

Where is my Honour and Fear?

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[0 : 0 0] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let's turn back to the first portion of scripture that we read, the book of Malachi, chapter 1 and verse 6.

Malachi 1, 6. A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my reverence?

Says the Lord of hosts to you, priests, who despise my name. Yet you say, in what way have we despised your name?

But especially these words in the middle of verse 6, where is my honor? Where is my reverence? Or where is my fear?

Where is my honor? Where is my fear? But I want us to look, first of all, a little bit about the context of Malachi's message, this burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

[1 : 2 5] Let's look at the context of this particular book, this particular prophecy, this particular message. And then I want us to look particularly at this great biblical theme of the fear of God.

The fear of God. Where did it begin? What is it? What are the marks and the tokens of those who have the fear of God in their hearts?

What are the particular promises that are associated with the fear of God? Let's look then at the context of Malachi's burden.

The burden of the word of the Lord. Malachi means messenger. Messenger. He's coming with a particular message to Israel.

And the fact that the word, or the name Malachi means messenger, points us in a very special way through the time between the New Testament, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

[2 : 5 1] A period of 400 years. This book resounds in a very special way through that intertestamental period of 400 years.

Malachi, the messenger, pointing us through his message to another messenger. What messenger is that? The messenger of the covenant.

The messenger of the covenant. Of whom Malachi speaks in chapter 3. 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.

Who is the messenger of the covenant? The Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 5 3] So what was Malachi's message? His message was to Israel. It was to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity.

The city had been rebuilt. And the walls had been rebuilt. And the prophets had prophesied and had preached the gospel to them. Reminding them of the very reasons why they were taken away to the Babylonian captivity in the first place.

And, of course, you know that yourselves. You know that it is sin. And you know that it is the effects of sin.

That always cause us to be in captivity, as it were. To go to a place, a strange place. A place where we know that we ought not to be.

Because of our sin. Because of our sin and our disobedience. Because of our covetousness, our idolatry. Because of the lusts of the flesh and of the eye and of the pride of life.

[5 : 06] Because of our sin. Sin always separates us from God. Sin has separated Israel and Judah from God.

From their God. And here, after the Babylonian captivity. They come back and everything seems to be in order.

But Malachi is sent by God with a very specific message. And if you read this remarkable narrative. You see that the narrative is presented as a dialogue.

It's a dialogue between God and Israel. God is indicting them for their sin. And they say to God, When did we do that?

When did that happen? Look at the very first thing he says to them. I have loved you. God says, and they say, When did you love us? When did you love us?

[6 : 10] Remarkable. Absolutely remarkable. But I wonder if it is so remarkable. When you search your own heart. How often the Lord says to us, I have loved you.

And yet you, We seem to have this incredible capacity. Not to respond as we ought to. And question and find some excuse.

Not to respond to God. And his overtures of love and grace. And if you read down that whole narrative.

It's almost as if the whole book is part of this narrative. Of this dialogue. They had grown sceptical of his love. They had grown careless in the worship.

And I want to focus specifically on that. They had grown indifferent to the truth. They had got disobedient to the covenant. Particularly in terms of idolatry.

[7 : 13] They were faithless in their marriages. Divorcing their wives. And marrying foreign women. They had wearied the Lord. And they were saying that the Lord.

And the burdens of the Lord were a weariness to them. A weariness. Oh what a weariness. They say. They were calling evil good.

And good evil. They were forsaking the ordinances of God. They were holding back the tithes. They were holding back their givings from God.

Because they seemed to have a controversy with God. I'll just not give God what God has given me. I wouldn't give him the tithe and the money that I must give him.

To maintain his cause in the world. And they were doubting the very character and nature of God.

[8 : 16] And they were saying that the Lord is not a Christian. Well you might say. Well this is a picture of our day. Not just Malachi's day. This is required reading for every single one of us.

Whether you're a Christian. A professing Christian or not. This is absolutely required reading. Required reading.

Verse 6 captures the heart of the matter. It captures the heart of the matter. Where is my honour? Where is my fear?

And he begins to reason with them as it were. A son honours his father and a servant his master. If then I am the father. Where is my honour?

If I am a master. Where is my reverence? The people of Israel would have understood the father-son relationship. They would have understood it.

[9 : 23] Because it was hugely important to them. Hugely important. The family circle. Hugely important in our own culture. Certainly used to be perhaps more important than it is now.

