



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Malachi 2:1-9

“God and the Ministry”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and for the power that it has in our lives when wielded by the Holy Spirit. We pray tonight that he may take the word and may he make it known to us and apply it to us in the way that will bring honor and glory to Thy name. Enable us, Lord, to do that which Malachi exhorted the priests to do and that is to honor Thy name. We ask Thy blessing upon the classes that follow and pray that this night may be a night of growth in grace and in the knowledge of Thy word. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is "God and the Ministry." And we're turning to Malachi chapter 2, and our text or passage for tonight will be Malachi chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 9.

In these verses that come before us tonight, Malachi has a word for the priests. And it may help to review just for about a minute the responsibilities of the priests in the Levitical ritual system. You remember that the priesthood was responsible for the worship of the community, generally speaking. The priests were the representatives of the people. And therefore, there fell into their hands the responsibility of the worship of the children of Israel.

Specifically, he was responsible for the offering of sacrifices. The writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews lays a great deal of stress upon that. And you'll remember that more than once in the epistle he says that it the responsibility of a priest to have a sacrifice to offer. And he does that in order to stress the fact that our Lord Jesus being an eternal priest must have an offering to offer. And in his case, of course, it was the offering of himself. So, the priests were responsible for the offering of the sacrifices. The people brought the animals. The priests slew the animals and carried out the ritual in connection with the sacrifices.

And then the second responsibility of the priests was the responsibility of intercession. That follows naturally from the offering of the sacrifice. The priests offered the sacrifice and then interceded on the basis of the access that he had by virtue of divine appointment. Just as our Lord Jesus offers the once and for all sacrifice and then intercedes for those for whom the sacrifice is made, so the priests in the Old Testament offered sacrifices for definite people and then offered intercession for the definite people for whom the sacrifices were made.

And then, third, the priests were responsible for the instruction of the people in the Law of Moses. It was their responsibility to teach and to teach specifically the law. And Malachi will make reference to that in this section when he says, "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge." "True instruction was in his mouth," or "The law of truth" as the Hebrew puts it "was in his mouth."

Back in Deuteronomy chapter 17 and verse 8 through verse 13, Moses writes of these responsibilities. And this, of course, involved the responsibility of judging between cases because it was the priest who had the knowledge of the word. Moses writes in Deuteronomy chapter 17 and verse 8,

"If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another,

being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses. So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge, who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case."

And he goes on to write for a few more verses of the responsibility of judgment. So the priests then offered sacrifices. He interceded for the people. And he instructed the people in the Law of Moses.

The priests miserably failed. And that, of course, is the burden of the prophet Malachi here is chapter 2. What they did, evidently, was to evacuate the law of its force by persuading the people that its demands were of little significance. They themselves suffered from this, we saw last time, because since they did not impress upon the Israelites the importance of yielding obedience to the law of God, the result was that the people began to bring sacrifices that were polluted. They brought sacrifices that profaned the altar of the Lord. They brought sacrifices that were technically not to be sacrificed. They brought the lame and the blind. And the result was that the priests suffered themselves because it was their privilege to live off of the sacrifices that the people brought.

So, they miserably failed, and the responsibility for a great deal of the failure of Israel was lying right at the doors of the priests who had responsibility for ministering. And so it is today.

Now in the New Testament we read that every one of us is a priest. And I'm not trying to suggest to you that the ministry of today is the priesthood. I do think that is woeful misunderstanding of the New Testament. I remember some years ago in Dallas Seminary one of our guest speakers, a minister of a local church in the city here, leaning over the pulpit and telling the people who were there, most of whom were students at the seminary, "Men we must be priests for the people."

Now that is a woeful misunderstanding of the place of ministry in the local church. We are each one of us priests, every one, whether we teach the word or not, every believer. Even the females are priests. [Laughter] All of us are priests, and so we all have access to God. Now I'm glad you can smile over that. That's the way I meant it. We are all priests. And consequently, we shouldn't make the equivalence of priests in the Old Testament ministry in the New Testament. Ministry gifts are gifts that are given to certain people, not to everybody.

So, the place of the priest in the Old Testament in the sense that it was his responsibility for ministry is similar to the ministry of the gifted men in the New Testament. And one of the reasons that the church is in the condition that it is in today is because its ministry, its gifted men, its men who are supposed to teach the word of God have not done that. And if we are to rouse respect for the ministry today, it can only be done by godliness, godly piety on the part of those who carry on the ministry of the word of God. The gifted men who preach and teach the word of God, those that have gifts of utterance, the exhorters, the pastor-teachers, the teachers, the evangelists, they will gain most respect from us to whom they minister when their lives are godly lives.

