

# Malachi 1:6-2:9 // Roadkill Sacrifices

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[ 0 : 00 ] Tonight's passage is in Malachi chapter 1, reading from verse 6 all the way through to chapter 2, verse 9. You'll find that on page 960 of the Pew Bibles in front of you.

That's Malachi chapter 1, verse 6. A son honors his father and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due to me?

If I am a master, where is the respect due to me? Says the Lord Almighty. It is you, priests, who shall contempt for my name. But you ask, how have we shown contempt for your name?

By offering defiled food on my altar. But you ask, how have we defiled you? By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong?

When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor. Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? Says the Lord Almighty. Now plead with the Lord to be gracious to you.

[ 1 : 03 ] With such offerings from your hands will he accept you? Says the Lord Almighty. Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors so that you would not light useless fires on my altar. For I am not pleased with you, says the Lord Almighty.

And I will accept no offerings from your hands. 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. But you profane it by saying the Lord's table is defiled and its food is contemptible. And you say, what a burden. And you sniff at it contemptuously, says the Lord Almighty.

When you bring injured, lame or diseased animals and offer them as sacrifices, should I accept them from your hands, says the Lord? Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord.

For I am a great king, says the Lord Almighty. And my name is to be feared among the nations. And now you priests, this warning is for you. If you do not listen and if you do not resolve to honor my name, says the Lord Almighty, I will send a curse on you and I will curse your blessings.

[ 2 : 20 ] Yes, I have already cursed them because you have not resolved to honor me. Because of you, I will rebuke your descendants. I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices and you will be carried off with it.

And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue, says the Lord Almighty. My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace.

And I gave them to him. This called for reverence. And he revered me and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was found in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips.

He walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned many from sin. For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth.

But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble. You have violated the covenant with Levi, says the Lord Almighty. So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in the matters of the law.

[ 3 : 27 ] This is the word of the Lord. Well, good evening, St. Silas. Great to be with you, as I said up there before. My name is Andrew.

I'm a leader in training here at the church. And it's my joy to be speaking on this Belt of a Passage tonight in Malachi. And as we start, why don't we come to the Lord in prayer. Psalm 19 says, The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold. They are sweeter than honey. By them your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. So, Father, as we look now at your word together, we seek your help for each one of us.

That tonight, wherever we might be with you, that we would all take one step forward in our love for you and our relationship with you. In Jesus' name.

Amen. I wonder, do you ever find your perception clash with God's perception, the way that God says that it is? Do you ever find yourself reading God's word?

[ 4 : 37 ] And if you're being honest, go, you know, that's just really not the way that it seems to me. It's not how it feels. He declares one way to be righteous and another wicked.

And if we're being honest in our heart of hearts, we sometimes go, it's not really how I would categorize it. Or maybe you read one of God's promises of all that he's done, and yet it just feels so detached from your lived reality.

He promises you that he loves you and that he protects you. And yet sometimes you feel so alone and so vulnerable. And when we struggle to square what God says with what we feel, what do we do?

Well, generally, we have one of two options, I think. We either seek to change ourselves. We look inwards and we go, what is it about me and about the way that I think that means that I am struggling to understand God?

Or we change what our understanding of God is and we try to make him and what he says and what he promises fit with our own perception.

[ 5 : 50 ] And the one that we choose really matters. We kicked off Malachi last week with the blockbuster declaration of God to his people of I have loved you.

And yet the people feeling disillusioned with their current circumstances, feeling disillusioned from the promises of God, go, how?

How have you loved us, God? The people have returned from exile that Malachi is speaking to. And when they returned, they expected to receive all of God's promised blessings.

They thought this was gonna be it. This was gonna be real party time. Only to find themselves vulnerable, poor, still subject to a Persian governor who had no care whatsoever for the Lord Almighty.

And so instead of looking inwards, instead of seeing what it is about them that they've got wrong, we see that they blame God. And tonight, we see that, that in their perception, they cloud their view of God.

