



“Where is My Honor and Fear?”

Series: Malachi: Remember the Grace of God

Malachi 1:6-14

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Beloved, I want you to open your Bibles to Malachi 1 as we continue to work our way through the disputations that God has with Israel. Last week, we came face-to-face with the ease with which Israel had forgotten the gracious, covenant love of God. Forgetting God’s love for His people has serious consequences as you might imagine and those consequences are what we are going to start looking at today. The first place in which we see the consequences of forgetting God’s love appear is in the area of worship. Pick it up with me in chapter 1 and verse 6.

God is Supremely Jealous For His Glory and Jealous for the Worship of His People

As we are working our way through the book of Malachi, particularly in this passage that we are looking at today, we see two themes that jump out of the text. **One, God is supremely jealous for His glory and two, He is jealous for the heart and the faithful worship of His people.** These are themes that we see repeatedly displayed in the history of God’s relationship with His chosen people – Israel – God’s passion for His glory and His passion for the worship of His people. In this text today, for instance, we see God repeatedly referencing His “name” – six times in fact. It is a shorthand way of speaking about His glory, His majesty, His holiness. Repeatedly, we see His anger at the way that the worship of Him is treated with contempt. The very people whom He has loved with a special and everlasting love and whom He has redeemed from slavery in Egypt are treating God with disrespect. A people to whom He has revealed Himself and whom He has called into a special place of intimacy and union with Him is treating him with contempt. Israel – a nation unlike any other, blessed unlike any other -- was treating God and the worship of God with contempt and dishonor.

We need to consider for a moment the redemption history of Israel. This sets the foundation for everything regarding Israel. God sent Moses to be the instrument of the deliverance of the Israelite people from their bondage in Egypt. God came to Moses at the burning bush and commissioned him for this great responsibility, and He said to Him, **“Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain (Mt Horeb, where this encounter took place is another name for Mt. Sinai).” Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’”** (Exodus 3:10–14, ESV) I AM, the transcendent, self-existent One, the Holy One, the Majestic and Glorious One, the Almighty God of glory, the creator and sustainer of all that is, He has sent you. That is what Moses was to say.

So, Moses went down into Egypt to deliver the nation, and by degrees, through the different plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians – turning the Nile into blood, the plague of the frogs, the gnats, the flies, the death of the Egyptian livestock, the boils, hail, locusts and darkness over the land – through all of these different plagues, God displayed His power and His glory over all of the lesser Egyptians gods who were no gods at all, and especially over Pharaoh himself. Still, despite these plagues, Pharaoh would not let Israel go. Deliverance came when God declared that unless Pharaoh were to let the nation of Israel, God’s covenant people, go, with all of their flocks and herds, to worship and serve the Lord God, that God would strike down the firstborn of every living thing in Egypt. Pharaoh refused and that very plague came upon Egypt. The Angel of Death descended upon Egypt and slew all of the first born.

But God protected Israel from this plague and instituted the Passover as the remembrance of His deliverance of the nation from bondage to Egypt and slavery to Pharaoh. Exodus 12:21ff, tells us: **“Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the**

destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' " And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did." (Exodus 12:21–28, ESV)

The death angel came and slew the firstborn. Pharaoh cast the Israelites out of Egypt and they came out of Egypt with the gold and silver and riches of the Egyptian people and flocks and herds and in one night, Egypt went from being the richest and most powerful nation in the world to being a cheap third-rate power. But God was not done. Exodus 14 starting in verse 4, tells us that God said: **"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD."** And they did so. When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, **"What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"** So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, **"Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."** And Moses said to the people, **"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.""** (Exodus 14:4–14, ESV) God had made Egypt the richest and most powerful nation that the world had ever seen at that time. And when the time was right, God took His glory public, if you will, and displayed that God is supremely glorious above all others. He is master of all nations and all kings. He is the warrior who saves, by His power, for His glory and for the fame of His name. You know what God did. He

split the Red Sea; the Israelites walked through it on dry ground. The Egyptian army followed and they were consumed as the water crashed down upon them.

