

March 18, 2007 by Steve Brandon



# Don't Forget the LORD

## Malachi 1:1

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In the life of many organizations or institutions or movement, there are certain phases they go through. The first phase is when those in the movement **fight** for the cause. The second phase is when they **enjoy** the cause. The third phase is when they **become complacent** to the cause. And finally, the fourth phase comes when they **forget** the cause.

The first generation fights for the cause, because survival is at stake. If the cause is not believed and proclaimed, their organization will simply not exist. Nobody will know about the organization. The movement will die. The second generation enjoys the cause, because the blessing is there to enjoy. The first generation had fought the battles, but they are now finished. With the hard work done, it is left for the second generations to enjoy the blessings that come. People have embraced the vision of the movement. There is much support. There is much unity. There is much excitement. The third generation is complacent to the cause, because the organization is established. The beliefs have been determined. The policies are all written. The procedures are set in place. Everyone knows what to expect and how to act. Such establishment can bore many. There is no fight. There is no cause. There is no problem to solve. The fourth generation forgets the cause, because nothing matters anymore. It all has become so normal. The organization has become a machine. All is functioning fine. Long forgotten are the intents of the founding fathers. The organization carries on as it wishes.

Now, I know that these things are broad generalizations. It's difficult to pigeon-hole any organization or movement into one of these phases. Furthermore, sometimes there is a revival which leads the group on a path back toward their beginnings. But, in general these things are true. The older an organization becomes, greater is the chance of it losing its original purpose. I'll give you a few examples.

Think about our nation. Our nation was founded upon a certain set of ideals. At the very least, some of which were a belief in God and the importance of morality. The end of the pledge of allegiance says it well: one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all. Early in the history of our nation, many fought for these ideals, giving their life for the cause of a free nation. As the years have rolled by, we have enjoyed the great blessings that have come as a result of these things. We have known an economic prosperity that has surpassed any nation that has ever existed. But, in recent years, there has been a complacency in our nation. We have begun to focus on our blessings and have missed the cause which brought these blessings. We have taken God out of the public arena. The morality of our nation is sliding. The family is corroding. In many ways, we are now at a point in our country where we have forgotten our cause. The original intent of the framers of the constitution no longer matters. Judges are reinterpreting the constitution.

Another example is the homeschooling movement. My wife recently had a conversation with someone who is very involved in the homeschool movement. She and her husband are currently working very hard at preparing for the Illinois Christian Home Educators conference, which will be attended by thousands of families across Illinois who are either homeschooling their children or who are interested in the cause. Some would place the origin of this movement to the late '60's and early '70's when several books were written about the failures of the public schools. <sup>[1]</sup> Since then, the modern homeschool movement has become more and more popular and has been gaining strength in recent decades. More and more people are doing it. As a result, there are more and more resources available to help you in the process. There are many today, who are enjoying the blessings of those who went before them. It used to be that finding a homeschool curriculum was very difficult to do. But, now, the difficulty is in choosing which one, because there are so many. It used to be that a homeschooling family had very little support. But, now, there are many, many homeschooling families who are willing and able to provide support and encouragement and help for others.

Well, there's now a new concern among some in the movement. There is a concern that the homeschoolers today are becoming complacent. They never fought the legal battles for the freedom to educate their children at home. As far as they are concerned, the laws have always been in place to allow them to homeschool. They have never struggled with the difficulties in thinking through a curriculum to follow. As far as they are concerned, a curriculum is as easy to obtain as placing an order online. They have never lacked support from other families. As far as they are concerned, they have always been surrounded by dozens of other families who are doing the same thing.

Another example of this is in churches. There is a reason why you don't see liberals planting churches. They don't have a cause to fight for. You don't see Methodist churches being planted. You don't see Congregational churches being planted. Certainly, there are some exceptions to this. But, those who plant churches are usually those who are Bible-believers, who believe they have a cause to fight for.

Once a church is fairly established, there is often a time in which those in the church enjoy the blessings of what preceded them. The

teaching is good. The worship is good. The programs are meeting real needs. People are growing. But sadly, churches often fall into complacency. People are content with the status quo. No longer is the attitude, "What can I give to serve in this ministry?" Rather, the question becomes, "What can the church do for me?" The foundations of the church no longer become important. At some point, the foundations are forgotten, and the church merely exists in outward form, with little purpose. I believe that church history will bear this out. In fact, I heard one man say tongue-in-cheek that conservative churches should not build buildings, because "the liberals are going to come and take them over anyway." This man's thought is getting at the same idea I have put forth here. In the life of many churches, the truth is often gradually watered down, until eventually, they look nothing like they did when they started.

