

Book of Malachi

Chapter 2:1-16

¹ *"**And now**, this commandment is for you, **the priests**. ² If you do not listen, and if you do not **take it to heart to give honor to My name**," says the LORD of armies, "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.*

And now > (Precept Austin) the prophet recapitulates what was said in the preceding passage and emphasizes the topic of his new discourse."

The priests > (Utley) The priests in the Old Testament had several functions:

1. They were mediators between man and God (cf. Exod. 28)
2. They were teachers (cf. Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10)
3. They acted as a court of appeal (cf. Deut. 19:17-23).

Ironsides > There is no such official sacerdotal order recognized by God in the present dispensation, but all believers are now anointed priests, both holy and royal, having immediate access to the holiest in virtue of the blood of Jesus. As worshipers they go in to God to offer up spiritual sacrifices. As royal priests separated to Himself, they come out to show His praises to a needy world, and as holy priests they are appointed to intercede on behalf of those who pray not for themselves.

I Peter 2:4, 5, 9 > ⁴ *And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by people, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a **holy priesthood**, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

Heart > (Wolff) "The word "heart" denotes in Hebrew what may be called the command center of a person's life, where knowledge is collected and considered and where decisions and plans are made that determine the direction of one's life.

In view of the 814 occurrences of the word in the Old Testament in reference to the human "heart" and the common usage of "heart" in English of emotions, it is important to differentiate the Hebrew meaning from the English and so to "guard against the false impression that biblical man is determined more by feeling than by reason."

Take it to heart > (Utley) > lit. "set your heart on"

Wiersbe > The priests dishonored God's name in another way: they despised the very privilege of being priests (Mal. 2:1–5). They were taking for granted the high calling God had given them and treating the temple ministry with contempt. Serving at the altar was a job, not a ministry, and they did it to please themselves, not to please and glorify the Lord.

To give honor to My name > (Wiersbe) The key theme of Malachi is "Honoring the name of God by living godly lives."

Curse > (Pettersen) with covenantal violation (cf. Lev 26:14–39; Dt 27:11–26; 28:15–57). But this warning is more than an idle threat, for the onset of the divine curse has already begun. This caution may be understood in the sense that the coming curse is as good as accomplished, since Malachi does not elaborate the nature of any punitive curse that has already occurred.

Even the "**Blessings**" will be cursed!

³ *Behold, I am going to rebuke your descendants, and I will spread **dung** on your faces, the **dung** of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.*

Dung > (Strong's) From *parash*; excrement (as eliminated) – dung

Barnes > It was by the law carried without the camp and burned with the animal itself. They had brought before the face of God maimed, unfitting sacrifices; they should have them cast back, with their refuse, upon them

Utley > There are four separate rebukes:

- (1) curse your offspring
- (2) spread refuse in your face
- (3) spread refuse on your sacrifices
- (4) take you away (i.e., dung pile)

MacArthur > This very graphic language shows how God viewed unfaithful priests as worthy of the most unthinkable disgrace.

⁴ *Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, **so that My covenant may continue with Levi,**" says the LORD of armies.*

So that My covenant may continue with Levi > How many times have we seen this in our study of the Minor Prophets? The principle of the Lord making a promise (or a covenant) and fulfilling it > while purging the individuals who sin. Personal, individual, responsibility is the natural outcome of the "free will of man".

Criswell > God's judgment on the priests would convince them of His intention of restoring the priesthood to faithfulness to His covenant with Levi. The nature of this covenant is elaborated in Malachi 2:5-7.

⁵ *"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 was in awe of My name.*

Of life and peace > (Barnes) literally "the life and the peace"

In **Numbers 25:7, 11-13** we see this promise made to *Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest* The Lord said to Moses > ¹¹ *"Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has averted My wrath 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. ¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be for him and for his descendants after him, a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.'"*

He revered Me and was in awe of My name > This was Levi's response to the Lord's covenant with him. This was also what the Lord wanted from the priests in Malachi's time. And ... this what He wants from us as priests.

⁶ *True instruction was in his mouth and injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and justice, and he turned many back from wrongdoing.*

True > (Strong's) Contracted from 'aman; stability; (figuratively) certainty, truth, trustworthiness

Instruction > (Strong's) a precept or statute, especially the Decalogue or Pentateuch

Clarke > See the Lord's qualifications of Levi:

1. He feared me (vs. 5)
2. He was afraid (vs. 5)
3. My law of truth was ever in his mouth (vs.6)
4. No iniquity (vs.6)
5. He walked with me in peace (vs.6)
6. He did turn many away from iniquity (vs.6)

Wrongdoing > (Precept Austin) There are 3 primary Hebrew words for "sin". Each is defined based on the existence of God's standard of righteousness (all that God is, all that God commands, all that God demands, all that God approves, all that God provides in Christ Jesus (1Co 1:30) established by God.

- 1). *Chattat/chattath* > miss the mark or to fall short of the divine standard; to err and wander
- 2). *Pesha'* > rebellion or transgression, and indicates revolt against the standard.
- 3). *'Avon* > iniquity or guilt is a twisting of the standard or deviation from it; crooked dealing (This is the word translated as "Wrongdoing" in this passage)

⁷ For the lips of a priest should maintain knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of armies.

Hindson > The priest was the God-intended means of communication between God and man. His life and message should have been such that man would seek him out to find out what God says about everything. No man had a higher privilege than the priest of the Old Testament.

⁸ *But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have ruined the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of armies.*

But > (Precept Austin) Every encounter with a term of contrast should prompt us to pause to ponder the text and context. Malachi has just presented the "ideal" behavior of a Levitical priest, **but now** presents the reality of their decadent, faithless practice.

