

April 1, 2007 by Steve Brandon



# Don't Forget His Honor (part 1)

## Malachi 1:6-11

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We are in the beginning phases of our exposition of the book of Malachi. Two weeks ago we saw that the main message of this book comes loud and clear: "Don't Forget the LORD!" Through a series of questions and answers, Malachi exposes the various ways in which the people of Israel had indeed forgotten the LORD. Last week, we saw how the people of Israel had forgotten the love of God. This week, we will see how the people of Israel had forgotten the **honor** of God. Our text this morning comes by way of condemnation. In forgetting to honor the LORD, these people were condemned with strong language.

Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Don't Forget His Honor." Indeed, this is precisely what the Israelites had done. They had forgotten the honor of the LORD. We need to learn from their negative example so that we might not follow in their steps. Consider our text.

Malachi 1:6-11

"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." But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.

These were some strong words that the LORD was speaking to His priests. They deal with the issue of the proper worship of God. In the law of Moses, the LORD had clearly laid out for the priests how it was that they were to offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD. But, during the days of Malachi, they had neglected these instructions. As a result, the LORD was not pleased with these sacrifices at all (verse 10). The result is that the LORD would not accept these offerings from them (verse 10).

Israel was worshiping the LORD in vain. Oh, to be sure, there was activity. We aren't talking about God being ignored. Animals were being slaughtered. Animals were being burned. Incense was giving off an aroma. But, the LORD was not accepting their offerings.

When you think about this for a few minutes, you realize that this is pretty tragic. The people of Israel are making the effort to come to Jerusalem, into the temple courtyard, to worship the LORD. They are bringing their sacrifices, leading the ox and sheep into the temple area. They are giving their sacrifices to the priests, who in turn slaughtered the animals and offer them up to the LORD. And at the end of the day, their sacrifices were rejected. God is not pleased with their sacrifices.

Though we don't offer up animal sacrifices today as they did in the days of Malachi. We do worship the Lord. We worship Him privately. We worship Him in our families. We worship Him publicly.

Every Sunday we come here into this building to offer up praise and honor to Him. And it can easily be the case that the Lord rejects our worship as well. In fact, I'm sure that in many churches across our land, the Lord looks down at what is happening in those churches and refuses to accept their worship, just as He had done in the days of Malachi.

My heart is that this might not be the case with Rock Valley Bible Church. My heart is that our worship would be pleasing in His sight. As we worship Him, I would love to place an approving smile upon His face. Because, anything else is our doom.

As my sermon title indicates, the key to proper worship is remembering Who it is that we worship. Our great God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power (Rev. 4:11). "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory" (Rev. 5:12). Not to offer up such worthy worship is disaster.

The end of these priests isn't good as they did not honor the LORD. Look at chapter 2:1-3, "'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."

This is serious stuff! We aren't dealing with secondary issues here this morning. We are dealing with the essentials of how it is that we ought to worship the LORD. And He is very particular about the ways in which He is to be worshiped and He will reject all worship that spurns His ways. Let's begin with ...

## 1. The Principle of Honor (verses 6-7)

I believe that this is where the priests missed it all. If they had understood, "the principle of honor," then they wouldn't have offered up their faulty sacrifices. Rather, if they had understood, their sacrifices would have been a "pleasing aroma" unto the LORD (Num. 28:2). The LORD would have delighted in their worship. The LORD would have accepted their worship. The LORD would have blessed them and all would have been well with them.

I believe that this principle passes directly to us as well. In other words, if you get this principle right, you will get worship right. Which of you doesn't want to worship Him correctly? Life and death are in His hands. He is the One we need to please, by giving him the honor He deserves.

The "principle of honor" is explained in verse 6, where we read, "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." Malachi puts up two types of people and asks how it is that people treat them. The first person to be set up as an example is a father. The second person is a master.

"A son honors his father." This is what generally occurs in life. Notice that Malachi was not appealing to the command to honor your father and mother (Ex 20:12). Rather, he is appealing to what takes place in life. A father brings a son into the world. And, the right thing for the son to do is to bring honor to his father. He follows his father's counsel. He doesn't speak poorly of his father. He submits to his father's authority. When a son does these things, he honors his father.