I say that by way of introduction to the book of Malachi, in which we begin our study this morning. The people of Israel in the days of Malachi were on this trajectory toward the final phase of forgetting the LORD. This morning, we will look at only one verse, the first verse of this prophecy, which reads, "The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi." This will give us enough fodder to ponder. Notice, first of all, ...

## 1. The Recipients

Verse 1 says that this book was written "to Israel."

The history of Israel was a long one. It began with the calling of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans somewhere around 2000 B. C. Nearly the entire Old Testament is devoted to telling the story of how God worked in the life of the Israelites. We don't have time this morning to go into all of the details of their entire history. (Though, next week, we will spend a good portion of our time reflecting upon God's great love for Israel as demonstrated in their history. Time and time again, God demonstrated His great love and faithfulness to them). But, we can look at their recent history. Let me give you four facts about their recent history.

First of all, **they had fought for the LORD**. The people of Israel had been exiles in the land of Babylon for 70 years. But, now, they had returned to the promised land. Cyrus, king of Persia, had initially supported those Jews who were willing to return to the Jerusalem. In 538 B. C., Cyrus proclaimed, "Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel" (Ezra 1:2). And so, about 30,000 people returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 2), with the task of living there and rebuilding the temple. But, the "enemies of Judah and Benjamin" (Ezra 4:1) rose up and stopped the work. When it finally began again, there was much opposition to it (Ezra 5). For 21 years (536-515 B. C.), they fought to get the temple built. Finally, the temple was completed. On that day, there was great rejoicing, "the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of [the temple] of God with great joy" (Ezra 6:16). Soon after that, Ezra searched out some more Levites who would be able to return to Jerusalem and offer up the sacrifices in the temple (Ezra 8:15-20).

At this point the people of **Israel began a season of enjoying the LORD**. A man named Ezra, who had "set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" came to Jerusalem to teach the people. (Ezra 7:10). In fact, Ezra had come under mandate of King Artaxerxes to make sure that the law would be taught to those in Jerusalem. Here is the actual mandate from the mouth of a pagan king:

Ezra 7:25-26

You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your god which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant of them. Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of goods or for imprisonment.

Indeed, Israel, enjoyed the great blessings of God upon them. One of the most moving chapters in all of the Bible is found in Nehemiah 8, when "all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel" (Neh. 8:1). They made a wooden podium for the occasion for Ezra to stand up high above all the people so that all could hear him read to them from the law (Neh. 8:4-5). And then "Ezra read from it ... from early morning until midday. ... and all the people were attentive to the book of the law" (Neh. 8:2-3). As the law was read, it was explained "so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8). They were enjoying the truth!

But, soon afterwards, **the people became complacent with the LORD**. They began to be involved in great sin, not caring about all that Ezra and his disciples had taught them! The sin began with the priests and continued on to the people. The priests had neglected their duties, preparing a room in the courts of the temple for Tobiah to live (Neh. 13:4-9). The priests also allowed the people to offer up lame and sick sacrifices, contrary to the law (Mal. 1:8). The people had failed to give their required tithes (Neh. 13:10-13). The people of Israel had begun to intermarry foreign women (Neh. 13:23-28).

When all was said and done, **they had forgotten the LORD**. They had Ezra and His disciples as their teachers. They had all of the Old Testament revelation to read and study and know. But, they appeared to have forgotten it all.

This is the context of the book of Malachi. In recent years, they had fought for the LORD in reestablishing the city of Jerusalem. Then, they enjoyed the blessings of the truth, as they enjoyed the temple ministry. But, sadly, they became complacent with the truth. Eventually, they had forgotten the truth. These are the people who are receiving this letter. This is the reason why I have entitled my message this morning, "Don't Forget the LORD."

At this point, I want to survey the book of Malachi for you by showing you the different ways in which the people of Israel had forgotten God. Throughout this short book, God makes His perspective known, and Israel responds by saying, "How is that true?"

