

# The Consequence of the Sin of the Priesthood without Repentance

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Date: 26 February 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to start chapter 2 tonight.

! It really picks up from where we left off in chapter 1.! Recall that God has been really dealing with the priesthood! and how they have conducted themselves in the ministry that God had called them to perform.

And in essence, what they then have been doing to the Lord as they did that. They were offering, remember, perverted sacrifices, lame animals and things such as that, profaning the altar of God, and thus desecrating God, defiling God Himself.

Recall that he talked about the bread of God. Of course, the Scripture in the Old Testament speaks of the bread of God as that offering that was offered on the altar to God, and that in essence was the bread of God.

And by offering defiled sacrifices, they were defiling God because the law of God said anyone that ate anything defiled was themselves defiled.

[ 1 : 28 ] So there was a picture of them defiling God by the sacrifices that they were offering. Remember, they even snuffed at the service of God.

They were saying this is a wearisome thing to us. Doing the same thing day after day after day in a routine form and fashion became a wearisome thing to them.

Boring, if you will. We'll use our terminology. And so God rebukes them for having that type of attitude that just enabled them or caused them to do the things they were doing in profaning the service of God that God had called them to.

So God continues that train of thought anyway as far as dealing with the priests are concerned. So let's read together the first four verses of chapter 2.

And he says, And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.

[ 2 : 42 ] Yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it.

And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. One of the things I find interesting after having gone through the book of Jeremiah for quite a while is the repetition, not just in the book of Jeremiah, but now even in the book of Malachi, the same thing he had to say to the kingdom of Judah, earlier than that, the entire nation of Israel, if you'll stop doing the things that you're doing, if you'll stop the sin, repent of that, and return to me, then I will withdraw my judgment against you.

Says the same thing in essence here. If you'll stop doing the things that you're doing, that I'm instructing you about, then I will be able to withhold my judgment upon you.

But if you don't stop doing that, I'm going to have to bring that judgment against you. You would think that history would show, or history would teach us a lesson, amen, about what to take place, or what's taken place in the past, what God had to do as a result of that, and because the judgment against Israel and Judah were tremendous.

And now God says here in Malachi, to the priesthood to begin with, that you're perverting my sacrifices, you're profaning me, so you need to stop it.

[ 4 : 37 ] And if you do, it'll be well with you. If you don't, I'm going to have to judge you. And so that's what he begins to say here. Now, oh, you priests, this commandment is for you.

The commandment. God threatens the priest here. He begins the threat to the priest as we begin the chapter. The commandment, or the command, is called a mitzvah. It's not an instruction, not an admonition or a warning. A mitzvah is something that is applied about something that God's going to do.

He's resolved himself to do to a particular person. The execution or accomplishment of what he's determined. And he brings that about by human instruments.

All right? God uses individuals. All right? To deal his justice with the people he's dealing with. Now, the punishment is only to be carried out in the cases, in case the priest do not repent of their sins.

[ 5 : 42 ] If they do not change what they're doing and lay it to heart, the warning that God gives them, and then turn around and honor God and bring glory to him, sanctify his name in the service that they are performing in the name of Jehovah, which he has called them to.

Again, verses 2 through 4. If you will not hear and if you will not lay it to heart to give glory unto my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have cursed them already because you do not lay it to heart. And I will stop there in just a moment. Take note of something with me here. God said, if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, in essence, in what you're doing, in the service to the Lord that you're performing daily, if you don't lay it to heart to bring glory and honor to me in doing that, then here's what's going to happen.

We must be careful, mustn't we? That's a word, isn't it? Mustn't? Yeah. Not musky, but mustn't. We've got to be careful in our service to the Lord.

I think sometimes one of the worst things a church can do is to hand a microphone to somebody. Amen?

[ 7 : 11 ] I mean, the handheld kind. What happens? Just something about that microphone. Amen? That says, I've got to perform.

I've got to perform. Or I've got to draw people's attention to myself. Now, don't misunderstand me because our music guy's just coming in.

