



**The Problem with Human Shepherds
God Defines the Terms and Conditions, Not Us
Malachi 1:6-2:9**

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The first group that Malachi will address are those who really should know better. The priests. They know what the Torah says, and they know they are servants of YAHWEH. But there is a problem called compromise and it has shown up.

We see the same problem all around us today in these last days. It is all part of the end game we see in the process of being fulfilled all around us.

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. **For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.** He opposes and exalts



himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's temple, proclaiming that he himself is God." (CSB)

That day, the day of the Lord, which does not begin until the church is removed, has some warning signs attached to it. These are not attached to the rapture, but to the day of the Lord. Compromise, apostasy, falling away before or after the taking away, is to be expected.

But compromise, as we will learn here in Malachi, has been around since Genesis 3. For some, following the Lord per His requirements, and as New Testament saints, there are still a few we must follow, can be a problem when you overlay the culture on top of it.

Our culture has redefined terms to their own lifestyles so they can feel comfortable in their sin rather than, well, condemned. They want to flip the script and have the believer in Christ be the one who is condemned for daring not to accept their definition of marriage, sexuality or anything else. Here is the truth though.

Romans 8:6–8

"To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. And so people become enemies of God when they are controlled by their human nature; for they do not obey God's law, and in fact they cannot obey it. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God." (GNB)

Compromise is the result of allowing the flesh, the human nature, be in control. And this always causes problems which then reflect outward into a world that is watching.

For example.

I have heard, including in Bible school, why one should never trust the institutional church, or anyone employed in the role of Pastor in the church. When I first heard it, I didn't believe it. But I soon learned there might be some truth to it. We trust in Jesus, not people.

Years later I began to work as an Adjuster in West Texas, and I soon learned that all the warnings were indeed true. Every single time I worked a claim and the individual making the claim was either a Pastor or a church; well, let's say I would shake hands and then count my fingers to make sure none were missing. It didn't matter what denomination either. The flesh was strong with too many.

But that must be an aberration based on a biased selection set. I wish I could say it was. I remember while on active duty once, watching a car blow through a red light, I mean it was serious red and traffic was already moving the opposite direction when zoom. I hit the blues and pulled the car over and was told, while providing his license and registration, that the driver was a member of the clergy, a pastor, and he would never run a red light. In fact, he denied there was even a streetlight in existence at the intersection in question, which you could clearly see looking back from where I had pulled him over along the road.

I proceeded to obtain his signature on the ticket while also warning him about his conduct and his trying to excuse it due to his "serving the Lord." He paid the ticket, but the flesh was strong in this one. I have learned over time that Pastors are simply sinners saved by grace and subject to making the same mistakes we make as we walk with the Lord.

But here is the problem, because of the position, when there is a very public failure, it impacts the attitude of carnal Christians and unbelievers towards Jesus Christ and the church. Yes, some walk away from Jesus as a result.



For example, I have been the recipient of promises from more than one pastor over my life, only to be told when it was time to fulfill the promise that they had prayed some more about it and the Lord said no. Now I can believe that if I had only heard it once from someone, but when you have heard it from multiple people at multiple different churches over a 30-year period, then I think there may be a problem here. The flesh may be too strong in some.

Why do we, as believers, think we can use God's word to fulfill our will and satisfy our greed simply by using a bit of Christianese here and there and sprinkle a few verses out of context to go along with it.

What is it that is part of the reason why I get ghosted by real estate agents when looking for a building for us to meet in as a church? Why do other pastors run into the same thing?

Here is a hint, it is not primarily because of it being a church or being believers. It is a throwback to what I ran into in West Texas as an adjuster, reputation, and one that has been well earned.

Churches and pastors have a reputation for not paying their rent on time. For not taking care of the building the Lord gave them. For under insuring properties or misusing claims funds.

And I could go on and on because my experience tends to give a dim view of the career field, insurance claims work tends to do that. But the flesh is the real reason, not the Spirit. When the flesh, Satan, wins the battle, we get exposed to, well, problems, just like Malachi.

Instead of seeing the real battle taking place in the unseen realm, we become embittered and angry with the church and with those who let us down, the shepherd who is struggling with the flesh, just like us.

Remember, we are in a war.

Many of those who have stepped forward in response to a call of God to lead others in the church do not have colleagues to meet with or anyone to hold them accountable. They press forward with the Lord, but the flesh pops up now and then. They tend not to share their struggles with the flock they oversee.