Certainly, there are many exceptions to this general rule. There are many sons who fail in honoring their father. But, in such a case, you may easily determine that something is wrong. Either the father is not worthy of honor in any way, shape or form. Or, the son is wrongfully responding to his father. But, in either way, we intrinsically know that something is wrong. This is the way that it is with fathers and sons. The father maintains a position of authority over his son, which demands respect from his son. "A son honors his father."

Verse 2 continues with an observation of the workplace, "A servant [honors] his master." Again, this is what generally occurs in life. You work for a boss. You do what he tells you to do. If he tells you to make the widgets, you make the widgets. If he tells you to clean the bathroom, you clean the bathroom. If he tells you to run an errand, you run an errand. If you don't do this, you will bring disgrace to your boss and yourself. Your boss maintains a position of authority over you, you are to honor him by obeying his wishes.

In the day of Malachi, there were masters and slaves, but the idea is the same. Because of the position that the master holds over the slave, the slave is expected to give respect and honor to his master. "A servant [honors] his master."

We can take these earthly relationships and apply them vertically as well. As believers in Christ, He is our heavenly father, and so, we should treat Him as our great father. As creatures that He created, He is also our master, and so, we should treat Him as our great master. As God is in this position of authority over us, it behooves us to act in such a way that is consistent with the honor that He deserves as our heavenly father and lord of our lives.

This is what Malachi points out in the middle of verse 6, "'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."

As a father of the nation of Israel, God deserved respect from His people. As the master of the nation of Israel, the LORD deserved respect from His people.

### **This is the principle of honor. And this is the essence of worship.**

God is one who is in a position over us and above us. He is entirely worthy of our worship and our praise. He should have our utmost respect. We should follow His counsel. We should speak well of Him. We should submit to His authority. We should obey Him in every way. These things give God the honor that He deserves, based upon who He is! He is our loving LORD.

But, the priests in the days of Malachi weren't doing this. They were robbing God of the honor that He fully deserved. The LORD accused them of "despising" His name (verse 6). As they despised the name of the LORD, they were defrauding the LORD of the honor that He deserves as our loving King. As a result, the LORD was rejecting their worship.

These priests had no clue of the dishonor they were bringing to the LORD. Upon hearing of the LORD's disapproval of their worship, the priests responded with the typical response that takes place seven times throughout the book of Malachi, "How have we despised Your name?" (verse 6). They pleaded ignorance. They claimed that they didn't know what the LORD was talking about. "What are you talking about? We haven't despised Your name? We have done everything that you have told us to do. You told us to build a temple. We built a temple. You told us to anoint the Levites as priests. We have anointed the Levites as priests. You told us to offer up sacrifices. We have offered up sacrifices. How have we despised Your name?" (verse 6).

And the LORD responds, "Here is how you are despising my name: You are presenting defiled food upon My altar" (verse 7).

God had given clear commands to the priests for the requirements of the sacrifices. In Leviticus 22:2, the LORD instructed Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons to be careful with the holy gifts of the sons of Israel, which they dedicate to Me, so as not to profane My holy name." But, these priests were careless in their handling of the sacrifices. Their sacrifices were defiled. And in offering up these defiled sacrifices, they profaned the name of the LORD.

But, still, they were clueless. Again, they responded with ignorance, "How have we defiled You?" (verse 7). They still didn't know what was what was wrong with their actions. They didn't realize what they were doing wrong.

At the end of verse 7, the LORD brings the issue to the table, "You say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'" (verse 7). Now, it's debatable whether or not these priests actually said these words. Personally, I doubt that the priests told those bringing their sacrifices to worship: "The table of the LORD is to be despised." Rather, I believe that they diminished the altar when they permitted the lame and the blind and the diseased sacrifices to be offered up upon the altar. In allowing these things, it was as if they were saying that the altar was to be diseased.

Whether or not they said these words, they were definitely saying it with their actions. In the next few verses, God will give proof that how exactly they were despising the altar. None of it has to do with what they said. It all had to do with what they did. They were presenting faulty sacrifices upon the altar. In this way, they defiled the LORD, whom they professed to worship.

