

PostExilicProphets 22-04-13a

Greetings, welcome to the Wednesday evening Bible study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're in Malachi and we are at the close of chapter 2, Malachi chapter 2, verse 17. This is our starting point tonight and we have some very interesting observations, interpretations, and applications to make in connection with this passage.

Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, ask His blessing on our fellowship, cultivate the ministry of His Holy Spirit so that we can represent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as effectively as possible. Shall we pray? Father, it is such a refreshing time of encouragement and fellowship to set aside the distractions and the cares and the undertakings of this world and go to the oasis of living water to be accompanied by fellow believers who have an enthusiasm for understanding Your Word and who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are anxious to ask and seek and knock so that You can reveal to us the truths that sustain us and prepare us for every good work. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word together that the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts effectively and persuasively so that we will be motivated and ready to undertake our individual assignments and our assignments as a church in the time that remains to us on this earth and in this life.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We have seen in Malachi God pointing out the failure of His people to keep their end of the covenant.

They are covenant people. We are covenant people and we do not want to follow in these disturbing footsteps. We don't want to go astray.

We don't want to miss the mark, fall short, be found lacking at our judgment. And so these examples provide encouragement and illumination into the ways that we can go wrong. And if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

So looking at the failure in Levi to conduct sacrifice and worship toward God properly, looking at Judah failing to treat the one another commands with due respect, reflected particularly in the area of marriage, this is what we've looked at in the earlier part of chapter two. And the conviction here is interesting when compared to the historical record we saw in Ezra and Nehemiah with regard to mixed marriages or marriages with foreigners. They have biblical warrant for saying we should not intermarry with the people of the land, but this is not that problem.

They have already done so and been married long enough to have children. And so these are families and God responds and doesn't say in verse 16 for the Lord God of Israel says that he hates foreigners. The Lord God of Israel says he hates immigrants.

He hates proselytes. He hates Moabites and Ammonites and fill in the blank guides. That's not what he says.

What is it that God hates? Divorce. Why? You made a promise. You took an oath.

You pledged your truth. And that is far more important to God. And aren't you glad that it is? We have promises from God regarding our salvation, regarding our provision, regarding our entire future.

What if God said, well, you know, I made that promise, but I'm not nearly as infatuated with you now as I was at the beginning. So sorry, the deal's off. You're all going to the lake of fire or there's one or two of you that are pretty good looking.

I'll keep you the rest of you into the into the lake you go. How important is it to keep our pledge? There is an element of mutuality here. And in particular, our covenant relationship with God, God is absolutely not ever going to disregard or break his side of the covenant spontaneously, is he? God's not going to wake up some heavenly morning or at some point in non-time eternal realms and say, well, I had this plan of salvation going, but if I wipe everybody out, who's going to know the difference? God's integrity is our security.

God's character is the basis for our faith and our hope and our love. We are to reflect that same integrity, that same dedication so long as the conditions for it are met. Is there in fact a time to no longer pursue a relationship, even a covenant relationship? Yes.

If the other party leaves first, if they say, I want no part of you, I want no part of your God. Scripture says to not be unequally yoked together with the faithless. This is not just faith in God.

This is faithlessness to what you're supposed to be faithful to. If you are faithless to your partner, if you break your promise and you're promiscuous, you commit adultery, you become spiritually adulterous, you become spiritually way out in the weeds and you become a hindrance and an anchor and are preventing the other party from any ability to live their life as under the Lord, there are grounds. Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, Jesus says, because of the hardness of your hearts.

Divorce is a remedy in a case of a hardened heart, hardened like Pharaoh's heart was hardened. He was never going to let the people go, but it's not God's perfect will. And when it comes to relationship with God, there should be no abrogation of covenant.

There should be no dissolving of trust. And in Israel, having contracted a marriage with women who were willing to leave their country of origin and their families and their father's house and come and live in Israel. To the land of the God of Israel to say, well, you're ethnically not descended from the 12 tribes and we've.

I've decided I'm not going to be married to you anymore on that basis. That's not a legitimate basis. And so they are condemned for their treachery toward the wife of their youth.

That's what we saw in verse 14. God says, I'm not going to receive your offerings, which are a sign of your, uh, overt dedication to the covenant. You're going to worship God.

