

PostExilicProphets 22-06-01b

Let's resume our study now in the book of Malachi. We're looking at chapter 3 where Unlike some of the previous charges Where people have done despot to God by questioning his love by Disrespecting his Altar and have defiled him in so doing These you can't put a good face on Claiming that that God's altar is defiled and disrespecting him by bringing lame and corrupt sacrifices but there is a bit of a chiastic element here in these Quotes that the Lord gives the very first one in chapter 1 verse 2. I have loved you says the Lord let ye yet you say in what way have you loved us and God says if you look at history if you look at the difference between the way you as a nation have been treated and provided for and preserved vis-a-vis Edom Esau There is not the tone of Accusation or a charge of malfeasance in that first question and there's not really a tone of disobedience or malfeasance in this last question And I find it interesting that there's almost a parallel in the first and the last How have you loved us? We're not feeling very loved at the moment This Can occur in human relationships whether it is between Husband and wife between parents and children between Siblings, especially when you know, there are external issues that there are disagreements about What should we do about some common issue that affects the family and Some people come down on one side and others come down on another and I'm speaking abstractly I haven't had that experience lately myself, honestly and totally I've been with family this past weekend. I'm with family now I don't have any such issues, but I have seen it happen in the past I have watched across the fence and seen families torn apart over policy disagreements, what are we going to do about X and Shredding each other over it and saying how can you how can you love me? how can you say you're for the family when you're doing this or saying that or pursuing this or adopting that or Prohibiting this and running away from that Where is your love there was a song when I was back in high school, you know, where is the love? you said you would give to me and Where is the love? You made promises and you haven't kept them and so on and you see that element here God says he loves us.

But here we are in the post-exilic days and Life is hard and then you die Where is the fulfillment and people are Beginning to understand the same Issue that Solomon addresses in the Ecclesiastes in Kohelet If God's dealings with us are contained only in time I Don't get it. I'm pushing up against the ceiling and I'm gonna die and even God's blessings on me are going to perish and be divided amongst other people and The spirits gonna go somewhere. I don't know about and possessions are gonna gonna disappear If God blesses my descendants, I won't know it.

So what's where is the the fullness of blessing that God promises to those who Are obedient and faithful and who honor him in their lives who love the Lord God with all their heart all their soul all their Strength and all their mind same thing. Jesus is talking about in our Matthew passage chapters 23 24 25 what about the people who love God and who honor him and put him first and Yet it seems to be the wicked that are getting their way the wicked are in power the wicked are prospering the wicked have got Billions, we're grinding along with next to

nothing and You know piety doesn't seem to to pay Where is in what way have you loved us was the first question and God's answer interestingly is to Point out what is going to happen in the future in that first question I have loved you says the Lord you say in what way have you loved us? God says was not Esau Jacob's brother says the Lord yet Jacob. I have loved Esau I have hated I've laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness Even though Edom has said we have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate waste places Thus says the Lord of hosts they may build but I will throw down They shall be called the territory of wickedness and people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever Your eyes shall see and you shall say the Lord is magnified Beyond the border of Israel.

There is going to be vindication and people are going to recognize and Justify God when they See God's action of vindication in The future that Was the first question then we had these illegitimate practices a Son honors his father a servant honors his master if then I am the father Where is my honor if I'm a master? Where is my reverence says the Lord of hosts to you priests who despise my name so turning from? these who are questioning where the expressions of God's love are God is now going to indict the leadership of the people the priests Should have been assuring the people that these Rituals and these sacrifices and these offerings have meaning for the present and for the future they foreshadow The coming salvation of God in Christ and the priests have fallen down on this They've corrupted the picture. They're not teaching the principles. They're not holding up God's law And imbuing these practices with the meaning that they should have and so the center of the book has been an indictment of the priestly leadership and the governing leadership in Judah the tribe of Levi the tribe of Judah who ought to be imbuing the people with hope and Reminding them of God's promise that it is transcendent.

