

A Wearisome Lord

Some people want positive motivation almost exclusively. That's not a brain-buster. I get it. But, I've found that doesn't actually work (at least not for me), and more importantly, it's not God's style of promoting change. God's will call out the ugly and promise the beautiful.

Losing weight (for example). There's a reason why people take pictures. Seeing the progress is encouraging, but you always have the original to motivate. The "I'll never go back to that" kind of drive. It's not wrong. In fact, it's what I hear Paul saying in Romans 6:20-21

We come to the end of another year and begin a new one. I'm not a New Year's resolution guy. Only because we can tend to wait for a particular time to make a change. We can put things off. I have more hope for the guy/gal who begins to exercise in November instead of January 1st. You get the idea. But, here we are.

So, I was thinking about Malachi. This is the last Old Testament prophet, and it ends on a sour note. Many needed to see their messy condition. The majority wouldn't because having eyes they couldn't see. For them, it was time for God to confront them directly. He had saved His people from captivity and brought them back home, but their hearts were not with God. His rebuke doesn't guarantee change. In fact, for most people it won't. Some people never learn. Even when they feel the consequences of their sin, they play dumb or blame it on someone/something else. There could be some here today that need to be confronted with sin. But the reality is - this has never guaranteed repentance. Yet, that doesn't keep us from preaching the word. Surely, some in Malachi's day did appreciate God's blessings. They were aware of the filth surrounding them, and observing such individuals may have reminded them of their past hearts, but not anymore. They would welcome God's rebuke and remain faithful to Him. They always kept the "original photo" in their hearts. They could see it in the lives of their neighbors. They could never go back.

So here we are today, ready to enter a new year. Have you been faithful to God? Have you been growing? Will you stay the course and grow closer to Him? Or have you been neglecting God? Has your heart been far from Him? That's the beautiful thing about the Bible. It doesn't end with Malachi. The next pages reveal the Son of Man entering to save the world. I hope this will encourage repentance if needed or a reminder of where you've come from and where God has placed you today. Some are still "the old-self" and some are the new. Which one are you?

Telltale signs:

- The Lord wearies you: 1:13
 - Let's remember that God will not be mocked and will be honored by those worldwide. You'll either be a part of it or not, but He gets the last word in.
 - So we don't offer sacrifices anymore (literal produce or animals). How does this apply? What do you bring to the table? Do you give the Lord your best? Do you sacrifice anything? Your time,

talents, or money? What about our coming together to praise God? How often do you miss? Do you want to be here? What's the point of showing up? Notice what God said in verse 10.

- What should one do? Stop laughing at everything. I pray that God will humble you and you may gain the wisdom to repent. Everyone thinks he's tough until he's punched in the face. It may be that your lack of wisdom will bear consequences and that you'll find yourself in situations that reveal you're not who you think you are: you're not that spectacular. There's always someone smarter, cooler, richer, and more talented than you. In fact, if your experience is like mine, you'll learn you were never as good in any of those areas as you think you were.
- You weary the Lord: 1:17
 - The problem wasn't that they wanted justice for those mistreated. It's that they were the offenders. Habakkuk asked the same question but was a faithful servant. It's about who's asking the question.
 - Brethren, their arrogant attitudes cloaked their own disobedience. It affected every aspect of their lives. We cannot afford to not see ourselves as we truly are. Do we practice sin? It's a very simple question. Do we walk in darkness? Do we realize that God is allowing humanity to repent? When will we look in the mirror and realize, "Oh, I don't look that hot and my daily choices may end my life sooner than later?" Or, more to the point, "I'm spiritually dead by choice and will have to face the consequences of my sins." Brethren, do you believe in God? What do you think about Him? Do you believe in hell and eternal separation from God?
 - I do not believe God has made the process too difficult to understand. We need a sober reminder that most people choose not to see. They don't want to. Sermons like today are an attempt to reach those who may be lost. It doesn't guarantee anything, but we continue to try. More importantly, it must be understood as the Lord's attempt to help and encourage reconciliation. It's been said that Malachi may end with a curse, but Revelation ends with grace! I don't know that I see it that way. I see both letters end with a warning, but each implies those who are faithful to God. They both call for repentance. Our God is waiting with open arms.