

## **“Unworthy Worship”**

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Scriptural Foundation: Malachi 1:6-14, NIV

God continues to relate to the people of Israel through Malachi that there were several things that were amiss in their spiritual condition. In the earlier study we saw how they were denying and doubting God's love for them. In this study, God will address a different problem. God, through Malachi, would say,

### **Blemished Sacrifices**

<sup>6</sup> "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty. "It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.

"But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'

<sup>7</sup> "You place defiled food on my altar.

"But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?'

"By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible. <sup>8</sup> When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty.

<sup>9</sup> "Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?"-says the LORD Almighty.

<sup>10</sup> "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands. <sup>11</sup> My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty.

<sup>12</sup> "But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, 'It is defiled,' and of its food, 'It is contemptible.' <sup>13</sup> And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.

"When you bring injured, crippled or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands?" says the LORD. <sup>14</sup> "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations.

“God loves adverbs!” This puritan saying reminds us that God is interested not only in what we do, but also how we do it. For example, in 2 Corinthians 9, God not only calls us to give offerings to Him, but to give them cheerfully and not reluctantly. Or, in Galatians 6, God not only calls us to restore a brother who is caught in a sin, but to restore him “gently”. In Luke 18, Jesus teaches His disciples not only to pray, but to pray persistently and humbly. Indeed, God loves adverbs.

He cares about how we obey Him, how we follow Him, and how we serve Him. This is particularly true when we come to the subject of worship. God is very interested in how we worship Him. That is why the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandments of the Ten Commandments relate that if we worship the True God in the wrong way then we sin against Him through such worship.

Jesus, in John 4, teaches us that God seeks after worshippers who would worship Him in a certain way and in a certain manner; that is in spirit and in truth.

Here, in Malachi 1:6-14, God addresses a people who are committed to worshipping God each week. They refuse to worship idols. They refuse to bow down before other gods or to serve them, and yet we find, in Verse 10, God saying, “I am not pleased with you.” Why wouldn’t God be pleased with a people who come every week, every Sabbath, to

worship Him and when they worship they are not including other gods and they are not serving and worshipping false deities, but they are serving and worshipping the One True God? Why would God be displeased with a Temple that was full and packed with people every week? Why would God say to such a people, “I am not pleased with you”?

The answer is: because God loves adverbs. God not only cares that we worship, but He is deeply concerned how we worship Him. The people were worshipping the True God in the wrong way and God was deeply offended. He was offended that the people would worship Him so casually, so carelessly, and so half-heartedly and that they would worship Him without joy, without delight, without zeal, without energy, and without love. This is a people who were simply going through the motions of worship and thinking, “God should be satisfied. At least we are singing the songs, we are offering the gifts, and we are praying the prayers.” The people completely misunderstood the nature of worship, for worship that pleases God engages our whole person in recognizing and honoring God for all that He is worth.

A.W. Tozer writes, “What is worship? Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonishing wonder and overpowering love in the presence of that most ancient mystery, that majesty which philosophers call “the First Cause”, but which we call “Our Father, who art in Heaven.”

I appreciate William Temple’s words on worship as well: “For worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His Holiness, the nourishment of mind with His Truth, the purifying of imagination by His beauty, the opening of the heart to His love, the surrender of will to His purpose, and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable, and therefore that chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.”

Malachi’s message awakens our modern hearts to consider God’s evaluation of our own worship in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, for much of the worship that takes place in this age, within evangelical churches, I fear resembles very, very much the worship that took place in 400 BC among the people of Malachi’s day.

God seeks after worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth and we can learn much from this negative example that is set before us. We can observe, from Malachi’s audience, five ways that they offended God in worship.

The first offensive way of worshipping God is worshipping Him with a lacking zeal for the honor of God’s name, as we read in Verse 6,

<sup>6</sup> “A son honors his father, and a servant his master.”

God is very jealous for the honor of His own name and here He accuses the spiritual leadership of worshipping Him with a spirit of contempt for His name. Remember, this contempt is in the very face of God’s great love. He has just expressed, “I have loved you,” in Verse 2, and He goes on to prove His love when He says, in Verse 6,

<sup>6</sup> “If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. “It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.”