It's not just short-term It's not just now the whole Levitical system and the whole monarchic system looks forward to the day when there is a Great high priest and there is a son of David sitting on the throne in perpetuity there is no throne of David and there is no king in these days and Letting people's gaze drop to their feet and to their short-term path instead of looking to the hills from whence comest Strength looking to the horizon looking for what's coming up is on the leadership And I would argue that that one application particularly in terms of those who? who occupy some position of teaching or leadership or guidance in our Christian community is If you get too much in this world and too much in the now and you get Preoccupied with social justice and you get preoccupied with trying to fix the world as it is instead of Preparing and using the current time and the current situation current suffering current hardship Current shortfalls by those around us our own shortcomings our own failures working against us If we do not lift our eyes, and if we do not speak to one another in hope and If those in leadership those who are sort of Metaphorically in the position that the priests were in and that the leadership in Judah was in to Remind people of God's promises and that their fulfillment is certain Both in the present and even more so exponentially in the future we have got to Forget those things which are behind and It isn't pressed toward the distant mark of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. It's a high calling of God we Climb we ascend we are looking for

the high ground We're trying to stay on the narrow road that goes through the straight gate that leads to life I went back and was rereading that because my mental picture from the very beginning has always been that that gate is at the top of a hill and I guess there's no hill mentioned there, but my mental picture of it is this skinny road going up a kind of a craggy Ascent and you can't see what's beyond it. You just see a glow That that is past what you can see But you've got to you've got to run the uphill race to get through that narrow gate And it's it's a somewhat torturous narrow path and few there be that find it If it's on flat ground and well-marked everybody could find it But I think it's got some twists and turns and there are parts of it that are obscured to view But you follow that narrow road and and in my mind you finally get to the the top of the crest Go through that straight gate now You can see what is beyond but faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of what we cannot yet see But we believe it's there by faith we take the evidence of promise and the substance of God's Declarations about the present and about the future and treat them as fact We respect God and we respect his word and that's what motivates us.

Hope is the motivation You get the idea here that people have lost their sense of the love of God being expressed And their hope is diminishing. I quoted Psalm 73 earlier Turn back to Psalm 73 This is an expanded view of this attitude represented in the first and last questions in Malachi and I think my opinion of the first question has changed a little bit now that I've worked my way to the end of the book And I see these as sort of bookends in between which you've got some people who genuinely need to be Slapped down for their questions But God does not rebuke in his answer to the first question or in the last question. He gives reminders of His past actions and his future promises look at Psalm 73 This is by Asaph Truly God is good to Israel To such as are pure in heart But as for me my feet had almost stumbled my steps had nearly slipped why I started getting envious of the boastful When I saw the prosperity of the wicked my feet almost slipped Can you imagine can you dovetail this with? Malachi I Began to wonder if God really does love me.

I began to wonder if God really is going to bless the poor in spirit and Humble those who promote themselves the arrogant they boastful the these that are abusing worship to their own Advantage I was envious of the boastful. I saw the prosperity the wicked No pangs in their death. Their strength is firm.

This is where I get the idea that that they began to see the death of those During the captivity those who survived the captivity, but now in these post exilic days Have not seen the return of the glory of national Israel. They have struggled. They have ground out a living They've been faithful.

Maybe they worked on the wall. Maybe they maybe they help with the the rebuilding effort in the in the temple or in in Jerusalem But they've had a hard struggle and then they died But the death of the wicked seems comfortable there's no pangs in there their strength is firm They're not in trouble as other men nor they plagued like other men. I look around at my faithful companions my faithful relatives my faithful forebears and They're like Abraham who dwelt in

tents and he never did see the city He was waiting for a city whose founder and builder is God and he never saw it going back to Hebrews 11 Therefore pride serves as their necklace pride arrogance Violence covers them like a garment their eyes Bulge with abundance.

It's either their face or their eyes. Either way. This is kind of a funny picture Something in their facial aspect is bulging They're they're they're just engorged with their prosperity So much so that their eyes are bugging out with with fatness They have more than heart could wish They scoff and speak wickedly Notice There's italics.

They're concerning. This basically is they scoff and speak oppression Wickedly just switch those two words. They speak oppression.

They not only are not oppressed themselves But when they talk with one another It's how can you keep these people down? How can we keep them? Subservient, how can we keep them in subjection? How can we maintain our power over them? They speak oppression? wickedly They speak loftily They're going to couch this as this is for the good of the people. This is for the betterment of the nation We have lofty aims and goals We have great morals our ethics are beyond reproach. All of this is in the pursuit of lofty goals They speak oppression wickedly in lofty terms This sound familiar They speak oppression wickedly in lofty terms They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walks through the earth You can't beat scripture for picturesque description, can you? They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walks through the earth Just let that picture Marinate in your soul a little bit Therefore his people return here and waters of a full cup are drained by them And to Psalm 23 My cup runneth over.