There is a game that we sometimes play in our family. Perhaps you are familiar with it. It's called, "Who stole the cookies?" It begins when

someone, like me, chants, "Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar?" Then, I name a culprit, like my daughter, "Carissa stole the cookies from the cookie jar." At this point, Carissa says, "Who me?" and then, I respond, "Yes, you!" Carissa responds, "Couldn't be." Then I say, "Then who?" At this point, she chooses another culprit, "Mom stole the cookies from the cookie jar!" All of these things are said in a regular chant with a cadence to it.

In Malachi, God is cursing these Israelites of forgetting Him. And yet, when the accusations came, they responded by saying, "Who? Me?" God says, "Yes, you!" These questions and answers form the structure of this little book.

Let's begin by looking at chapter 1, verse 2. Here we see God's first accusation and the response of the Israelites, which demonstrates how they had forgotten the Lord.

Malachi 1:2  
"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?"

These people were ignorant of God's love. Though God has blessed them in many ways and protected them in exile, they questioned His love for them. They had forgotten the truth of Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with a everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."

The next questions comes in verses 6 and 7. They are coupled along the same theme.

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 hosts to you, O 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.'"

These people were ignorant of the most basic fundamentals regarding the worship of God: He is to be honored! They failed in honoring the Lord. Instead, they despised Him (verse 6) and defiled Him (verse 7). They had forgotten the truth of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The next question comes in chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. In verse 13 we see the accusation arising.

Malachi 2:13-14  
This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

These people were ignorant of the effects of their sin and worship. Though they sought to worship God with great emotion, pouring out their tears with loud shrieks of groaning, God wasn't accepting their worship, because they had been unfaithful in their marriages. Being controlled by their lusts, they were marrying foreign women. They had forgotten the truth of Deuteronomy 7:1-4, "When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. "

The next question these people ask develops a similar theme. It comes at the end of chapter 2 and verse 17, ...

Malachi 2:17  
You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

These people were ignorant of the effects of their poor theology. They supposed that it didn't matter how you lived. They believed that you could be good or evil, and the LORD would still look favorably upon you. They didn't see the righteousness of God as having any effect upon their lives, nor upon their prayers. They had forgotten the truth of Isaiah 1:13-15, "Bring your worthless offerings no longer. Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies--I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood."

Let's look at the next question they ask of God. It comes in chapter 3, verse 8, ...

Malachi 3:8  
"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings."

These people were ignorant of the requirement that God placed upon the people of Israel to pay their tithes to support the work done in the temple. These tithes were similar to our taxes today. They were integrated into the framework of the structure of their society. But, they refused to pay these tithes, and in effect became thieves, withholding from God what was due Him. They had forgotten the truth of Numbers 18:21, "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service of the tent of meeting."

Let's look at the final question they ask of God. You can find it in chapter 3, verse 13, ...

Malachi 3:13

"Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet, you say, 'What have we spoken against You?'"

These people were ignorant of the ways of God. They thought that their service to the Lord was in vain (3:14). They thought that it was useless to serve the LORD, because others who denied Him were walking securely. They had forgotten the truth of Psalm 73, where Asaph had the same doubts. He saw "the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalm 73:3) and thought that he had kept his heart pure in vain (Psalm 73:13). But, then he "perceived their end" (Psalm 73:17). At that point, Asaph said, "Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction" (Psalm 73:18).

This is the book of Malachi. It is a book written to a people who had known God's great blessing, but had forgotten His ways, and were incurring the indictment of God. Let's look now upon ...

## 2. The Author

The author of this book is simply identified as "Malachi" (1:1). His name is all that we know about this man. He isn't mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. This is the only place.

Literally, his name means, "my messenger." "Malach," is a common word that is usually translated, "messenger." At times, it refers to a messenger of God (Is. 41:27). It can be a messenger to tell of a disaster (Job 1:14), or the events on the war field (2 Sam. 11:19). There are times when it is translated, "angel," which would be a "heavenly messenger." The little letter, "i" at the end of this man's name is a first-person personal suffix, which means, "my." Thus, the translation, "my messenger." A play on his name comes in chapter 3, verse 1, where he is anticipating the coming of another messenger, Elijah (i.e. John the Baptist), who will "clear the way before [the LORD]."