[ 7 : 02 ] They despise God. They despise the way to God. And they despise the word of God. Let's dive into our passage together. If your Bibles are shut, you're gonna need to get them open.

We're on page 960, if they have fallen shut. Keep looking there. Keep reading it. Our first point this evening, though, the danger of despising the way to God.

Chapter 1, verses 6 to 14. You'll find that inside your service sheet if you got one of those in the way, and hopefully those will be a help to you. Contempt is all over our passage tonight.

Contempt for his name. Contempt for his table. Contempt for his food. They're even sniffing contemptuously at the Lord's table in verse 13.

Not sure I could sniff contemptuously if I tried. But this whole section is dripping with it. Contempt is everywhere. They have utter derision for the Lord and his temple.

[ 8 : 05 ] Utter derision for everything that he has called them to do. And there's much going on in our passage tonight. So I've created a simple equation for us to keep track of it all.

Firstly, we have a small view of God. You'll see that our graphics have gone significantly downhill from last week. Verse 6, read with me. A son honors his father and a slave his master.

If I'm a father, where is the honor due me? If I'm a master, where is the respect due to me? Says the Lord Almighty.

God created his people. He formed them. He rescued them out of slavery in a land, to a land of their own. He protected for them.

He provided for them. As an intimate father, he deserves their honor. And he's also their master. God not only walks with his people, but he reigns supremely above as well.

[ 9 : 12 ] And all of that is wrapped up in his name. His name Yahweh, or Lord in all caps, in your Bible in front of you. It's his covenant name.

His self-revelation to his people, of his character, of his nature, of what he is like. And his name carries weight. His great salvation of his people is wrapped up in it.

In Malachi, God is predominantly referred to as the Lord Almighty. It's the same word as other translations, but as the Lord of hosts. And it's this idea that he is all-powerful.

There's nothing that comes close to his power and his authority. He is the commander of hosts, of angel armies, who do his bidding. But God says his people have shown contempt for his name.

They have a small view of God. They ask how to that accusation. And God, verse 7 says, by offering defiled food on my altar.

[10:21] When the people returned from exile, they got back to the land. They rebuilt the temple. We see that in Ezra. And they resumed worship there. When it was first built by Solomon, we read in 2 Chronicles chapter 7, God saying, I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my name may be there forever.

My eyes and my heart will always be there. The temple is intimately linked with God and his name. It's where his people approach him.

It's where his people have atonement, where they are made right with him through sacrifice. His name is at the temple. And yet here is his people showing contempt and defiling his temple.

Actions speak louder than words and their actions declare, his table is contemptible in our eyes. It's not worth our consideration. For verse 8, look there with me.

When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong?

[11:33] Try offering them to your governor. Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? Says the Lord Almighty. They have such a small view of God, they have shrunk him down, that they don't even offer him what their regional governor would accept from them.

And so we add to their small view of God a small view of sin. It is not easy for sinful people to be with the Lord Almighty in relationship.

The whole sacrificial system at the temple was established to provide the people with a way to come to God. They brought offerings both to pay the price of their sins and as a continual fellowship offering in thankfulness to him.

And they needed to bring their best. The whole thing was set up to remind people of how big a problem their sin is. There were vivid reminders everywhere of how hard it is to be in relationship with the Holy Lord Almighty.

Yet, here they are bringing the lame, diseased, blind animals from the flock, the absolute runts of the flock that no one would want. And what you sacrifice to God says a lot about your understanding of the debt that you owe him.

[13:01] Will you give him your prized possessions or the unwanted gift left under the Christmas tree? Does my sin require a lamb who's no and no blemish or can I scrape a bit of roadkill off the A82 and bring it along and will that do?

When you combine a small view of God and a small view of sin, well, you get roadkill sacrifices. Their perception being that God's not that big, he's not that powerful.

Has he really done anything that really deserves that? Has he really loved me that much? Because if he's not that different, then my sin isn't too much of a problem.

The ways that I don't listen to him, the ways that I refuse to live as he calls me to live, my sin. Is it that much of a problem? I'll just scoop up the dying fox by the roadside.