Frustration sets in and some, not all, begin to react to the situation. The flesh is strong with that one. Then there are those who were never called by God at all. And that can become a problem as well.

I love the church and I love those who He has called to shepherd flocks. It is a tough job with unique potholes to be avoided. I love the men I consider friends and mentors who are also Calvary Chapel Pastors. I love the time we have meeting together, praying, and lifting each other up. And yes, I am still very gun shy, but we are all sinners saved by grace. All of us. We all want to be in the Spirit.

Malachi, starting here in verse 6, is drilling down into this issue of the flesh. Doing the job of being a shepherd and the need to do Temple while maintaining the proper honor and respect. It is not simply a job. Neither is being a pastor.

Malachi 1:6-7

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the LORD of armies to you, the priests who despise My name! But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'" (NASB 2020)

The Lord begins the discussion with a generally accepted statement. In most cultures, it is normal and acceptable for a son to honor his father. It is also normal for a servant or employee to honor his master or employer.



This is normal for the culture, and it is normal for us today as well. When a son does not honor their father, then it is time to find out why.

As a manager, when an employee starts going out of their way to either avoid doing the work or disingering their supervisor, then there is a problem. And I have learned, it isn't always with the employee either but most of the time, it is. Due diligence is required but at the end of the day, usually the problem is with the son or the employee.

YAHWEH takes this example and the cultural expectation of honor.

In the culture of the day, this honor is expected as it is a shame and honor culture. In the culture of the time, "when a son honors his father he is acknowledging his "weight," his importance, his authority. This is tantamount to fearing, respecting (yārē') him (Lev. 19:3). Children who attack or curse their parents must be put to death (Exod. 21:15, 17)." (Verhoef 1987, 211-212)

The priests would know this since they live with this daily and must adjudicate the law when there is a rebel in the community.

When YAHWEH says, "If I am a father where is my honor?" It is not simply a figure of speech. He really is the Father and Lord of His people. He is their Master.

The priests know their law and they know what is in the Torah. But it doesn't mean they follow it.

Exodus 4:21–22

"The LORD instructed Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, make sure you do before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put within your power. But I will harden his heart so that he won't let the people go. And you will say to Pharaoh: This is what the LORD says: **Israel is my firstborn son.**" (CSB)

As a son, they are expected to honor their father, YAHWEH.

When YAHWEH told Moses that the people were to have no other Gods besides Him in Exodus 20, He was stating for them that He is Lord over them. Isaiah settled that question.

Isaiah 26:13

"O LORD our God, masters besides You Have had dominion over us; But by You only we make mention of Your name." (NKJV)

He is the Father of the nation and is their God and Master, yet the leadership has done the unthinkable and do not supply Him even the basic honor that the culture gives to a father.

This leads to the Lord stating another question asked by those who are clueless to their offenses, the priests. "How have we despised your name?"

In other words, the priests are offended that Malachi is there questioning their loyalty to YAHWEH. The question reflects that. They believe that they are faithful Temple officials who are following the letter of the law.

These comments from Malachi are triggering to them, how dare they be accused of despising the name of YAHWEH.



They are about to find out that God is paying attention to what it is they are doing. They are once again, winking at the law. Surely God didn't mean that a sacrifice must be without blemish. Just like many in our culture today want to wink at sin and say surely God didn't mean to discount love by saying marriage is only between a man and a woman.

Because the name of YAHWEH is also bound to the Temple and to Jerusalem, to despise His name means much more.

Malachi 1:7–8

“You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ In that you say, ‘The table of the LORD is to be despised.’ And when you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is it not evil? Or when you present a lame or sick animal, is it not evil? So offer it to your governor! Would he be pleased with you, or would he receive you kindly?” says the LORD of armies.” (NASB 2020)

How could they possibly despise God? They are serving in the Temple and offering regular sacrifices to Him as per the Torah.

We see the same thing happening today in some churches here in the west. The buildings are full, in fact some have expanded to the point that they hold thousands at one time and look, they must televise their services because there are so many trying to get in. God must be really doing a work here. I mean they even have opened other campuses recently. Size and numbers do not equal faithfulness all the time though.

The Temple is full, and worship is happening. But YAHWEH hits them right between the eyes, the food you present, the sacrifice on the altar, it's defiled. Moses made clear the duty of the priests.