God crushed Pharaoh, and true to His word, Pharaoh and all of His host and the Egyptians were convinced that He is God; they were convinced of His glory. And so was Israel. Exodus 15 tells us: ***“Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” (Exodus 15:1–3, ESV)*** And then a little later in that same song, verses 11-13: ***““Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. “You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.” (Exodus 15:11–13, ESV)***

What we see is from the very beginning, from the great Exodus, God’s deliverance of His people from oppression, is that God is jealous for His glory and He is jealous for the heart and the faithful worship of His people. Scripture then tells us how God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, how He sweetened the bitter waters at Marah so they could drink, how he gave to them quail and manna from heaven to feed their bellies, how He bought them to Mt Sinai and called the nation into covenant with Him saying: ***“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”***” (Exodus 19:4–6, ESV)

Scripture tells us how God descended on Mt Sinai in His glory -- in lightning and thick clouds, in fire and smoke, and in the quaking of the mountain. We read how God gave to Israel His commandments – all testifying to His holiness and glory, and how He gave to them the sacrificial system—the means by which they could draw near to God and worship Him as God and know and rejoice in His presence and glory. Do you see? God’s love for Israel was expressed in the fact that God has revealed Himself to Israel – demonstrating His glory and awesomeness – but also had given to them the way to commune with Him and worship Him by means of the sacrificial system. God had displayed His transcendent glory and had called Israel to be His people, granting to them the grace of knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing

in and praising and worshipping Almighty God – a privilege and honor which He had not given to anyone else. **God is jealous for His glory and He is jealous for the heart and the faithful worship of His people.**

That twin-truth is the underlying context for all of history and particularly the history of the nation of Israel. From the judgment of God for the golden calf fiasco, to the conquest of the Promised Land by God's powerful might, to the period of the Judges, to the rule of the kings, the Assyrian conquest of the 10 Northern Tribes for disobedience and idolatry, the Babylonian Captivity of Judah for the same, and the nation of Israel's return to the Promised Land because of God's mercy and grace – the underlying theme of all of the history of Israel is God's passion for His glory and for the heart and faithful worship of His people. God will be glorified and He will have the white-hot passionate, faithful, undivided worship of His people. And that brings us to our text today.

Although God had been gracious to Israel and had returned her to the Promised Land. Although they had rebuilt Jerusalem and rebuilt her walls, and although they had rebuilt the temple and under Ezra's leadership had experienced the revival of worship and the instruction of the Word of God, here they were, a generation or so later, offering to God worthless worship. Worship is wearisome. Sacrifice is a burden. Their passion and zeal had evaporated. Worship was an empty formalism.

Even the priests who operated the temple worship had grown indifferent to God. They were accepting as sacrifices blemished animals, the sick and the lame. The priests were handling holy things as if they were common things; they had become so accustomed to handling them that they no longer had any awe about the things of God. The nation of Israel was offering to God shameful and disgraceful worship because they had forgotten God's gracious and sovereign love to them and they had forgotten that **God is jealous for His glory and He is jealous for the heart and the faithful worship of His people.** We are going to look today at the curse of worthless worship and I want for us to begin by looking at a proper expectation.

The Curse of Worthless Worship (v. 6-14)

A proper expectation... God begins the confrontation regarding their worship beginning with a commonly agreed upon expectation. Starting in verse 6, He says: **“A son honors his father, and a servant his master.”** The Israelites would have completely agreed with that statement. Unlike our own culture in which people routinely disrespect their parents and speak rudely of their employers, theirs was a culture that took honor and the giving of honor to whom it is due very seriously. All of Israel would agree that a son should honor his father and a servant should honor his master – that was a proper expectation. But in the case of the Israelites and their relationship to God, it was a proper expectation left unfulfilled.

Rather than honor, hate... God says, **“If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name.** These are strong words, shocking words, and they are meant to be. God was Israel’s father and Israel was His son. That was the reason for the Exodus. God had said to Moses as He was sending Him to Egypt: **“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’ ”** (Exodus 4:22–23, ESV) As Israel’s father, God deserved honor from them. The word for honor is the word “kabod”. It is the same word that we translate as glory. It carries the idea of weight or heaviness. Originally the word “kabod” conveyed the greatness of a person because of the weight of his wealth. When applied to God it refers to His greatness, fame, honor by virtue of His character and His nature. Israel was not giving to God the honor that He was due.

