

JCI #170 March 2016

Just Checking In

The Rebuke that Restores - Malachi 3:6; 3:16-4:2

(You can listen to these messages on the web at www.bbcpa.org - scroll down to Message Archive and click on the archive link and you can listen to the four part series by Dan Francis and Ron Berrus)

The Old Testament ends with the call of God through the Prophet Malachi bringing God's rebuke to Israel with the desire to restore them to fellowship with Himself. The Old Testament ends with a rebuke to Israel (Malachi) even as the New Testament ends with a rebuke to the church (Revelation 2-3 The Seven Churches) . The message and the motive are both the same... A rebuke to restore cold hearts. *Malachi 3:6-7 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O sons of Jacob, are not destroyed. 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."* *Revelation 3:19-20 "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*

If God loves us enough to rebuke us,

it's because He loves us enough to restore us.

Malachi begins with a declaration of God's love for a cold hearted people.

Malachi 1:2 "I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?"

Six times the Lord speaks to His people and every time they respond with an offended, defensive, cold-hearted attitude. The rebukes center around four symptoms: Cold hearts, changing God's laws, broken vows, and minimal offerings. Each one is a symptom of an inner distance from God. The heart that is cold and distant from God is a heart that is on a lethal path to self-destruction. The people in Malachi's day were disappointed with God, dissatisfied with His leading, resentful of His requirements, and callous towards their families. Life had become completely self-centered and the Lord called out for immediate repentance. We see the same symptoms in Revelation.

Cold Hearts - Malachi 2:1-5 Revelation 2:4

Changed Laws - Malachi 1:6-2:9 Revelation 2:14-16

Broken Vows - Malachi 2:10-16 Revelation 2:20-23

Minimal Offerings - Malachi 2:17-3:15 Revelation 3:1-3

God warns Israel to come back before He comes! Malachi 3:1-6

God warns the church to come back before He comes! Revelation 3:18-22

We need to heed the ancient warnings and listen to the voice of God who rebukes in love so He can restore in love. God loves us too much to ignore our cold hearts.

The book of Malachi is significantly different from the other prophetic books in that it ends with a restored remnant who listen to God's rebuke and return with humble hearts. It is a glorious insight into both the immediate results of responding to God's rebuke with humility as well as promises of even greater blessings awaiting.

Malachi 3:16-17 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. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.

None of the other prophets ends with this personal note of immediate repentance and restoration. Wonderful promises are given to those who will repent, but there is not account of any who do. But Malachi ends with the wonderful account of those who listen and are restored.

Restored Fellowship Malachi 3:16a

"Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other!"

When our fellowship with God is restored, we love and long for the fellowship of other forgiven and restored sinners.

I John 1:7 "If we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."

God's Delight Malachi 3:16b-17

...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. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him."

God not only records our failures, He also records our fellowship!

Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of the books that record our sinful deeds.

Colossians 2:13-14 reminds us that the blood of Christ has blotted out our transgressions so our sins are no longer held against us.

Malachi 3:16 tells us that God also records that fellowship which delights Him. He pays close attention and records it when His people speak to one another about His grace and goodness. God calls us His treasured possession. Amazing! His love for us is so strong and constant that even though He just rebuked us He immediately reminds us that we are His treasure. There is no love like the love of God in Christ! He stands at the door and knocks, calling us to open the door and return to intimate fellowship once more.

Full Healing Malachi 4: 2a

"But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings."

The word picture describes the sun rising from behind a mountain range. The stands of sunlight stream out over the mountain peaks like an eagle's wings. And every shaft of light brings healing to all it touches. When Christ comes, all will be fully restored. Full healing of our bodies... glorified. Full healing of our souls...sinless. Full healing of our minds...purified. Full healing of our environment... new heaven and earth. Full healing of our memories... no regrets, shame, or sorrow. Full healing of everything..."Behold, I make all things new!" Revelation 21:5 We have never known this kind of full and everlasting healing, but we will!

Complete Joy Malachi 4:2b

“And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.”

Only a farm boy can appreciate this imagery. The farm I grew up on had 70 cows. We timed their breeding so they would give birth mostly between January and March. That way we had the most milk at the time we had the most bills due! We sold most of the calves to stock dealers, but we would always keep the heifer calves, usually 8 to 12 every winter. Now when they were born, we immediately tied them up with bailer twine to rings in the wall at the end of the barn. It was my job as a boy to rake out the manure, put clean straw down every night, and feed them twice a day. They were never released all winter long. They stayed tied up with about 3 feet of cord day and night. But when Spring finally came, we would take them out to a small 2 acre pasture just outside the doors. We would lead them out, and then cut the cords and let them loose. At first they just stood there in shock. They had never walked that far in their lives. They had never been outside, and they had never been free. They would take a step or two before they realized there was nothing holding them back. Then they would trot a few steps. Then they would take off running, leaping, bucking like a bronco, and darting all over the pasture. They were finally free. They had never known this freedom before. Neither have you or I. Oh, we are forgiven. We are cared for. We are accepted in Christ. We are His children. We are blessed beyond measure. But we have never known the kind of freedom that awaits us. (1Corinthians 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him") We have lived our whole lives stuck in a sin-broken body, tied to a sin-cursed world, and shrouded by a sin-tortured mind. We have no idea of the freedom that awaits us. But God does! And He tells us in graphic language of what it will be like when we do! What an awesome God we serve! He is so loving, so patient, so caring, so sweet, so faithful, so true, so dependable, so honest, so constant, and so wonderful!

Self-check

- 1) Has my heart grown cold and distant from the Lord?
- 2) Am I quickly responding to the Savior's knocking when I've crowded Him out of my overly busy and distracted life?

- 3) Am I grateful that God by His Spirit rebukes me regularly every time I sin?
- 4) Do I realize that His rebuke is clear evidence of His love for me?

For Further Study:

Examine the rebukes in the book of Malachi and also in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and list and record the heart issues dealt with. Times may change of hearts don't!

“Lord, thank You for loving me enough to never give up on me; for loving me enough to rebuke me; for loving me enough to pursue me; for loving me enough to restore me; for loving me enough to not give up on me. Your love is indescribable! Give me a tender and rebukeable heart that responds quickly to Your rebuke. I am so grateful that You consider me a treasure. I sure don't understand why, but I am so very thankful that You do. And I long for the day when I will see You and be with You forever face to face. I pray in Your gracious and glorious name, Amen.”

Remember, you are very special to us and we pray for you.

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4

Ron& Val

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable,
changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible
with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows,
spending our time on eternity,
owning nothing yet possessing everything
that matters and lasts.
We are Pilgrims in Paradox.
Welcome to THE JOURNEY