And the reason that the ministry is looked down upon so much today is because it is not characterized in many respects by godliness in the ministry because, it's a sad thing, but the ministry often realizing this, that is, that they're not respected by the people to whom they minister, think that they can gain the respect by being a jolly good buddy. And so the result is that the ministry becomes very worldly. And that just does not do the job.

When the ministry is godly and lived before God in fear and awe of his name as Malachi writes here, then we shall respect them, then we shall listen to them, then we shall pay attention to them. But when our evangelicals are called out before the whole of the country for their homosexuality, for example, or when in some of our large denominations that were at one time evangelical, more attention is given to yielding

obedience to the book of church order than to the Bible, it is natural that we should not pay them too much attention.

I think I read to you a few weeks back an illustration of this in one of our large denominations which at one time was extremely evangelical in which certain important officials have said that to believe the virgin birth or not to believe the virgin birth does not harm anyone, but to fail to ordain women to the ministry, that harms a lot of people.

Now that is also a horrible misunderstanding of the word of God, for the faith in the Scriptures is of much more importance than any kind of practice such as that.

In Scotland which was known for so many years for its godly ministry and for its faithfulness, fidelity to the word of God, in New College in the University of Edinburgh just about a hundred years ago, modernism or departure from the faith began in the theological college. And it began right after the ministry of one of the really godly men of the Church of Scotland, Rabi Duncan. He was called Rabi; Rabbi we would have said. But he was professor of Old Testament there.

He was succeeded by A. B. Davidson, a very learned man, whose books have a great deal of profit in them even till today. And for many years, Professor Davidson taught in that Presbyterian institution. And he began, was one of the reasons for the infiltration of unbelieving higher criticism. There is higher criticism that is believing higher criticism. There's nothing wrong with that. But unbelieving higher criticism intruded into the minds of the young people of New College through A. B. Davidson and others who followed after him. And he used to tell his students, "Now the things that I'm telling you, you must give to your congregation in small doses," because of course, they wouldn't take it if you gave them large doses of it.

So just as in our day there has been such a failure in the ministry of the word of God by those whom God has gifted to preach and teach, so in Malachi's day the failure existed in the priesthood, those who had upon their lips the Law of Moses

This section that we're looking at begins with an admonition. And for those of you that like to take notes, I didn't put a transparency up tonight because I just have three points and they are these: Roman I. The Admonition to the Priests, verses 1 through 3. Let's read these three verses now in which Malachi warns the priests of the possibilities if they do not respond and give honor to his name. Verse 1 begins,

" "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, (Now that word offspring can mean simply seed. And I think that is the meaning here. It means the seed of the harvest, the seed of their planting.) I am going to rebuke your seed, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it." "

The point of these three verses is simply this, that their pollution of the sanctuary is going to lead to their own punishment if they do not listen, if they do not take it to heart. He says, "And now this commandment is for you."

Now really he doesn't give any commandments specifically here. But the word "this commandment" is the Hebrew word mitsvah. Now mitsvah means simply a commandment and that noun probably in this particular context means charge. And so, he is giving them a charge rather than a specific commandment. So, it's a charge to them, a charge to these men who are responsible for ministry, very much like the charge that a man would give to a young pastor who assumes a place of ministry. And frequently meetings are held in which various men speak in order to give the man a charge as he begins his work of ministry to challenge him to faithfulness and fidelity. Well, it's this kind of charge that is given to the priests here, except that this is a warning. This is an

admonition to change their ways. He states, "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name."

Now, if you've been reading Malachi, you'll notice how often he has used the expression "my name" in these verses. This is, I think, the sixth time that it has been found in the sixteen verses up to this point. Now the name, or the expression "my name" is of course a Hebraism, that is, it's a kind of thing that meant something to them, does not mean quite as much to us. Although we do have expressions like he has a good name. We mean by that his character is good.

Now when God speaks of his name, he speaks of all that he is. It is a kind of summation of his attributes. So, to give honor to his name is to give honor to him as he really is in his being and in his attributes.

The priests are given the prerogative to invoke his name in Aaronic blessing which so many of our wedding ceremonies conclude with, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you." It was their responsibility and their privilege to pronounce the blessing of the name of the Lord.

So when he says to give honor to my name, he means to give honor to me as I really am as the sovereign God of the universe, as the self-existent being, as the one who possesses the communicable and incommunicable attributes which range all the way from his self-existence, his omnipotence and omniscience and omnipresence all the way through to his moral attributes of love and goodness and kindness. So, to give honor to his name means to uphold him as he really is before the children of Israel.