And if they didn’t honor Him as Father, at least Israel should have been in awe and reverence of who God is. They should have feared Him as a master who had delivered them from their old masters in Egypt to serve Him. They should have feared Him and respected Him for His greatness and His glory. But they did not. That was a great problem. They had first forgotten God’s love for them and then they forgot His greatness and began to take Him for granted. Let me read a few of the verses that we read this morning from Malachi and you tell me what phrase you hear repeated over and over.

V. 6, "And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts."

V. 8, "will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts."

V. 9, "With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts.."

V. 10, "I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts."

V. 11, "My name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts."

V. 13, "What a weariness this is,' you say, and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts."

V. 14, "I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts."

What phrase is noticeably present in each of those verses? Lord of Hosts. Lord of Hosts is a name that refers to God's glory as the creator and commander of an infinitely powerful army of angels and of innumerable planets and stars. It is a phrase that speaks of His infinite worth, His infinite holiness and perfection and might. In some of your bibles it is probably translated as God Almighty. God is the most important, most valuable, most precious, only essential person in the universe. He created and sustains everything. He does everything according to the counsel of His will and no-one can stay His hand. He is the only source of eternal life and everlasting joy. He is the just judge and the savior of all who believe through His son Jesus Christ. He is the God who delivered Israel by the might of power according to His love and mercy and grace and who was to them a Father and yet they treated Him with contempt.

Beloved, hear me on this. **The origin of worthless worship is a failure to see and know and comprehend and feel the weight of the greatness and glory of God and as a result the failure to be gripped by the wonder of being reconciled to Him by His own mercy and grace.** God is worthy of worship not contempt. And yet that was exactly the heart of the priests and of the people. They failed to understand God's greatness. From God's perspective, they despised – devalued, treated with contempt and treated as worthless -- His name, which is just another way of saying that they no longer thought of God as weighty and worthy. They were making a mockery of the holiness of God. And it was obvious.

Making a mockery of the holiness of God... God says you have despised my name and then He gives the response of Israel, at the end of verse 6 saying: ***But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"*** (v. 6) ***"By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised."*** (Malachi 1:7, ESV) ***"When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil?"***

Israel did not apprehend His greatness, so worthless and polluted worship followed. You

may be wondering, why does God call the offering that the Israelites were to make to Him, food? The answer gives us insight into the way that God regarded the sacrifices. The answer is that all of the offerings that were given to God by the priests, according to the Lev 21:6, were called “food offerings”. Not only were the sacrifices offerings for sin, but the sacrifices made to God were like a communion meal with Him. The Israelites were to offer to God a sacrifice in keeping with God’s worth, in keeping with His holiness, as if it were a communion meal because to God it was. When they brought offerings to God and placed them on the altar, it was as if God consumed them and they shared a covenant meal. Do you see it? **This is personal for God.** But Israel grew weary with giving their best to God and the priests did nothing about it. Instead they offered to God the blind, the lame and the sick. Imagine for a moment, the parade of blind, and stumbling, and sick animals toward the temple. Broken limbs, oozing sores covered with flies, limping, collapsing. It was the very opposite of what God had commanded in Leviticus 22. God’s holiness demanded whole, healthy, spotless offerings – the best of the flock. Anything else profaned God’s glory.

If the origin of worthless worship is the failure to see and to feel the greatness of God, the essence of worthless worship is worthless religious activity that demonstrates a low view of God’s worth. That is exactly what was going on here. To the great God of all creation, to the awesome, majestic Lord they offered... the blind, lame, sick of their flocks. They offered God garbage, they offered God refuse and thought God would be pleased with it. But he was not pleased in the least.