Well, I'm trying to have a full cup These people are draining it the waters of a full cup are drained by them I can't it's hard to enjoy my small cup of blessings when these people keep kicking it over They say how does God know is there knowledge in the Most High? Where is this God of justice you keep talking about? You can't miss the connection behold, these are the ungodly who are always at ease they increase in riches They're not Being judged. They're not being brought down. They're not You know being resisted by God I thought God resisted the proud and gave grace to the humble with a humble are having their little cup overturned and these people are just ascending Surely verse 13 watch now surely I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in Innocence washed my hands naively I I Was naive to think that that I should pursue cleanliness before God these people defile and Corrupt God sacrifices and they're getting away with it prospering.

They're eating all of the good meat and giving the nasty stuff to God And getting away with it Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain and I've washed my hands in Naivete in in I was ignorant that I was wasting my time For all day long. I have been plagued and I've been chastened every morning I'm being taken advantage of I'm being oppressed If I had said I will speak thus behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of your children. I Haven't wanted to talk about this.

I don't want to Speak my concerns I Would have been judged unfaithful. I people would say what you're not you're not faithful if you start questioning God out loud That's not a good thing When I thought how to understand this it was too painful for me. I couldn't I Didn't know what to do about this.

It was just a very painful subject And I was almost afraid of my own doubts on this score Until verse 17. I went into the sanctuary of God Then I understood their purpose In God's sanctuary, I understood the purpose what's the problem in Malachi when you go to the sanctuary who's there? Corrupt priests and faithless leaders. There is no comfort in the sanctuary because of these Levites In the psalmist day when ASAP was there who's Running things at the tabernacle who is ensuring the tabernacle worship is properly accomplished David and then Solomon with his temple in the early in the early days.

You could go to the sanctuary and you would find the Word of God. I Went to your sanctuary and I understood their end Surely you set them in slippery places You cast them down to destruction Now notice nothing has changed These people are still not in trouble as other men verse 5. They're not plagued like other men Pride is their necklace violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes are still bulging with abundance.

Nothing has changed but going to the sanctuary and Being reminded of the Word and promise of God Now I understand That they are on thin ice They are on slippery places. They have ascended but their footing is not secure Pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction They may have climbed to a high place, but that is temporary if you're standing in a slippery place Your standing is temporary, right? Nothing has changed except perspective Nothing has changed except what I choose to think about having gone to God's sanctuary You set them in slippery places you You can put in brackets are going to cast them down to destruction Your policy is to take such people and cast them down to destruction. Maybe it hasn't happened yet.

I Understand the end their end this looks to the future Whose end is destruction whose whose God is their belly whose end is destruction Ultimately, that's where they will end up. Oh verse 19 how they are brought to desolation Suddenly as in a moment They are utterly consumed with terrors as a dream when one awakes So Lord when you awake you shall despise their image their appearance their current picture Thus my heart was grieved and I was vexed in mind. I was so foolish and ignorant I was like a beast before you this is now harking back to when I almost Stumbled my steps had nearly slipped in verse 2 my my mental steps My mental standing almost slipped when I forgot that it is they whose steps are going to slip It's their stand that is going to they're the ones who are going to be caused to stumble and fall But looking at them and forgetting their end.

I nearly Tripped myself. I nearly knocked myself down and So verse 21 is a return to verse 2 My heart was grieved and I was vexed in my mind because I was foolish and ignorant like a beast before you Remember my analogy in the first session that a chicken can't understand our plans

even when we're trying to help them You know you you have to lock your dog up for their own good You have to do things for your children that are against their desires You have to deny them things that are not good for them And they don't understand and you know, sometimes kids will lash out and say I hate you Because they do not understand I was like a beast before you I was unthinking unknowing Uncomprehending Nevertheless, I am continually with you verse 23. You hold me by my right hand.

I May not understand your timing. I may not understand why the wicked prosper but what I do know is you've got me by the hand and I know that you have said you have a purpose you have a coming judgment verse 24 You will guide me with your counsel and afterward receive me to glory in the end When these have stumbled and fallen and been destroyed I am going to enter into your glory Whom have I in heaven But you there is none upon earth that I desire beside you my flesh and my heart fail But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever For indeed those who are far from you shall perish You have destroyed in prospect All those who desert you for harlotry But it is good for me to draw near to God. It is good for me It is good it is not vain it is not to no profit It is good for me to draw near to God I have put my trust in the Lord God that I may declare all your works That goes back to that first question in Malachi.

Have you forgotten my works where Jacob? I have loved and he saw I have hated have you forgotten my works? No, I go to the sanctuary and reminded of your works I'm going to Talk about your works. I'm going to declare your works. So now back to Malachi When you get to this Closing Section 16 through 18 of chapter 3 Those who feared the Lord spoke to one another and when they are speaking to one another and Just as the psalmist why would ASAP record these psalm 73 thoughts? Listen I was starting to think like you I know you've expressed these doubts that loving the Lord is worthwhile or that he has not loved us in return that following him and and maintaining his Charge keeping his charge Shamar in the Misham are It has no upside.

