

Radiant 2018

GOD'S PROMISE: "Your eyes will see it" -Malachi 1:5a-

MY PROMISE: "I want to see God's greatness"

Bible Reading: Malachi 1:1-14

On occasions we ask obvious questions; for example: A wife asks her husband, "Do you love me?" The answer should be obvious...right? We all assume that the answer is "yes". Sometimes appearances fool us. Take the case of the people of God in the book of Malachi. God asks a series of questions that should have gotten a genuine and true "Yes", "Of Course". However, behind a superficial answer, there is a hard truth. There are times that in a relationship there is a need to say the truth, even though it may hurt. The results will be beneficial if it is done with all sincerity. The book of Malachi establishes certain requirements that God demands we accept in order to see God's greatness.

GOD'S LOVE - vv. 1-5 "I have loved you"- Using several questions, God affirms that His people do not have the slightest idea of His love. He says to them, "I have loved you", and they responded, "In what have you loved us?" We are so distant from the love of God that we cannot see "how He has loved us." In mentioning Jacob, Esau and Edom, God is reminding them of the "acts" of love that He has done for them. He has not only loved them with words, but also with deeds. Is it not the same with us? We know that

He loves us; but isn't it true that He has taken care of us, has fed us, and has given us employment? Still, we do the same as in the times of Malachi. We say, "How have you loved us?" The first reflection of this new year is to not doubt or question the love of God.

IT BEGINS WITH THE LEADERSHIP - vv. 6-14 - Be careful not to substitute a cat for a rabbit. The greatest pressure we have in church is the "what will they say" syndrome. This syndrome makes us adjust our convictions to the convictions of the people who surround us, even though it may be contrary to our own values and principals. However, when it comes to God, He always hopes the best for us without thinking about "what will they say". "What will God say" is a thousand times better than "what will they say". God always begins with the leadership. Who is a leader? They are the people who have influence upon others, or a person who has been delegated to discharge a responsibility with work to be done. In this case, it refers to the people of the church who had the responsibility to helping the people worship God duly. The areas in which they were responsible were:

1. Honoring God -v.6- God corrects them for having slighted God. Do you want to know when your life with God is beginning to slip? When you think very little about who God is. In verse 6 we are told, "If I am your father, then where is my honor?" "If I am your Lord, then where is my respect?" In both cases, their attitude showed that even though they called Him "Father" and "Lord" they really were not showing it. Today He calls us to consider whether He truly is "Father" and "Lord".

2. Offering sacrifices that acceptable to God - vv. 7-9 - God corrects them for having offered inferior sacrifices. Have you ever gotten a "cat for a rabbit"? We are told that this saying came from the Middle East, when hunters captured as many cats as rabbits. After having cleaned them, they would sell them to the hotelkeepers as rabbits. The sacrifices of public worship that the leaders offered to the people seemed to be good, but they were very offensive to God.

3. Dirty offerings -vv. 10-13- God corrects them for offering something unacceptable. God uses the phrase "Nor will I accept any offerings from your hands". Our hands are symbols of cleanliness and honor. Read what the Psalmist says in Psalms 24:4. Our hands represent what we touch or whatever we are used to being around. Can we can touch things that are not pleasing to God and later pretend that what we have brought to God, we do it with clean hands?

4. Feeling annoyed - vv. 13-14a - God corrects them because what they do, they do it with a bad attitude. There comes a time in our lives when we do things because it is a custom, apathetically or contempt. That was the case with the leaders in Malachi's time. God found out about it and His reaction

was not long in coming. God cursed them. Does God curse? Of course. That is why He asks us to react. For this year, are you looking for God's blessing or curse? You and I will decide on the basis of our attitude and behavior.

GOD IS GREAT AND FEARFUL -v. 14b- Do you know who God is? God is a Great King. We know that and celebrate Him. Do we also know that His name is "feared among the nations?" (4b) This title reminds us that we cannot take it lightly. God must be respected. We must always understand that He demands that we have a right perspective of Him. If not, then we will fall into the mistake of being apathetic and superficial in those things that for Him are important. That is a formula for disaster, my brothers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Comment on an obvious question that someone may have given you. For example, when someone arrives home we might ask, "Are you home?"

Do you think that we have asked God obvious questions? Mention some of them. How can we see God's greatness?

As leaders in our homes, what are our responsibilities?

Pray that this new year we can see God's greatness in our family, church and

community.