"Malachi" is a very appropriate name for the one who writes this book, because, fundamentally, it is a message of the LORD to Israel. This book is a small book, containing only 55 verses. And yet, well more than half of the verses are written in the first person, God Himself was speaking to the people of Israel. I counted up 69 personal pronouns in this book. Thirty-seven times, God is quoted as saying, "I." Twenty times, God is quoted as saying, "My." Another twelve times, God says, "Me."

Let me give you a good flavor of this, looking at a few verses from every chapter.

Malachi 1:2-3

"I have loved you," says the LORD. "But you say, 'How have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."

Malachi 2:1-5

"And now this commandment is for you, O 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 hosts, "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 offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it. Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that **My** covenant may continue with Levi," says the LORD of hosts. "**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 stood in awe of **My** name."

Malachi 3:10-11

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in **My** house, and test **Me** now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 4:2-3

"But for you who fear **My** name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

Malachi is a personal message from the LORD through Malachi, His messenger. Throughout this whole book, you will find statements that affirm that God is speaking. You will hear statements like, "says the LORD" (1:2), "declares the LORD" (1:2), "thus says the LORD of hosts." (1:4), "says the LORD of hosts." (1:6), "says the LORD of hosts." (1:9), "says the LORD of hosts." (1:10), and "says the LORD of hosts." (1:11). Notice how many times, the phrase, "LORD of hosts" is used. By this phrase, Malachi is indicating that the LORD is the sovereign, majestic, powerful One! He is the one who rules over all of the heavenly host.

The book of Malachi is a personal message from the LORD through Malachi, His messenger to Israel. That's what it says in chapter 1, verse 1, "the oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi." It was God's message that came through the pen of Malachi, who was "His messenger." Think about it! This book is a personal message from the sovereign Lord of the universe! If you had a book that was written by God, Himself, to you, would you pay attention to it? I'm sure you would.

### 3. The Message

The message of this book can be described with one word: it's heavy.

I remember the days in my generation, when this word was used to describe a profound truth. Someone would say something profound or hard or difficult. The cool response was to say, "That's heavy, dude!" It's probably the same today. Certainly, teenagers are known from time to time to say, "That's heavy man."

That's the idea of this book. This comes from the very first word of verse, which describes this book as "the oracle." Literally, this can be translated, "the burden," or perhaps, "the weight." If you have a New American Standard, you can even see this possible translation in your margin. In fact, the New King James translates it, "the burden of the word of the LORD to Israel." It was a weight upon his shoulders, that he needed to get off his back. He got it off of his back by writing it down and proclaiming it throughout Israel.

As this word is used throughout the Old Testament, every time, it has a connotation of judgment. Isaiah mentioned his "burden" almost a dozen times. He had a "burden" concerning Babylon (Is. 13:1), concerning Moab (Is. 15:1), concerning Damascus (Is. 17:1), concerning Egypt (Is. 19:1), concerning Edom (Is. 21:11), concerning Arabia (Is. 21:13), concerning Tyre (Is. 23:1), and others. All of them were messages of condemnation to each of these countries or cities. Jeremiah had a "burden" to bring (Jer. 23:33-40). It was a message of punishment (Jer. 23:39-40). It was a message of abandonment (Jer. 23:33). Naham had a "burden" to bring against Nineveh (Nahum 1:1). It was a message of coming judgment. Habakkuk had a "burden" to bring (Hab. 1:1). He warned of the coming destruction. And the message of Malachi was no different. It was a message of judgment from the LORD.

The recipients of this letter were a wayward people in need of some serious correction. Malachi was bringing their correction. God Himself is evaluating the people of Israel, and it's not good. They are a people who have forgotten the LORD. The LORD is not pleased with them. Judgment was coming upon a people who had forgotten the LORD. This is the character of the book.

But, before you begin dreading the strong messages that will come in the next two months as we work our way through this book, know that there is hope in this book as well. Hope comes in chapter 3, verses 16-18.

Malachi 3:16-18

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

The hope comes to those who fear the Lord. Chapter 4 also contains some hope for those who fear His name.

Malachi 4:2

But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

There is hope in this book. It's not all doom and gloom. For those who fear the Lord and walk in His name, they can anticipate a great blessing to come.

