

**“Devotion Worthy of God”**  
**(Malachi 1:1-5)**  
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**September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007**

**Introduction:**

*NIV Malachi 1:1-5* <sup>1</sup> An oracle: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi. <sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?' "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD-- even beyond the borders of Israel!'"

**History and background**

The exile occurred in 586 BC. 70 years later the exile ended and they returned to Jerusalem and the walls of the city were rebuilt. Malachi comes on the scene at 460 BC. So it's been about a 120 years

Religious life and family life were always central to the stability and future prosperity of God's people. If either one of those were to go, it would be detrimental to the people's continuity. And I think this is true today. When family life begins to deteriorate on a microcosmic level, life itself begins to deteriorate. And on the macrocosmic level, in society the effects are the same.

And when our spiritual lives begin to deteriorate both individually and as a community then we've already begun the slide down the proverbial slippery slope.

I don't know about you but as a young person growing up and as an older person now, it's always been like this.

And now that the temple was rebuilt, there was a great sense of apathy in the people. A half-hearted devotion was pervading the community. And Malachi addresses this with some very specific examples and calls them to recommit to God and as we begin a new semester, it becomes a great opportunity for each one of us to recommit to giving God the devotion that's worthy of Him.

Here are the six areas Malachi addresses.

1. Thinking God hasn't done much for them recently (1:2-5)
2. Offering sacrifices unworthy of God (1:6-14)
3. Treating God's view of marriage with contempt (2:10-16)
  - a. Inter-faith marriage
  - b. divorce
4. Thinking that God doesn't care about justice (2:17-3:5)
5. Treating the whole center of religious life with contempt (3:6-12), specifically refusing to give tithes.
6. Believing that being a follower of God has no returns (3:13-18)

When a person become spiritually apathetic these are the symptoms. If we display any one of these attitudes, we're already sliding down a dangerous slope of backslidden, apathetic spirituality.

Let's look at each of these a bit more closely.

### **Thinking God hasn't done much for them recently (1:2-5)**

When we think God hasn't done much for us recently, it's never a problem with God and always a problem with us.

### **Offering sacrifices unworthy of God (1:6-14)**

The priests, who had the job and duty to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, were guilty of giving God offerings that were the bottom of the barrel. They were sacrificing animal offerings and they were giving God the lame and deformed animals as offerings. And God says, if you were to give that to a human of high standing would he accept that? And of course the answer is no. We wouldn't do that to our family or our friends, let alone some VIP.

How much greater is God, that we would even consider doing something like that to Him. This is what the Israelites were guilty of. This is the contemptuous manner in which they related to God. For us, I think it's when we treat God like the end pieces of a loaf of bread. We eat all the middle pieces and if and only if a fresh loaf is unavailable do we force ourselves to eat the end pieces. Or when we think of church as the final resting place for all the old sofas and furniture that we wouldn't even dream of leaving on our drive way for the waste collectors to remove.

It's when we give offerings to God and they're not the first fruits, but rather the leftovers. We don't make sure our offering to God is the first cheque we cut after payday, but rather after the mortgage, utilities, cable, cell phone, car, groceries, clothing, entertainment, student loans, and only then, if we have something left over, do we give it to God.

Folks it's strange what has happened to us when we think about God or the church. Because from when we were very little, our parents demanded the best from us, even with the beats. And our coaches demanded the best from us. And some of our really good teachers demanded the best from us. Even our country at times would call on us and ask us for our best. And we'd enter the work force and bosses would demand the best from us and we ourselves would look into the mirror and expect the best from ourselves. And then for some reason, we go into the church and the best is no longer expected and somehow we've convinced ourselves, that of all the places that should deserve my best, church can't be one of them. That's what's happened.

Friends, this can never be the attitude we have toward Jesus and his beloved bride, the church. As our creator and redeemer, as our enabler, God deserves nothing less than the best of all that we have. And if we've been giving God second best, we must repent and do so no longer.

Always give your best, your firstfruits to the Lord. It isn't wrong to think that way. It isn't wrong to give God an offering of thanks when incredible blessings come our way. When graduation happens, marriage happens, jobs, children, promotions, health, homes, birthdays, the sun rising today, air and food...when these things happen, it's right to say to God, "Thank you Jesus, all of this, is because of you."