When you distill it all down, their fundamental problem was that they had forgotten the honor that was due to the LORD. They had forgotten that those in authority deserve our honor. They had forgotten that those in the highest authority deserve our highest honor. If they had remembered this one simple principle of honor, I doubt that they would have "presented defiled food upon the altar" (verse 6). If they had remembered this one principle of honor, I'm sure that they would have had an entirely different attitude toward the sacrifices they were offering.

The application comes almost directly to us. "Do you understand the principle of honor?" "Do you understand the place that the LORD deserves in your life?" As the utmost authority, He deserves our utmost honor and respect in all that we do. Had they remembered the truth of Psalm 93, I doubt they would have dishonored the LORD in the ways that they were doing.

Psalm 93  
The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;  
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;  
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.  
Your throne is established from of old;  
You are from everlasting.  
The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
The floods have lifted up their voice,  
The floods lift up their pounding waves.  
More than the sounds of many waters,  
Than the mighty breakers of the sea,  
The LORD on high is mighty.  
Your testimonies are fully confirmed;  
Holiness befits Your house,  
O LORD, forevermore.

The Bible is clear. In 1 Samuel 2:30, the LORD God declares, "those who honor Me I will honor and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed." That's (1) The Principle of Honor (verses 6-7). Let's look now at my second point. ...

## 2. The Practice of Honor (verses 8-11)

In verses 8-11, we will see some ways in which we should apply this principle of honor. In these verses, the LORD will provide the details of how exactly these priests had dishonored Him. By way of application this morning, we will take their negative example and turn it into a positive exhortation for us. Do you want to worship the LORD with honor? Here is the first thing.

### a) Bring Your Best (verse 8a).

This is what the Israelites failed to do. It's what the priests didn't encourage. Look at the first half of verse 8, "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil?"

The LORD was very clear in giving directions for the sacrifices that the people of Israel were to bring to offer up on the altar. There were different types of sacrifices for different types of sins that were committed. There were varying requirements for the animals being brought. But, in every instance, the animal brought was to be a perfect specimen, **without defect**.

Consider the following verses, and observe the common theme of all of the sacrifices that were to be offered to the LORD.

Leviticus 1:2-3, "When any man of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of animals from the heard or the flock. If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male **without defect**."

Leviticus 1:10, "But if his offering is from the flock, of the sheep or of the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer it a male

**without defect."**

Leviticus 3:1, "If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it **without defect** before the LORD."

Leviticus 3:6, "But if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD is from the flock, he shall offer it, male or female, **without defect.**"

Leviticus 4:3, "If the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD a bull **without defect** as a sin offering for the sin he has committed." (see also 4:23, 28, 32; 5:15, 18; 6:6).

Later in Leviticus, the LORD clearly defined what it meant to be "without defect." The LORD spoke to Moses, in Leviticus 22:18-22, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the aliens in Israel who presents his offering, whether it is any of their votive or any of their freewill offerings, which they present to the LORD for a burnt offering for you to be accepted--it must be a male without defect from the cattle, the sheep, or the goats. Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it will not be accepted for you. When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. Those that are blind or fractured or maimed or having a running sore or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD, nor make of them an offering by fire on the altar to the LORD."

A good summary was given in Deuteronomy 15:21, "If it has any defect, such as lameness or blindness, or any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God."

These priests of Malachi's day knew full well the requirements of the law. They knew that the sacrifices were to be perfect. And yet, what did they do? They presented the blind for sacrifice (verse 8). They presented the lame for sacrifice (verse 8). They presented the sick for sacrifice (verse 8).

Now, let me ask you, why would anyone bring these types of sacrifices to be offered? Why would you bring a blind ram to be sacrificed? Why would you bring a lame lamb to be sacrificed? Why would you bring a sick ox to be sacrificed? I can think of one word: **economics**. It makes financial sense. If an animal is going to die by being sacrificed upon an altar, why not bring one that is of no use to you anyway? You won't use a blind ram to mate and produce offspring--it might be blind as well. A lame lamb won't fetch as large a price as a large, strong animal might. You may not even be able to sell a sick ox. They are undesirable to you, so give it to the LORD.