God is employing a human analogy to help the people understand why their worship is so offensive to Him and why He is offended when He says, “A son honors his father.” Honor is naturally due to the one who cares for, protects, and provides. Such honor among sons was yet even more common in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC among the Jewish than perhaps it is at this time; perhaps it is not as common today. But, particularly among that people and at that time it was very common because sons recognized that their fathers were provided for them and that they were protecting them. He says that this is the natural order and we have to go against the natural order if we are to bring dishonor to the One who has cared for us. He goes on to say, “If I am your Father,” and He said He was their Father throughout the Old Testament and that He was the Father of Israel, “why aren’t you giving me at least the honor that a son would give to his human father. Isn’t it true that a master is to be respected or be given a respect that is due from the servant?” Once again, God has revealed Himself to this people as Lord and Master overall. Through the Prophet Isaiah, He said, in Isaiah 42:8,

“I am the Lord. That is my name. I will not give my glory to another.”

Priests knew that God had acted toward Israel as both Master and Lord, and as Father, and yet God asked, “Where is the honor? You know that this is my position before you. Where is the respect? If you give such honor to your human fathers and to your human masters, why do you withhold it from me?”

Understand that the priests were still saying the right things about God. The problem was not so much with the words that were coming out of their mouths during worship so much as it was the heart-attitudes that they held. Their heart-attitudes didn’t support the words. The words were lofty and noble, but their love and their zeal for God didn’t connect.

When I was ministering in Texas in a church, it was my first experience with Texas culture. Some of that culture was wonderful and some of it was not so great. In Texas culture, at the time at least, it was very common for children to grow up always saying, “Yes, ma’am,” and “No, ma’am.” It was never just a “Yes”. It was a little odd for me as a twenty-four year old to have teenagers call me, “Yes, sir”, and “No, sir”, but that is what some of them did, but I soon came to realize that for some of them using the words “sir” and “ma’am” did not necessarily carry with it respect. In fact, often it was just contrary to that. There was one young lady who, for whatever reason, and I cannot imagine why, did not take a liking to me and it is still very puzzling to me this very day. She didn’t take a liking to me and he dad was a leader in the church and she was going to have to go to youth group. You could tell that this really bothered her and she would always sweetly smile at me and say, “Yes, sir”, and “No, sir” to any of the questions. But, she would do painfully dishonoring things. In class she would intentionally try to disrupt and begin carrying on side conversations during the teaching of the lessons. She would tell others why they shouldn’t like me and why she didn’t like me. Once she even phoned every person in the youth group, prior to the youth meeting, and asked them, “Now, when Ritch asks the question do not say a word. Let’s have no one answer the questions. That way we will get out all the quicker.” And, yet, during the whole time she would answer, “Yes, sir”, and “No, sir” with a nice smile.

This was the heart of the people towards God. Their words were correct but they lacked any real honor and any real concern for the glory and the reputation of His name.

Today it is possible to follow in the example of this people of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC to speak about God with honoring words and to pray the right kinds of prayers and to sing the right kinds of songs, to still flock into the temple and fill the place, and to bring the sacrifices, but yet to have no real zeal for the honor of God’s name; that it really doesn’t concern us all that much whether God’s name is honored or dishonored among, first, His people and then among the people of the world.

This people were, first, ignorant of God’s love and they asked, “How have you loved us?” Now they show by their question, at the end of Verse 6, the ignorance of their own sin. God says,

<sup>6</sup> “It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.”

“But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’”

They were utterly oblivious and ignorant of their own sin. They considered themselves very righteous in this matter of worship, but you know righteous people do not, first, act as if God does not know what He is talking about, and that is exactly what they were saying. When God gave them a very clear expression of the sin in their life, they said, “God, you do not know what you are talking about! How in the world have we done that?” Righteous people do not question the truthfulness of God’s Word and that is what was happening as they asked this question towards God.

Rather than being righteous, these priests who God is directly talking to, and as the leadership of a people goes so goes the people, what is revealed by this question, “How is that we have shown contempt towards your name?”, they were revealing not righteousness but self-righteousness. They believed themselves to be utterly innocent and, thus, they became very defensive at the bold assertions and bold accusations that God laid at their feet. They refused to listen to God’s loving correction and they said, “We are not going to listen to this. You are going to have to justify your accusation.”