A year ago, our youngest was going into grade one. Linda had been out of work by then for 11 years. And she wanted to start working again. And there were some ideal jobs that she came across, but nothing materialized. We took it as a “wait sign” from God. This summer we tried again, and the first resume she sent out, boom she got the job. And we talked about a bit, not too much, because we knew what to do already, but we said, hey let’s give your first cheque to God. Cuz it’s all God. Cuz he’s been so incredibly gracious and good to us, how could we not give him one small cheque, one of many more to come. Friends, follow the example of your pastor. Don’t give the garbage to God. God’s not worthy of garbage. He deserves only the best so give him your best, in everything, but especially in our offerings.

### **Treating God’s view of marriage with contempt (2:10-16)**

The Israelites were profaning God’s institution of marriage in two ways. **Divorce** and interfaith marriages.

Now these aren’t the only two vices that can offend God in the realm of marriage. There are plenty of marital and family sins that we can commit. Just co-existing without serving and loving. Not living out a God envisioned and purposed partnership. Husbands and wives, either or both, not fulfilling their God-given roles. Living in anger. Embittering our children. The list can go on and on, but the two Malachi mentions are inter-faith marriages and divorce. And since many of us know already know that divorce is in most cases wrong and greatly displeases God, I’ll spend more of this time on inter-faith marriages.

### **Inter-faith marriage**

Let’s get into it point blank. Is it or is it not a sin for a Christian to marry a non-Christian? I know I’m entering a very sensitive area here for some of us. But please hear me out and listen to the words of God. Let me build my case and you decide for yourself.

God designed marriage for all of creation. I think we can agree on that from Genesis 1 and 2.

But as the people of God and the community of God was forming he began to give us some rules and in the rules we can see the purposes of marriage.

In Deuteronomy 7, right before entering the Promised Land God gives some clear instructions to his people about marital conduct.

**1** When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you- **2** and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. **3** Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, **4** for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.

So from early on in God’s dealing w/ his covenant people he gives this restriction about marriage. And then we have Nehemiah ,which is one of the last Old Testament books, chronologically, calling the people of God to recommit to God in the area of marriage.

**Nehemiah 13:23** Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. **24** Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. **25** I

rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. **26** Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. **27** Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?"

Now let's move over into the New Testament.

Background of chapter 7. Either two non-believers and one became a believer, or a believer married a non-believer. And Paul states in that passage some things about marriage. The passage ends with the statement,

**1 Corinthians 7: 39** A woman (or man) is bound to her husband (or wife) as long as he (or she) lives. But if her husband (or his wife) dies, she (or he) is free to marry anyone she (or he) wishes, but he (or she) must belong to the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? **15**What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? **16**What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

**17**"Therefore come out from them  
and be separate, says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing,  
and I will receive you."

**18**"I will be a Father to you,  
and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

The "Yoke" implies a connectedness that either governs where we go or constrains where they go. It is wrong to be yoked to one who refuses the yoke of Christ.

So here are four texts about God forbidding inter-faith marriage. What can we conclude? The reason for this restriction is not racial. It never was. The reason has always been spiritual. And it bugs me like crazy when our parents pull the racial card and forbid interracial marriage. But will compromise on the faith issue as long as the person is of the same race. This rule stems from the blazing white holiness of God. He cannot bear the thought of his covenant people being led astray to worship other gods. His character and holiness will not allow that. It's the same as if a woman says, "my character, my integrity, my pride will not allow my husband to mess around with another woman." It's the same thing.

So is inter-faith marriage between one who confesses Christ as their saviour and one who doesn't a sin? There is absolutely 100% no doubt in my mind that is it. And that is why I interview every couple I marry and refuse to officiate the weddings of those who are self-professing believers and wish to marry a person who does not know Christ.

Application.

1. For the not yet married. Don't even date a non-believer. Because you date, you fall in love and then it usually too late. What I've seen is that this usually happens when a person does a few things. A) they've backslidden from God. B) they've removed themselves from Christian fellowship. C) or they are ignorant of this restriction. So don't even go there.
2. For the already married. Repent for the sin of inter-faith marriage and win your spouse over, as it says in 1 Corinthians 7. Yes, if it is a sin, then I need to repent. This can trigger the beginning of great changes in your marriage and the future salvation of your non-believing spouse. God is a God of grace and can even turn a wrong into a right. But that's God choice, not ours. Divorce is not the answer. Two wrongs don't make a right. Continue to love and to live and pray like crazy and win your spouse over to Christ.

### **Thinking that God doesn't care about issues of justice (2:17-3:5)**

When we start thinking like this, we have really gotten away from a deep relationship with God. We have forgotten the fundamentals of our faith. And a whole ton of repenting needs to be done. Why?

