

# Building in Vain

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week, again, we began our study in Malachi in chapter 1, after we've done the introduction.

! Remember that God opens the letter by really showing! What his intent is, and he simply says, I have loved you, saith the Lord. He's talking to his covenant people, I have loved you. We began looking at that idea of God's love for his covenant people, and then, of course, mentioned that as far as his love for us as well.

Their response to that, remember, was interesting as far as the way Malachi puts an answer to that or a response to that that speaks of the real attitude of the people of God, the covenant nation of God at that point of their history.

Wherein have you loved us? How is it you have manifest your love to us as your people? How have you done that? As if to say they weren't really acknowledging or weren't really recognizing those times when God did things in their lives for them, to them, through them, and in them, all of those things.

So God really kind of opens the page for them there, and for us too, as to what type of things does God do to manifest his love for us?

[ 1 : 49 ] So let's just read again to begin with the first five verses of chapter 1 of Malachi's prophecy. The burden of the word of the Lord, notice it's Jehovah, to Israel by Malachi.

I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet you say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, saith the Lord? Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, they shall build, but I will throw down. They shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever.

And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, the Lord will be magnified from the border, or really over the border of Israel, is the idea there.

Now God's response. Here's how I've loved you. Remember Esau and Jacob. We looked at that last week. Jacob and Esau being the twin boys in the womb of their mother, struggling even in the mother's womb, fighting each other.

[ 3 : 15 ] Esau, when he's born, as he was born, Jacob reaches up to hold his heel to try to hinder him from being born. And then after he was born, of course, Jacob was born.

But God had already said in this mix-up of the two boys, the younger will rule over the older. And so that's the picture that he paints here. Remember Esau and Jacob, the brothers.

He said, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau. Now again, I really have to believe here, and I think it's not a good point for us to spend a lot of time on that idea of God loving Jacob and hating Esau.

I think what we really need to recognize again is what God is going to do in the midst of that and what's going to happen. I really believe what we see here is the nature and character of Esau being carried on through his seed down the line to the people that become the Edomites.

Remember who they were and what happened to them and what I think caused God's anger, if you will, or hatred to really come against that people.

[ 4 : 43 ] In Numbers chapter 20, turn there just a minute, just refresh our minds. Numbers chapter 20. God has delivered Israel, the covenant people, from Egypt, from the bondage they were in, in Egypt.

And so they were traveling on the way to Canaan. And we find in verse 14 of Numbers chapter 20, Now again, notice how he speaks.

He said, this comes from your brother. All right? Again, it's the idea of the twin relationship here. Thou knowest all the travail that has befallen us, how our fathers went down into Egypt. We have dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians vexed us and our fathers. And we cried unto the Lord, cried unto Jehovah, and he heard our voice and sent an angel and hath brought us forth out of Egypt.

And behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country. We will not pass through the fields or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells.

[ 6 : 18 ] We will go by the king's highway. We will not turn to the right hand nor to the left until we have passed thy borders. And Edom said unto him, thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

So you see the animosity here still against the seed of Jacob. And the children of Israel said unto him, we will go by the highway, and if I and my cattle drink any of thy water, then I will pay for it. I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet. And he said, thou shalt not go through. Edom came out against him with much people and with a strong hand.

Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through this border. Wherefore Israel turned away from him. And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came unto Mount Hor.

So you see the characteristic there of the people of Edom. The character, the character. Just the same as Esau. Remember, you know, Esau was upset because Jacob had stolen the blessing of his father of the firstborn.

[ 7 : 40 ] But you go back a little earlier than that. Remember when Esau was out hunting? Came back hungry, about to die, he said.

Jacob was sitting there, you know, stirring up a pot of stew he was making. Esau said, give me some of that stew because I'm about to die here.

And Jacob took advantage of it and said, make you a deal. Sell me your birthright and I'll give you something to eat. Well, it didn't take much.

Esau said, fine, that sounds like a good deal. I'll do that. Gives it the idea that Esau had no interest in the spiritual things that pertained to the seed of Jacob.