Friend, if you and I become defensive when God’s Word confronts our own sin, whether God’s Word confronts our own sin through our own reading of the Word, or whether God’s Word confronts our own sin when we hear it taught,

or when God's Word confronts our own sin when a friend brings it to us and says, "Friend, I want you to know that I am concerned about an area of your life and here is what God's Word says about that...", if we immediately become defensive, then please know that such a response reveals the same kind of arrogance and the same kind of pride that the people of Malachi's day committed themselves to. The righteous do not defend themselves arrogantly when God confronts them.

Job is a wonderful example of one who had true righteousness. He was called "righteous" by God at the beginning of the book of the record of Job. Remember how Job went through all of these trials and he lost wealth, his children, his health, and in spite of this he held on to God in faith. At last, God speaks to Job and He talks to Job about Job's weakness and Job's ignorance because Job is asking some questions. God says, "I want you to know, Job, you are ignorant," and instead of Job rising up with defensiveness and saying, "I think I have done pretty good, but God, you shouldn't be telling me these things." What did Job do? Because he was righteous, this is what Job says in response to God's confrontation in this situation, in Job 42,

<sup>5</sup> "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Let me ask you, when you come to church to worship do you have a zeal for the name of the Lord? Do you have a great concern that God's name would be exalted and that He would rightfully be given the worship that is due Him by ourselves and by others around us? Or, are we still just giving a "Yes, sir" and a "No, sir" lip service to Him.

The second way that we can offend God in worship is by making commitments that cost us very little. God, again, graciously answers the people's arrogant question, which is a defiant question, "How have we treated your name with disrespect?" God could say, "I don't have to answer that question, I am just going to judge you." That is not what He does. He graciously answers and He is helping them through. In Verse 7, He says,

<sup>7</sup> "You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' By saying that the LORD's table is contemptible."

Understand that they are not saying this with their words; they are saying this by their actions. In Verse 8, we read,

<sup>8</sup> "When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong?"

These priests had forgotten what was clearly written the Law time and time again. In Leviticus 22:20, God says,

<sup>20</sup> "Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf."

The animals offered to God had to be absolutely perfect and without spot or blemish. Nothing imperfect was going to be accepted by God as worship. Why? One big reason why is that these sacrifices pointed to another sacrifice that God would provide. That sacrifice would be the Lamb of God, Jesus Himself, who, as a sinless One, as a completely righteous, holy and pure One, would die as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sin. He would die in our place, carrying our sins upon Himself. So, to bring an imperfect sacrifice, in Old Testament times, would be to ruin the symbol that God intended for the people to look to, to understand who His Son is and what His Son has done and how glorious His Son's name is to be. He says, "When you bring an imperfect sacrifice you ruin your worship because you ruin the intent behind the sacrifice which is to teach you about a sacrifice that is coming and that is perfect."

Worship really is about demonstrating God's great worth and it is about submitting to God's commands, and the people in this worship were doing neither. They were not submitting to God's commands. He was very clear about His instructions and they were not interested in demonstrating His great worth to Him. By offering defective animals, they are saying, "God, you are worthy of that which cost me very little and so I will give that which cost me very little. I take your commandments and your clear instructions more or less as suggestions. It is sort of a suggestion, Lord, not to bring an imperfect animal?" So, those who come to worship God, viewing His Commandments as suggestions upon their life, or those who worship God, viewing the cost as of very little importance when it comes to worship are missing the picture of worship and in the process are in danger of actually offending God through their actions.

One of the wonderful stories of the Old Testament is in 1 Chronicles 21. David does something which angers the Lord: he numbers the fighting men and because of that seventy thousand men of Israel fall dead as a result of God's judgment. David intercedes for the nation as he falls down before the Lord clothed in sack cloth and he says,

<sup>17</sup> David said to God, "Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O LORD my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people."

David is saying that he is the one who should be punished, so an angel of the Lord, which I believe is a pre-figuring of Jesus, would come and say,

<sup>18</sup> Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. <sup>19</sup> So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> While Araunah was threshing wheat, he turned and saw the angel; his four sons who were with him hid themselves. <sup>21</sup> Then David approached, and when Araunah looked and saw him, he left the threshing floor and bowed down before David with his face to the ground.

<sup>22</sup> David said to him, "Let me have the site of your threshing floor so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped. Sell it to me at the full price."

