

A PEOPLE THAT HAS STRAYED FROM GOD

GOD'S PROMISE

"And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." Malachi 3:18

MY PROMISE

"I want to return."

Bible Reading - Malachi 2:17-3:12

A saying that we use to see where our loyalties are says, "Show me your check book and I will show you where your loyalties are." There are people who invest their money in diversions, in clothes, in cars, in parties, in liquor and in drugs. They throw away their money without thinking about it twice. It is the evidence that they have completely embraced what they have invested their money in.

The biggest proof that God had against the people according to Malachi was their money. Since they had already strayed from God and did not know how to distinguish between good and evil, maybe they could justify their attitudes and even their actions but they could not hide the greatest evidence. Where was their money going to? God did not silence his judgement. He called them "thieves." (3:9)

The question I show can people fall so deeply. From being a faithful people to a people of thieves. That does not happen from night to day. It begins with the heart and ends with putting it into practice.

WHOEVER DOES EVIL PLEASES THE LORD - 2:17a

It begins with fatigue. Have you ever been tired? On the other hand, have you ever gotten to your wits end? God had gotten to His wits end. How can anybody say, "Whoever does evil pleases God?" (v. 17a) Does this sound like the days in which we live? People say that what they do pleases God. Living however, we please is pleasing to God. Doing with your body whatever you want pleases God.

Now God takes His own words to accuse them. It is no longer an idea; it is a reality. This first declaration shows a point of degradation in which we can fall if we are not careful. The second part of this declaration is the evidence. Look at what verse 17b says, "...and in those He is pleased." The people did evil and believed that God was being pleased. How sad!

WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE? - 2:17c

When we reduce God to only a weak figure, we can say crazy things like these. "Where is the God of justice?" The people were so far from God that they not only believed that God was pleased with their evil actions but that same God did not have the power to effect justice. Now a day, there are people who do not believe that God can do justice. That attitude is

dangerous because if God is anything, He is just. Our justice are like filthy rags according to the prophet Isaiah. We cannot compare our justice with God's justice. That is absurd.

THE WHOLE NATION HAS STOLEN FROM ME - vv. 3:6-9

In one of the passage that is most mentioned in the Bible, the prophet Malachi deals with one of the most delicate themes in any ecclesiastical meetings (in the church). Money. Because God is just, He brings to our memory these very delicate subjects. We consider our checkbook to be ours only and we do not want anyone to have anything to do with our money. God then takes the opportunity to speak about "our checkbook." To whom does the money belong? That is the question of the moment. From whom do our material goods come? Who opens the doors of provision? God! However, a people who has already strayed from the ways of the Lord cannot recognize this simple truth. We cannot believe that stealing from God is a small detail.

The prophet is not speaking about quantities, but rather about attitudes and actions. God does not make this accusation frequently but here He says, "You have stolen from me." (verse 8) that is a sad declaration. The truth is that the people had stolen from God. Think about it. How many times have we stolen from God? However, we continue to deny this truth and continue to live under this terrible fantasy. This is because we have already come to the conclusion that whoever does evil (like stealing from God) is fine (see the first points of the lesson). This declaration has a

terrible ending when he says to them, "You are cursed with a curse." (verse 9).

THERE IS A HOPE OF BLESSING - vv. 3:4; 10-12

A blind people cannot see a good God. Could it be true that God prefers to bless us? May God help us not to live under a curse. Let us do what it says in verse 10. Let us allow evil to turn into a blessing. The invitation is simple... "bring"... "test..." (verse 10)

To test something with words is empty and easy. When it is done with actions, that is a true sign of sincere change. For those who enter into this truth, the blessings are real and true.

God will accept us. Verse 4 says, "The offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years."

God will bless us. In verses 11-12, it says, "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.

There is a great difference between cursing and blessing. Whoever peruses the blessing, do it understanding that God will favor them. This next year deserves blessing!