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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Need for Just Leaders Malachi 2:1-9; 3:5-6

Lesson Background and Introduction

Malachi's words should serve as sobering warnings to leaders in the church. Dangers abound when we become casual about doing God's work. It's a small step from an attitude of indifference to one of anti-biblical rationalizing by those who serve the Lord in leadership positions. The late Dallas Willard once observed, "The greatest threat to devotion to Christ is service for Christ." Those who earn wages by serving the church or a parachurch ministry can come to see what they do merely as a source of income. We forget that ours is a ministry done in service to the Lord and for His glory. Certain words and actions become part of the routine, of what is expected according to their job description. It's a slippery slope. One source of help may be for the leader to arrange to meet with a group of fellow leaders (either within or outside of the congregation) for mutual prayer and encouragement. Many have found such accountability groups greatly beneficial in keeping them spiritually sharp and providing valuable counsel when temptations or other challenges occur (compare Malachi 3:16). Speaking honestly to one another can be of immeasurable value in avoiding the spiritual barrenness that brought God's harsh criticism of the priests in Malachi's day. Inviting candid feedback from a fellow servant of Christ is always preferable to being on the receiving end of God's correction.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Defective Sacrifices - God's people in Malachi's day dishonored the Lord by bringing diseased and defective animals for sacrifice—and the priests refused to stop this practice. The leaders and the congregation refused to respond to God's love with all their heart, mind, and soul. God spoke through Malachi to warn the priests if they persisted in their sinful ways, allowed the people to stray, and continued to be a poor example— this would lead to severe problems. God's desire is always to bless His children, but corrupt activities result in negative consequences. The improper sacrifices presented before the Lord caused great misery, not prosperity.

Strong Warnings - Malachi used powerful words to warn the priests concerning their unfaithfulness. Curses would result from their disobedience. Consequences had already started because God knew the hearts of these stubborn men. If they refused to repent, He planned to destroy them by fire like dung or garbage. The Lord appointed the priests and exalted their positions. They needed to see their duties as a great privilege. But they handled God's people like common, ordinary things, instead of the Father's precious children. Instead of telling His truth, they lied and operated by their own power. These corrupt priests caused others to stumble; they defiled everything and everybody they touched.

Problems of the Day and Our Day - Malachi continued to warn the leaders of God's absolute, sudden judgment for their misconduct. Sadly, the people suffered the consequences as well. The prophet listed the ungodly activities in his day, many of which are the same today—demonic activities, ungodly marriages, and perjury. The leadership caused oppression by exploiting the less fortunate, with no concern for widows or orphans. They cheated the laborer and treated immigrants in a hostile fashion. Despite everything, the Lord reminded the Israelites of His steadfastness and His mercy. He stays faithful to His covenants.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
The only leaders qualified to lead are those who have learned to serve

POEM FOR THE WEEK:
Controlling other people's lives is not a godly leader's trait; But serving other people's needs is what the Lord considers great —Sper

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who trusts in You
(Ps 86:2 NKJV)
(from "Our Daily Bread", May 05, 2008)

Series: Justice and the Prophets

UNIT: God Promises a Just Kingdom

NEXT WEEK

A Just Servant (Isaiah 42:1-9)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Just Leader Requirements (Mal 2:1-9)

Requirement to hear God (1-4)

- Hear so that belief is confirmed (Rom 10:14)
- Hear so that faith is strengthened (Rom 10:17)
- Hear because it is the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)
- Hear because the more we hear, the more we are given to hear (Mark 4:22-24)
- Hear because it makes us part of the family of Jesus (Luke 8:21)
- Hear because it is a blessing (Luke 11:28)
- Hear because it is the way to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2)

Requirement to fear God (5-7)

- Fear of God leads to lacking for nothing (Ps 34:9)
- Fear of God leads to spiritual wealth and riches (Ps 112:1-3)
- Fear of God leads to finding life, prosperity and honor (Prov 21:21)
- Fear of God is the key to treasures (Isa 33:6)
- Fear of God based on His power over death (Acts 5:9-11)
- Fear of God based on His wrath (Deut 9:19)
- Fear of God based on His righteous judgment (Luke 23:39-41)

Requirement to obey God (8-9)

- Obey God by being a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:15-18)
- Obey God by living a life that proves obedience (2 Cor 9:13)
- Obey God so that we will know God (1 John 2:3)
- Obey God by living in God (1 John 3:24)
- Obey God by being ready to do whatever is good (Titus 3:1)
- Obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29)

Just Leader Judgments (Mal 3:5-6)

Judgment of wickedness (5)

- Judgment of pride (Luke 20:45-47)
- Judgment of not teaching sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3-4)
- Judgment of not maturing in the Word (Heb 5:12)
- Judgment of being a false teacher (2 Peter 2:1)
- Judgment of being a stumbling block (Matt 23:15)
- Judgment of unjust angry (Matt 5:22)

Judgment with mercy (6)

- Mercy because He loves us (Rom 5:8)
- Mercy because Jesus paid for sins (Isa 53:5-6)
- Mercy because God is faithful and righteous (Rom 3:3-5)
- Mercy because of His grace (Eph 2:8-9)
- Mercy because it prompted God's salvation (Rom 9:16)
- Mercy because it is part of His purpose (2 Tim 1:9)