But... But, you know, there are people that can hold a microphone in their hand and honor the Lord with it.

They do that. But so many times, I just look at people that are doing things in the name of worshiping God or honoring God and it's a show and it's honoring themselves.

And it's not just music. It's in everything we do. Teaching, preaching, and whatever means we serve God through the local body.

[ 8 : 12 ] We've got to be sure that with our heart, we are doing what we know to do to honor God, bring glory to Him and glory to His name.

All right? And not to be, not to be focusing any attention upon ourselves. Scripture says, God's a jealous God and He will not share His glory with anyone.

that's why, that's why, I don't, I'm not going to ride a hobby horse here, but I'm also going to throw it out here. That's why I don't applaud in church.

Mm-mm. Mm-mm. If we're going to sing, we sing to honor and bring glory to God. I should not want any praise. It's interesting, isn't it?

We have, this is not anti-music night, Dan, by the way. You know, it's interesting that people will applaud music, whether it's the choir singing, whether it's, it's an individual singing, a solo, whether it's a pianist playing, special music, people will applaud.

[ 9 : 26 ] But I've not heard anybody applaud the preaching. Amen? See what I'm saying? Yeah. Now don't do that Sunday. I'll be gone, but don't, don't applaud Dan, or Dan, don't applaud Pastor Mike, because he'll not know what's going on.

But, but what I'm, see what I'm saying, see what I'm saying. We've got to be careful that we're not bringing praise and honor and glory to someone, but that it's strictly bringing praise and honor and glory to the Lord.

We're not here to perform. We're here to worship, and we're here to bring glory and honor to the Lord our God. All right. So that's what he tells the priests in chapter, verses two and three of chapter two.

He said, if you not lay it to heart to give glory unto my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessing. Yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart.

Behold, I will corrupt your seed and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it. You shall know that I have sent this commandment or this mitzvah unto you, that my covenant might be with the Levites, saith the Lord of hosts.

[10:45] So, if they fail to heed what God is saying, then he's going to send the curse. And the curse comes to them in two different ways. First of all, he's going to curse their blessings. And the idea, of course, in fact, he says he's already done so.

The blessings of the priests are not the things that they receive. It's not their portions of the offering, not their portion of the animal sacrifices, but it's the blessings that the priests themselves pronounce on behalf of or upon the people that they do on a daily basis.

God said, I'm going to, in fact, I already have, cursed those blessings. That was the job they were to do in virtue of their office.

But God said, I've already cursed them and will continue to do so. The idea is not just the general blessing, but each individual blessing that they pronounce for individuals, every single one.

God pushes the delete button. All right? Nullifies. Nullifies. Anything that was brought before them, before him, on their benefit or on their behalf, rather.

[12:15] So, he said, that's what I'm going to do to your blessings. Now, secondly, God says he's going to corrupt or rebuke the seed. Now, a lot of different ideas about what the seed literally is here.

Of course, he's not a farmer. The priests weren't farmers. So it's not the idea of God cursing the crops of anyone. There are some that interpret that as being the idea of the offsprings of the priests, sons and daughters, particularly sons in the priesthood.

But there are others that believe, and I think this more likely and rightly fits the context of what he's saying here, that say they believe that the idea of the seed is a picture of the arm.

You realize rebuking the arm does not mean hurting it physically or bringing some kind of damage to it. It's the idea that the arm is what a man uses to perform the work that he does.

So the idea here then could be that God is going to rebuke the things that are used, laming the arm, the things that are used, in their service to the Lord.

[13:33] So it's the idea of neutralizing the official duties that they perform in the priesthood at the altar and in the sanctuary that God has called them to do.

Now, something else here. God will also deliver them up to the most contemptuous treatment by scattering dung in their faces, namely, the dung of their feasts, the festival sacrifices, those animal sacrifices slain at the various festivals they have.

The dung of those animals was always to be carried away to an unclean place outside of the camp and burned there. In the case of the sin offerings, they were to be taken upon an ash heap and burned upon the ash heap.