“Despising Yahweh's name involves improper ritual practice at the place where Yahweh has caused his name to dwell. The charge is particularly apt, since it was the priests' responsibility to preside over sacrifices at that place where the name of Yahweh is present, namely, the temple in Jerusalem. The character of the communication between the deity and the priests is, up to this point, striking. Yahweh had asked two questions and received no responses. Only when they had been indirectly accused does dialogue between Yahweh and the priests develop.” (Petersen 1995, 178)

Leviticus 21:6

“They must be holy to their God, and they must not profane the name of their God, because they are the ones who present the LORD's gifts, the food of their God. Therefore they must be holy.” (NET 2nd ed.)

The Priests are to be holy and not profane the name of God. But they have profaned the name. This has been done by their being slack with the law.

It probably all began when one of their good friends, who may have also married a non-Jew, decided to offer a sacrifice but opted to keep the best of the flock for themselves and offered a substandard offering.

Once that took place, well word got around and soon others were wanting to do the same. Get rid of the old, lame and sick animals by offering them to God and keep the best for yourself.

Or maybe it all started because giving dropped off. Nehemiah left, the buzz is over and for the priests, no giving, no sacrifices, means going hungry.

The Lord fully intends for the sacrifices and gifts to not only fund Temple operations but to also provide a livelihood for the priests and their families.



As a matter of self-preservation, rather than trust the Lord, they looked at their external situation, examined the metrics closely and determined that there sure were a lot of sacrifices they were being turned away due to the animals having a blemish. And many of those who made the offer which we rejected never came back. Maybe we should make it easier for them to give by lowering expectations.

At least we would get something instead of nothing.

The priests had become supportive of people who no longer wanted to give God their very best. They were ok with tipping God but not giving the very best to God. The biggest problem here, the priests were okay with this behavior. They didn't even hold God as high as the Persian governor. By doing so, they are saying that worship before God is not all that important. What does this say about them?

So, they compromised. Rather than living by faith, they were now living by sight, or as we would phrase it today, they were no longer living in the Spirit but had decided to turn to the world for their support. The flesh is strong with this one.

How important is worship to us? For born again believers in the United States, the need for participating in corporate worship has declined dramatically just since 2020. In 2020, 85% stated they were deeply committed to practicing their faith. But in 2023, that number has dropped to 50%. (Barna 2023)

The shocking news is this, only half of those who say they have trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation have any commitment to live that way. When worship is no longer important for us as believers, then what's left?

Unfortunately, we see what is left, when you strip worship and falling down before God in the throne room, church becomes nothing more than entertainment. The same motivation is there as with the priests who compromised, giving must be sustained in order to pay for everything and keep the lights on.

What we see in some churches is the music becomes more oriented towards an interactive concert, just like we see in most concert venues here in the west. The preaching, moves away from being about Jesus Christ and towards comforting, affirming and encouraging us in our chosen lifestyles.

Someone who is familiar with the differences between entertainment and worship, Alice Cooper, has said the following, "Well, Jesus is everything. I mean, we're not here without Him. Most people I know, young people, think Jesus Christ is a swear word. They have no idea who Jesus Christ is. He's not preached enough, you know." (McKeithen 2021)

That's the problem today. Sermonettes or Ted Talks without Jesus = Christianettes without conversion. The flesh is strong with this one.

One can view the worship of God in such a manner only when one has no ongoing, intimate fellowship with God and no understanding of his nature, and both types of knowledge of God are mediated through the sacred history of God's words and deeds—that is, for us, through the Scriptures. Through the recounting of the "old, old story" in the preaching and sacraments, the music and teaching, the speech and deeds of the church, God reveals himself to our hearts and minds as truly the great King over all the earth—as the Father who has created us and redeemed us and circled us with his electing love in Jesus Christ and as the Master who guides and empowers and commands our lives. Such a God demands our life, our love, our all. (Achtemeier 1986, 179)

Here at Calvary, we remain committed to Paul's charge to Timothy, and he too saw the same thing Malachi saw, the danger of compromise.



2 Timothy 4:2–4

“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine (Today), but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.” (CSB)

God has always taken seriously, the conduct of those who represent Him. My sole desire is to communicate God’s word so it can be clearly understood. But I have been in places where I wonder what was even taught.

YAHWEH has stated the problem to which the Priests have objected with questions that show us where their hearts are.

Their compromise has resulted in their worship becoming unworthy and corrupted. They are now worshipping by their own standards and offering “strange incense or fire” before the Lord. They have forgotten the lesson of Nadab and Abihu.

The giving, the sacrifices, no longer meant anything about worshipping the God of the universe, now it was all about expediency. Like those who give only to have their name placed on the building.

