

Malachi: The Refiner's Fire

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July 6, 2025

Leonard Ravenhill: ***"Prophets are God's emergency men for crisis hours."***

A pastor's role is to shepherd — to care for and disciple the flock. But prophets sound the alarm — they are called to wake up a sleeping and complacent people.

One of the key goals of the book we're going to look at today, Malachi is to strike a death blow to complacency and compromise in our lives.

Malachi — likely written in the 5th century BC. The name Malachi means "My messenger" — and Malachi comes with a message straight from God's heart.

God loves his people and has chosen them, but the people are treating God like He's a second-class citizen. They are taking Him for granted. And that's not how relationship with God works.

Through Malachi, God...

- Confronts His people for their Spiritual Complacency - God is not content with our 2nd best
- Calls them to Wholehearted Worship - God wants true, wholehearted worship
- Points us to the Coming of the Day of the Lord, emphasizing judgment and restoration/vindication

God is not content with our second-best.

Malachi 1:6

"A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the hour due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the Lord Almighty.

Somewhere along the way God had left first place in their hearts and their connection with Him had become an afterthought.

Complacency is one of the greatest enemies of the church.

If we are struggling, there are steps we can take:

- We have places and ministries that will walk with you through this — Life groups, Set Free, Brave Hearts for women, Conquer series for men, pastoral care
- We are called to confess our sin to each other and go after God together
- If you're dealing with an area of sin in your life, get it out of the place of hidden darkness and share with someone you know and trust, and start working together for freedom.

We can't afford to be complacent with sin!

God Wants True, Wholehearted Worship

Malachi 1:10-11

“Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord Almighty, “and I will accept no offering from your hands. ¹¹ My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord Almighty.

God is not impressed by a church's attendance figures. He's not evaluating GMC Morden or Winkler by how many people come through the front doors. He's after our hearts.

Malachi 3:6-12

“I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors 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 mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—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 there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

God makes an interesting connection.

- In their worship, they were also withholding their tithes and offerings from God.
- We can often get uncomfortable when the issue of money comes up in a church setting, but God was not uncomfortable bringing it up. By not giving of their tithes to Him He says they were robbing Him.
- God is saying that there was an exchange that would happen when people gave — a general principle — if the people honoured God with their money, He would honour them. In fact, this is the only place in the Bible where God says it's okay to test Him!
- God's call to tithe isn't primarily about how much you can contribute to the church budget — *it's actually about your own heart, about your own dependance upon God*, it's a statement that He belongs in first place. When it comes to what is most important in our lives, we often vote with our wallet.
- God says, “Test me” — if you honour God with your finances He will honour you and provide for your needs.

Finally, Malachi points to the Coming Day of the Lord, emphasizing judgment and restoration/vindication

Malachi 3:1-4

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. ² 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.

The day of the Lord is coming — but even now He wants to come like a refiner's fire and purify our hearts.

We want to be a people who love the purifying fire of God. We want to be a people who invite Him to come clear out compromise.

Malachi 4:1-6

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.”² But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.³ Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the Lord Almighty.⁴ “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel.”⁵ “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”