God is going to provide and care for you. And so you bring offerings, but I'm not going to accept them because you are covenant breakers. You are treacherous.

The Lord has been witnessed between you and the wife of your youth with whom you have dealt treacherously, treasonously. It is not treacherous or treasonous to separate yourself from godless, hateful, spiteful, hostile individuals. That is not treachery.

That is spiritual self-preservation. God says these individuals in Israel are dealing treacherously, treasonously. They are betraying a faith, betraying a covenant, betraying a trust.

This is what you see at the end of Ezra and the end of Nehemiah, where for no other reason than national origin, they invoke this legalistic interpretation that said, don't marry into don't give your sons to their daughters. Don't take their daughters for your sons. Notice that was parents contracting marriages in those days.

God has no problem with that, but don't enter into them in the first place. It doesn't say if you are married to them, throw them out, turn them into widows and orphans. That's treason.

It's treachery. And God calls out and he says, because you've dealt treacherously with these innocent women and children who could have said, I'm not coming. I'm Orpah.

I'm going back to Moab. Sorry, no. They came, they've thrown in their lot with the people of Israel, and now they're being thrown out for no reason other than they weren't born from the right parents.

Treachery. So God calls them out on it. Now in verse 17, there is a fresh charge.

You have wearied the Lord with your words. They have worn the Lord out in any number of ways in these first two chapters. This new way is as a response to the question, well, in what way have we wearied? 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? This is such an interesting verse.

I want to remind you of one of our memory verses. What's the next phrase after the word of God is alive and powerful? Sharper than a sword. What kind of sword? Two edges.

How many times do we see in the word of God that if it's prophetic, there can be a near term and a far term. We just looked at that prophecy in Ezekiel and in Daniel that begins, and then it kind of lifts off. Daniel chapter 11, it applies in the first case to Antiochus Epiphanes.

Then it starts, as soon as it says at the appointed time, then you start getting details that don't fit Antiochus anymore, and they only apply in even grander and greater terms to someone who is yet future. Someone who is future to the Lord Jesus Christ when he's talking about the abomination of desolation. But people like to, I say people, I've had seminary professors, several who said scripture has one and only one meaning.

If you find two meanings in it, there's something wrong. Well, I don't believe that. I think

scripture is multivalent.

It has got layers. It has got overtones and undertones. It's got cross currents.

It is a part of a fabric. And almost any passage, and we have seen this together, just over and over again, the richness and the depth and the resonance that scripture has. So this verse, chapter 2, verse 17, I'm going to give you the classic look at any commentary.

I mean any commentary. Kylan Dalich, Matthew Henry, Adam Clark, Jameson, Fawcett and Brown, Bible knowledge. Pick your commentary.

And there are dozens, and I read almost all of them. I was just curious if anybody saw what I see here. And we all agree on this first reading.

This first reading is just fine. How, when you read verse 17, what is it that these people are saying that is wearing God out? When God hears this, he's, you know how people say, I am just sick and tired of hearing that. That's in colloquial English, American translation.

God says, I am sick and tired of you people saying the following. What are you sick and tired of? They ask. You say everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and God delights in them.

What do you think this means? All of the commentaries are unanimous in this. That it means why do the wicked prosper? They're looking around and seeing foreigners, seeing oppressors, seeing the Persians, seeing people who are far from God, who don't honor God at all. Don't even go through the motions of sacrifice and offering.

Maybe they're even worshiping in some pagan way. Look, these people are doing evil, but evidently, God is smiling on them. That's how this saying is understood.

God says, you're wearing me out when you claim that I am smiling on these people who are doing evil. And secondly, why isn't God judging them is how they take this second phrase. Where is the God of judgment? If evil is supposed to be punished and good is supposed to be honored and blessed.

Why is it that these who are doing evil are apparently good in the sight of the Lord in that they seem to be blessed? But you notice how much you have to add to make that work. If you just read it straight on, don't you kind of scratch your head? This is something that makes God tired. It's not just a misunderstanding.

It's not a misapprehension. You've got any number of Psalms where David or another psalmist are saying, I don't understand why I am righteous and I'm being persecuted. And those who are hounding me and dogging my steps and trying to ensnare and entrap and destroy me are prosperous and doing fine.