And he reasons with them. A son honours his father. Where is my honour? Am I not your father who is in heaven?

Am I not your father who is in heaven? Am I not your father? Am I not your father? And then he pleads to the master-servant relationship. Which is also something that they would have understood.

If I am a master. Where is my fear? Where is my reverence? the master servant relationship might be more in our day it would be employer employee relationship and of course as employees to an employer we all have a duty to our employer a duty to our employer Paul picking up on this very thing about relationships in families and in whatever various relationships picks this very point up in Ephesians chapter 5 just to remind us of how important these relationships are and he addresses these relationships Ephesians 5 and 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God and he addresses all the relationships in the household the husband and the wife and the parent and the child and all the relationships and he introduces those relationships in these terms submitting to one another in the fear of God all of these commands the nitty gritty of our day to day existence must be under the submission of God and the fear of God all coached in the framework of the fear of God where is my honor and where is my fear they had completely forgotten they had lost sight of God as a God as a God and a great king for I am a great king says the Lord of hosts and my name is to be feared among the nations we sang earlier what is the fear of God it's the beginning of wisdom the beginning of wisdom and the preacher goes on to say what is the fear of God it's the beginning of knowledge knowledge of the Holy One knowledge of God knowledge and obedience and submission and worship to God and they seem to lose sight of this awesomeness of God the reverence of God the holiness of God who God is who God is and what God has done and all the history all the history all the remarkable events in the history of Israel when he demonstrated who he was to them when he says to them where I have loved you how have you loved us they had left behind the awe and the amazement and the gratitude and the indebtedness to God and what was the casualty what was the first casualty of a lack of honour and a lack of fear the fear of God having been removed what was the first casualty well the first casualty always is the worship of God

the worship of God and he speaks to them in those terms you could call this portion of scripture the curse of careless worship the curse of careless worship he says to them in verse 14 but cursed be the deceiver who was in this flock but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished they have begun to take sacrifices to the Lord and he's specifically addressing the priests but in addressing the priests he's addressing the priests and the people and God says to them you've despised my name you've profaned my name and you've dishonoured my name in bringing sacrifices that are contemptible and you have caused and written contempt over the God given means of approaching him the sacrificial worship of God they have defiled it by bringing blind offerings and the lame and the sick they were bringing animals that were defiled and they knew what the law had said and they knew what God had said said a lamb without spot and without blemish chosen from the flock set aside and set apart and here they were bringing what they wanted as it were and God says cursed cursed careless worship is always cursed and careless worship is none other than a demonstration of despising

[16 : 17] God that's how serious this matter is he says to them in bringing false worship that they have despised him in what way have we despised your name they said and God says by saying the Lord the table of the Lord is content of when you offer the blind and the lame and the sick and not only that not only were they guilty of despising God they were guilty of profaning but you profane it and not only that but he says to them in verse 2 in chapter 2 rather at verse 2 that they have dishonoured dishonoured and now oh priests this commandment is for you if you will not hear and if you will not take it to heart to give glory to my name says the

Lord of hosts I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings yes I have cursed them already because you do not take it to heart they were dishonouring God by not giving him the glory by not giving him the glory and notice what God says to them notice what he says to them in verse 8 offer it then to your governor would he be pleased with you would he accept you favorably says the Lord of hosts what he's saying to them is this you would never dare you wouldn't dare to bring these kinds of offerings to those who are governing and ruling over you you wouldn't dare because they would never accept them from your hand and

God says to them why do you expect me to accept them from your hand the curse of careless worship their disobedience it's not that they weren't worshipping they were worshipping this is the remarkable thing about this narrative they were worshipping but they weren't worshipping the way that God had ordained for them but the problem wasn't fundamentally a problem of law it wasn't first and foremost and fundamentally a problem of law it was a problem of all it was an all problem they had lost sight of the awesomeness and the majesty and the glory and the holiness and the goodness and the love and the mercy and the patience and the long suffering of God and I wonder if that is true of us all amnesia one writer said all amnesia equals spiritual anorexia do you wonder why there is leanness in your soul do I wonder when there is leanness in my soul and even the pleas of

God they seem to turn a deaf ear to all gods please to turn to turn repent he says repent how will we repent why should we repent this is a serious serious spiritual problem it's a plague they had lost sight of the honour of God and the fear of God the fear of God what is the fear of God then what is the fear of God well the fear of God in the Bible is presented to us in two ways principally in two ways principally in two ways the first is this