I'll hope that it's still alive by the time I get to the temple. Sacrifice that. And then, well, it sounds like it's roast lamb for dinner, doesn't it? I'll keep that, a nice roast for me, myself and I.

[14:06] That fox cost me nothing. It's meaningless worship in some ways, isn't it? Such attitudes despise the way God made for them to be in relationship with him.

The sacrificial system, the temple, was a gracious gift from God. It was a way for them to come to him. But roadkill sacrifices, well, they make a mockery of God, make a mockery of his salvation, and a mockery of his holiness.

And from roadkill sacrifices, things spiral down to open defiance. The priests are profaning God's name in verse 11.

They're declaring the way to God to be a burden, sniffing contemptuously. They're even trying to cheat the Lord in verse 14. Maybe they thought that he wouldn't know.

Maybe they thought, well, he's not actually powerful enough to do anything about it. What a small view of God. And well, what's God's verdict?

[15:14] Well, verse 10, read that with me. God says, 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. Just stop it.

You're not fooling anybody. Your worship is useless. Shut the doors. Lock them out. God has no desire for empty words and offerings from people who despise his means of salvation.

And he doesn't need to suffer those who despise him in that way. Verse 11, he says, 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. the temple was meant to be this place where the nations flocked to, where they came to the temple and worshipped.

[16:29] It was meant to be the center point, the way to God. But now he's saying, if you're going to despise it, then I will make another way.

I don't need you to make my name great, he says. My name will be great among the nations in every place. incense and pure offerings will be brought to him.

The Lord is a great king over all of the nations. So he declares in verse 14, in his mercy he made a way for people to approach him.

And yet the priests and people despised it. Their perception conflicted with who God is and instead of changing themselves, they changed their understanding of him and of their sin.

they made him small and their sin problems small and they offered roadkill sacrifices and the Lord rejected them.

[17:29] And for us, sitting this side of Christ, this side of the promised Messiah, we mustn't despise our way to God. Jesus came and died as the perfect sacrifice, the lamb without blemish or stain who knew no wrong.

And in doing so, he made a new way to God so that we can be here in Scotland and approach him and worship his name. One that doesn't rely on making continual sacrifices, but relies on the Lord Jesus so that all who boot their trust in him really do have access to God.

and the price that Jesus paid for that was to drink the great cup of wrath of God deserving of sinners like you and me for our sin problem is really very great.

but our sacrifice in Jesus Christ is so much greater and we mustn't despise it by what we think, what we say or what we do.

Even though it looks unimpressive sometimes, even though our perception of it when we are thinking wrongly about things it might seem like nothing. We need to look inwards and remember how great our God is and how great the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18:52] For the people Malachi is speaking to things should never have gotten this far. Part of the priest's role was to guard the temple and to be the spiritual leaders of the people and to teach them you can't just worship God whatever way you want.

This is not a I guess that will do situation. It's an uncompromising rule. You must worship the holy God exactly as he tells you to for he is a holy God.

As temple guards when they saw a three-legged blind lamb hobbling up with a guy in full royal robes they should have said we're never ever sacrificing that.

Let me tell you about what our Lord God deserves. He deserves your very best. We will not sacrifice the runt of the flock. because it's not a case of that's better than nothing I guess.

But at the end of the day that takes real leadership doesn't it? To stand up to the people and go no that's not okay. Even though the prevailing public opinion seems to be that it is.

[20:11] It's unpopular. People who are bringing such sacrifices want to worship God in their own way and they're looking for tolerant leaders who will just let them do it.

Who won't try to make them stick to God's ways. But his end is rejection. There's a point at which a priest stops being a priest even if they still claim to be.

Abraham Lincoln is quoted to have said how many legs does a dog have if you call its tail a leg?

Well four just because you calling it a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.

And it's the same with our priests it's the same with churches. Just because a church calls themselves a church doesn't actually mean they're part of God's church.