It may make perfect financial sense to you, but, it is dishonoring to the LORD. He is worthy of much more honor than a discarded animal. God is worthy of your best animal. The principle comes straight to us. When you worship the LORD, do you "Bring Your Best" (verse 8a)?

The obvious area of application here is in your giving. That's the most straight-forward place to begin. When you place your offering in the box on the back table, do you give your best? Or, do you give the leftovers? When you give to other causes (parachurches, schools, missionaries, or other believers in need), do you bring your best? Or do you only give your leftovers?

The Scriptures are clear, to honor the LORD, we bring him the first fruits, not the leftovers. Proverbs 3:9, "Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce." The LORD is a great king. He is worthy of our best.

I'm not placing here any amount for you to give. I'm not placing here any formula for figuring out how much you should give. In Israel's day, it was sacrifices that they were required to bring. In our day, the shape of the gift may vary. You may only be able to give a small amount to others, but the LORD may be pleased with your gift beyond a huge contribution for others.

Perhaps you remember when Jesus was seated "opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on'" (Mark 12:41-44). It may be that your giving to the LORD is small, but well-pleasing to Him. If it's your best, the LORD is pleased.

As many of you know, my wife and I are expecting our fifth child. At an ultrasound recently, we discovered that we were having a boy. In recent days, when my 11 year old son was asked about his excitement to have a brother, he said, "I'm excited, because I will be able to give him my Legos." If you know how much my son cherishes his Lego toys, then you know of the sweetness of this sacrifice. God calls us to give our best.

In 2 Samuel 24, the story is told of the land that David purchased from Araunah, the Jebusite as the future site of the temple. Araunah owned some land in Jerusalem, where he threshed his wheat. One day, he looked down and saw David the king, "crossing over toward him," so "Araunah went out and bowed his face to the ground before the king, saying "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" (2 Sam. 24:20-21). He said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD" (2 Sam. 24:21).

Initially, Araunah said to David, "Everything, O king, Araunah gives to the king. May the LORD your God accept you" (2 Sam. 24:23). But, David refused to take it as a gift. He said, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24). And so, "David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver [and] build there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings" (2 Sam. 24:24-25).

The principle is clear: "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24).

What about your giving? Does it cost you anything to give to the LORD? Perhaps you have such an abundance that your offerings to the LORD are as nothing to you. Perhaps in giving so little, you are giving "blind" and "lame" sacrifices (Mal. 1:8). The LORD has no delight in these things. So, "Bring Your Best" (verse 8a). Here's the second thing.

### **b) Take the Test (verses 8b-10).**

This is what the LORD encouraged Israel to do in the second half of verse 8. He told them to take the authority test. "Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts" (verse 8).

He told them to imagine taking trip to see the governor of Persia. If you would bring him an animal as a gift, what would you give him? Would you bring a ox that is blind in one of his eyes? Would you bring him a lamb that can't walk? Would you bring a ram that is sick and skinny? Of course not. It would be an insult to the king! And the conclusion is this: If it would be an insult to the king, how much more is it an insult to the King of kings!

Let's contextualize it for us. Imagine yourself taking a trip to Washington D.C.. You are going to visit the president of the United States. In so doing, you were planning on bringing a gift to him. What would you bring? Would you bring him a rusty car? Would you bring him an old computer that runs Windows 3.1? Would you bring him a motorcycle with a flat tire and broken out headlight? Of course not. It would be an insult to the president!

Here's the million dollar question. Why, then would you bring these things to the LORD? It's the test that you should take when thinking about the worship that you offer to the LORD. because, in real ways, you are approaching the sovereign Lord of the universe. Your worship to Him ought to be worthy of His honor. He is the one you want to please! When you give a gift to the president, you certainly want to please Him. And that's what we do in our worship. Our aim is to please the LORD.