<sup>23</sup> Araunah said to David, "Take it! Let my lord the king do whatever pleases him. Look, I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give all this."

<sup>24</sup> But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

Friends, we are in danger of offending God when we make sacrifices and when we make commitments and when we offer worship that costs us very, very little.

In this situation, in Malachi's day, you can imagine this guy who makes this vow to the Lord, "I am going to give you this prize bull that I have and I am going to sacrifice it to you this year." He has several prize bulls, but he is going to sacrifice one of them. He vows to do that. He didn't have to, but he vowed it, and then, through the course of the year, one falls into a hole and breaks its leg, and he says, "I have been wondering which prize bull I am going to sacrifice. Now I know which one." He puts it on a cart, because he knows that it is going to die anyway, and he takes it into Jerusalem and he says, "Here, I am offering this bull as a sacrifice." The priests are not supposed to accept it, but the priests think, "This is a wealthy guy and he has helped us before and he is probably going to help us in the future, so we had better accept this sacrifice." All the people hear that this man has sacrificed his prize-winning bull. They do not know that it is defective, but he gets a reputation for it, but God says, "Don't you know that kind of sacrifice is offensive to me? It did not cost you anything. You are giving your leftovers."

He goes on and at the end of Verse 8, He says, "Try offering these diseased, crippled, and blind animal to your governor!" If the governor of the State of Illinois, or the president of the United States came to your house and said, "I want to dine with you," would you serve him leftovers? Would you serve him the scraps from underneath the table? That is what God is saying, "Why are you serving me the scraps from under your table, then? What does that show about how you esteem me?"

The application is that we are often guilty of offering God that which cost us very, very little, almost nothing at all. Such sacrifices become offensive in God's sight. We can become like this people when we consider that God must be "just happy" just to receive anything from us, and He must be just happy that we are acknowledging Him. God says, "No, that is not right, because I am a glorious God and you are not to have any other god before me."<sup>1</sup> You are to

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:3

worship Me in spirit and in truth with all you heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength,<sup>2</sup> so don't give me your spare time, your spare change, or your spare energy." Such worship treats God as though He is some kind of beggar who is glad to receive scraps from underneath our table. My friend, God is no beggar. He is the Majestic King who is worthy to receive our very best and our very most.

To get real practical, it is a good thing to give our second-hand clothes to the South Side Mission. I know that they appreciate and that other people use it, but please don't act like that is our worship; we are cleaning out our closet at that point. That is not going to cost us anything to give those things over. That is a good thing to do and it is a nice thing to do, but that is not worship. Worship is something that costs us something that we are really going to miss. David said, "I am not going to worship with something that costs me nothing."

We have to ask ourselves this question, "Does my energy or time in serving God reflect that God is the most important being in the universe? Does my giving in offering to God reflect that God is immensely great and infinitely great and wonderful? Does my praying and my praising reflect the attention and the reverence and the sense of connectedness that exalts God and lifts Him up to His rightful place?" We need to avoid what I would call "diamond-zirconium worship". There is nothing wrong with diamond-zirconium. If a young man, before asking a young woman to marry him buys a diamond-zirconium and offers that as his engagement ring there is probably going to be some disappointment and problems. For a guy, he could say, "What is the difference? You cannot even tell the difference between those two," but the girl says, "Ah, it makes all the difference in the world, because it is not so much how money it cost, but it is what it cost you, because it reflects on how much you value me!"

The third way that we may offend God in worship is by offering prayers with a spirit of presumption, as we see in Verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> "Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?"-says the LORD Almighty.

This can be taken two ways. Some take this as a genuine call of repentance when He says, "Implore God to be gracious." I don't think that is the case. I think God, again, is speaking to this people in a way that He hopes to shake them awake. He earlier asked, "Try offering those sacrifices to your governor." He is being a little ironic here when He says, "Implore your God to be gracious. Will He listen to you?"

What I believe is happening is that God is saying, "Go and offer your ragged offerings and then go to prayer and begin to intercede on behalf of the people and on behalf of yourselves for God's blessing. Do you really think that I am going to listen to you when you pray with such presumption that you can live anyway you want and you can worship the way that you please and when you come and need something, you come and ask and you really think that prayer if going to be effective and will avail much?" God's Word tells us that effective and fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, and these folks were not righteous. He was challenging them in reference to their entreaties before God.