Here’s why. To offer to God these worthless sacrifices was to undercut and to make a mockery of the holiness of God. By offering these polluted offerings they were in essence saying: “God isn’t absolutely holy and we aren’t that bad. A blemished sacrifice is enough for us to come before God, we don’t need a perfect sacrifice.” But this is exactly what is needed in order for us to come near to God, a perfect sacrifice of which the sacrifices demanded by God in the OT were only a shadow.

Though the Israelites as whole in Malachi’s day may not have understood it, the sacrificial system, the sacrifices offered on the altar prefigured the perfect, sinless Lamb of God with out blemish or spot, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would be put forth by the Father as the final and full atoning sacrifice for the salvation of His people. To offer the blind and the lame and the sick was doubly offensive to the Almighty God, it was both an insult to His glory and to the only begotten Son of God in whom the Father always delights whom He would give as

the ultimate sacrifice for His people. Maybe they didn't understand fully, but that is no excuse. The command of God and the greatness of His person should have been enough for them to obey.

In fact, God says to them: **“Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:8, ESV)** They would never think to offer this kind of garbage to a governor, to disrespect a governor whose favor they were seeking to win, but that's exactly what they did to the King of Glory and Creator of the Universe who had lavishly poured His grace upon them. They would never intentionally insult and offend a governor like that, but they treated God with utter contempt. God then points out their foolishness by the use of mockery. He says: **“And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us.”** Make this offering to the Lord, ask for His blessing, pray for His favor, ask for Him to look with pleasure upon us. God shows how foolish this really is. **With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:9, ESV)** Now understand what is being said here. It is not that we need to butter God up with sacrifices and offerings, with worship, to entreat His favor, to get Him to bless us in other words. It is not a tit-for-tat sort of arrangement. No, there is something far more fundamental being said here. Giving such an offering to God demonstrates that you don't really know or believe who God is. And the writer of Hebrews tells us: **“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6, ESV)** Offering such a sacrifice reveals a heart that is clueless of God's worth and which does not truly seek Him, it is evidence of a defective faith.

God takes worship and His holiness seriously and the priests should have known that. In fact, a very significant event from the beginning of priesthood history should have made that clear. Back in the book of Leviticus, Aaron – the first priest of Israel and the brother of Moses – had sons who were priests as he was. Two of them decided to offer worship in a manner other than what God as prescribed. Leviticus 10, starting verse 1 tells us: **“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.” (Leviticus 10:1–2, ESV)** That seems to us to be severe reaction, doesn't it? Aaron went to Moses wanting an explanation of it all and verse 3 tells us: **“Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’ ” And Aaron held his peace.” (Leviticus 10:3, ESV)** God did not

even allow Aaron to mourn over his sons, but they were immediately taken out of the camp of Israel. That is how seriously God takes His holiness and the proper worship of Him.

In fact, in this text, God is so incensed, so angry at this worthless worship that He declares in verse 10: **“Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.** Does that shock you? Does it stun you like it does me? God is not begging for some cheap form of worship from them. He says, "Look, I would much rather you shut the Temple down than give Me your worthless worship." In other words, God is saying, “If you are going to come before me in worship without any sense of my holiness and majesty and greatness, if you are going to come before me without a deep sense of the honor that I deserve. If you are going come before me without any sense of the kind of sacrifice needed to reconcile you to me. If you are going to come before me without any sense of your need for fellowship, and confession of sin, without faith, without sincere desire to worship me in the manner that I demand and deserve to be worshipped, do not come at all. Someone have the courage to shut the doors and extinguish the altar. I will not receive worthless worship.” Words like this should pierce our own souls. God will not lower Himself to receive such half-hearted and defiled worship. And the reason is clear...

“My name will be great...” We read in verse 11: **For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 1:10–11, ESV)** God’s name will be great. His glory, His holy, righteous character, will be known throughout the world. The Israelites need to get a clue. God is telling the Israelites that the fame of His name, the worship of Him as King and Lord will not be confined to Jerusalem or to the Temple, but the worship of God will spread throughout the world. The Israelites needed to get with the program. They needed to understand the scope of God’s glory and majesty. Messiah was indeed coming but that meant something far more important and glorious than simply the restoration of Israel’s national fortunes. The Supreme glory of God would be revealed in the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, the God-Man – through His incarnation, sinless life, saving death, and triumphant resurrection. Nothing brings God more glory than the gospel -- the glorious and gracious act of God in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, to provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who believe in Jesus.