Genesis chapter three then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him where are you so he said I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself I was afraid sin had caused a major rupture in Adam's heart and in all his faculties this fear this fear of God this fear of dread this awful bad fear had filled his heart I was afraid this is the same Adam who was walking with God in the cool of the day whom God had provided with everything that was possible for his well being and his eternal security

[22 : 52] I'm giving you everything that tree there don't touch that one that's all I'm asking you to do if you touch that one you die spiritually and of course spiritual death was first before physical death those who are dead spiritually and that's all of us by nature will certainly die physically and will most certainly die eternally in hell that's a fact we read the great indictment of God in Romans chapter 3 there is none righteous no not one death and accompanying death and accompanying the wages of sin accompanying the terrible rupture that sin caused in Adam's heart was this fear this bad fear and his sin was the cause of this emotion of terror fear and ever since then the words that we read in

Romans there is no fear of God before their eyes and in the Old Testament time and time again this aspect of the fear of God this fear of dread this fear of punishment of judgment you read it time and time and time again Malachi himself very interestingly speaks to them in chapter 4 and he said to them remember the law of Moses my servant which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments remember the law of Moses well what happened at Horeb the Lord appeared to them and how did they react don't let God appear to us whatever you do don't let God appear to us lest we die lest we die

Exodus chapter 20 God and Moses says to them do not fear what he's saying to them is don't be filled with that fear of dread and of judgment but be filled with this fear the fear of awe and reverence and worship come and worship God come and worship God there's a remarkable incident too in the life of Saul King Saul Samuel had been speaking to them about the Philistines and about the Philistines warring against Israel and Samuel is preaching to them and he's saying to them be filled with the fear of the Lord and the fear of the Lord will keep you and give you the victory over the Philistines and he went away and

Saul and his army went on their way and when he saw the Philistine army the Bible tells us that they were terrified terrified and of course what Saul did then was that he offered a sacrifice to God and Samuel reappears and he says stop don't do that why did you do that I saw the Philistines and I wanted to I wanted to to come to God and Samuel says no you are expressly forbidden to that they were terrified they were filled with the slavish fear a fear that fills them with terror slavish fear the fear of man there are many things that flow from that fear of dread the fear slavish fear it is a fear a bondage a fear of man it's a bad fear a bad fear the two thieves on the cross one was railing him and saying to him save yourself and us if you are who you say you are the other one said do you not fear

God we deserve this he's innocent we deserve it you see one who was filled with that fear of dread this bad fear and you have one who was filled with the fear of reverence and awe that acknowledges God for who he is and what he is what is this good fear the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom that is the beginning of knowledge knowledge of the holy one the fear of the Lord as somebody has said which is the soul of godliness the soul of godliness and you know what happens when the soul departs the body at death you know what happens there is decay decay complete decay the same is true spiritually when the fear of

[29 : 21] God of reverential fear and the worship of God when we cause by our own sin and disobedience for that fear of God not to be present in our experience then the result is decay and barrenness and leanness leanness God speaks to us God speaks to us and he says to us and he says to them remarkably there's a fantastic narrative in Jeremiah where Jeremiah is talking about the new covenant the new covenant and of course when he's talking about the new covenant he's talking about the sufferings and death of our

Lord Jesus Christ how do you mean I mean this that the new covenant is the covenant that was to be sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ the blood of Christ and in that context he says to them I will put my fear in their hearts the fear of God the good fear is a fear that comes from faith in Christ from believing in Jesus Christ it is one of the great blessings of salvation of salvation and God says to them I will put my fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from me Mary saw God's mercy to her Mary saw God's mercy to her as illustrating this great principle of the fear of

God when she says in her song of praise and his mercy is on those who fear him in the New Testament the church the church Acts 9 31 filled with the fear of God the church grew the church grew because the church was full of the fear of God there was no need for a 20 page strategy document the only strategy document that they had was the fear of God the fear of God that was their strategy to worship him I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with a strategy per se it's good to plan good to plan but if that plan means that we forsake what the

Bible specifically instructs we forget the fear of the Lord and the worship of the Lord and of course in the New Testament the remarkable truth the remarkable truth that our Lord himself Jesus our Saviour who walked on this earth he himself was filled with the fear of the Lord just as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 11 verses 1 and 2 and time and time again the Bible reminds us how we are to worship God reverence and godly fear the fear which constrains us to worship the fear which constrains us to deny ourselves the fear which constrains us because of the transcendent majesty and glory of God to say no to sin and to manifest ourselves as the means of grace and to be reading our