So, he tells them, If you don't listen, if you don't take it to heart to give honor to my name, then I'm going to send the curse upon you.

You know, it would be such a great thing for us if we were all students of the Bible, really students of the Bible. I must confess I'm not nearly the student that I ought to be and I would, I think, get a great deal more out of the Bible if I just knew it almost by heart, because so many of these expressions that the later prophets used are

expressions derived from the earlier part of the Bible. And this one here, that he will send a curse upon them, is a reference to something that he had said way back in the beginning of Israel's covenantal history.

Do you remember in the Book of Deuteronomy as he prepared them for entrance into the land he spoke to them and he said, Now I want you to know that I have given you the land, but if you do not obey me, then you are not going to be able to possess that which really belongs to you. Just as if one of our children should be given a car by grandmother or grandfather or by father or mother, and in the gift should be laid down certain conditions, that is, you can use the car, you'll have the use of that which is yours, you have title to it, but you will have the use to it so long as you're not picked up for speeding. Now that conditions the use of that which really belongs to them.

Now the land belongs to Israel, but God made with them a Palestinian covenant back in the Book of Deuteronomy. And in that covenant, and also in Leviticus chapter 26, in that covenant he said, Now if you do not obey me when you go in the land, I'm going to take the privilege of possessing the land away from you. It still belongs to them; incidentally, they've just been grounded for thousands of years. They haven't been able to go back.

Now these expressions here, I'm going to send the curse on you, are expressions that are taken from Deuteronomy chapter 28 which is the chapter in which he says, Now if you don't obey me, I'm going to do this and this and this and this. And right here he says that's exactly what I'm doing. I'm going to do this and this and this and this. In other words, the Palestinian covenant is still in operation. That's what he's saying.

Now, if you want to see this for yourself, turn back with me and I'll just read one verse. And I think you can see, if we just waste enough time to read one verse, you can see the point. Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 20.

Now, he begins in chapter 28 by saying, "Now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command

you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth." Then in verse 20 of Deuteronomy 28 he says,

"The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you" and so on.

So that's what Malachi is saying. He's saying if you don't pay attention to me then the Palestinian covenant goes into operation. And I'm going to send the curse upon you. So the answer is to glorify my name.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, we all know that it is said that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Well, to glorify God is to do exactly what he says here to give honor to his name.

So, I'm going to send the curse upon you. Furthermore, he says in verse 3 that "I will spread refuse on your faces."

Now, it's not nice for people to speak like this in polite society, but God does. This is horrible language. You see, when the offerings were offered by the priests, they slew the animals. Certain parts of the animals were offered for the sacrifice. Certain parts of the animals were given to the priest. And then the particularly repulsive parts of the animals were taken outside the gate and they were burned: the offal, the entrails, together with all that make up the most detestable part of an animal.

The most distasteful terms are used here by God, and of course, the reason is that he wants us to understand how he feels about corruption in the ministry of the word of God. So he says, I am going to spread refuse. I'm going to spread the offal. I'm going to spread the entrails with the dung on your faces, you priests.

There couldn't be any stronger language by God to express the contempt that he has for corrupt men in the ministry of the word of God. What a terrible thing it is to stand up behind a pulpit or stand up as a spokesman for God and not give out his truth purely. You can see what God thinks about it here.

This reminds me of Laodicea and our Lord's words to that church in the Book of Revelation in chapter 3. That church is one of the churches that our Lord speaks some of his most scathing language to. He says,

"I know your deeds, (Revelation chapter 3, verse 15) that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you (No translators can really be honest and truthful here. This word means to vomit. I will vomit you) out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

Lukewarm disciples of the great happy medium have not learned the real sense of sin. Think of sin like a painting of a modern painter with its impressionistic indefiniteness. Churches have fellowships of natural amiability. The pastors and preachers are men who are just jolly, good fellows. Tepid churches, these are the things that God would like to vomit out of his mouth.

So, the Lord is very forthright about failure to have a vibrant vital relationship to him. And of course, what he says about Israel and what he says about the churches is what he thinks about us when we are lukewarm.

At this point, Malachi introduces an illustration, and here he introduces us to one of the loveliest characters of the Old Testament, one very much overlooked too. I don't know whether I have time to do justice to Phinehas, but he was really a great man of

God. The background of the incident that is referred to here when he says. Let me read verses 4 through 7, then we'll turn to the passage that is the background.

"Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi. (When he says Levi, incidentally, he means the tribe of Levi as the priesthood, the priestly tribe. So Levi is used of the Levitical priesthood) 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. (Here is one man who was doing what the priests in Malachi's day were not doing) True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

Now, he has in mind here the background of the story in Numbers chapter 25, the story of Phinehas and his action in connection with the sin of the children of Israel in the day of Balaam, the false prophet. So turn to Numbers chapter 25 and let me read a few verses beginning with verse 1.

Remember that the Moabites sought to lead the children of Israel astray. And so they sent off for Balak, one of the kings of the east to lead Israel astray. And Balak did rather, and Balak sought Balaam. And Balaam was asked to prophesy against Israel. And you'll remember that he has given us in chapters 23 and 24, four great Messianic prophecies. And as a result of God's sovereignty, Balaam the false prophet was never able to prophesy anything but good about Israel. He would open his mouth and God would put great Messianic prophecies in his mouth.

And so Balaam finally arose and departed and returned to his place. And Balak also went his way. And then we read, "While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab."

Now, later on over in Numbers chapter 31 and verse, let's see, it's about verse 8, "And they killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain." Well, we read, "They also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword."

Verse 16, "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord." In other words, Balaam finally said to them, I cannot prophesy anything but good concerning them, but I'll tell you how you can get the children of Israel to sin. And that is you can get them to have sexual relations with the women. And in this way, you can get them to fall. So that's the picture in chapter 25 and verse 1.

"The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab." (What Balaam could not do by his prophecies, he could do by his counsel.) For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." (Notice that, he was so angry, he said take all the leaders of the people and execute them) So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor." Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, (Incidentally, he was the grandson of Aaron, but he was not the priest at this point. He was not acting officially. He was just so caught up in the unrighteousness of the children of Israel and the

wickedness of them, that he acted spontaneously.) When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. And those who died by the plague were 24,000. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath (Notice, by this act of judgment he has turned away the wrath of the Lord) from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy."

This was a sad incident in the history of Israel. People worshiping Baal of Peor and committing fornication with the Moabite women. And Phinehas, jealous for the glory of God, made an atonement by a single mediatorial act of executing judgment.

Now I want you to turn with me over to Psalm 106. This is why I said earlier it would be so good if we really knew the Bible, so we wouldn't have to turn to all these passages. You'd just know them. And furthermore, you'd know the point that I was making, or trying to make. You'd know it even better than I am able to make it.

In verse 28, the psalmist as he recounts the past history of Israel says, "They joined themselves (This is Psalm 106 verse 28) "They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and interposed." And this word in the Hebrew text is the word palal but in the old stem means to interpose in the sense of to act as mediator.

So, "Phinehas stood up and interposed, And so the plague was stayed." In other words, he played the mediator; he performed the act by which Israel and God were brought into a relationship of peace again.

Now, what was the act? Why, it was to take a spear and to put to death the Israelite and this woman that he had brought into the camp.

You see, God is pleased by two things. He's pleased by the execution of judgment, or he is pleased by the act of a substitute who takes the judgment. And he is not pleased and his law is not upheld, and he's not happy until he may righteously do what he wishes to do. So, Phinehas saw the necessity of judgment. And acting spontaneously, he came right out of the crowd of Israel with a spear in his hand because he knew that what was being done was contrary to the will of God and he slew, he murdered those two people. And God praises him for it. Not only praises him for it, but says, I'm going to give him the priesthood. And it's going to be a covenant of peace and life as a perpetual possession of Phinehas.

Now you see, Aaron had a son whose name was Eleazar. Eleazar may have had several sons, I don't remember. But the priesthood is carried down; the high priesthood is carried down through the Aaronic family. And of course, when there were several sons, there were several possibilities. And in this case, God said the priesthood will go through Phinehas because of this great act of devotion which he has done out of fear for my name.

You know one of the aspects of our Lord Jesus so beautifully pictured in the Book of Revelation is that he has "eyes as a flame of fire." Phinehas was just a type of Jesus Christ in this respect, an unusual type of Christ, an unusual type of our Lord in that he was a person who perfectly at this moment hated sin.

H. R. McIntosh who was Professor of Dogmatics at the University of Edinburgh used to say if he had relaxed, if Jesus Christ had relaxed his hatred of sin for one moment he would have lost us. And that's right, because he had to perfectly hate sin in order to be our substitute. And he had to perfectly acquiesce to the divine judgment coming upon him because of the penalty of our sin.

So, Phinehas is a type of Jesus Christ in that he expresses in this beautiful action his hatred for sin. It's an unusual type of Christ. Sometime I'd like to speak on that subject in all of its detail because it's very striking.