Leviticus 10:1–2

“Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the LORD by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. So fire blazed forth from the LORD’s presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD.” (NLT)

The Priests that Malachi is addressing, have done the same so the Lord has a word for them. “Apparently they had become so hardened and had so rationalized their sin that Malachi could portray them as daring God to spell out their wrongs.” That is a serious wrong move. (Blaising 1985, 1577)

Again, just like the gentleman who responded to me telling him he had run a red light, “what red light?” Reality staring you in the face but blinded by the flesh.

Malachi 1:9–14

““But now, do indeed plead for God’s favor, so that He will be gracious to us. With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?” says the LORD of armies. “If only there were one among you who would shut the gates, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar for nothing! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of armies, “nor will I accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name shall be great among the nations, and in every place frankincense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name shall be great among the nations,” says the LORD of armies. “But you are profaning it by your saying, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’ You also say, ‘See, how tiresome it is!’ And you view it as trivial,” says the LORD of armies, “and you bring what was taken by robbery and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I accept it from your hand?” says the LORD. “But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the LORD of armies, “and My name is feared among the nations.”” (NASB 2020)

The priests are corrupt. They have personally broken the covenant and as such have abandoned their right to be priests. It was bad.



When Nehemiah returned, he personally cleansed the Temple and even kicked out one of the sons of the high priest who was engaging in political marriage.

Nehemiah 13:28–29

“And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.” (ESV)

God challenges them, just keep on giving and sacrificing the way you have been and go ahead, plead for God’s favor while you give Him a diseased blind bull. It is never a good thing when God finishes His thought with a rhetorical question, essentially saying, “I hope that works out for you because why should God even respond.”

The people were offering animals contrary to the law, but even worse, the priests were accepting them. The priests could have corrected the action, but they chose not to. Implying by their action that they believed God would now wink at His word because, well, the culture.

What does YAHWEH think about this problem? He has a rather sarcastic answer for them. It would be better if the Temple were closed, and no one could come in to offer substandard worship on their terms rather than God’s. Just lock the doors and go home.

Doing nothing is better than what they are doing currently.

When a church compromises the word of God and teaches error instead, it is on the same shaky ground as the priests.

As matters stand, those conducting the sacrifices only profane the service. God withholds His blessing, the ministry is more and more low-grade, and the priests feel that the offerings are sorry sham gifts, demeaning God’s work. Yet they do nothing to lead the people to clean up their worship. (Rosscup 2008, 1446)

Even as the people lose out, God will still make His name great around the world.

Giving us insight into the future, the Lord says that His name will be great among the nations, His name will indeed be great among all the gentiles, and they will worship Him appropriately.

This is a quick view of the millennium. The “pure offering” is Jesus Christ and prayer, incense, will come from all over the globe. So much for the worthless self-centered prayer of Jerusalem.

During the time of Solomon, rulers traveled from the nations not because of rote ritual, but because of the glory of God and the insistence on worship done the right way. From the Queen of Sheba.

1 Kings 10:9

“Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.” (ESV)

This is the result of following the law and not compromising. The nations would be attracted to and come to worship YAHWEH at the Temple. We will see this take place during the rule and reign of Jesus Christ during the millennium.

But for the people and the priests that Malachi is writing to, that is not even close to happening. Why?



Malachi 1:12–14

““But you are profaning it by your saying, ‘The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’ You also say, ‘See, how tiresome it is!’ And you view it as trivial,” says the LORD of armies, “and you bring what was taken by robbery and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I accept it from your hand?” says the LORD. “But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the LORD of armies, “and My name is feared among the nations.”” (NASB 2020)

This is an amazing statement made by the Lord. He tells us that the priests actually know that the offerings are defiled. They say so. The sacrifices being offered to the Lord are also to be despised, they say so. They know what is going on and they have done nothing to stop it. It was just a burden to even be involved in the ritual.

The whole reason and purpose for worship had been lost. There is no relationship with YAHWEH taking place here. Not with the priests and certainly not with the people. There is no way the leadership has any interest in leading the people to do the right thing. It is all “tiresome and trivial.”

Yes, the post-exile culture was different, but compromise was not the solution. We live in a similar culture, one moving away from the Lord to the point of being totally pagan. Some churches have compromised, but others have simply flexed without the compromise.

I wonder how many ministries that used to take place in churches here in the west have disappeared simply because the people are no longer “into it.” It takes them away from what they want to do during the weekend. Then there is the issue of a secular culture with strange work hours.