Oh, Lord, where is your justice? It doesn't seem to have ever worn God out before. Why is it

wearing him out now, especially given the context? You remember our three rules of hermeneutics and they all apply here. Are there some righteous people who can legitimately say, I don't understand why God is blessing the wicked? These people are wicked.

They're messing up the sacrifices. They're bringing blind and putrid and lame and diseased and and inedible sacrifices that they wouldn't even offer to their Persian governor. And they're condemned for treachery in their marriages and in their treatment of one another.

Why would anything they say wear God out or why wouldn't everything they say wear God out? Why this particular thing? You have wearied God with your words. Well, of all of the things that they could be saying, why doesn't it weary God to hear? Well, the table of the Lord is contemptible. Why doesn't it weary God to hear? Let's take the lamest and the weakest and the flock and sacrifice that the decisions and the conversations that surround everything that's been condemned in the first almost two chapters, two chapters minus a verse.

Why isn't the conversation around those issues? What wears God out? Why is it this? You have wearied the Lord with these words. Well, this is where I'm going to offer you a thought about swinging the two edged sword in the opposite direction. And once you see this and hear it and think about some of our recent studies about current climate events, I'm talking about spiritual climate, global warming of the spiritual climate.

I think you'll see what I'm getting at here. But suppose that taking nothing away from that understanding, which I think is perfectly legitimate. I'm not totally convinced by it, but everybody says it.

So there's got to be something to it. Maybe. Here's what I think.

And I freely confess that I have confirmation bias and I am sensitized by what I observe in the world today. But take another look at verse 17 and let me let me retranslate this slightly in the light of our recent studies. You have wearied the Lord with what you say.

In what way have we wearied him? How could we possibly be tiring the Lord with our words in that you say people who are doing evil are good in the sight of the Lord? You are justifying evil and calling it good. You're not complaining that God isn't punishing those around you. You're wearing God out by continually rebranding evil as good.

You see how it makes sense that way. How are you wearing God? You continually say everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord. I'm doing evil.

I'm treacherous to my wife. I'm polluting the sacrifices. I'm despising the table.

And I'm good in the sight of the Lord. I'm doing good when what you're doing is evil. Does this seem harmonious with our context? Does it seem harmonious with our current culture? I have a couple of examples to give you shortly.

The reason people lean toward the original first interpretation is this second phrase. Where is the God of justice? Why doesn't God come down and judge these evil people? Is the understanding. Here's what I would suggest.

Well, let me ask you this. This is something of a pop quiz question. Can you think of any other place where people who really don't know what they're talking about ask the question, where is? Keep your finger here and turn over to Peter.

Is it 2nd Peter 3? Where is 4th? Great. Thanks, David. Once again, David pulls my fat out of the fire.

There it is. I've got a big circle around it. Knowing this first in verse 3, 2nd Peter 3, 3 scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as from the beginning of creation.

Where is the promise of his coming? What's the thrust of that question? He's not coming. There's no such thing. You keep saying he's going to come.

There's a promise of his coming. Where is this promise? There is no such promise, right? You go back to Malachi. Where is the God of justice? There is no God of justice.

God's not going to punish. We're look, we're, we're doing things that, that, you know, you Malachi, the prophet, you're saying we're doing things wrong and God doesn't like it. Where's the God of justice? If we're so bad and we're so evil, how come we haven't been punished? There's no God of justice.

You're, God doesn't do that. God doesn't punish. He's not a God of punishment.

Does that sound familiar? Let me read you something for our present day. This is from a article written by Keith Giles, December 29th, 2018, called Paul's Three Phases of Universal Reconciliation. This is a message that he has explicated in great detail in Jesus Unbound and some of these other books, the Un series that he wrote.

He's the author of those books. So what he's doing is going to Romans 5, 18 and 19. This is what Romans 5, 18 and 19 says.

So then, just as by one transgression unto condemnation for all human beings, so also by one act of righteousness unto rectification of life for all human beings. For just as by the heedlessness of the one man, the many were rendered sinners, so also by the obedience of the one, the first man being Adam and the second one being Jesus, the many will be rendered righteous. And you remember this in Romans 5, whereas by one man sin entered the world and death by sin.

