

Leading Others Upward **Malachi 2:1-2:9**

Malachi 2:1-9 Additional Warning to the Priests

¹ “And now, you priests, this warning is for you. ² If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me.

³ “Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will smear on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it. ⁴ And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁵ “My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. ⁶ True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.

⁷ “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth. ⁸ But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the LORD Almighty. ⁹ “So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.”

Intro: (v. 1)

Let's begin by looking at verse 1 together...

- passage is obviously not for us, or is it? --“priest”
- also used to describe every believer in the New Testament.
- OT priests were of Moses' brother Aaron, the tribe of Levi.
- They were set apart for two primary purposes:
 - (1) To sacrifice animals and (2) To serve God.
- In NT Priests are described differently

1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Revelation 1:6: “And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father...”

-Here is the point:

- 1) Every believer is a priest- set apart for worship and service.

2) Each of us is called to lead others upward.

5 fatal flaws that contributed to the spiritual slide of those who should have known better
5 leadership lessons

I. Fatal Flaws for Christian Leaders (vv. 2-3, 8-9)

-Do you get tired of hearing about the scandals of inappropriate behavior of people in spiritual leadership?

-H.B. London, from Focus on the Family, hits it on the head when he says: "Each of these has embarrassed himself by exhibiting conduct unbecoming to his calling"

-Malachi 2, -group of leaders that exhibited conduct unbecoming to their calling.

-did it with an air of flippant invincibility.

1. They dishonored God's holiness (vv. 2-3)

-dishonored the holiness of God.

-It always starts here.

-A.W. Tozer who said, "What you think about God is the most important thing about you."

-These priests no longer honored God

-they didn't consider Him to be weighty or heavy.

**Offensive Lineman- Eric vs. Me --Nate Newton

-verse 2--they didn't honor God they didn't bother listening to Him: ***"If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name, says the LORD Almighty..."***

-"listen" =to "hear intelligently with the implication of obedience"

-"set your heart" = an active decision of the will.

-They were offering garbage to God in their sacrifices

-"Lord Almighty" four times in this brief passage.

-But they didn't care. They were bored with it all.

-They yawned in the face of Yahweh.

*-And yet, because of God's love and grace, He offers them a chance to return.

verse 2: "If."

-God is giving them a condition.

-If they persist in sliding south in sin, then He will punish them.

-If they don't grasp God's greatness and honor His heaviness, then 3 things will happen:

- **Rebuke (vv. 2-3a)**

- God declares that He will send curses upon them.
- It's more than just wishing something bad on someone.
- A curse possesses an inherent power of doom and destruction.
 - He's going to **"curse their blessings,"**
 - v.3 -"Because of you I will rebuke your descendants."**

- **Rejection (v. 3b)**

- one of the strongest statements you'll ever find in the Bible.
- verse 3: "I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices..."**
- When the priests sacrificed animals they would lay them on a table and slaughter them, keeping the intestines and organs separate so they could be thrown away.
- *-This was a **dirty job**.
- *If you've ever gutted out an animal you know
- "offal"** =intestines to "dung" or "manure."
- manure makeovers!
- God will not stand for wimpy worship or sloppy service!

-Nahum 3:6: "I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle."

- **Removal (v. 3c)**

- The rebuke led to rejection, which finally leads to removal.
- offal, they were supposed to throw it over the wall and burned
- "will be carried off with it."
- It goes back to **Malachi 1:2: "I have loved you, says the Lord."** He loves us too much to let us keep living like we are.
- We must come back to a proper understanding of His holy love.

2. They departed from the way (v. 8a)

- NLT: **"You have left God's paths."**
- Once a leader stops walking with God, they must get back in step with Him, or their ministry is really over.

3. They are destructive to others (v. 8b)

- We end up taking others with us:
"...and by your teaching have caused many to stumble."
- others will ice over too.
- The priest's words and actions were deceiving

-Isaiah 9:16: "Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray."

-Matthew 18:6 "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

4. They desecrated the covenant (v. 8c)

-"You have violated the covenant with Levi, says the LORD Almighty."

- "violate" means "to decay, destroy or corrupt"

-What God meant as a means to bring them together, was driving them apart

5. They were despised by the people (v. 9)

-the priests were accepting substandard sacrifices

-rendering unfair verdicts

-I assume for personal profit

-People were sick of them now

-Instead of despised they should have been honored

II. Lessons for Christian Leaders (vv. 2a, 4-7)

1. Respond to God in obedience (2a).

-God wants for us to listen and to set our hearts for obedience.

-James 1:22 The Message: "Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!"

-Are you listening to the Lord?

-Are we as a congregation listening to the Lord?

2. Revere God as awesome (vv. 4-5)

-God is longing for His covenant with Levi to continue.

-Levi was the third of Leah's sons born to Jacob.

-His name literally means, "to adhere," or "be joined to."

-Zealous for God at Mt. Sinai while everyone was worshipping the golden calf(Exodus 32:26)

verse 29: "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

-Malachi 2:5 describes this covenantal relationship. **-covenant of "life and peace"**

**-a reference to what Phineas did in Numbers 25 when he took a stand against evil.

-They lost their first love!

3. Resolve to lead yourself (v. 6a)

-v. 6: "True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness..."

-If we want to lead we must make sure that God's Word penetrates our own lives.

-We must concentrate on our walk with Him more than anything

*put on your own oxygen mask first

4. Repel people from sin (v. 6b)

-do whatever it takes to **turn "many from sin."**

-James 5:19-20 exhorts us to not disengage from this task:

"My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."

*-sometimes we have to go get people out of the mud!

5. Represent God to others (v. 7)

-verse 7: "For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge..."

-"preserve" =to guard against perversion.

- "For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

-First, he was devoted. Second, he studied. Third, he applied what he had studied.

-That's a good formula for each of us to follow.

*Notice the second part of verse 7:

-People should want to hear from us!

-Are you making people thirsty for God?

-Do people come to you for answers?

1 Peter 3:15: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Conclusion:

1. leadership lessons:

- Respond to God in obedience. What one thing can you do this week to obey Him? Is there something you're doing that you know you should stop?

- Revere God as awesome. Read the Book of Malachi this week
- Resolve to lead yourself. Are you growing in grace? Are you walking with Him daily?

- Repel people from sin. Think of one person who is sliding into sin. Determine to make a contact this week, no matter how difficult it is.

- Represent God to others. Speak about Jesus to your friends.

2. Since we all lead somebody, who do you want to do a better job leading upwards?

Parents, how are you leading your children to the next level spiritually? Who is in your life that God wants you to do a better job leading upwards?

I want to close with this:

Does God have all of you?

If not, why not?

**Do you remember the story of Aron Ralston, the Colorado climber who cut off his right arm because a 600-pound boulder had trapped him for 4 days?

He resorted to something severe because he knew that he would die if he stayed where he was.

I'm reminded of what Jesus said in **Mark 9:43**: "**If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.**"

You may very well be in the same spot and you just don't know it.

You feel like a boulder of sin has trapped you.

You can't think of a way out.

Maybe you're just going through the motions as a Christian.

It's time to get out the sword of the Spirit and do whatever it takes to regain your first love.