As churches, we can either realize that we really must also do worship on other days of the week which helps those who struggle with Sunday only. Or we are simply okay with losing those we might have been able to win. The culture has changed, and we can still be faithful and flex along with it to a degree. We are no longer an agrarian nation.

I have seen worship services literally every day of the week. Yes, the hard part is also providing the same options for children as well.

Work schedules are serious flexible these days. Especially if you work as any type of first responder, in the medical world, retail, or several other types of careers. By insisting on Sunday only, we can be causing issues that can be easily overcome by learning to flex. Semper gumbly.

In the Air Force, some of us worked shift work 24/7 to include Sunday mornings during chapel. The chaplains couldn’t flex the times for us, but they did as much as they could.

The back row in chapel was reserved for on duty Security Forces and Fire Services to include a rack for our M16 rifles. There was special reserved parking right in front for our response vehicles and whenever we did have to respond, as we ran out of the building, we would always hear the chaplain praying for us. That makes you want to come back.

We had serious goofy schedules in Kuwait and needed to be able to do chapel in the middle of the afternoon on Sundays. The chaplains provided us the tent and oversight and Security Forces had their own chapel service. Yes, some of us were armed to the teeth, but we wanted to worship the Lord and due to our weird schedules, that was it.

For those who couldn’t make it, we had a robust tape ministry using material from Calvary Chapel Austin. Now our podcasting reaches the same audience and is available as needed and when needed.



But that isn't the case everywhere these days. For some who say they are believers, even being flexible is not enough. Just as there were those who insisted on bum sacrifices, we see the same today.

While walking out of church one Sunday I overheard a couple, who had two really excited kids who had been to Children's Ministry and wanted to go again next week. Basically, they said the same thing as the priests, it was tiresome and trivial. It took them away from the boat and the camper. It cut into their camping time and fishing time. No way could they commit to weekly.

And in many churches, Sunday School or any type of Children's Ministry have become things of the past. Now it is an hour or two of babysitting and games while mom and dad hear an encouraging word of affirmation but nothing about Jesus.

In those cases, we also see midweek services, prayer meetings, Awana, and other ministries going away as well. It has nothing to do with being flexible but has everything to do with compromise.

Where do complaints come from? Many times, from the marginal believers or unsaved who send their kids to those ministries as a baby-sitting service.

So, we see an abdication of reaching the next generation while the need for Bible based education and training for our kids is the most needed.

Serving is sacrifice, and if we are unwilling to do so, then have we fallen into the same trap that Malachi is discussing?

In some places, small groups are still going on in person, but, in many cases, that has now gone virtual with Zoom groups taking over. That is flexing and there is a place for that in our culture. Not everyone has the freedom or finances to be able to drive to a group, but they can do so online.

We have an Online Campus for our church services. That is intentional as there are many today, who simply cannot get to church for physical or health reasons. Then there is the potential for having a "viewing ministry" and inviting your friends or neighbors to watch church at the house with you.

The priests had ceased to be in awe of the God that they served and now, it was simply a job. Because of that, the Lord wanted them to basically shut the doors. That would be the same as if He simply said to every church that has strayed, shut your doors, and go home. If that was the case, then we would all be in trouble. The seven churches Jesus wrote to in Revelation had problems, but only two of the churches did He have nothing good to say about them.

As believers, when we serve, do we do so out of a full heart of love for Jesus and what He did on the cross for us, or do we do so because, well, someone has to do it.

In Jerusalem, the socio-religious leaders of the community played games with God and the people joined in. Sheep tend to follow their shepherds. If the flesh is strong with the leader, so goes the sheep.

When we worship, we need to remember this, and God has just pointed it out, you can't hide. In Judea, they had folks who would promise the prize bull, and then bring the one who was lame or sick instead.

They played games with God. But God knew and called those who offered the prize bull but then brought the sick one to the Temple, swindlers.



Malachi 1:14

““But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King,” says the LORD of armies, “and My name is feared among the nations.”” (NASB 2020)

When we promise our best for the Lord, we need to follow through with what we promised to do. We need to take worship seriously and we need to take our service of Him seriously as well. He really does know our motivation and the reason why we do what we do. And that’s the problem. Here is what He wants.

Romans 12:1–2

“Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice—alive, holy, and pleasing to God—which is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God—what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.” (NET 2nd ed.)

It is never too late.

1 John 1:9

“But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.” (NET 2nd ed.)

But for the unfaithful priests, who all knew better, God has a word.

