthless.

MALACHI 1:1-2 (NIV) 1 A prophecy: The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. **2** "I have loved you," says the Lord. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'"

Heart Attitude #1 we must avoid - Don't DESPISE the Lord by questioning His LOVE

Part of what leads to unfaithfulness on our part is we begin to doubt or question God's love for us. This doubt may be based on how others have treated us in the past. It may base it on our current circumstances. We may even base it on our own lack of faithfulness and inability to love unconditionally. But to do so is a huge mistake on our part because God is nothing like us and His love is always faithful. Nothing will diminish or torpedo our worship more than halfhearted

devotion fueled by a heart that doubts God's unfailing love for us! James warns us about the poison of doubt when he says this.

James 1:6-8 NIV "6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

MALACHI 1:2 (NIV) 2 "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."

Israel was only looking at what they had lost and the current difficulty of trying to rebuild what God had allowed to be destroyed. This circumstance had caused them to question God's love. But by comparing them with Esau (and Edom his descendants) God is trying to emphasize that God does love them and the evidence that this is true is because Jacob was not favored or chosen based on his merit but simply because of LOVE and a promise made to Abraham. Jacob was a deceiver by nature and a manipulator. He certainly wasn't better than Esau. When God chose Jacob over Esau, He didn't just see who they would become, He saw all that would come from them. God simply chose Jacob because he wanted to and God has not changed His mind on that choice. God is faithful in His commitment and with His love. The hatred mentioned in verse 3 is not to be considered a divine hatred because Esau wasn't worthy or without value to God or because God loved Jacob more. It was simply the result of Esau's idolatrous heart where he decided to choose other gods over the God of his father Isaac. As a result of Esau's path, Edom would be destroyed as all are who reject God and turn away from Him.

MALACHI 1:4-5 (NIV) 4 Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins." But this is what the Lord Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord. 5 You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!'"

Like Israel the Edomites would attempt to rebuild their ruins. But because God is faithful to His promise He negated their efforts. You see, God's promises are a sure thing. Israel's restoration was certain because God promised it. Likewise, Edom would not be restored because God promised them they would not be. And it all had to do with the nature of their hearts. In fact, God's promise will ultimately be extended beyond the borders of Israel and will one day include all who repent and acknowledge the Greatness of God!

Bottom line: God chose Israel unconditionally and He has pledged to be faithful to them whether they are faithful to him or not. Their very restoration which is yet to be fully complete is evidence of God's commitment to them. Listen to how David describes God's love and faithfulness.

Psalm 26:2-3 (NIV) **2** Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; **3** for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

Jesus is the perfect example of this.

John 14:28-31 (NIV) **28** “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. **29** I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. **30** I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, **31** but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

John 15:9-11 (NIV) “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Love is the key to our obedience and our expression of LOVE for God will always lead to a life of OBEDIENCE. But note this, WE CANNOT LOVE HIM IF HE DOESN’T LOVE US FIRST. If you don’t want your worship to become worthless **don’t DESPISE the Lord by questioning His LOVE.**

Attitude #2 we must avoid - Don’t DEFILE the Lord with your HALF-HEARTED OFFERING

MALACHI 1:6-9 (NIV) **6** “A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name. “But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’ **7** “By offering defiled food on my altar. “But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’ “By saying that the Lord’s table is contemptible. **8** When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord Almighty. **9** “Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the Lord Almighty.

Israel, because they doubted God’s love, did not bring their best to God! They gave out of what they didn’t want to keep or that wasn’t very valuable to them. It was half hearted at best. What does it say about the God you worship when you make that kind of offering of worship? Remember, our worship is saying something about God’s worth. Notice what God has to say about such an attitude of worship.

MALACHI 1:10-11 (NIV)**10** “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands. **11** My name will be great among the nations, from where

the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord Almighty.

Our worship should declare He is Lord Almighty! But if it doesn't it would be better if we would just shut the doors to the temple so that no one could offer up such a meaningless sacrifice offering. Think about that for a moment. **No worship would be better than half hearted going through the motions worship.**

MALACHI 1:12-14 (NIV) **12** “But you profane it by saying, ‘The Lord’s table is defiled,’ and, ‘Its food is contemptible.’ **13** And you say, ‘What a burden!’ and you sniff at it contemptuously,” says the Lord Almighty. “When you bring injured, lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?” says the Lord. **14** “Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king,” says the Lord Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.

Does what you offer God (Time, Talent and Treasure) match the value of the God you worship? Does it respect the magnitude of His NAME? Does it express the value of His love and demonstrate your love for Him? Here is a peak into the throne room of heaven that we will get to see one day for those who receive eternal life. Tell me if this is a half hearted offering of worship?

Revelation 4:9-11 (NIV) Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, **10** the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: **11** “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Remember, Jesus is the perfect example of what our worship should look like. What kind of offering did Jesus offer up to the Father?

John 10:14-18 (NIV) **14** “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—**15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. **17** The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

Would you call that a half hearted offering? Jesus' worship of the Father was wrapped up in His obedience to the Father. Not only was it a demonstration of His love for us and His love for the Father. It was a demonstration of a full hearted offering that declared the glory of God! Anything

else would be considered worthless. How is your worship? And I am not talking about Sunday morning. I am talking about your daily life!

Heart motives that make for **WORTHY WORSHIP**

Obedience to God

Loving others at the expense of self

Honoring God in all that you do

Generosity

Emptied and Vulnerable (where you recognize you desperately need God)

Everyday (no days off when it comes to worship)

Heart motives that make for **WORTHLESS WORSHIP**:

What you do doesn't match what's in your heart

You act out of obligation (rather than love)

You seek to please people (rather than God)

You serve God from your leftovers

Self sufficient (you don't really depend on God you just like to have Him around for a good luck charm)

Convenience (only when its convenient)

Comfort (as long as you don't have to get out of your comfort zone)

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Don't DESPISE the Lord by questioning His LOVE. Trust Him for He is faithful!! Don't DEFILE the Lord with your HALF-HEARTED OFFERING. Bring Him your very best!!

Do you know about God's faithful love for you? Jesus died so that you don't have to. Have you received Him today?

How is your worship? What needs to change? Are you bringing Him your BEST? After all, He gave His best for you.