I'll never forget when I was pastoring a church in Claremore. From time to time, we had some dairy farmers in our church. From time to time, I would go help them milk cows.

They just laughed at me because I had been a city kid all my life and never milked a cow. I'd never made butter, never milked a cow. I would go and help them milk cows, but of course, they had the milking machines, so we just used that.

[15:01] I'll never forget the time that my wife was a country girl, my first wife. She was a country girl. She knew all about milking cows and churning butter and everything. She showed me how I could make butter.

We would buy, we would go out to the edge of town in Claremore and there was a dairy farm out there that would sell whole milk by the gallons in the big wide mouth gallon jars.

We'd go out there from time to time and get some. She showed me. She said, of course, the milk fat always rose to the top. She said, here, just skim some of that and put that in that jar, a little baby food jar, and just shake it up.

So I did that and I just kept shaking and kept shaking and voila, butter. Squeezed some of the residue milk out of it and you had butter.

I did that and I went back to church that next Sunday morning and I said, you guys never guess what I did. I said, I made butter. And they just chuckled, you know, they chuckled.

[16:08] But one of the nastiest things about working on that dairy farm and helping milk the cows was that, you know, you had the portion of the barn, the milk barn where you brought the cows in, hooked the machines up to them and drew the milk out.

But just outside of that where all the cows waited for their turn to come into the stalls was a big old slab and I forget what they called it.

I don't think it was the pit. But anyway, you can realize what cows do when they're waiting to get inside. And so from time to time that had to be cleaned off.

The only, because there was big fence, big metal pipe fence around it, the only way to clean it off was with a scoop shovel and just fun.

Smell good. Yeah. Very aromatic. Yeah. Dirtiest job I believe I'd ever done. But anyway, God says here, you know, same thing, same idea here.

[ 17 : 23 ] Those sacrificial animals, the dung that they dropped had to be cleaned off of the place and taken. It was taken outside the camp of Israel, outside the city gates, and there it was burned in a particular place, away from everything.

God said, I'm going to spread that on the face of the priests because of what they have done. I'm going to spread that upon you, the dung of your festal animals, and place it on your face.

and as such then, he said, you are going as well to be then considered as dung. And the same thing done with you.

They're going to take you away with the dung that is upon you. So that's pretty contemptible, isn't it? Man, that's the picture that God paints in his heart and mind over what the priests are doing in defiling the worship of the people of God as they supposedly come to honor him.

So you see the picture here that God paints of how he sees and how he looks at the idea of people profaning the worship of their righteous and holy God.

[ 18 : 52 ] Now, strongest essence of that is that the people will carry you away or sweep you away with the dung and treat you just like the dung.

Now, so he says, when that happens, you will perceive then that that threat that I gave you did literally come from me.

He said in verse four, you shall know that I have sent this mitzvah or this commandment unto you. Now, the purpose of it is revealed.

The purpose of that threat that he makes to the priest is revealed in verse or the rest of the verse, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

So my purpose is that my covenant will be with Levi. Levi. So they'll perceive that just as Jehovah has up to now regulated his conduct towards Levi by the terms of the covenant he made with them when he brought him into the priesthood and made his, you know, Aaron and all of those and the tribe of Levi, the tribe from which the priest would come.

[ 20 : 13 ] That God then in that established a covenant with them and has regulated the terms of that covenant from that time. So now from this point he said his conduct will be regulated not by the covenant with Levi but by the terms of the terms of the degree of punishment that he will now bring upon the priesthood because of their sin unless they repent.

So the attitude of God towards the priest called the covenant in respect to God having placed them in the special relationship with them.

Realize with me they had no, they were unlike any other tribe of Israel. Every other tribe of Israel had an inheritance in the land and of the land but the tribe of Levi did not.

God placed them in a special position and in such he placed upon them special privileges and blessings and the greatest of all of that is God himself was to be their inheritance.

So that gives you a picture of the heart and mind of God toward the Levites, toward Levi and his descendants who would all serve in the priesthood.