Or the seed of Israel, rather, I'm sorry. Of Abraham, Isaac. Isaac is what I'm trying to say. Isaac. That covenant relationship that was passed down from Abram to Isaac and then would be passed down to Jacob.

[ 8 : 49 ] Esau as the firstborn rightfully should have received that. But he didn't care. So he had no spiritual inclination about that at all. So when Jacob goes in and steals the birthright or steals the blessing, rather, from Esau, the blessing that the father Isaac gives him, and he's upset to the point he's ready to put Jacob to death, I don't believe it's because of the spiritual heritage that lied in or that laid in that blessing of Esau.

I think it was more so the traditional aspect that the firstborn is to get the double portion and all of those things, and the blessing of dead upon that would include all of that.

It was more earthy material things, I believe, that Esau was interested in than anything spiritual. So you see that here then, transferred to the people of Edom.

Now, take a look, if you will, once again, in verse 4, whereas Edom says, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down. They shall call them the borders of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever.

[ 10 : 17 ] However, consider the fact in their history, it's not just the Edomites that have their country destroyed, and their buildings and cities torn down.

Israel did too. Judah did too. Northern kingdom by Assyria, the southern Judah by Babylon.

Babylon, Babylon more than likely, is the same one that came and destroyed the Edomites. But the difference is, and here's the difference, here's how I have loved you, Israel.

Jerusalem is restored, rebuilt. The city walls are rebuilt. The temple's rebuilt after the captivity.

The Edomites never survived. They may have rebuilt, but God would tear it down. Rebuilt, God would tear it down to the point there's nothing left.

[ 11 : 28 ] So you see the distinction there. God loved them, and that's the way they, he manifests that love to them. Now also in verse 5, your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, the Lord will be

magnified over the border of Israel.

Jehovah who is enthroned or rules over the border of Israel is great. He makes known his greatness to men by the things that he does in demonstration of the power that he has resided within himself.

That's how he shows his greatness. Now he did that, of course, to the descendants of Esau, the Edomites.

God proved that, that he was powerful and great and mighty. Now, Jacob goes, Jacob, Malachi goes on in verse 6 and following.

Let's read on here just a minute. A new point here. A son honoreth his father and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where's my honor?

[ 12 : 41 ] If I be a master, where's my fear, saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name? And you say, wherein have we despised thy name?

You have, you offer polluted bread upon mine altar, and you say, wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible.

And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor.

Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts? And now I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us, that this has been by your means.

Will he regard your persons, saith the Lord of hosts? Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? Neither do you kindle fire on mine altar for naught.

[ 13 : 42 ] I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts. Neither will I accept an offering at your hand. Now, he addresses the priesthood here, but it's not just the idea of the priesthood.

You've got to realize that the character of the people of Israel here possess the same mindset. The display of contempt for the Lord by the priesthood is what he speaks of here.

And of course, it applies to the entire nation. After the captivities, when Israel came back, the real heart and soul of the nation was really formulated through the priesthood or in the priesthood, if you will.

So Malachi here uses, as he deals with the priests and what they've done in considering service to the Lord as contemptible, he uses a couple of things here that's that's that acknowledge truth with the people of Israel.

A son gives honor to his father. All right? I mean, in Israel, that was a given. The son honors his father.

[ 14 : 58 ] Likewise, a servant honors his master. So when Malachi lays this down before them, nobody's going to question that. That's a given among them.

They realize that. But they fail to realize and recognize that in that, the position of God with them is the same. But yet, as they would honor their father and the slave honor his master, they were not honoring the Lord.

Now, in Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 6, Jehovah is called the father of Israel in the song of Moses insomuch that he created and trained Israel to be his covenant nation.

That passage says, Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath brought thee or bought thee?

Hath he not made thee and established thee? So they considered God, Jehovah, as their father and rightfully so. In Isaiah 63, 16, we find the same thing.

[ 16 : 11 ] Jehovah is called the father of Israel insomuch that he is their redeemer. So, as father, then God is also Lord or master of the nation, which he has made then his possession.