I was thinking that way. Also my feet almost slipped I almost stumbled and fell but I went to the sanctuary and I realized I was thinking like a beast. I was short-sighted And I remembered that it's God who holds my hand We have him in the heavens He is the guarantee he is the surety for the fulfillment of his promises and these people we're looking at in our myopic short-term vision are going to suffer loss and be destroyed from his presence and We are going to enter into his glory Just wait wait on the Lord be of good cheer.

He will strengthen your heart Wait, I say on the Lord Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength They will mount up with wings like eagles So if you can return to genuine worship Verse 11 I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes so that he will not destroy the fruit fruit of your ground Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field says the Lord of hosts Yahweh sabaoth same phrase We have in verse 14 All nations will call you blessed for you will be a delightful land says Yahweh sabaoth So those who feared the Lord spoke to one another and the Lord listened and heard So a book of Remembrance The word order in Hebrew is really great here, so These words that were spoken by those who feared Yahweh to one another this

is this is very emphatic in terms of Conversation between those who fear the Lord they have not yet abandoned their fear of the Lord their respect for the Lord They've just got questions their feet are almost ready to slip and They're beginning to discuss this with one another And the one another aspect is very strong because the word spoke it says Oz or za depending on how you take that first word. It's either then or this spoke and this is a Niphal and I'm giving you Hebrew here because I like Hebrew and it's fun but Speaking here is the bar. This is the word D a B a R, which is Really both a verb and a noun in an unmodified form, but it's the simple word for for speaking words You can devour Davrine Davrine you can speak words But this is passive this was spoken Those who fear the Lord it was spoken in other words spoken to each other is Implicit in the verb if you didn't say anything else you would say then this was spoken.

It was spoken among the God fearers and this is Yara in the plural And this is from the word that means to fear and it's got that I eat infix So these are the God fearers the ones fearing you take the verb turn it into a noun by giving it that that participial infix, so this is a masculine Plural so those who are fearing The Lord Yahweh So it was spoken among spoken between spoken by to one another Those fearing Yahweh, then we have each at Ra a who? Ray a who? Which is each man to the other it was spoken among those who fear the Lord each one to the other It's a it's a very intensive picture of the community of those who still fear the Lord Talking this over this is becoming an issue that is being talked about it's a debate. It's a question It's a thing. It's an issue being spoken of and God says wow the everyone who's who still Fears my name is having these questions.

They need Reassurance they need some additional Prophetic hope and affirmation of promise so Listened this is from Kashav Q a SHA V in Hebrew and This is the word that is translated to be attentive to a thing God paid attention to these intramural conversations God-fearing people are talking to one another and God is paying close attention. He is listening with attention and He heard this is Shema, this is where my name comes from God heard Hannah's prayer Shema Shmuel God has heard Shema God paid close attention God hears and this is hearing in the sense of Heating or acting on what you hear this is to hear and heed hear and Develop a policy and decide what you're going to do about what you have heard It's it's analogous to agape. Not only do you love but you take some kind of action to express that love It's an action word.

It's not an abstraction. It's not an attitude. It is a policy With intentionality to accomplish things this Shema is When we Shema the Word of the Lord we do something about the fact that we have heard it We've heard it now that's going to change the way we we think and act so God listens and pays close attention and he hears in the sense that he is going to heed and do something about the content of what He has heard the God-fearing people discussing intensively among themselves And So this is the word order Spoke those who feared Yahweh each one to the other and listened the Lord and heard So was written a book there was This word is cut top, you know, it originally meant to cut like you cut a covenant you write a covenant But this is a sufferer This is a a book came to me in an accounting book and and our word cipher comes from this root To cipher to set down records of a thing and so there is a book But this is a special book.

This is a book of Zakar to remember a book of remembrance and so this is Zikar own Interestingly, this is a Singular this is not a book of memories plural. It's not a scrapbook full of photos or souvenirs programs newspaper clippings this is a book of remembrance singular a reminder book before his face God listened God heard and a book of remembrance Was written before him Before God's face Now we have For those who fear that same word the Year a e which is the plural those who are fearing? God but there's a Lamed in front of it, which means two or four and In this case, it is kind of both. There's a book of remembrance written before the face of God to or for those who fear the Lord and Who meditate This word meditate is very interesting.