The gospel glorifies God's name in that His holiness is upheld, and His justice -- the penalty God had pronounced upon sin and sinners -- is carried out, on the behalf of both God and man, in Christ. It glorifies the God's name in that it provides the way for sinners to be freed from the penalty of sin and to come into the presence of God and to commune with God by means of a perfect substitutionary sacrifice. And it glorifies God's name in that God remains just and the justifier of sinners and through Christ makes all who repent and believe acceptable in His sight and makes for Himself worshippers out of rebels. We, the church, are the fulfillment of this promise. Even now, God's name is great among the Gentiles and will be greater still as the gospel of God's glory through His Messiah, Jesus Christ, is proclaimed throughout the world until the end of the age.

God is not finished addressing their worthless worship. After saying "My name will be great", He goes on, saying in verse 12: ***"But you profane It(my name) when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and its fruit, that is, its food may be despised. But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD."*** (Malachi 1:12-13, ESV)

You are profaning my name through the worthless offerings that you are bringing and what is meant to be a time when you celebrate your covenant oneness with me, that I am your God and you are my people -- it has become a weariness to you, a burden, an inconvenience. Wow, do you see what an affront this is to God? The very sacrifices, the feasts and festivals that were to be a time of celebration of being in covenant fellowship with the Almighty God had become a weariness. They were only hurting themselves. The opportunity for sacrifices to be given to God, which should have been met with anticipation by the people of God, as an opportunity to demonstrate their faith toward God and their trust in God and their honor and love for God through genuine praise and thanksgiving, was instead a boring hardship to be endure, something at which they arrogantly snorted. God closes this section pronouncing a curse on the hypocrisy of the Israelites.

A curse on spiritual hypocrisy... God sums things up in verse 14 saying, ***"Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. For I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations."*** (Malachi 1:14, ESV) Do you see beloved, God cannot allow spiritual hypocrisy and vain worship go unpunished. God could not and would not allow the behavior of the priests or of the people of Israel to be ignored. For God to ignore the disdainful treatment of his great

name would amount to him dishonoring his own name and denying his own greatness, and God simply will not do that. So what do we learn from this text. I want us to consider together:

How The Failure of Israel Should Foster Faithfulness in Us

God did not preserve this word for us so that we could look at the Israelites and shake our heads at their foolishness before God; at their shoddiness in worship before the Lord. What God is doing through the words of Malachi this morning is shining a searchlight directly on our hearts. He is shaking us out of our complacency and our comfort zone and asking this question, “In your worship in keeping with what the God of glory deserves?”

You see, we are spiritual Israel. We have been chosen by God to be His special possession, the objects of God’s love. We have received the grace and mercy of God according to His sovereign will. Are we worshipping God as He deserves? Are we gripped by His glory, His majesty, His weightiness? Do we fear Him with the awe and the reverence that He deserves? Do we worship with a sense of the greatness of God? He is the infinite God of infinite wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is the Lord of Hosts. He is the eternal and omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth, yet the One who knit you together in your mother’s womb. He is the One and only One who was and is and is to come, who has no beginning and no end, who rules over the world and accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will, the One whom the angels adore, whose glory is reflected in the work of creation, and whose grace is fully revealed in His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Do you worship Him like He deserves to be worshipped. Peter tells us: **“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”** (1 Peter 2:5, ESV) Is God pleased with your worship?

The exhortation for us today is this: **Guard your heart against vain and worthless worship and instead, make it your business to worship God in the way that His glory demands.** I think there are two components to this exhortation that we need to think about today.

First, when you come before the Lord in worship, make sure that you are consciously and intentionally approaching Him by way of His appointed sacrifice – Jesus Christ our Lord. Be sure that when you seek to come before Him you come recognizing and believing that your only acceptable standing before the Holy God, the only way that you can successfully approach the Holy and Almighty God is by means of the perfect sacrifice that He has provided for you – Jesus Christ.