Bibles and to be praying so that at every point of my Christian life every breath that I breathe I must breathe it and the fear of God it must be marked by the fear of God what is the effect of this godly fear the psalmist tells us the psalmist tells us in that psalm that we were singing what man is he who would live long and see good psalm 34 and verse 12 do you want to live forever or do you want to die he's saying to them do you want to live or do you want to die in hell and he's saying to them

[34 : 58] I'll teach you the fear of the Lord I'll teach you the fear of the Lord and what is the fear of the Lord keep your tongue from evil and your mouth from speaking wickedness despise evil despise evil now remember my friends that you can do lots of damage with your tongue lots of damage with your tongue untold damage has been done from the very beginning with our mouths untold damage with our eyes and our ears with our hands and with our feet what about you what about you thy lips refrain from speaking guile and from in words thy tongue depart from ill do good seek peace pursue it earnestly

Moses implore them not to have this bad fear but to have this good fear the fear of God so that you may not sin so that you may not sin and what does the preacher say the fear of God is the hatred of evil the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom the beginning of knowledge knowledge of the holy one the fear of God is the hatred of evil I must hate what God hates that's the golden rule rule and the golden rule of sin is this of course and I break the golden rule myself and the golden rule is this of course is to hate sin before the act before the act not after it oh you must hate it after we do do we not there are many things of course in our lives and in our experience that we're sorry for but this is more than being sorry for something this is a hatred of it a holy hatred why do we struggle with habitual sins why do we struggle with habitual sins and if sin becomes habitual red warning flags have to be raised grave danger of habitual sin and don't think christian brother and sister that you can't fall into habitual sins we can but why is it so difficult to get over habitual sins sin well the problem is that we don't hate what we love we don't hate what we love you never hate what you love and the problem with sin is that it can present itself so beautifully so pleasantly so gorgeous that you just want to take it and eat it and partake of it and why don't we hate it enough because we don't fear god enough because we don't fear god enough what are the benefits of the promises that flow from the fear of god well let the preacher speak the fear of god is a fountain of life to escape or to depart from the snares of death the narrative that we read in romans ends or that particular quotation from scripture in romans ends with there is no fear of god before their eyes romans chapter but god but now romans 3 21 but now how can i get that fear how can i have that fear of god how can i be re awakened as it were how can i be refreshed in my soul well repentance and prayer david

in this great psalm psalm 34 before the king of ashish he feigned madness and whatever spiritual condition he was in he said the lord delivered me i sought the lord he heard and did me from all fears delivered the lord delivered him from all his enemies because he came to god and he sought the lord and the blessings and the benefits that flow from the fear of the lord the angel of the lord encamps and round encompasses all those that to him fear the lord's eyes are on the just or the lord's eyes are on those who fear him he hears their cry he's delivering them every day every day and he says but now the righteousness of god is revealed even the righteousness of god through faith in jesus christ through faith in jesus christ and god tells us through this great messenger i can see your imperfect sacrifices and i want you to repent and to come and to pray and to believe but malachi is pointing them to something else or someone else he's pointing them to the great messenger of the covenant the messenger of the covenant these great narratives in the prophets all present us with a reality that there is one who is the perfect sacrifice the perfect sacrifice the lord jesus christ this narrative this remarkable narrative makes us realize that there was hope for us to despite the sin and the rebellion there was hope because there was a saviour coming a saviour coming and he would come and he would cleanse and purify his church and on the grounds of his once only perfect sacrifice they come to him and through him they have access to god and and one and one of the great tokens of those who have access to god is communion and fellowship with each other communion with god those who fear god spoke often one to another and a book of remembrance was written and god says to all those who fear him they shall be mine says the lord of hosts on the day that i make them my jewels and i will spare them and to you who fear my name he says the son of righteousness shall arise with healing on his wings and you shall go out and grow fat like stall fed calves but to those who do not fear him the day is coming burning like an oven and all the proud yet all who do wickedly will be stubble and the day which is coming shall burn them up says the lord of hosts where the wicked shall be trampled in the

judgment will you not fear god will you not hear the words that speak come children i will teach you the fear of the lord amen let's pray oh lord will you but when you you have families to the kid who back or like if you have a drink so you have to have a going to