

# MALACHI

## Week 3

### OVERVIEW

Judah – both the leadership of the priests as well as the remainder of the people – has strayed far from where God had called them to in their moral, religious, and civil commands. Outlined in Torah, the precepts of God have all but been forgotten by Judah. At this point, they are doing what is right in their own eyes.

This problem has not gone away: we, too, struggle to live life on our own terms apart from God's commands, discipline, and accountability.

To pursue life in Christ, we must be submitted to God's loving discipline. In the text today, we will read about God's assessment of the situation where Judah's worship has led them and what they need to do to respond rightly.

### KEY QUESTION:

What steps do you need to take to be or remain under God's discipline?

### DISCUSSION

READ Malachi 2:1-16 out loud as a group

#### OBSERVATION:

- Who is involved/mentioned in the text?
- What does God say?
- What sections or passage breaks do you notice?
- What key words stand out to you?
- What are some repeated words, phrases or ideas?
- What have the priests done?
- What have the people (Judah) done?
- What are the conditions set by God? ("If...then...")

#### INTERPRETATION:

- Who was Levi (see Genesis 29:34, 1 Chronicles 6)
- Why is Levi significant in this passage?
- A covenant is defined as: (from: <https://netbible.org/bible/Malachi+2>)
  1. A mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, to do or to forbear some act or thing; a contract; stipulation. A covenant is created by deed in writing, sealed and executed; or it may be implied in the contract.

## INTERPRETATION:

2. A writing containing the terms of agreement or contract between parties; or the clause of agreement in a deed containing the covenant.
  3. In theology, the covenant of works is that implied in the commands, prohibitions, and promises of God; the promise of God to man, that man's perfect obedience should entitle him to happiness. This do, and live; that do, and die.  
The covenant of redemption, is the mutual agreement between the Father and Son, respecting the redemption of sinners by Christ.  
The covenant of grace, is that by which God engages to bestow salvation on man, upon the condition that man shall believe in Christ and yield obedience to the terms of the gospel.
- What kind of covenant was God's covenant with Levi?
  - What character traits or behaviors was Levi a model of?
  - What sin(s) does God point to with the priests?
  - Why is it significant that the spiritual leaders of Judah were sinning?
    - o See James 3:1-3
  - What was the consequence of the priests' sin?
  - What might this look like today?
  - In what ways did Judah "despise God's name" (Mal. 1:6) in Ch. 2:10-16?
    - o What were the three major issues God had with the people's unfaithfulness (hint: see verses 11, 14, and 16)?
  - Why do you think God hates sin?
  - What "mechanism of accountability" is being destroyed by the intermarriage, adultery, and divorce occurring in this text?
  - Why is family so important to God's plan for redemption?

## APPLICATION:

- God has strong words for Judah's faithlessness and severe consequences for failing to repent. John 15 & Hebrews 12 remind us that God disciplines those he loves through pruning to produce greater fruit.
- How are you at being confronted with your sin?
  - o Do you remember a time when someone "rebuked" you (aka pointed out your sin)?
  - o What was that like for you?
  - o What was your response?
  - o Why?
- What's the difference between "accountability" and "discipline"?
  - o How are they different?
  - o How are these related?
- If the fruit of the Spirit is what God is working to grow in us, then how does this help us receive discipline?

## APPLICATION:

- In what ways are you being held accountable and submitting to God in your life?
- What activities or people are you connecting yourself with that are hurting your ability to be faithful to God?
- In what ways are you acting faithfully or unfaithfully to your wife or kids that need attention?
- According to 1 Peter 2, we are a "royal priesthood": is Truth on your lips? Are you misleading people through ignorance or deception?
- How can this group help you grow in this?

### \*HELPFUL TIPS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND DISCIPLINE\*

Reframing our mentality around sin and our ability to abstain, resist, fight, and defeat temptation is a lifelong pursuit. We need to have our old thought patterns replaced with new ones and condition ourselves to choose God's best way over-and-against the flesh, the world, and Satan's power in our lives (Rom. 12). This means we need to be willing to admit our flaws and weaknesses and find ways to guard against attacks in these areas.

- **Realize** that submitting to God involves accountability and discipline – it is an act of trust, love, and honor to God.
- **Be proactive.** It is better to establish relationships of accountability BEFORE it is needed, than AFTER something has happened.
- **Build trust** with Godly men who can KNOW you from the inside out AND who you give permission to speak into your life with candor and respect.
- **Set-up regular check-ins** of accountability for specific needs BEFORE they get out of hand and you are in "damage-control" mode.
- **Set boundaries** that will help you to (a) be protected from temptation, (b) you will be able to have specific and clear guidelines around, and (c) that can be sustained without inordinate efforts.
  - o Example: good boundaries are ones that are clear to you and clear to others. Like a good fence, there's no question of what is inside and outside the boundary lines. The fence ought to be sturdy-keeping both bad things out and good things in. This usually means setting a boundary further away from trouble, than closer to it. If you have to wonder 'is this too close to danger?', then it's probably a good idea to move it further away, even if only for a season to test and see if it is a good one.
- **Be honest.** It's far better to get everything out in the open and exposed to "the light" (truth and love) than it is to piece-meal it and hide. What is hidden is difficult-to-impossible to be healed and what we resist from exposing to God will be kept from being able to be forgiven.

- **Be repentant.** This means going beyond feeling and saying you're sorry. It means acknowledging to the people whom you have harmed the wrongs you've done, owning the sin, making a plan for change, and acting upon it. It is not enough to sprinkle grace on it and "forgive and forget." This is not how Christ forgives you, nor is it how anyone is called to move through sin. Sin is far too painful, damaging, and deadly to merely "move past." Seek forgiveness with earnest sincerity – it may just be the very best way you can lead as a man.
- **Trust God.** Whatever humiliation or cost there may be to your pride, reputation, or influence, trust that following God's call on your life to repentance is for your ultimate good. He will provide for your every need. Remember: whatever we give up in order to follow Jesus is worth the eternal reward He has promised us! (Mark 8:34-35).

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Read Malachi 2:17-3:5
- Make notes of Observation, Interpretation, and Application
- Bring your thoughts to group to share next week