It is Christ that makes us acceptable to God the Father. It is through Him that we have forgiveness of sins, adoption as sons and daughters, and right of access to the very presence of God. When you come before God, you coming before Him rejoicing in Christ, fully aware that it is through Christ that God warmly receives you? Oh beloved, guard your heart and mind against approaching God foolishly, carelessly, haphazardly, failing to apprehend the holiness and glory of God and the infinite worthiness of Christ as sacrifice. Guard yourself from mindlessness in your approach to God, from familiarity that breeds contempt, and from the foolishness of thinking that God would ever accept you for your works of the flesh – because you are a good guy, a fine woman. None of us stand on equal footing with God. He is high and lifted up and we are low and unworthy. The only reason we can be in His presence is because of the costly sacrifice that Jesus made for our good and God's glory. We do not in ourselves deserve to be in His presence. We did not deserve Jesus' sacrifice. We do not deserve God's love or mercy or grace but oh how He delights to pour it out upon us. God has graciously given to us, out of His love, all things that we need to be received by Him in all of His holiness and not be consumed and what He commands of us in response is our worship; worship that is only made acceptable through Jesus Christ who is the purifier and refiner of His people. Any worship apart from worship through Christ is not worship at all. And the good news is that God accepts our worship, not grudgingly, but with joy and with pleasure when we come to Him through Christ.

Our only acceptance with God, the only way of approach to God, the only way of coming to God in worship that upholds His glory and honor and holiness and weightiness is through the sacrifice of infinite worth, infinite perfection, infinite power to cleanse, and infinite righteousness – Jesus Christ. When you come before the Lord in worship, make sure that you are consciously and intentionally approaching Him by way of His appointed sacrifice – Jesus Christ our Lord.

Second, having approached God through Christ, let us give to Him the sacrifices, through Christ our Savior, that are in keeping with His Holy Name. Paul said it in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1, ESV)

Our worship, what we offer to God, the way that we sing – joyfully, meditatively, exuberantly, the way that we pray – in faith without doubting, the way that we listen to His word – earnestly with a desire to hear and believe and obey and submit our minds and our hearts, the way that we declare to God what He is worth, the way that we encourage one another to faithfulness to Christ, the way that we invest our lives in the lives of the brothers and sisters in this local church, the way that we uphold the gospel, the way that we seriously repent of sin and pursue the fruit of righteousness in our lives, the way that we give of ourselves and of our possessions for the sake of His glory, the way that we offer the strength of our bodies, the faculties of our minds, that emotions of our souls must be offered to Him as the treasure of our lives, not as something cheap and worthless.

This is not an ancillary or secondary issue -- THIS IS THE ISSUE OF LIFE. You do not live for yourself. Your life is an offering to God, made acceptable by Christ. Do not give God something that is polluted with hidden and coddled sin, polluted with mindlessness, or with a lack of reverence and love. Lazy, apathetic, careless, mindless, heartless, effortless, perfunctory worship is worthless worship and it not true worship at all, but hypocrisy. Real worship involves our entire being given to God as a living sacrifice. We must give all to Him, our will, thoughts, devotion, honor, our obedience, faith, our love, our praise, and our delight. It is ordering the entirety of our lives around Christ. It is our all that God’s glory demands – **(Hebrews 13:15–16, ESV)**

What do you do if you find yourself in a period of spiritual dryness? Everyone goes through times of dryness when God feels distant or worship is a battle. Keep seeking him, even if it is only with a mustard seed faith. Remain faithful, and wait for God’s blessing. Continue by faith to seek the Lord by Christ, until he come and rain righteousness and grace and mercy and refreshment upon you.

I want to close with these words of encouragement from Psalm 96: **“Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth! Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and**

majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!” (Psalm 96:1–9, ESV) Beloved, we must be gripped by God’s worth and we must see and know and comprehend and feel the weight of the greatness and glory of God. And then we need to offer to Him worship, in Christ, of which He is worthy. I pray we will.

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