[ 21 : 43 ] but now that has been changed because of the ungodliness and wickedness of the priests that Malachi speaks of here.

Now, what was the nature of that covenant with Levi? It's in verses 5 through 7 of chapter 2. My covenant was with him of life and peace and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me and was afraid before my name.

Now, God really begins to get to the crux of the matter here with the present-day priesthood that he's writing to. The nature of the covenant that we saw in verses 5 through 7, he gives in order to explain the reason for thinking of it all.

Verses 8 and 9 reveal the justification for that covenant. He says, showing the priests have neutralized the covenant by forsaking the way of their fathers.

God is obligated then to act differently towards them now and deliver them up to shame and disgrace. He said, my covenant was with them of life and peace.

[ 23 : 03 ] Literally, the life and the peace. that which alone is true life and true peace. That was his covenant with Levi.

My covenant was with him life. A covenant of life and salvation is the idea. My covenant consisted in this, that life and salvation were guaranteed and granted to him.

Shalom, the salvation, peace, is the sum of all the blessings that are requisite for well-being in a person's life. And that's what he guaranteed in the covenant with Levi.

Granted life and salvation to the priesthood and he did that for fear. Now, Levi and the priesthood of all time responded to God's intention.

How did they respond to that? They feared him. They feared him. Now, it's not the kind of fear, of course, that we think of being afraid of someone. But it's the reverential fear that comes by realizing and understanding who he is.

[ 24 : 17 ] God said, and he feared me and was afraid before my name, in verse 5. Again, not the servile kind of fear, but really the kind of fear that children should have to their parents.

All right? Anybody, you all feared your parents, right? At least one of them? The one that had the belt or cut the biggest switch?

Yeah. You loved them. You weren't afraid of them, per se, but you had that type of fear for them or fear of them because you knew who they were.

Now, how many, we were all guilty of saying it, but we were guilty of saying it because we heard our parents say it. You tell your kids to do something, and they said, why?

And the response would be, because I'm your dad and I said so. Right? Yeah. Yeah. So that if they didn't do what you're told to, and you took the board of education upon the place of learning, then they knew that it was dad or mom.

[ 25 : 41 ] My mom never used a belt on us. She never spanked us. Dad did. Mom didn't have to. She was a softie. We could get by with a lot of things with her. My dad, you couldn't.

Anyway, until the fact that, well, I'm not going to go with enough of that. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Oscar knew my dad, so I can't say anything else about that.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But having that reverential fear for God, Levi had that. All right? And so that was a problem in Jeremiah's day and carried on to the day of Malachi.

I don't remember how many hundreds of years difference there was in that time span. And we still have it today, do we not? Of course, America is not a covenant nation with God.

You know, that's just not a picture. But people have lost a reverential fear of God. And that's brought the world to the point it's in today.

[ 26 : 56 ] They don't recognize who he is. They don't recognize what he is. They don't know him. And that causes men, they think, the freedom to just do what they want to do and believe they can do.

Isaiah chapter 8 verses 12 and 13 said, Fear you not the fear, the fear of this people, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Proverbs 13, 13, He who feareth the commandments of God will be rewarded. Levi had this fear, both as a priest, but also in his personal life.

All right? Really, I don't think he can have that. He couldn't have it as a priest if he didn't have it in his personal life. All right? That same fear of God and the same thing goes for us.

Verse 6 says, The law of truth was in his mouth and iniquity was not found in his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity and did turn many away from iniquity.

[ 28 : 11 ] The law of truth that was in his mouth is the instruction in the law that consisted in truth. All right? So it's truth that had its roots in the law of God. That, again, was the rule of his personal conduct and his rule as a priest as well in his life as a priest.

Now, the opposite of truth is iniquity, perversity, and conduct which is not regulated by the law of God, but by selfishness and sinful self-interests.

And they said of Levi, they found not perversity in him. So he walked in peace, that's the salvation, and integrity before God.

God, that God had developed within him. And with me, he walked. What a statement, amen, from God himself.

