

Malachi Study: Conversation With God

Week 2 – Devotion

Malachi 1:6-2:9

Sermon Goals

MAIN IDEA: God desires our wholehearted devotion.

Head Change: To know that when we lose sight of God's devotion to us, our devotion to Him slips into lukewarm mediocrity.

Heart Change: To celebrate that God is more concerned about our internal holiness than our external busyness.

Life Change: To fully devote ourselves to worshiping God out of delight, not drudgery.

OPEN

As a kid, what excited you most? Theme parks? Christmas morning? Your birthday? The beach? Do these things still excite you?

If not, why?

It's likely that you've matured, you've had new experiences and have simply become interested and excited in other things.

A lot of times we have a been there done that mentality.

Are you more or less excited about worshiping God now than you were when you first became a Christian? What's changed, and why?

The reality is that many Christians start their faith journey on fire for God – super excited to worship Him.

But the buzz wears off. The busyness and the distractions of life lull us into half-hearted devotion.

We lose sight of God's love for us and slip into a lukewarm middle ground – neither blazing hot in our faith nor ice-cold in our denial of God.

This is the subject of the second conversation Malachi records between God and His people.

VIEW

In this second conversation with His people, what is God accusing them of?

According to Romans 12, what should we offer to God?

What story did Jesus tell to show that God isn't concerned about the *amount* we give so much as our *attitude* in giving?

According to Malachi's prophecy, what was the consequence of half-hearted worship?

REVIEW

As we look back on God's first conversation in the Book of Malachi, we are reminded that **God's love isn't based on our performance but on His promise.**

This plays out in the life of Christians today in the following way...half-hearted devotion is the result of us losing sight of God's great love for us.

When this happens, we fall into this lukewarm, strange middle ground where we still have a semblance of faith, but we've lost our blazing hot enthusiasm for God.

Maybe there Has been times in your life (that time may be now) when you've lived a churchy life, but your zeal has cooled off and you find yourself just going through the motions.

If your one of those people who is saying I've been there, I want you to think about what brought you back from complacency to wholehearted devotion.

And if you are sitting here this morning saying I'm in the thick of it...I'm going to church, I'm reading my bible(every once and a while), praying(at dinner), I just feel like I'm going through the motions...Then this message is for you.

Malachi 1:6–2:9 details the second conversation between God and His people, in which God accuses them of lack luster commitment to Him.

Malachi 1:6

“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?’

Right at that start of this conversation there is an accusation made against the people by God.

He says, you don't honor me! You don't respect me! You show contempt for me name, treating me as though I am worthless to you.

He's God!!! He deserves the highest praise...and yet, they are treating Him like nothing.

...But how were the priests and the people showing contempt for God's name?

Malachi 1:7-8

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.

Here the people are taking a central act of worship, sacrifice for sin...and making it as if they just don’t care at all

We do a food drive and thanksgiving basket program here every year. The purpose in creating these baskets is to give thanks to God for His abundance and blessings, by blessing others.

Even though this is the heart, every year, like clockwork we will have people habitually contribute something like a leftover can of beans – something he didn’t need and wouldn’t miss.

I have to admit, for years I was the same way, scrounging around the day of trying to find something that I wouldn’t miss to donate.

It wasn’t until I read Scripture such as Deuteronomy 26:2, which states *“take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name”*

and this scripture here in Malachi, that I realize I was giving God the scraps of my worship.

I was keeping the best for myself and giving God almighty my leftover

Can anyone relate? Can I get an amen

So what is God saying through this conversation with His people about the kind of devotion He longs for and the personal sacrifice He's calling you to make?

Romans 12:1 states: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship."*

'Because God has promised to love us fully and freely, the only right response is to give Him everything back in return – a life of sacrifice. That's what He desires, and that's what He deserves.'

The temptation is to think God doesn't care about what we offer him.

We think..."That'll do."

We convince ourselves God is thrilled to have us on His team and delighted with whatever gift of time, talent, or treasure we bring.

And yet, in doing so, we live with the kind of half-hearted faith, Just like the leaders in Malachi.

He deserves everything we've got. He's given it all to us in the first place. He's chosen to love us so much. So, the sign of our worship is to bring our best to the table.