This is kashyav ch a sh a B or V kashyav And it means to Meditate is a good translation. It means to consider it means to count it means to account it means to Calculate to esteem It means to plan or to plot It means to look at information and develop a strategy and a policy and implement a plan it's words, you know, there's only a fraction of Number of words in Hebrew, there's only a couple of thousand words total so the words that they have have to really carry a lot of freight carry a lot of water and this word is used to mean When you come to God's Word It matters You take it into account you devise your plans you implement your strategy It affects everything that you do It is uppermost in your mind as you move forward Well in the light of what I have just heard what I have come to know from his word This now Permeates and Infiltrates everything I am going to think and do That's kashyav look it up in a in a lexicon sometime there's there's just So many examples of it in Scripture Where people thought and therefore acted in a certain way In In in Genesis 38 you remember the story of Judah and Tamar and She goes by the side of the road and when he saw her he thought she was a harlot It's kashyav, which means he then implemented a whole plan and had a whole activity Because of the impression he got when he saw her he took into account. Here's where she is.

This is how she looks so this is what I'm going to do and The whole story of Perez and and and the sons of Judah and the rest of it all is Centered on that that episode many many uses of it throughout Scripture In Exodus chapter 26 verse 1 this word occurs with the tabernacle workmen when they made the cherubim These cherubim are the work of a kashyav Workman when he creates these Cherubic images he puts a lot of thought into it his knowledge of them his Appreciation of them and their role and the action of the Holy Spirit within him when he crafts the cherubim There is great thought that goes into this But you always see kashyav associated with the action that people take with what they are doing what they are going to do If they account someone to be a foreigner, they're going to treat them a certain way It's not just abstractions. It's not you would meditate. You know, my only quarrel with the translation meditate is just Isn't that rich? Isn't that? Interesting.

Oh What a what a poetic thought what a what a beautiful Picture that paints kashyav is an action word this with this information if I give you the information that there is a ticking time bomb under your chair and You think about that information? What is your thought going to produce? Action to leave the chair, right? It's that kind of thought so Kashyav this book of

remembrance is written before God What do you think God does God need a Post-it note does God need a finger? String does God need a an alarm in his phone to oh, you've got an appointment does God need a text, you know two hours before the doctor appointment a Book of Remembrance is written before the face of God two or four Those who fear him and who kashyav on his name Shame with the possessive suffix Meditate on his name. What did God open with? Do you remember my mighty works on your behalf? Do you remember my judgment on Edom and my blessing on Jacob? You're still here Edom is not Edom is a wasteland and a place for jackals to howl You all are back in your land after having been judged you're still here Those who who reflect on his name and what are they going to do when they reflect on his name a Son honors his father and a servant honors his master Those who think on his name are going to render The honor to God that is his due and they are going to reverence God with the reverence that is his due How can I do that? I'm not just going to think about it in the abstract. I'm going to do it I'm going to accomplish it That book of Remembrance is to remember Everyone who has that attitude Those who fear the Lord who speak to one another when they've got questions They speak the truth to one another in love they go to Asaph Thousands of years apart and yet we can fellowship with Asaph and say wow, here's another Child of God another of God's people who had the same experience as me looked around and thought when if ever is God going to set this straight And he says yeah, that was me my feet almost slipped.

I was I was ready to quit until I went to the sanctuary What's in the sanctuary for us psalm 73 The New Testament the words and works of the Lord Jesus Christ our fellowship in Reflecting meditating building our lives on and around God's name Reverencing him honoring him recognizing that he is smarter than us He loves us and he's got us by the hand One of the primary messages of the book of Malachi is that God does love us God has us by the hand God is going to reconcile the inequities and the inelegancies and the hardships God is has an end and a purpose in our trials and our sufferings Stick with it Don't let our feet slip the people whose feet are certainly going to slip are those who have climbed That slope of arrogance and dismissive Disobedience and apathy toward God. Those are the people whose feet are going to slip. We don't want to let our feet slip It's a wonderful beautiful Uh summation here in this this closing question as we move into chapter four We're going to see God talking to these people who are written in the book about what's upcoming there is warning there is prediction And there is hope We'll see it next time but we'll close here in a word of prayer Father, we do.

Thank you for your grace and your faithfulness toward us uh as paul says even when we are faithless you remain faithful and you cannot deny us because we are In christ and we belong to you through him and we're grateful for that status We pray that we can reflect on it. We can think about it and live our lives accordingly So that we can be included in that book That is before your throne and before your presence And enjoy the blessings and the opportunities that will come in the day When your purposes are revealed and these issues are reconciled we ask and pray all these things in jesus name. Amen