They might meet in an old building they might be a part of a historic structure they might have church on the side of their building but unless they worship God on his terms and not their own they're not actually a church.

[ 21 : 23 ] Or a minister is not a minister just because they have the title reverend in front of them. They're only a leader of God's people if they bring people to God in the way that God tells them to.

Teaching them to give every area of their life to God because he is the Lord Almighty and we do not do it on our own terms. People who despise the way to God are not left in charge of God's people are not part of God's people.

And so we must pray for our leaders that they would keep on shepherding the flock, that they would keep on bringing people to God the way that God calls them to and avoid finding ourselves under leaders who don't do this, who despise the way to God.

If in time you find yourself thinking about leaving Glasgow, moving on from St. Silas to somewhere else, it's worth thinking about, is there a faithful gospel church that I can be a part of?

Are there leaders where I can sit under who do not despise the way to God, but help me to keep coming on God's terms to him? And if that option isn't there, I'd really encourage you to think again about, is that definitely the right option?

[ 22 : 49 ] Because we see in Malachi tonight that those who despise the way to God are really dangerous. But it's not just the way to God that the priests are despising, it's also the word of God.

chapter 2 verses 1 to 9, the danger of despising the word of God. We opened in prayer using the words of Psalm 19 declaring God's word to be more precious than gold and sweeter than honey, that in keeping them there is great reward.

But clearly the priests of Malachi's day don't agree. The crux in this part is that they won't honour him and they won't teach his word faithfully.

They won't even listen to God anymore, let alone obey his words. Look at verse 1 of chapter 2 with me. God says, and now you priests, this warning is for you.

If you do not listen and if you do not resolve to honour my name, says the Lord Almighty, I will send a curse on you and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them because you have not resolved to honour me.

[ 24 : 09 ] The priests won't listen and they won't honour God's name. Part of their role that they had been given by God was to bless God's people.

It was an important thing that they did. But now God says that because they despise him and his words, he will and already has begun to curse their blessings, to frustrate the works of their hands, to stop them from fulfilling this role and office that was given by God.

They won't listen, they won't accept the word of the Lord and so God rejects them. Verse 3, he says, because of you I will rebuke your descendants, I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices and you will be carried off with it.

Possibly the verse that grabbed you as we read it. God won't leave people who despise him in charge of his people. Priests in the Old Testament didn't sign up at their school careers day, and go I want to join the priesthood.

No, you had to go down family lines, you had to be a Levite to be a priest. And so God threatening to rebuke their descendants is a risk to the entire priesthood as they knew it.

[ 25 : 34 ] Especially if God is going to smear dung on their faces and carry them off. And dung is somewhat of a plight word for what's going to be smeared on their faces.

When an animal is sacrificed, not every part of it is burned. The entrails and the dung were unclean ceremonially, and so had to be carried off outside of the camp away from God's people so that they didn't defile anyone.

And just as the priests were defiling God's name, so God will defile them. He will smear dung on their faces and carry them away. They're not fulfilling their roles as priests, so God won't let them stay in that office.

This might seem harsh, but just look at verse 4. This is a warning to them through Malachi, giving them the chance to stop, giving them the chance to repent, to turn back to the Lord, to stop despising the way to him and his word, to keep the covenant with Levi.

What's that covenant, you ask? Well, God goes on to tell us everything that we need to know. Read with verse 5 with me. He says, my covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him.

[ 26 : 57 ] This called for reverence, and he revered me and stood in awe of my name. Well, there's something that's been missing in the book of Malachi so far. Someone revering God's name, reverence of the Lord.

You see, Levi had a right understanding of who God is, and from that he received life and peace. More than that though, verse 6, true instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips.

He walked with me in peace and uprightness and Levi turned many from sin. to him, the word of God really, truly was more precious than gold and sweeter than honey.

He taught it, he lived it out, and he turned many from sin, exactly as priests are meant to do. Verse 7, before the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty, and people seek instruction from his mouth.

Priests weren't just responsible for running the temple, but for reading and teaching God's word too. People sought instruction from them, from their mouths.