God always blesses those who fear His name. Those who see God for who He is--the majestic, transcendent, awesome, holy creature--and tremble before Him in repentance and faith, God will look favorably upon that soul, even in the midst of a godless society, even when surrounded by those who have forgotten the LORD.

All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Roman 10:13). Jesus saves those who fear His name. Jesus saves those who grasp the evil of their sin and cry out to the only one who can save. Even in this heavy prophecy, there is hope to those who fear His name.

### 4. The Application

The application for us today from this book is not direct. As a church, I do not believe that we are not like Israel. We haven't forgotten the truth. We haven't abandoned God like they had. I don't believe that we have forgotten the love of God like the people of Israel did (1:2-5). I don't believe that we have forgotten how to honor the LORD with our worship (1:6-2:9). I don't believe that we have forgotten the importance of righteousness in our worship (2:13-16). I don't believe that we have denied the justice of the LORD (2:17-3:7). I don't believe that we have robbed the LORD in our giving (3:8-12). I don't believe that we have spoken against the LORD (3:13-15). There may be tendencies in each of us to head this way.

The application for us comes by way of warning. This book pictures the tragic results of a disobedient group of people. We ought to learn by way of warning. This could easily be us, if we don't follow the LORD completely.

I remember when I was in high school, there was an advertisement that ran on the televisions that sought to keep young adults off of drugs. In these advertisements, they showed an egg and said, "This is your mind." Then, they showed a frying pan and said, "This is drugs." Then, they cracked the egg and dumped it into the frying pan, where it immediately began to fry. The advertisement said, "This is your mind on drugs." The idea is that the end result should deter you from starting down that path.

I also remember being in high school and seeing some pictures of cars that had been totaled in an accident. They were entirely crumpled up and certainly undriveable. And then, I was told, this car was wrecked by a teenage drunk driver. The implication was clear. Drinking and driving doesn't mix. You may end up being killed in a car like that.

You might call these sorts of advertisements, "scare tactics." But, they are Biblical. Particularly they are used in the book of Proverbs. Solomon told his son, ...

Proverbs 24:30-34

I passed by the field of the sluggard and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense. And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest." Then your poverty will come as a robber and your want like an armed man.

The lesson is clear. Laziness may well lead to poverty. Work hard, so you don't have a barren field, but rather, a fruitful crop. Solomon also told his son of the time he was looking out the window of his house and noticed a "young man lacking sense" (Prov. 7:7) being seduced by the "boisterous and rebellious woman" (Prov. 7:11). She told this naïve, young man, ...

Proverbs 7:18-23

Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, He has gone on a long journey; He has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home." With her many persuasions she entices him; With her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; As a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life.

Again, the lesson is clear for all to see. The adulterous woman is out there on the prowl. She attract with her beauty. She has a smooth tongue. She fishes with her eyelids. In the end, you will be like an ox that is led to the slaughter. "The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it" (Prov. 6:32). "Do you want to destroy yourself? Go after the adulterous woman!" Again, notice how Solomon is arguing. He is arguing from the end. But, this form of argument isn't merely presented by Solomon. Psalm 1 argues the same way.

Psalm 1

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season. And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

The end of the wicked is terrible. So, don't be wicked! Walk with the righteous and have a love for the word of God!

Jesus even argues this way. At the end of Matthew 25, Jesus describes the final judgment as sheep and goats coming to the King. The sheep had lived lives of righteousness and were privileged to "inherit the kingdom prepared ... from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). The goats, on the other hand, had failed to live righteous lives. They were cast "into the eternal fire" (Matt. 25:41). The lesson for all is obvious. Know that the end of your life is coming. You will stand before your creator and give an account for your life. So, live now in such a way that you prepare for that final day.

I believe that this is where Malachi directs us this morning. All of us may find ourselves in different states this morning. I only ask you to evaluate your soul and apply the truth of Malachi as is appropriate for your situation.

- If today finds you fighting for the truth, rejoice and keep fighting.
- If today finds you enjoying the truth, enjoy it to the max. But never forget the fight that it took for you to have the truth.
- If today finds you becoming complacent with the truth, be warned. The warnings of Malachi are for you. You may well find yourself there someday, unless you repent.
- If today finds you forgetting the truth, take heed to the words of Malachi.

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[1] See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling> for a good summary of the history of the recent homeschooling movement.