He owns them. If he's a father then, where in the world is the honor that is due him from his people? And if he's a lord or master, where's the fear that the servant owes his lord? That's due him as well.

But where is that is the question he asks here.

Now, in order to show the priest that they do just the opposite of this, Malachi calls them despisers of the name of Jehovah. Can you imagine as they're sitting here listening to what Malachi says to them?

They're just scratching their head. they have no clue of the degree to which they have gone in their response to and their attitude toward Jehovah God, their God.

[ 17 : 23 ] They have no idea. Now, he says, they are despisers of the name of Jehovah or of the glory of God that he has manifest to Israel.

Now, he strengthens that statement by providing and proving that they exhibit this contempt in their service before the altars of God or the altar of God.

And, of course, here again, they will not admit that they have done that, that this is true. And so, that contempt was seen in the fact that what he says is that they have offered corrupted or polluted bread upon the altar of Jehovah.

Of course, the bread that he talks about there, seen in Leviticus 21, is the sacrificial flesh that's offered unto the Lord. It's the bread of God, if you will, the scripture calls it.

Now, the food was seen as polluted, as blemished, not so much because as they offered the sacrifice, their heart was unclean.

[ 18 : 34 ] That's not the idea here. The idea literally is that they offered animal sacrifices that were blemished. They were not freed from any infirmity here.

They were affected with corruption. Now, they did that before the Lord. They did that, offered that to the Lord in disobedience to what the Old Testament law said over in Leviticus chapter 22 and verses 20 and 25.

Here's what he says. Now, let's go to verse 17. The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons and to all the children of Israel and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel or the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows and for all his free will offerings, which they will offer unto Jehovah for a burnt offering, ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish of the herd, of the sheep, or of the goats.

But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer, for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offering unto Jehovah to accomplish his vow, or free will offering in herds or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted, to be accepted, there shall be no blemish therein.

Blind or broken or maimed or having a wind or scurvy or scab, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord.

[ 20 : 26 ] Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a free will offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

Ye shall not offer unto the Lord that which is bruised or crushed or broken or cut, neither shall you make any offering thereof in your land, neither from a stranger's hand shall you offer the bread of your God of any of these, because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them, they shall not be accepted for you.

Pretty clear, isn't it, that God demands a perfect sacrifice, as perfect as one could be concerning earthy things.

Now, wherewith hath we corrupted or defiled thee, has the idea of these touching or anything unclean that would defile a person.

So, in this sense, they regard the offerings of defiled food to God as defiling God himself. Anybody that touches anything defiled is unclean. If you're offering a defiled sacrifice unto the Lord, then in essence, you're defiling God himself.

[ 21 : 49 ] that's how they've polluted, defiled Jehovah God. Now, the answer to the question, how have we done that?

In that you represent the table of the Lord as something contemptible. Wow. The table of Jehovah is the altar upon which those sacrifices were laid, those things that were considered the food of God.

The word contemptible here is the word that means to despise, to hold in contempt, to disdain, or to be vile, to be worthless.

They represent the altar as contemptible. Not so much in what they say, but in what they're doing, in the practices they perform.

And that by offering up bad, despicable, sacrificial animals, which had blemishes, been either blind, lamed, or diseased. And those were unfit for sacrifice before the Lord God because of those blemishes as we saw a minute ago in the law in Leviticus.

[ 23 : 04 ] So, they violated both reverence for the altar and reverence for Jehovah God as well. you know, anything can become common place for us, anything we do.

If we do it repetitively for any length of time, your jobs can get that way, common place, to where we just sometimes just do what we need to do to get by.

Right? That's what the priests were doing here. And they were calling that practice contemptible before the Lord. Now, so Malachi puts it in perspective for us in verse 8.

If you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now.

Here's what you do. Offer it now unto your governor. Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts? Of course, the answer is evident.