So the death passed upon all men for all have sinned. So New Testament scholar, David

Bentley, I'm quoting Keith Giles now, says in his commentary on this verse from the context, one can tell what Paul is saying that just as one transgression or the transgression of one man brought condemnation to all human beings. So by one rectifying act or the rectifying act of one man, all human beings receive a rectification of life, meaning either a rectification of their lives or a rectification imparted by the life of the risen Christ.

The strict proportionality of the formulation is quite clear. Here and in the surrounding verses, just as the first sin brought condemnation and death to absolutely everyone, fair, in Adam all die, so Christ's act of righteousness brings righteousness and life to absolutely everyone. This is universalism.

In Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive. You see the parallel here? God is not going to punish or condemn rejection of his son, rejection of the need for atonement, rejection of the idea of repentance, hard-heartedness, obstinacy, stiff-neckedness. He's not going to do anything about that.

He's going to save everyone because in Adam all die, in Christ all are made alive. Do you in your advanced PhD wisdom see the flaw in that logic? Think about Venn diagrams. You remember the overlapping circles they call a Venn diagram? You've got set A, then you've got an overlapping circle that is set B, and where they overlap there are members of both set A and set B. Other times, set B is a complete subset of set A, so you've got a circle completely within a circle.

What they're trying to say is in Adam, everyone in Adam, Scripture says, is going to die, but that everyone is now in the second circle that is all going to be made alive by Christ. The problem is it doesn't say all will be made alive by Christ. It says in Adam all die.

Every human being is in Adam. How many human beings are in Christ? Not all. In Christ, all in Christ will be made alive, but it's not the same all as those who are in Adam.

You see the difference? Everyone in Christ is going to be made alive, but not everyone in Adam is in Christ. There's a decision to be made. We were born in Adam.

We are born again into Christ by choice. We choose. God does everything else, but it is a choice.

It is a response to an option, but not every human being is in Christ, and if you are not in Christ, you are not made alive. In Christ, all in Christ are made alive, and they've somehow blurred that, and the reason is they do not believe in a God of judgment. Where is the God of judgment? I don't see it.

Anyplace I find it in Scripture, I don't think that's Scripture anymore. I think that's somebody's misguided attempt at understanding God because I don't see judgment by Jesus. Jesus didn't kill anyone.

Jesus didn't judge anyone. Jesus actually did condemn and pronounce woes and curses. He that

hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

If you have not life or you have life, who is performing that operation of the granting of life or lack of grant of life? That's God. So, this guy, New Testament scholar David Bentley Hart says that just as the first sin brought condemnation and death to absolutely everyone, so Christ's act of righteousness brings righteousness and life to absolutely everyone. Whether intentional or not, the plain meaning of the verse is that of universal condemnation annulled by universal salvation.

This is from the New Testament, a translation, David Bentley Hart, page 297-298. So, Keith Giles continues, without the writings of Paul there would be no grounds for any conception of universal reconciliation, yet many still refuse to see this teaching even though it is all through Paul's writings. For example, in 1 Timothy 4.10, we have set our hope on the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

We conveniently rip that out, there have been three chapters and nine verses ahead of that statement by Paul, but we just take it out and say, we set our hope on the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe, 1 Timothy 4.10. Then he's going to quote 1 Corinthians 3.11-15, No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident. The day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire.

The fire will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he will be saved, yet so as through fire.

You see the problem here? This foundation, which is Jesus Christ, is given to believers. Unbelievers cannot build on the foundation of Jesus Christ. So context tells you at the outset that the one who builds on the foundation of Christ or the one who builds on some other foundation and it doesn't survive the fire, that's his fault because he had the foundation of Christ available and did not build on it.

This is a judgment for believers. It's your work. Unless you believe in salvation by works, the faith question of salvation in Christ is already solved.

The foundation is Jesus Christ. Any man who builds on that foundation will, using gold, silver, and precious stones, the work will become evident. There's gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble, but it's all built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, right? The wood, hay, and stubble is still on the Jesus Christ foundation.

