

STUFF GOD CARES ABOUT

Before We Get Started: Some Stuff You Need To Know

Malachi's Message:

Malachi 1-4

Stuff God Cares About That We Tend To Forget Or Downplay

1) He expects to be treated like **God.**

Malachi 1:1-2:2 (see especially 1:14-2:2)/ Proverbs 9:10/ Matthew 22:34-40
1-2

Malachi 3:6-11/ Haggai

2) He expects us to obey **ALL of his commands.**

Malachi 2:2-9 (see especially 2:7-9), 1 John 2:3-5/ John 14:15

3) He expects to be **at the center of our marriage & family.**

Malachi 2:10-16/ Ephesians 5:21-33/ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18/ 1 Peter 3:1-7

4) He expects us to provide **help and **justice** to the weak.**

Malachi 2:17-3:5/ James 1:26-27/ 1 Peter 4:17/ 2 Corinthians 5:10

Food for Thought

For the week of June 3, 2012

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. Similar to the people Malachi was speaking to, most of us can relate to losing sight of God's justice and work in our lives when the "wicked" seem to be the ones succeeding. Psalm 102 gives us an example of a man in the midst of great difficulty also losing sight of God's justice. As you read this Psalm, what big picture perspective can you gain of who God is, how he works, and the hope we can have when feeling like God is not doing his part? How does Psalm 4 help build upon this perspective?

Psalm 102:1-28

A prayer of an afflicted man. When he is faint and pours out his lament before the Lord.

Hear my prayer, O Lord;

let my cry for help come to you.

[2] Do not hide your face from me
when I am in distress.

Turn your ear to me;

when I call, answer me quickly.

[3] For my days vanish like smoke;
my bones burn like glowing embers.

[4] My heart is blighted and withered like grass;
I forget to eat my food.

[5] Because of my loud groaning
I am reduced to skin and bones.

[6] I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.

[7] I lie awake; I have become
like a bird alone on a roof.

[8] All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who rail against me use my name as a curse.

[9] For I eat ashes as my food
and mingle my drink with tears

[10] because of your great wrath,
for you have taken me up and thrown me aside.

[11] My days are like the evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

[12] But you, O Lord, sit enthroned forever;
your renown endures through all generations.

[13] You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to show favor to her;
the appointed time has come.

[14] For her stones are dear to your servants;
her very dust moves them to pity.

[15] The nations will fear the name of the Lord,
all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.

[16] For the Lord will rebuild Zion
and appear in his glory.

[17] He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;
he will not despise their plea.

[18] Let this be written for a future generation,

that a people not yet created may praise the Lord:
[19] "The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,
[20] to hear the groans of the prisoners
and release those condemned to death."
[21] So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem
[22] when the peoples and the kingdoms
assemble to worship the Lord.
[23] In the course of my life he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.
[24] So I said:
"Do not take me away, O my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations."
[25] In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
[26] They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.
[27] But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.
[28] The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you." [NIV]

Psalm 4:1-8

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.

Answer me when I call to you,
O my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
be merciful to me and hear my prayer.
[2] How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

Selah

[3] Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself;
the Lord will hear when I call to him.
[4] In your anger do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.

Selah

[5] Offer right sacrifices
and trust in the Lord.
[6] Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?"
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.
[7] You have filled my heart with greater joy
than when their grain and new wine abound.
[8] I will lie down and sleep in peace,
for you alone, O Lord,
make me dwell in safety. [NIV]

2. No matter how we “feel” or what we “think” about who God is, the good news is that he remains the same and his justice will come (Malachi 3:2-6). To keep this perspective, we need to remain teachable and open to God’s message to us, just as many did when Malachi proclaimed God’s message (Malachi 3:16). What indicators do the following verses give to see if you’re remaining open to God’s guidance in your life? How are you doing at putting what these verses say into action?

Malachi 3:2-6

But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. [3] He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, [4] and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.

[5] "So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty.

[6] "I the Lord do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. [NIV]

To keep this perspective, we need to remain teachable and open to God’s message to us, just as many did when Malachi proclaimed God’s message (Malachi 3:16).

Malachi 3:16

Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. [NIV]

What indicators do the following verses give to see if you’re remaining open to God’s guidance in your life? How are you doing at putting what these verses say into action?

Psalms 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
[24] See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting. [NIV]

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. [25] Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. [NIV]

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. [NIV]

3. Malachi 3:7-10 speaks of how the people lost the mindset and practice of generosity.

Malachi 3:7-10

Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

[8] "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. [9] You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. [10] Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. [NIV]

It's natural to think that if we made more money, we would be more generous. But studies show that a rise in income doesn't necessarily mean a rise in giving. If you were to come into financial prosperity in the near future, how could the following verses help you be one of the people who actually become more generous?

Proverbs 3:9-10

Honor the Lord with your wealth,

with the firstfruits of all your crops;

[10] then your barns will be filled to overflowing,

and your vats will brim over with new wine. [NIV]

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel,

but with many advisers they succeed. [NIV]

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Whoever loves money never has money enough;

whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.

This too is meaningless. [NIV]

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20] But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [NIV]