

Recession Proofing Your Faith
Be Careful about Your Attitude toward God
Malachi 2:17-3:6

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: Today we return to the book of Malachi for the continuation of our study called "Recession Proofing Your Faith." I want to remind you of the setting and the structure of this book. The setting is after the exile which was a direct result of the sin of Israel. Upon their return, they had a measure of freedom. They were allowed to rebuild the Temple, which they had done. What they had not done is rebuild authentic worship. Rather than being a thankful people for God restoring their land to them, they focused on their enemies. The repentance that should have resulted from the exile had not materialized. Burdened with economic hardship, remember, that instead of repentance, the people had grown more rebellious, more flippant, more arrogant, more argumentative against the LORD. Unfortunately, that sort of thing happens to us as we encounter difficult times.

Understanding that setting helps us to identify the structure for this book. Remember that the structure for this book is built upon questions (argumentative questions) that the people have apparently been asking (at least in their hearts) to God. The first question was "How does God love us?" The second question was "In what way have we despised your name?" The third question was "Why won't the LORD accept our offering?" That brings us to the fourth question of the book, which is found in our Scripture reading this morning.

Text: ¹⁷ You have wearied the LORD with your words;
Yet you say,

"In what way have we wearied *Him*?"
In that you say,

"Everyone who does evil
Is good in the sight of the LORD,
And He delights in them,"
Or, "Where *is* the God of justice?"

¹ "Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,"
Says the LORD of hosts.
² "But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He *is* like a refiner's fire

And like launderers' soap.

³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;

He will purify the sons of Levi,

And purge them as gold and silver,

That they may offer to the LORD

An offering in righteousness.

⁴ " Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem

Will be pleasant to the LORD,

As in the days of old,

As in former years.

⁵ And I will come near you for judgment;

I will be a swift witness

Against sorcerers,

Against adulterers,

Against perjurers,

Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,

And against those who turn away an alien—

Because they do not fear Me,"

Says the LORD of hosts.

⁶ " For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;

Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Introduction: Recession Proofing Your Faith. That is our theme as we journey through the book of Malachi. My prayer has been that all of us would see that this book is more than just the last book of the Old Testament. Instead, here is the living word of God that speaks right where we are living in 2009. We have said that if we want to Recession Proof our Faith, we must (1) Celebrate God's Love, (2) Celebrate God's Name-Authentic Worship, and (3) Confess our Sin Regularly and Authentically. Today, we add to these principles a warning that we would **"Be Careful About our Attitude Toward God."** Here is the point of this text.

One commentator said about verse 17 that here is the climax of the book. By that I think he meant that those themes that we have already identified in the book become even more strikingly clear in verse 17. The concern that they have questioned God's love, been involved in going through the motions of both worship and confession, come to a climax by God indicating that they had wearied the LORD with their words. By this point in the text, their question should not be surprising. "Who us? How have we wearied the LORD?" The indictment is the continuation of the theme that they are simply going through the motions in their relationship with the LORD and they do not even recognize their sin.

The statement, question, and response that we have grown accustomed to in this book provides the principle for recession proofing our faith.

Be Careful about our Attitude Toward God

Here's the Attitude to Avoid:

Verse 17 points clearly to the attitude or attitudes to avoid.

- 1. They had the wrong view of sin.**

They had decided that their sin must not be all that bad. They had begun to feel that it was useless to obey God. To them it appeared that the sinners were getting away with their sin and maybe even thriving in their sin. This is actually the second time we encounter this attitude in Malachi. In the beginning, it was packaged in the apparent success of their enemies.

2. They had the wrong view of God.

They also had the wrong view of God. They accused God of not carrying out justice on sinners.

Do you think we are ever guilty of the same attitudes as these Israelites in Malachi's day? Do we sometimes believe that sinners thrive and believers are left to struggle? Maybe we decide that serving the Lord is pointless.

When I was just a kid, maybe 10 or 11, a group of boys carried out the same ritual every day of the summer. We would play baseball or some other game until about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. In the afternoon, one of us would ask, "Y'all want to go to the store?" As though we had never heard of such a thing before, we all left to our houses to get money to go to the store. Now, our store was a store called The Corner Pantry. We would ride our bikes through the neighborhood, get a cold drink, and a bag of candy, and ride our bikes back home. We did this practically every day. One day, somebody had a different idea. He suggested that instead of The Corner Pantry, we go to the 7-11. The 7-11 store had something The Corner Pantry did not have—Slurpees! Immediately, everybody thought it was a good idea. Even at the age of 10 or so, I was the voice of reason. There was one problem with the 7-11. It was too far away from our house. Going there would require riding on busier streets and being a pretty good ways away from our neighborhood. So, I said, "There's only one problem—our Moms are not going to let us go." Everybody agreed, but then one of our group said, "They don't have to know. We will tell them we are going to the store just like always, and they will never know what store we are going to."

They went, I didn't. I remember thinking when they returned unscathed from the 7-11, "This isn't fair. Where's the justice?"

That's just a boyhood story. The attitudes are much worse when it comes to our feelings toward what seem like the injustices of God.

Here's the Answer to Accept:

God gives the answer in the beginning of chapter 3.

1. Have faith, Jesus is coming!

Malachi spoke of the first coming of Jesus. We look forward to the coming of Christ with the same anticipation. We must look with the same kind of faith that the second coming of Jesus will set all things right.

Now is a time of preparation.

2. Have faith, Justice is coming!

When Jesus comes, the promise is that with Him justice is coming. Don't grow discouraged—justice is coming.

This will be a time of purity.

When Jesus comes, He will bring a time of purity. You better make sure that you are prepared for the coming of Jesus.

3. Have faith, God never changes!

Be thankful for now is a time of patience.

The reason for the wait is that while God is indeed a God of justice, He is also a God of patience. Trust God's character. Balance what you see going on in the world with the character of God. The character God has never changed. His character cannot change.

You know what I did the next time my friends brought up the idea of leaving the neighborhood to go get a Slurpee! I trusted the character of my mother. I went in the house and said, "Hey, Mom, would you bring a group of my friends and me to the 7-11 today to get a Slurpee?" And she did.

Now is the day of Salvation!

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: ¹ We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says:

*"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."*

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.