





and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law."

If you are familiar with Old Testament history, you know that being a priest could be a fatal position. In 2 Samuel 6, we read how they were bringing the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem when a man named Uzzah reached out to steady it so it wouldn't fall. God struck him dead on the spot. Why? Because the ark of the covenant was not to be touched.

In Leviticus 10, we find the account of two of Aaron's sons mixing their own type of incense to burn before the Lord instead of using the incense God had commanded. God killed them for it. So tell me—do you want to sign up to be a priest in the temple of the Lord?

In our text, through the prophet Malachi, God calls out the Levites—who were the guardians of the temple and of the Scriptures—for their utter failure. He tells them that because they had failed as His priests and made the temple contemptible, He would make them contemptible before all the people. So, who wants to sign up?

Perhaps you are thinking you can let your attention drift away to nice, sleepy places since you are not a priest and aren't foolish enough to sign up to be one. But don't believe that lie. Yes, it is true that in the Old Testament only the descendants of Aaron and Levi were priests, but in the New Testament, the priesthood is open to all believers. In fact, all believers are priests to God.

(1 Pet. 2:9 NKJ) *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."*

The rights and responsibilities of the New Testament priesthood are yours. What are these rights and responsibilities? While they vary in form from the Old Testament to the New, at their heart, they remain the same. They are laid out in our text because the priests during Malachi's time were failing in them. God's priests are to walk humbly before Him—in fear and reverence of His name and glory—and they are to treasure the Word of the Lord.

The priests in Malachi's time were doing neither. As Malachi lays out in verse 8, they had departed from the way. They no longer feared doing what God had forbidden, nor failing to do what He had commanded. They also thought serving as priests was a bum gig—boring, with all the serving instead of being served, with all the praying and teaching that brought little monetary gain. On top of that, both by example and word, they caused others to stumble. They told people whatever they wanted to hear, so long as they were slipped a little money. They did not teach God's truth but their own opinions and the opinions of the age. In short, they corrupted the covenant of Levi. They were to rejoice that their inheritance was the Word of God, but instead, they despised it. They were to guard the Word of God by being faithful to it and teaching it faithfully, but instead, they neglected it and taught whatever they thought best.

Have you?

Listen again to how God describes what a priest should do in our text, and ask yourself, *Have I done that?*

*"The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned*

*many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."*

So, how many have you turned away from iniquity? Has injustice been found on your lips? Have you walked continually with God in peace and, by word and action, taught others the way of God?

God has given us all the rights and responsibilities of priests. We should study His Word. We should preach His Word in both word and action. We should stand against error and stand for the truth of His Word. These are our rights and responsibilities, and we have trampled on them. We have shown partiality. We have corrupted the covenant.

Is there even one good reason God shouldn't do to us what He was going to do to the priests in Malachi's day? Why shouldn't He make us contemptible and base before all the people? Why shouldn't He take our pathetic service of Him and smear it like dung over our faces? Why shouldn't He take the rights and responsibilities He has given us and give them to others who will offer better service?

There is one reason—one reason only—why He *should*, but He *hasn't*, and He *won't*. It is a good reason. The reason is Jesus.

The covenant God made with Levi and Aaron—and the covenant He has made with you—is, as our text states, one of *life and peace*. It was a covenant of life and peace because God entrusted them—and us—with the knowledge of our Savior. He has granted us to know that:

*"Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."*

This is peace and life—and you have it in what Jesus did with His life and with His death.

This was the treasure they were to guard—not by hiding it away but by proclaiming it. And this is the treasure we have. A treasure we are to guard not by hiding it, but by sharing it and having the joy of it restored in us every day. This knowledge gives peace and life, for Jesus gives us peace and life with God. This knowledge makes our lives a joy to live, no matter what is happening on this rock we call earth.

God rejected the priests of Malachi's day because they rejected this covenant of life and peace in the Savior. Despite all our sins and failures, that is something we have not done.

So, are you ready to be priests? Ready for Good Friday? Ready for Easter? You are! You are priests, and you are ready! Not because you haven't failed or won't fail, but because God has made a covenant with you—a covenant in Christ of life and peace.

God won't smear your sins and failures like dung over your face to embarrass you before all the world. Fellow believer, God has washed you by water and the Word to give you peace with Him and life in Him. This is how that I Peter passage continues-

*"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now*

*the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. 2:9-10 NKJ)*

**Amen.**

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