Malachi 2:1–3

““And now, this commandment is for you, the priests. If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” says the LORD of armies, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart. Behold, I am going to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread dung on your faces, the dung of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.” (NASB 2020)

God’s word...repent and do so right now.

If they decide not to repent, then they will have personal possession of the curse, and this is what they will see in their lives.

Deuteronomy 28:16–20

“Your businesses and farms will fail. You won’t have enough bread to eat. You’ll have only a few children, your crops will be small, and your herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats won’t produce many young. The LORD will make you fail in everything you do. No matter what you try to accomplish, the LORD will confuse you, and you will feel his anger. You won’t last long, and you may even meet with disaster, all because you rejected the LORD.” (CEV)

On top of that, those blessings they pray for others to receive, they will be curses. In fact, that is already becoming a reality for them.

And it will get worse. One of the items that the priests had to pay attention to was to make sure that the refuse of the sacrifices was taken outside of the Temple and burned. If they didn’t pay attention, then they may wind up having some of the refuse get on them making them ritually unclean and they could no longer serve until they became clean again.



The sin they are doing today will impact the next generation. They will not succeed, in fact God says He will rebuke them, He will stop them. That means they would not continue on as priests which did indeed happen in 70 AD.

As for the priests, the Lord will treat them as unclean. They would literally be smeared with dung and be rendered unclean and incapable of serving. By their actions, they defiled the sacrifices, so YAHWEH will defile them. That will prevent them from doing further damage.

Even though YAHWEH is intent on eliminating the problem within the priests, He is also still intent on sustaining the covenant He made with Levi. But where is that covenant since there is no covenant with Levi to point to in the scriptures .

Malachi 2:4–7

“Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant may continue with Levi,” says the LORD of armies. “My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and was in awe of My name. True instruction was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and justice, and he turned many back from wrongdoing. For the lips of a priest should maintain knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of armies.” (NASB 2020)

There is no account of any such covenant in the Hebrew Bible, but its existence may have been inferred from the blessing Levi in Deuteronomy 33:9–11, which says, “they kept your words, / and your covenant they upheld.” The passage goes on to speak of the teaching role of the Levites: “They teach your ordinances to Jacob, / and your law to Israel.” Malachi 2:6–7 also speaks of a teaching role. There is a perpetual covenant with Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, in Numbers 25:12–13. Jeremiah 33:21 speaks of “my covenant with the priests of Levi,” which cannot be broken any more than the covenant with David can be broken. Nehemiah 13:29 refers to “the covenant of the. priesthood and the Levites.” It seems then that by the Persian period there was believed to be a covenant with Levi, or the Levites, even if it was not explicitly narrated in the Bible. The covenant with Levi is described as one of “life and peace” (Mal 2:5). The covenant with Phinehas was also called a covenant of peace. (Collins 2013, 131-132)

Levi’s descendants had the hereditary right of the priesthood. They were supposed to be those who taught the people the Torah.

Deuteronomy 33:10

“They will teach Jacob your ordinances and Israel your law; they will offer incense as a pleasant odor, and a whole offering on your altar.” (NET 2nd ed.)

We saw in Haggai 2 that the priests were relied on for rulings and interpretations dealing with the law.

Here we discover that as the Priests operate according to the law in awe of the Lord, true instruction comes from them.

When the priesthood operates as it should, we see correction for the people taking place and many being turned back to YAHWEH. In fact, the Lord states the Priests should maintain knowledge and the people should be coming to them for instruction. That is their focus and ministry as given to them by YAHWEH. God is committed to that as they will be serving in the Temple during the reign of Messiah. Even though they have strayed, God intends to maintain the covenant implying that even as there has always been a remnant of those who believe in Israel, the same may also be true of the Levites as well.



Malachi 2:8–9

“But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have ruined the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of armies. “So I also have made you despised and of low reputation in the view of all the people, since you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.” (NASB 2020)

This promise still goes for today. Simply look at the lives, post failure, of those who at one time were serving, but then decided to chase after the flesh instead. Many do indeed repent, but life is never the same.

As believers in Jesus Christ, are we fully aware of the war we are in? We are either in the flesh, or in the Spirit. Stop and think about that for a minute or two. There is no in-between per Paul.

We all have the same person who did it without failing, someone we can model our lives after, someone who will never let us down and will never compromise. If we have had someone throw a little bit of the flesh our way, we need to give them grace, forgive them and pray for them. That is exactly what Jesus did with all of us.

Romans 5:6–9

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (NKJV)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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