[ 28 : 19 ] They knew that they were the ones who should know God's word best. They are meant to be God's messengers. They are meant to teach his word, they are meant to act in it, just like Phineas in Numbers 25, who was zealous for the honor of the Lord, and from that he received a covenant of peace.

But these priests are an utter disaster, aren't they? They despise the word of God. Verse 8, they have turned from it and have caused many to stumble. Instead of leading them in uprightness, they have violated the covenant, they have turned themselves and taken many with them.

They've held a covenant in derision. Their leadership has had catastrophic consequences for the nation, teaching falsehoods rather than the true instruction that should have been on their lips.

They knew their responsibility but shirked it. And verse 9, because of their rejection of God's ways, God causes them to be despised and humiliated or will cause that.

They despised the word of God and violated the covenant, so God removed them. And what would this say to the people reading Malachi at the time for who it was written to?

[ 29 : 40 ] Well, I think it would say to them, man, we really need a different priest and another way. People who are stuck in a similar situation to when Malachi was speaking, waiting to hear from the Lord again.

we need another priest, a better priest, and we need a better way. And so let us give thanks that living this side of Jesus, that we don't have to worship under those priests, that Jesus is our better, great high priest, who is always there to bring us back into right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself gave of himself, that we might have that right relationship.

As I was preparing this, I read someone who suggested doing this. So let's read from verse 5, and I'll replace Levi with the Lord Jesus. God says, my covenant was with Jesus, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him.

This called for reverence, and Jesus revered me, and stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in Christ's mouth, and nothing false was found on his lips.

Christ walked with me in peace and uprightness, and truly turned many from sin. For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty, and people seek instruction from his mouth.

[ 31 : 16 ] Praise God for Jesus, our great high priest, the one that we really need. Jesus is set apart from sinners. He is a priest forever, and can save us all once for all time.

He is the better way to God, and assured of our salvation in him. Let us be really careful not to despise the way that he has made.

It's not a small thing, and so it doesn't deserve a small response. We need to respond to it with an acceptable offering of our whole lives, because God is our great king.

Here's a closing equation for you. We need a big view of who God is. We need a big view of our sin and our problem in it, but we need a bigger view of Jesus' sacrifice and our view of our sin, for he is so much better.

And when we have that, that leads to whole life sacrifice as a response to the goodness and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 32 : 25 ] The writer of Hebrews at the end of his letter exhorts his readers through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess his name, and do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices, God is

pleased.

The readers of Malachi longed for the day of the Messiah to bring a new way to be in relationship with God, and we have received that through Christ, and so we must respond in praise in all that we do, remembering just how great the Lord Almighty is, and just how great Christ's sacrifice to save us is, we do not despise him, we do not despise his word, but seek to live it out as faithful servants of him.

And so when we find ourselves thinking, should I really sacrifice all this for Christ? Should I really offer all of this? Do I really owe him this much? Am I sure it's not my perception that's right? And perhaps I need to change my view of God? We want to be thinking, well, God's word is always right, we do not despise it. So rather than offering meaningless roadkill sacrifices, we offer him our best in all that we do.

Such is our debt and such is our hope in Christ that even when it's hard to square our perception with God's word, we can trust and respond that he is a great king and he has provided a great salvation, salvation, whether it be with our time, skills, money, job or reputation, secure in the promises of the Lord Almighty, we give of ourselves a sacrifice of praise.

[ 34 : 19 ] It would be a great thing to, before you leave, turn and chat to someone afterwards about one way that you could offer a sacrifice of praise in your current situation to the Lord.

It would be a great thing to do after the service, but for now, let's pray and then we'll sing in response. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a mighty king who is all-powerful and we praise you that you have made a way for us to be in relationship with you despite our very real sin problem.

Help us in all that we think, say, and do to be responding to Christ's sacrifice with our own sacrifice of praise and we pray that you would protect us from ever trying to change who you are in hard times.

But instead, we would cling to your promises of the new creation still to come. Amen.