Well, to say that God doesn't care about justice post 30AD, is blasphemy. For a Christian, a follower of Christ, a person who has been purchased by the saving and sin forgiving and hell avoiding death and resurrection of the perfect and holy Son of God, to say that God doesn't care about justice, is nothing less than blasphemy. It's to totally forget the very foundation of our faith as Christians. It's denying the very holiness and grace and mercy of God. It's to spit in the face of the cross.

To look at a broken world or a broken life, your broken life, and to say, God doesn't care, it's terrible.

God cares about justice so much. He cannot not care about it. His holiness will not allow it. Do we have all the answers to life's problems? No. Do we know all the reasons to why evil is so pervasive in the world? No we don't. But as a bible believing Christian, we cannot come to the conclusion that God doesn't care. If he didn't care, he wouldn't have sent the prophets to warn and warn again and again. And if he didn't care he wouldn't have allowed Israel and Judah to be invaded and exiled. If he didn't care then he wouldn't hold the offending nations accountable. If he didn't care he wouldn't have done any of that. And for us, if he didn't care, he wouldn't have sent his Son. And he wouldn't have filled his church with his Spirit and he wouldn't have given the church the great commission to go into all the world. It's because he cares so much that he did all of that.

Friends, if you think God doesn't care, go back to the cross and stay there. Look into the face of a butchered man and still try to say, God you don't care.

### **Treating the whole center of religious life with contempt (3:6-12), specifically refusing to give tithes.**

When God set up the whole Israelite community back in the very beginning he divided the people up my twelve tribes. And one of tribes, the tribe of Levi were to act as priests. So we can say that one twelfth of the people of God didn't have regular jobs. They weren't farmers or ranchers. They weren't metal workers or artisans. They weren't any of those thing that the rest of the eleven tribes were. Their only job was to serve God in the tabernacle and temple. So God

designed it that they would make their living, have their homes and feed their families from the tithes (that is ten percent of their earnings) of the eleven other tribes. And all the costs of running and maintaining and upkeep of the tabernacle and their personal needs would be taken care of in this way.

So not giving the tithe was communicating a few things. Of course it communicated a neglect of their fellow brothers, the Levites and their provision. And so they allowed their brothers to go hungry and homeless. It communicated that the temple, the center of religious life and activity, where God met his people, was no longer important. And worst of all, it communicated a disdain for God, not to mention his temple, his priests, his law, and his mission for the world.

So when you and I refuse to give our tithes to God it communicates the same things. Friends, it's time to do a heart check. It really is. God gave us all that he has in his Son Jesus. He didn't think twice about it. He didn't think of cutting corners. No he gave us the best of what he has. He can do no other. And what he asks of us is ten percent of your earnings to be given to the church. It's a test of obedience. It's a test of the sincerity of our faith. It's an opportunity to remind ourselves that the giver is greater than the gifts.

Tithing is a faith issue folks. Listen to what it says in this passage.

**10** Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. **11** I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. **12** "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

As far as I know, this is one of the only, if not the only place where God point-blank says, **test me!** Put me to the test. You're either not tithing because you're greedy or because you're lacking faith. If you're not tithing because you're wondering if you'll go hungry, if the rent will be paid, then God is saying test me. It's a faith issue. God will bless us and that blessing will spread to the nations. Tithing (an act of faith and obedience to God) will lead to personal blessing that's beyond compare. That blessing will lead to the nations calling us blessed.

When Linda and I were dating and we knew we were going to be married, we had decided early on, that we would tithe. And at times it was really tough. I was okay cuz my parents paid for most of my tuition, but Linda had to finance her own education. And she was just working fast food, not getting paid too much. She had tuition, she had a car and there were months when it got really tight. And we were tempted to ignore the tithe. But we bit the bullet and didn't compromise. And when we got married at the ripe old age of 24, we didn't have anything, not even enough to hang out at the buck fifty cheap theater. I was a student and part time pastoral intern getting 500 bucks a month. We hardly ever went out to eat. We had no luxuries. And there were times we could have used that tithe money to give us a bit more cushion, but we bit the bullet again and committed to give the tithe.

Folks, don't compromise on the tithe. Miss a student loan payment if you have to, cut your cable tv and cell phone if you have to, downsize your standard of living if you have to, but never compromise what belongs to God. And watch, just watch him bless you.

**Believing that being a follower of God has no returns (3:13-18)**

**Conclusion:**

Let me conclude with this message with a couple of thoughts.

Is God worthy? God as our creator, is he worthy of this? And even more so, God as our redeemer and savior, is he worthy?

Can we do all that God has asked through Malachi? Absolutely not. We're too carnal and sinful. But Christ is able to make it possible. We need to look to Christ the author and perfecter of our faith, the one through whom we can do all things.