In Psalms 66, we read, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me."

It is easy to presume that because God is God He must hear us and because He is good and kind He must answer the prayers of His people whenever we come to him, regardless of our heart-attitude and regardless of our responsiveness.

I remember, several years ago I was watching an episode of "Survivor". That show has lost its luster for me, but in this group there was a person who had been pretty verbal about being a Christian. They told people that they were Christian and that they followed Jesus. This person chose to intentionally lie and deceive other people so that they could get ahead in the game. They cut away to a private conversation with this individual. I don't remember the exact words, but the gist of her words were this, "I know that I am lying, but that is a part of the game. You have to do that in order to get ahead. I am a Christian and so I can confess my sin and God will forgive me." I believe that that is the heart-attitude of many believers; that they can continue on in sin and they are planning to continue in sin, but because they are "Christian" they have an out and they can confess to God and He will forgive them, but God say, "If you regard iniquity in your heart, I will not hear you and treat me to be gracious to you. Will I listen?"

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5

One of the ways that we offend God in our worship is by offering prayers with a spirit of presumption. Biblical confession is not just an acknowledgment of sin, but it is an agreement concerning the destructive nature of our sin and in the heart-brokenness that we would turn from it.

The fourth offensive way that we may offend God in our worship is by exercising rituals that are empty, as we see in Verse 10,

<sup>10</sup> “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors...”

What I believe God is saying here is, “Where is the zeal for the purity of my house and for the glory of my name? If there was just one of you who would have a concern, you would see what is going on in the Temple and you would say, ‘No one is coming into the Temple today. We are going to shut the doors and we are not going to worship if we think that we are going to continue to worship in this way.’ Oh, that one of you would just shut the Temple doors. Don’t let anyone come into this place and continue to worship with this kind of worship that is being given. Won’t any of you rise up and say to the people, ‘It is enough. We have to change.’” If we are not going to give God worship that is due Him, then the Temple doors should be closed. He says, “I do not need any more mockery of my name by going through the motions of worship with no heart connected to the worship.”

He goes on to use the word, in Verse 10, as “useless”, when He says,

<sup>10</sup> “Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar!”

Other translations say, “that you would not light fires in vain” (ASV). That word “in vain” means: for no reason; or without cause. One Old Testament scholar writes, “Thus, while the altar fires and sacrifices were symbols of the openness of fellowship between God and man, in actuality they had become meaningless. Their religion had become vapid, perfunctory, and purposeless. Their gifts and services, based as they were on vacuous activity, were futile and destined only to lull them into a state of false security.”

Malachi, up to this point, has been God’s instrument and God has been saying some pretty rough things to this people. Now God breaks in with a light, a bright beam of light, in the midst of His words of rebuke, in Verse 11. He is saying, “I want you to know, while you are not worshipping me, my glory is not dependent upon you and I want you to know something about what is going to happen.”

<sup>11</sup> “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the LORD Almighty.

He is talking about a day yet in the future. This verse has not come to pass. While we have seen the nations begin to have this Light in little corners and pieces throughout this world, His name has not been made great in every place and among all of the peoples, but there is a time, when Jesus Christ returns, when this will be absolutely completed and He wants the people to know, “If you wish to connect to that which is meaningful and that which is purposeful and that which is a part of my created design, understand that when you connect to me, it is not going to be a life of drudgery, a life of emptiness, or a life of vanity. It is going to connect you to that which all of human history is moving, and that is namely the glory of my name.”

Verse 12 continues, when He says,

<sup>12</sup> “But you profane it by saying of the Lord's table, ‘It is defiled,’ and of its food, ‘It is contemptible.’”

Jesus, as He speaks to the woman at the well, has a conversation as to where worship should be, and He tells her that there is going to come a day when it doesn’t matter whether we worship at this mountain or that, but that the Father is seeking after worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John 4:21-24

What a wonder it is that God delights in worship that is authentic, genuine, and connected. It is important for us not, as we consider our worship, to simply exercise rituals and forms that become empty because we are not filling them with meaning. It is not that the rituals were empty in themselves, it is that when the people came they became rituals and forms and that was it.