And you'll notice too, that as a result of this act of faith on his part, it is said of Phinehas the same thing that was said of Abraham. Did you read the next verse? Verse 31 says, "And it was reckoned to him for righteousness, To all generations forever." So by his great act of faith he obtained this righteous standing before God, this act of judgment. Incidentally, the history of Phinehas' line supports this because the priesthood did stay with that line.

Now, when we turn back to Malachi, we can see what our Lord is saying. He's saying that Phinehas, who represents the tribe of Levi, and to whom he gave the covenant of life and peace, Phinehas is the man who stands in awe of my name. That's the kind of priest I want, the Lord is saying. I don't want one of these priests who, evacuating his responsibility before the people, tells them that they don't really have to obey the word of God. I don't want a priest like that. I want a priest who will stand behind my word as Phinehas did. I want him to stand up and fearlessly express my anger and hatred of sin. I want him to warn the children of God of how I feel about sin. I want him to be faithful. And whether it's a popular or unpopular kind of ministry, that's beside the point.

I'm sure that there were many people who thought that Phinehas' act, his spontaneous act, was a very cruel and terrible act. I can just hear them speaking about it. All the ancestors of those who hate capital punishment, I can hear them. How cruel. This kind of punishment is cruel and unnecessary, and what's the phrase, I've lost it for a moment, unusual punishment. It was unusual, but it pleased God and that was the important thing.

"My covenant" he says in the 5th chapter of chapter 2, "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." I love that character Phinehas. I'm afraid that I would have sat back and watched him. But nevertheless, I do admire this.

Now he goes on to say, "True instruction." This incidentally, I think, is better in the Hebrew text, and I believe that the Authorized Version still has this, "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity." That's the way that men are turned back from iniquity when there is someone like a Phinehas around to either preach the gospel positively or warn about impending eternal punishment.

"He turned many back from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge." Incidentally, that expression to preserve knowledge means not simply that the priest should have it in his head. The word shamar means "to keep" really. It means to keep knowledge. And da`ath, which is the word for knowledge here, is like one of the words used in the New Testament, a word that speaks of experiential kind of knowledge, the kind of knowledge that is not simply the knowledge of the head, such as the knowledge of the multiplication tables, that kind of knowledge, but the knowledge of experience.

And so when he says the priests' lips should preserve knowledge, he means that they should not only have the truth, but that truth should be expressed in their life. They should have it in their hearts. They should have it in their minds. They should have it treasured up there so that it is part of them. That's the point of it.

Now finally, our time is just about up. In verses 8 and 9 he lodges an accusation against the priests. He says, "But as for you, you have turned aside from the way." You see what a difference there is between Phinehas and the descendants of Phinehas in the present day.

" "But as for you, you have turned aside from the way, you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the Lord of hosts. So I

also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction."

What he simply says is that apostasy in life and doctrine leads to the ridicule of the world and punishment and judgment from God.

Micah, a prophet I'd like to study with you some day has said, "Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe." Is that modern? "Her priests instruct for a price." How ridiculous for men to take the word of God and teach it for money, instruct for a price. "And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean of the Lord saying, "Is not the Lord in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."" He has a good sarcastic tone. He's a good prophet.

Apostasy in life and doctrine leads to the ridicule of the world. And it also leads ultimately to the judgment of God. Retribution was inescapable. There would be as Rabbi Kempke says, Measure for measure. You despise me, I will make you despised. Those are words incidentally that come from 1 Samuel.

Well, I think there is an important lesson here. There's an important lesson for all Sunday school teachers too. But there's an important lesson for preachers. The one you seek to please is not the man in the pew. The one you seek to please is above. There's an important lesson for any Christian, too, who seeks to witness for Jesus Christ. The important person to please is not the person to whom you talk. The important person to please is the Lord.

Are you really standing in awe of him? Are you really honoring his name? Has God given you the courage to stand and to forthrightly proclaim his word to an individual, to a class, to people or just in your life? That, I think, is the challenge of this section.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words from Malachi. How wonderful it is to see the relevancy of the word of God to us. And we do confess, Lord, that we do not have the boldness. We do not honor Thy name as we should. And we pray, O God that Thou would forgive us for our sin for our departure from truth. And give us, Lord, boldness in the proclamation of Thy word. Enable us, Lord, to look in our ministry as unto Thee. Deliver us from huckstering the word of God for a price or for the adulation and praise of the people to whom we preach or teach or speak. O God, enable us to please Thee and give us that relationship to Thee that is deep and personal and real. For Jesus' sake. Amen.