D. James Kennedy had a great insight about what takes place in a church service. He said, "Most people think of the church as a drama, with the minister as the chief actor, God as the prompter, and the laity as the critic. What is actually the case is that the congregation is the chief actor, the minister is the prompter, and God is the critic." [\[1\]](#)

This is the test that we need to take! We need to consider that everything that we do is for the LORD. It is His approval that we seek! He is the one that judges our worship.

The question on the table is whether or not God is pleased with our worship of Him? God had rejected the sacrifices that these priests were offering. In verse 9, the LORD asks rhetorically, "With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts" (verse 9). The obvious answer is, "No."

In verse 10, the LORD puts forth His disgust with very picturesque words. He says, "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you."

What a terrible reality to face! All of your effort, all of your sacrifices and God says, "I am not pleased with you." God says, "I [will not] accept an offering from you." It would be better if somebody came and shut the gates to the temple, locked them, and threw away the key, than for you to continue to offer up these sorts of sacrifices.

In Amos 5:23, the LORD said, "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps." You should feel the weight of these words. Much of our worship on Sunday mornings as a church consists of singing His praise. Through the words are all right, it may well be that the LORD is not pleased with your songs. It may well be that he would prefer that you remove the noise of your songs far away from His ears.

There is a sort of worship that God hates. When it takes place, the LORD's desire is that it would be stopped! Better to have no worship than false worship!

In the first half of verse 9 is the key to acceptable worship before the LORD. Malachi writes, "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us?" At the end of the day, bringing your best isn't going to be worthy enough. You need to entreat God's favor. Apparently, these priests weren't doing this. They thought that the sacrifices were enough. Perhaps they had succumbed to believing that the ritual of the sacrifices was enough to satisfy the LORD.

And yet, the LORD was clear. "I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). He wants a heart that honors Him through and through. It's not the motions that He delights in, ... even if He is the one who instructed people to go through with the particular motions (i.e. of sacrifices).

You want your worship to be accepted by the LORD, because, after all, He is your chief critic. He's the only critic that matters. So, it makes sense to seek His favor. We ought to seek His favor in our worship (i.e. verse 9a). We ought to plead His grace. It's the only way that we will stand before a holy God: by pleading the mercy of the cross of Christ.

So, (a) Bring your Best, (b) Take the Test, and know that ...

### **c) God will be Blessed (verse 11).**

In verse 11, we read, 11 "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of

hosts.

The LORD was telling those in Israel that we wasn't a desperate God. God isn't desperate to have our worship, as if His survival depended upon whether or not we worship Him. If the worship in Israel was rejected, the LORD would raise up others who would be able to worship Him. God will see too it that He will be worshiped! Or, as I have put it, God will be Blessed! If some are worshiping Him in an unacceptable manner, He will raise up others who will.

This is Palm Sunday. It is the day that the church celebrates the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem, a week before He was crucified. I trust that you remember the scene. Jesus road into Jerusalem on a donkey (in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9). "Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matt. 21:8-9).

Perhaps you remember when the Pharisees observed what was happening. When Jesus was the object of worship, they said, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples" (Luke 19:39). But, Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" (Luke 19:40). God will be worshiped! God will be blessed! If we fail in our worship, the LORD will raise up others who will.

The name of the LORD will be magnified. Verse 11 prophesies of the time in which the worship of God would go far beyond the borders of Israel. "From the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations." From the east to the west, the name of the LORD will be known and worshiped! I believe that these words have been fulfilled today. All across this globe, there are worshipers of the true God, Jesus Christ.

You can go to nearly every country on the planet and find true followers of Christ. Certainly, there are a few tribes who have never heard the name of Christ before. And there are missions organizations seeking to identify these tribes and bring the gospel to them. Certainly, there are also strongly Islamic nations where believers can only survive if they remain underground and unidentified. But, there are pockets of believers in many of these nations. Indeed, the true worship of God, which comes through Jesus Christ, is taking place among the nations of the world today. Malachi's words have been fulfilled in the spread of the gospel far and wide from Jerusalem.

May we be among those who are giving great honor to the LORD.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 1, 2007 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, compiled by Paul Lee Tan, Illustration #684, p. 245.