He walked with me. Same thing that Enoch did, Enoch did. Yeah. I found it interesting over in Genesis 5, 22, talking about Enoch.

[ 29 : 23 ] Enoch. And a statement was made after Methuselah was born, of course, that was the son of Enoch. After Methuselah was born, Enoch walked with God 300 years.

And I'm thinking, what about the 65 years prior to Methuselah's birth? You know, I just thought that was an interesting statement, you know. Yeah. But the idea of walking with God, having a life so disciplined that God could serve you, he walked with me.

And that's what Levi did. Boy, look at the contrast. Look at the contrast of the life of Levi with whom God had made that covenant with the priesthood of life and peace compared to the priests of the day of Malachi that he's having to deal with severely here.

What a contrast that there is. But God brings that to their attention. Now, so Levi's life was faithful in the discharge of his duty and his calling as a priest.

And as a result, many were brought back from guilt or iniquity, back from sin to righteousness, back to a fear of the Lord. So it says, and he did turn many away from iniquity.

[ 30 : 52 ] He did nothing more than what the office of the priest required. All right? For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Now, they should seek the knowledge, the knowledge of the will of God as revealed in the law of God. They should seek that from the priests.

And the lips of the priest should keep that, to instruct the people in that, for out of his mouth of the priest, the men seek the law, the instructions in the will of God.

Now, the failure of the priesthood, verse 8, you have departed out of the way. You have caused many to stumble at the law.

You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Now, the idea of bringing perverted sacrifices was not the only issue God had with these men, with these priests.

[ 32 : 00 ] you have departed out of the way, that is, out of the knowledge, truth, equity, and fear of God. And you have caused many to stumble at the law.

Now, notice he didn't say stumble in the law, but at the law. So, the law was what they stumbled at. They not only misunderstood the law, and that came through the false teaching of the priests, because they were allowing the things which in themselves were really sins, but the priesthood were allowing those as if there was nothing wrong with that.

So, the law itself was their source of stumbling. Just like Jesus was a rock of offense, wherein the people stumbled, so likewise the law became an offense to the people in Malachi's day.

And that came through the unholiness and inconsistencies of the lives and ways of those that taught the law and taught the people. So, it was in that way they've corrupted and overthrown the covenant with Levi, so God's no longer bound by that covenant to them.

Same thing happened in Jeremiah's day. The life of many of the priests were ungodly lives.

[ 33 : 29 ] people and stop and think about it just a minute. Here are the men that are to teach the people the law of God. They're to walk with God, but their lives were just completely opposite of what they should be.

The people see that. What's the old saying, what's good for the goose is good for the gander? Yeah. Well, if the priests can do that, then it ought to be all right for me to engage in that same sin or that same lifestyle.

And so they did. And so the nation was continually corrupt before God. God withdraws from the priest those things that he granted to Levi.

And so instead of that covenant with Levi or his relationship with the priesthood governed by the covenant with Levi, it is now governed by his dealings with them in judgment.

All right? So God makes them contemptible before contemptible and base with all the people in verse nine. We find that. The word contemptible here is to despise, to hold in contempt, to disdain, and base is low and humble.

[ 34 : 53 ] So that's what God's made them in the eyes of the people. Just recompense then for what they have done in turning away from being the men of God that they should be.

they were despised as well by the people. Their preaching was disregarded. I find it interesting that there was a passage in Jeremiah when I don't remember if King Jehoiakim, which king it was, in dealing with Jeremiah that he said, made a statement, something to the effect that, because one of

them was wanting to, some of them were wanting to take Jeremiah and put him to death, or put him in prison at least.

And he said, well just go ahead and do what you want to with him. I have no power with the counselors, which were equivalent to the president's cabinet in our day.

I have no power with him whatsoever. just a figurehead with no power. That's what you see in the priesthood here. They're holding the office, but that's all.

And God made them despised in the eyes of the people. Where have I loved you? He tells them. You've defiled me. How have we defiled you?

[ 36 : 22 ] This is how. Thank you.