[ 24 : 11 ] He wouldn't accept that. He would laugh in your face, no doubt. So, if an earthly governor would not accept such contempt, why in the world do they think Jehovah of hosts would accept those things, would accept such sacrifices, would accept such worship?

So, the challenge is given here. Interesting. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us. This has been at your means.

Will he regard your person, saith the Lord of hosts? In other words, he's saying here, all right, you priest, this is the way you're doing things. You're calling God and his altar contemptible, service to him contemptible, doing things that your human governor would not even accept.

So, here's what you do. Go ahead and call upon the Lord on our behalf. Go ahead and see what he does. because all this is done at your hand, by your means.

Will he regard what you do, even in the prayers of, on your prayers on behalf of your people or the people of God? Now, Malachi intimates by that question, that under the existing circumstance, any intercession, any intercession by the priests would be fruitless.

[ 25 : 46 ] You know the question, will he regard your person? In other words, will he show favor to anyone on your account? Because you pray to him for compassion when these are the actions that you perform?

Wow, think about that. Will God really even listen to you on behalf of the people you intercede for? Because of what you've done in bringing polluted sacrifices and considering the altar and God himself contemptible.

Of course, the intimation there is, no, he won't. If he won't accept the sacrifice, won't accept their worship, how can he accept their intercession?

Now, that raises a good question for us. What quality of worship do we bring before the Lord? Is God pleased with our worship?

Good question for us. are we complacent? Yeah, yeah. I think, how many people, how many times do we, we're all guilty from time to time in the past or maybe even present, the alarm clock goes off Sunday morning, it's cold and wet outside, winds blowing, miserable day.

[ 27 : 18 ] Okay. Got to get up. and go to church as if it's like anything else we do, any place else we go.

Got to go to the store, got to go to Walmart, whatever. Got to go to church. So we drag ourselves out of bed and come to church with that glorious attitude that I'm really glad to be here.

You know, how does God, how does God look at that? Some people say, well, God understands. Yeah, he does. God isn't understanding God. And he understands where we're putting him in the scheme of things in our life and in our living.

So it's a good question for us to consider, isn't it? Yeah. You know, I've got to confess, I've even, you know, I've been in some circumstances and situations and pastoring various places where there have been days when Sunday morning came around and I dragged myself out of bed because I didn't really want to go.

You know, what's the old story? The guy said, God, I could be a good pastor if it wasn't for the people. Yeah. Yeah. Or the guy's mom comes in and says, son, it's time to get up.

[ 28 : 46 ] Or his wife comes, son, it's time to get up. You've got to go to church. Oh, mom, I don't want to go. Come on, you've got to go. You've got to be there. Oh, I just don't want to go. The people don't like me.

They don't shake my hand. They don't say anything nice about me. I know, but you've still got to get up and go because you're the pastor. You know, that kind of thing. You know.

But hey, the idea here for us is, if we're, if our heart is walking, if we're walking with God and our heart is right with God, and we're recognizing the blessings of God, the goodness of God daily in our lives, then Sunday morning ought to be a culmination of that.

That we get out of bed. Now, you might not spring out of bed because you're getting older and your lumbago isn't cooperating, but you get up ready to worship, excited to go and worship the Lord

together with the people of God.

Because you recognize again of what God's been to you, what God's done in your life to manifest His love for you this past week, and you want to just go and give praise and worship to Him.

[ 30 : 05 ] Now, that's the worship that God honors. us. Now, in verse 10, God's view, a view of God's heart concerning the unholy worship of the priests in Malachi's day.

Let me read it to you in the Amplified here. Oh, that there were even one among you. Now, get the heart of God there. even if there were just one among you whose duty it is to minister to me, who would shut the doors.

Yeah. That you might not kindle fire on my altar to no purpose, to an empty, futile, fruitless pretense. Wow.

Is there just one that can recognize what's going on and just shut the doors and not offer any sacrifice, not even to kindle the light of the altar?

I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hand. The doors there, of course, the doors to the inner court where the altar of the burnt sacrifices were.