There is no other foundation. Paul starts out saying that. We're talking about believers now.

You've got the Jesus foundation. You can either build on that with faith that lays hold of righteousness, eternal life, treasure in heaven, or you can build with human works and human

ingenuity and human ideas and human perception of what is good and what is righteous, and that's what's left. If the foundation is wood, hay, and stubble, it's going to be tested by fire.

If it burns up, what do you have left? If the man built with wood, hay, and stubble, and the fire consumes every particle of it, what's left? What was the foundation under the wood, hay, and stubble? The other foundation can no man lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Why is he saved yet so as by fire? He's still got the foundation, but he is least in the kingdom." These people just do not pay attention to detail. At the heart of this discussion is the question of fire of judgment that all must pass through.

What is the nature of this fire? What is the purpose of God's judgment? Does God punish for the sake of punishing? Is there no other point to this except to cause pain and exhale an endless fury against sinners? Hardly. Hebrews gives us insight into the purpose of God's discipline and punishment. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him.

For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines, scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? In their view, all human beings are God's son. There is no difference in sonship if you accept the Lord Jesus and He is the firstborn among many brethren or not. Universalism says every human being is a child of God.

That is how they can make Hebrews a part of their argument when Hebrews absolutely eviscerates their argument. God deals with His children as sons. But there are those who are not born again and they are not adopted.

Have you read Paul talking about adoption as sons? We cry, Abba, Father, because we have been adopted? We are not sons by birth, we are sons by adoption. And we opted into that adoption. They just ignore all of that.

He disciplines us for our good so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, yet to those who have been trained by it, it afterward yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. This is in the family.

This is post-salvation. They are trying to make this into universal salvation and it is just crazy. How can they do it? Because in Malachi 2.17 they say, You keep talking about a God of judgment, a God who is going to do the lake of fire and the great right throne.

Where is this God of judgment? I am not finding it in my scriptures. When I go to Hebrews, when I go to Timothy, when I go to Corinthians, I am seeing a God who deals with all of us as children. Yes, He is going to judge in the sense that He is going to discern that we have a problem.

Yes, we are going to pass through the fire, but everybody is going to be saved. Some are just

going to have some gold, silver, and precious stones. Others are just going to be saved by fire.

But everyone is going to be saved. You weary God, saying, Everyone who does evil is still good in the sight of the Lord. Do you see how this connects? Do you see how what Malachi is talking about in 2.17 describes progressive Christianity, which is burgeoning? It is mushrooming like you can't believe.

The news is full of overseas stuff, and somebody shot somebody, and somebody attacked somebody, and politics this, and failure that, and economic this, and climate that. What we don't see is the seismic shift away from the Bible in American Christianity. People are actively prosecuting, saying, American Christianity is bad because it is American.

Christianity is bad because it has been populated by so many white people. Christianity is bad because it has been honed in on the Bible instead of on people and on love. The only way you can get to people and to love is through the Scriptures, because it is the love of God that has to be shed abroad in our hearts.

You cannot just emit love by a decision. You can't generate love by an act of will. It has to come from God, and it does not come ex nihilo.

It doesn't even come by request. It comes by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit speaking to us and transforming us with the washing of water by the Word. You can't throw the Bible out and say, what we really need is more social justice.

What we really need is more awokeness. What we really need is more sensitivity, and more kindness, and more enemy love, and more emoting, and more celebration, and more overlooking of wrongs. One of the hallmarks of progressive Christianity and those who are being sucked along in its wake and drafting behind it in the suction is, judge not, lest ye be judged.

The Bible is full of exhortations to discern and to judge. We are not the ones who pass and execute sentence. But we are commanded to discern.

But by taking that away, what do you say? You weary the Lord because you say, everyone that is currently practicing evil is good in the sight of the Lord. God says, no, they are not. And they are in line for judgment.

And that's where chapter 3 is going to take us. But we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see what the Bible has to say about those who call evil good and good evil.

It may ring a familiar note. And where we should come down in terms of application in the time that remains to us in this life, in discernment and in avoiding the trap of misunderstanding God, misattributing God's kind, goodness, mercy and grace in cases where it is going to be all about judgment and the curse. We'll see that when we come back.