Instruction (*tora*) (Merrill) "instruction," suggests that here it is not just any teaching in general but indeed *the* instruction, namely, the Torah, the law of Moses.

You have caused many to stumble by the instructions > (Barnes) He does not simply say, "in the law," but "at" it. The law was what they stumbled at. They did not only misunderstand the law, through the false teaching of the priests, as though it allowed things which in truth were sins (although this too); itself was their source of stumbling.

Keil and Delitzsch > Hitzig has given the correct explanation: ye have made the law to many a (block) instead of the light of their way, through your example and through false teaching, as though the law allowed or commanded things which in reality are sin.

Ruined > (Strong's) A primitive root; to decay, i.e. (causatively) ruin

⁹ *"So I also have made you despised and of low reputation in the view of all the people, since you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction."*

Low reputation > (Strong's) from a word meaning depressed, literally or figuratively - base(-st), humble, low(-er, -ly).

But are showing partiality > (Utley) This is literally "and lifting faces in the law." This idiom refers to a judge lifting the face of someone coming before him to see if he knows the person before rendering a fair verdict

¹⁰ *Do we not all have one Father? **Is it not one God who has created us?** Why do we deal **treacherously**, each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?*

Is it not one God who has created us? > (Barnes) **Deuteronomy 32:6** > *Is this what you do to the LORD, You foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father who has purchased you? He has made you and established you.*

Keil and Delitzsch > The one father, whom all have, is neither Adam, the progenitor of all men, nor Abraham, the father of the Israelitish nation, but Jehovah, who calls Himself the Father of the nation in Malachi 1:6.

Treacherously > (Strong's) A primitive root; to cover (with a garment); figuratively, to act covertly; by implication, to pillage

Keil and Delitzsch > The Israelite acted faithlessly towards his brother, both when he contracted a marriage with a heathen woman, and when he put away his Israelitish wife, and thereby desecrated the covenant of the fathers, i.e., the covenant which Jehovah made with the fathers, when He chose them from among the heathen, and adopted them as His covenant nation

Stuart > ". . . the Mosaic covenant was by Malachi's time understood as a quaint, archaic document too restrictive to be taken seriously and inapplicable to a "modern" age- virtually the same way that most people in modern Western societies view the Bible today."

(I had to get rid of one of my study books for the same reasoning.)

¹¹ *Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves, and has **married** the daughter of a foreign god.*

Married > (Petterson) The first way in which the people of Judah have acted faithlessly is by having 'married [lit. 'Baal-ed'] the daughter of a foreign god'.

Utley > Surprisingly in the post-exilic community, there was still this old temptation.

¹² ***As for the man who does this, may the LORD eliminate** from the tents of Jacob everyone **who is awake and answers**, or who presents an offering to the LORD of armies.*

As for the man who does this, may the LORD eliminate > The **Septuagint** translates this phrase as > *The Lord will utterly destroy the man that does these things,*

Who is awakes and answers > (Constable) The difficult idiom translated "*who awakes and answers*" (NASB) evidently means "whoever he may be" (NIV). This curse would befall him even though he brought offerings to almighty Yahweh at the temple. Worshipping God did not insulate covenant violators from divine punishment then, and it does not now.

¹³ *And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and sighing, because He no longer gives attention to the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.* ¹⁴ *Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been a witness between you and **the wife of your youth**, against whom you have dealt treacherously, **though she is your marriage companion and your wife by covenant.***

The wife of your youth ... though she is your marriage companion and your wife by covenant. > (Utnley) > In Hebrew culture a boy became marriageable at age 13 (*bar mitzvah*), which was also the time of his personal commitment to YHWH and His covenant. One could be called "a youth" up to age 40 (cf. BDB 655). Marriages were arranged by the parents and the wife came to live in the husband's family home. The husband's covenant requirements were part of his *bar mitzvah* education and commitment to YHWH.

¹⁵ *But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And why the one? He was seeking a godly offspring. Be careful then about your spirit, and see that none of you deals treacherously against the wife of your youth.*

Wiersbe > In the entire book of Malachi, this is recognized as the most difficult verse to translate and interpret. I think the best translation is given by Dr. Gleason Archer: "*But no one has done so who has a residue of the Spirit. And what does that one seek for? A godly offspring! Therefore take heed to your spirit [as a true believer under the covenant] and let none of you deal faithlessly with the wife of his youth.*"

¹⁶ ***"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with violence," says the LORD of armies. "So be careful about your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."***

For I hate divorce > (Peterson) The normal way of translating the Hebrew literally would be, "If [or "for"] he hates sending away [i.e, divorce], says Yahweh God of Israel, then [or "and"] violence covers [or "he covers/will cover with violence"] his garment, says Yahweh of hosts."

And him who covers his garment with violence > (Wiersbe) Why does Malachi mention a “garment” and “violence”? In modern Western society, a man puts an engagement ring on a woman’s finger to propose marriage, but in ancient Israel, he placed a corner of his garment over her (**Ezek. 16:8; Ruth 3:9**). If a man divorces his wife, instead of having a garment that symbolized love, he had a garment that symbolized violence. He wrenched apart that which God said is one; by his infidelity, he made the marriage bed a place of violence.

Ezekiel 16:8 > *Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine,” declares the Lord GOD.*

Ruth 3:8, 9 > ⁹ *So he said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your slave. Now spread your garment over your slave, for you are a redeemer.”*

Garment > (Strong’s) From a word meaning an edge or extremity; specifically (of a bird or army) a wing, (of a garment or bed-clothing) a flap, (of the earth)