[ 31 : 31 ] his wish is that the altar might no more be lit up by the shining of the sacrificial fire that burned there in that altar for the sacrifices.

You do it in vain without any object or use, because God had no pleasure in such priests or such worthless sacrifices.

Now, those tiny sacrifices God does not desire, nor does he need them to make his name great. Isn't that amazing? God doesn't need us to make his name great, does he? He doesn't need us at all. He doesn't need what we do to make his name great, because his name proves itself to be great among all the nations of the earth.

You will see that in a minute. So that pure sacrifices are offered to him in every place. So he doesn't need sacrifices to maintain his existence.

[ 32 : 42 ] That was a delusion that the priests of Israel really cherished, and he doesn't demand them for that purpose. He demands them as signs of dependence of men upon him.

That's what God does for sacrifice. Now, for the recognition on the part of men that they are indeed indebted to God for life and every other blessing, and owe him honor, praise, and thanksgiving. Turn over to Genesis chapter 4, verse 25. Of course, this is after the conflict between Cain and Abel, and Cain slaying Abel.

Cain leaves from the presence of the Lord, dwells in the land of Nod. But look at verse 25. Adam knew his wife again, and she bare a son, and called his name Seth.

For God, she said, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. Now, notice this. To Seth, to him also there was born a son, and he called his name Enos.

[ 33 : 58 ] Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord. The name Enos is a name that means to be weak, faint, frail.

Designates man from his frail and mortal condition. So, in the name then, there's an acknowledgement of human weakness.

And when there's the acknowledgement of human weakness, there's the acknowledgement of dependence and the need to be dependent upon God for goodness and blessings and provision.

All right? And that's where that comes from. And so, naturally, notice the statement. From that point then, man began calling upon the name of the Lord.

You know, Seth born. He wasn't around when Cain slew Abel, but no doubt mom and dad told him the story. And Seth begins to recognize the reality that there is a real weakness within man.

[ 35 : 11 ] In our flesh, we do not have what it takes and what we need to provide for ourselves everything that we need. But God's the one that makes those provisions.

You know, even when Seth is born, she calls his name Seth, literally appointed, because God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

so she recognizes God's provision there. And so Seth then has a son, sees weakness in mankind, calls his son's name Enoch, or Enos, excuse me, Enos, denoting the ideal of the frailty of man, and man then begins to call upon the name of the Lord.

They see their desperate need for him. Over in Genesis chapter 8, what is it that Noah did when the rains finally stopped and the waters receded and then popped up dry ground?

Genesis chapter 8, verse 20, after Noah departs from the ark, Noah built an altar unto the Lord, took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

[ 36 : 50 ] I like this, verse 21, and the Lord smelled a sweet savor. And the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, neither will I again smite anymore everything living as I have done.

While the earth remaineth seed time and harvest and cold and heat summer and winter and day and night shall not cease. Oh, to me, that's such a beautiful picture.

You know, Noah obeyed the Lord in spite of everything, because God told him to do it. He gets inside when it's the appointed time, God shuts the door, the rains and the floods come.

Noah and all those with him on the ark are spared, just float around, still sending out the birds to declare whether or not there's dry land from which they could find a twig.

finally it happens. And the time comes for them to depart from that redemptive boat, if you will. The first thing that Noah does is build an altar unto God.

[ 38 : 14 ] Altar of thanksgiving. And God smells the sweet savor of it. I like that. Amen? God just, yeah, because he knows what it means.

The sweet savor of that animal sacrifice spoke, if you will, in a language only God could understand at that point that, yes, he recognizes that he needs me.

And I'm pleased with that. Yeah, I'm pleased with that. Gives us the idea here that one thing that God is pleased with for us and about us is when we recognize genuinely our total need and dependence upon him for everything.

Amen? For everything. All right. God did God did not want to receive those reprehensible sacrifices of the priests because sacrifices were offered to him by the nations of the earth and all places and therefore his name was and remained great in spite of the desecration on the part of the people of Israel than the priesthood of Israel.

We'll pick up there next week because I want us to consider that statement there.