What it looks like for you, to 'bring your best to the table', for God, is going to be different than someone else

If you don't have much, that...'s ok

In Luke 21, Jesus gives this wonderfully beautiful account of a poor widow who offers God all she has – which isn't a lot. There are those in the temple giving abundantly more than she could ever dream of giving.

However, her measly offering of two coins...all she had, not only in her pocket, but all she had, pleases God infinitely more than the extravagant gifts of the rich whose comfort isn't even dented by their 'sacrifice'.

He's making the point that **God is less concerned about your actions, and more concerned about your heart.**

‘God despises half-hearted worship. He would rather you were on fire for him or far off, not in some blurry middle ground that doesn't make a difference.

It's neutral Christianity. You're neither alive enough to serve him wholeheartedly, nor dead enough to engage in blatant disobedience.'

In Malachi 1:10 we hear God's response to this...(Read Malachi 1:10).

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.

In other words, God is saying don't waste my time here. Your lack of true worship, sacrifice and devotion and worthless to me...and you.

Do you understand what he is saying here...He would rather the temple be closed than to have this half-hearted wishy-washy type of sacrificial worship and devotion.

You can run a “successful” church with tons of programs, fantastic worship, thousands of attendees, great outreach and huge budgets...and yet if there is no devotion among the people, God would rather shut up those doors than to keep on going like that.

Why? Because **God is more concerned with internal holiness than external busyness**

God tells us what He Deserves in verse 11

In Malachi 1:11 and 1:14, God says, ‘*My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets... I am a great king... and My name is to be feared among the nations.*’

If you're bored with worship, or going through the motions of serving the Lord, then something's not right.

If the outside of your Christian life looks all nice shiney, but on the inside you're no different...somethings gone wrong.

Maybe, just maybe...you've lost sight of the glory of God.

Here's the challenge I think God has for us this morning...

There is a cost to your Christianity. It takes work and sacrifice to give God your best.

So many of us think that we can get everything that this world has to offer and have Christianity on the side.

We think we don't need to give anything up to worship God.

God says there's a cost. You might have to give something up to give Him your best...scrap that, you will have to give something up!

- You might have to give up that promotion at work in order to go to small group
- You may have to set your alarm earlier (and not hit snooze) in order to get up and read the scripture
- You may have to serve in a ministry where you don't get anything out of it.
- You may have to spend less on yourself, so that you can give more to God
- You might have to turn off the TV, put down the phone or tablet, so you have more time to get down on your knees in prayer

Do you tend to see Christianity as all-encompassing, or as an add-on to your life?

When you think of giving up something in order to give God your best, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Are you willing to take that next step?

Giving God your best takes sacrifice.

God is clear what the consequence is for half-hearted worship in chapter 2

Malachi 2:2-3

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 dung from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.

God takes apathetic worship extremely seriously (Malachi 2:2–3), and so should we.

In these verses, he takes their half-hearted, apathetic worship and rubs it in their faces. Sending them away to face shame, curse and exclusion.

And yet, even after issuing a warning to His people, He promises life and peace, calling them to once again stand in awe of Him and to live righteously.

Malachi 2:4–6

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.

The solution to half-heart worship isn't to try harder, but to become even more captivated with God Himself.

He tells us the kind of attitude He wants from His people...respect and honor for His name. Speaking in truth, walking in righteousness.

Ultimately God is going to restore His priestly order, and bring about His high priest...Jesus Christ.

He is the one who fulfills the covenant that God made with Levi.

So, if you want full devotion to God, then get your gaze on Him.

The one who gave up His best, to take on your worst!

See I can stand here and tell you to read your Bible more, or pray more, or go to church more...but if you don't have Christ at the center of your gaze...it will all be for nothing.

Let us be a people that when we come to worship, we don't share the words of the people in Malachi saying "what a burden"...rather let us come before God in whole hearted devotion and say "what a joy to give You my best)

Conclusion

If you long to be fully devoted to God, fix your gaze on Him: the One who gave up His best to take on your worst. I encourage you to read your Bible more, to pray more, to go to church more – but none of this will result in heartfelt worship if Jesus isn't at the center of your life. May we be known as a people who see worship not as a burden but rather as an indescribable blessing.

DEEPER WALK

Pray: If your prayer life feels lukewarm – if you really don't feel like praying at all – text a friend. Meet up and pray for one another, that God might put fresh fire in your bones to bring Him your best, in every arena of life.