Bethany Baptist Church is not a liturgical church. We do not have a whole bunch of elaborate rituals, but we do have ritual and form. Every Sunday when we come we sing some songs and we pray some prayers, we take an offering, and we hear a sermon or there may be a testimony. Once a month we celebrate the Lord's Supper. It is possible for us to come here on a Sunday morning and go through the motions and that is all that they become and that is all they become – empty forms. But, He says that when that happens we are offending God. I know that this is very tempting because I know that I have engaged in this kind of worship at various times and in various places. When, after praying a prayer and I will have bowed my head and closed my eyes, I will lift up my head and I will think, "What did that person pray?" I do not know what that person prayed because my thoughts were elsewhere.

One humorous incident occurred when I was in Texas. As a seminary student I went to a church that I was visiting on a Sunday evening. The song leader evidently had said, "I am going to introduce a new song to you. I will sing it through first and then I will have you sing it with me." I didn't hear the introduction at all because my mind was elsewhere thinking about this or that. I heard the tune and it was one I was familiar with so I started singing, and my mind was elsewhere while I was singing. I looked at my friends at the end of the song and they were laughing and I couldn't understand why. I look around and everybody is looking at me, because the song leader and I were singing a duet that wasn't planned. Now I realized the error was to sing a song with wonderful words, but I had no connection to those words and I had no presence there.

Friends, understand that our worship becomes offensive when we go through forms without meaning.

The last way worship becomes offensive is when we become weary in worship and in service, as we see in Verse 13,

<sup>13</sup> "And you say, 'What a burden!'"

"You come to the Temple to worship and in your mind is this word, "BORING! BORING! I cannot wait to get through this thing. Let's go through this one more time, get home, have dinner, and do what we want to do." That was the attitude of the people: how burdensome and how wearying. It is no surprise that the worship they were offering became boring, tedious, and laborious as we consider the kind of worship that they were offering, which was just plain ritual. I can understand why, but the fact that it was boring they should have recognized, "Is God a boring God? No, so if I am being bored in the midst of worship it is not that something is wrong with the worship service or the God of the worship service, something must be wrong with my heart. I should always be excited to be able to come and worship the Living God even if the songs that are sung are not exactly the one's that I want to sing, or even if the words that are being taught are not the exact words that I would use, none-the-less, I am coming to worship God and that is exciting."

Friends, as believers, weariness or boredom in worship, or in our service to God, is a symptom of a lethal, spiritual disease. It is easy to get tired and weary in the midst of serving God. As D.L. Moody said, as he came home from a weary, long day of working and serving God, "I get tired in the work, but I never get tired of the work." That is a great distinction, isn't it? It is okay, at the end of a Sunday, to say, "Man, this day was the longest. It was exhausting, but I am not tired of the worship and the service to God. This is a wonderful opportunity that we have to serve the Living God."

God loves adverbs and He cares how we worship. Through Malachi He asks us to evaluate our own lives in reference to those who were of Malachi's day. In Psalm 24, we read,

<sup>3</sup> Who may ascend the hill of the LORD ? Who may stand in his holy place?

<sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol...

You may say, "I am not sure if I have clean hands and if I have a pure heart." That is a good observation because Scripture says that us do have clean hands and a pure heart, so how can any of us have the opportunity to connect in fellowship to the living God and worship Him? The Apostle Paul will say, in Romans 1



<sup>16</sup> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation...<sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...

Friends, what we need in order to become worshippers, and not only is it important how we worship, but it is important, first, that we become worshippers. What God says is that in His grace He has provided a way for us who are sinful and who have disappointed God and who have transgressed against God's Law to be fit for worship. How? It is through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus, and when we attach ourselves to Jesus Christ what happens is that Jesus' righteousness becomes our righteousness so that as we come up to worship we do not have to fear whether we are qualified for worship for we have One who has qualified us by giving us His righteousness and clothing us with His goodness, and if we trust in Jesus Christ our sins will be taken away and our righteousness that comes from God is such so that we can worship Him now and forever. What a joy and wonder that is.

I ask you, do you have the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ so that you, too, can fellowship with God and can worship Him in spirit and in truth? If you wonder about that question, I call upon you as God's Word calls upon you, to believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior so that He would provide for you a righteousness that would fit you for fellowship with God Himself.