

**Recession Proofing Your Faith**

**Celebrate God's Name**

**Malachi 1:6-14**

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**Text Introduction:** Last week, we began this journey, which will be verse by verse, through the book of Malachi. Rather than seeing Malachi as the last book of the Old Testament, we ought to see it as the living Word of God spoken to our situation in 2009. The people of Malachi's time faced their own economic and moral recession. In that context, God asks them to examine their faith. So, we are calling this series "Recession Proofing Your Faith." How is it that you maintain your faith and even grow in your faith in the context of difficult times in your family, your finances, your health, or whatever? We do this first of all by Celebrating God's Love. We settle once and for all that God loves us. (Malachi 1:1-5)

The second principle that we discover in this book is that we celebrate God's name. That is, we must maintain a right view of worship.

**Text:** <sup>6</sup> " A son honors *his* father,  
And a servant *his* master.  
If then I am the Father,  
Where *is* My honor?  
And if I *am* a Master,  
Where *is* My reverence?  
Says the LORD of hosts  
To you priests who despise My name.  
Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?'  
<sup>7</sup> " You offer defiled food on My altar,  
But say,  
' In what way have we defiled You?'  
By saying,  
' The table of the LORD is contemptible.'  
<sup>8</sup> And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice,  
*Is it* not evil?  
And when you offer the lame and sick,  
*Is it* not evil?  
Offer it then to your governor!  
Would he be pleased with you?  
Would he accept you favorably?"  
Says the LORD of hosts.  
<sup>9</sup> " But now entreat God's favor,  
That He may be gracious to us.  
*While* this is being *done* by your hands,  
Will He accept you favorably?"  
Says the LORD of hosts.  
<sup>10</sup> " *Who is there* even among you who would shut the doors,  
So that you would not kindle fire *on* My altar in vain?

I have no pleasure in you,”  
 Says the LORD of hosts,  
 “Nor will I accept an offering from your hands.  
<sup>11</sup> For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,  
 My name *shall be* great among the Gentiles;  
 In every place incense *shall be* offered to My name,  
 And a pure offering;  
 For My name shall be great among the nations,”  
 Says the LORD of hosts.  
<sup>12</sup> “But you profane it,  
 In that you say,  
 ‘The table of the LORD is defiled;  
 And its fruit, its food, *is* contemptible.’  
<sup>13</sup> You also say,  
 ‘Oh, what a weariness!  
 And you sneer at it,”  
 Says the LORD of hosts.  
 “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick;  
 Thus you bring an offering!  
 Should I accept this from your hand?”  
 Says the LORD.  
<sup>14</sup> “But cursed *be* the deceiver  
 Who has in his flock a male,  
 And takes a vow,  
 But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—  
 For I *am* a great King,”  
 Says the LORD of hosts,  
 “And My name *is to be* feared among the nations.

**Introduction:** Worship—now there is a buzz word in the church today. I have said on more than one occasion that “no worship style fits all.” I believe that is true. Some people like a more contemplative worship experience, and some prefer a more celebrative worship experience. Done in the right way and for the right reasons, there is no reason that both of these worship experiences cannot bring glory to God.

I don’t intend to address the style of worship today, but I do intend to address a more fundamental subject—the substance of worship—that is the authenticity of worship. Now, that’s an important topic. The simple answer is that God is only pleased by authentic worship. Rather than the practice of worship, God is more concerned with the purity of our worship.

In Malachi’s day, the people had rebuilt the Temple, but they had not rebuilt worship. In fact, as we read in the text today, they were simply going through the motions of worship. This is another critical area of where Malachi speaks to us.

**Examples of Worthless Worship:**

Worthless worship is any kind of worship that does not honor God as supreme and have God as the center of the expression. In this text, there are several examples.

1. Less-than-my-best Worship (v. 7-8, 13)—Any worship that is not your best is worthless worship. Remember that worship is not what we do for an hour on Sunday, but rather, what we do every second of our lives. At whatever point in our life that we do not give God our best, we are guilty of worthless worship. In other words, if I ever walk into this pulpit, without my best effort of preparation, both physically and spiritually, I commit a great sin. But similarly, if you come to worship without your best readiness, you have committed a great sin. God deserves our very best. The implications are enormous, are they not? In giving—did I give my best? If you are a SS teacher, did you give your best effort? If you are an encourager, did you encourage? God deserves our very best, not like the offerings recorded by Malachi.
2. Let's Make a Deal Worship (v. 9)—Some worship is an attempt to make a deal with God. How could we ever call it worship if our intentions are to manipulate God.
3. Let's Get this over God Worship (v.13)—If we are not careful, our worship will become a cycle of “Let's get this over” so I can go back to what I want to do. That kind of worship is worthless as well.

Things keep going back to the way they were before. Like Malachi, may our “burden” (see verse 1) be for worship that is worthy, not worthless.

### **The Ignorance of Worthless Worship**

To compound the problem of worthless worship, most times we are ignorant of our worthless worship. The people had to ask the question, “In what way have we despised your name?” They didn't recognize their worthless worship. In addition, the priests were in approval. Both of these factors led to an ignorance of their worthless worship. It had been so long since they had lived in authentic worship, they wouldn't have known. Could the same thing happen to us?

A man sat down to supper with his family and said grace, thanking God for the food, for the hands which prepared it, and for the source of all life. But during the meal he complained about the freshness of the bread, the bitterness of the coffee, and the sharpness of the cheese. His young daughter questioned him, “Dad, do you think God heard the grace today?” He answered confidently, “Of course.” Then she asked, “And do you think God heard what you said about the coffee, the cheese, and the bread?” Not so confidently, he answered, “Why, yes, I believe so.” The little girl concluded, “Then which do you think God believed, Dad?”<sup>1</sup>

We are probably all guilty of just going through the motions sometimes and calling it worship. God calls it worthless.

### **The Irony of Worthless Worship**

1. We realize this is wrong in other relationships. Three analogies drive this text. One is the relationship of a father/child. Another is the relationship between a servant and master. The third is the relationship with a governor. We

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<sup>1</sup> Copied from SermonCentral.Com, (James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 433.)

may not always give our best in these relationships either, but we realize that we ought to give our best.

2. God requires all or nothing.

The greatest irony is that God would rather the Temple doors close than the continuation of these worthless forms of worship. Do you see what that means to us?

### **The Imperative of Worthy Worship**

God's name shall be great among the nations. If not us, then who? Who will give God the glory due His name? The dominant feature of identification for God in this passage is "The LORD of hosts."

What is different from the other names about the name Yahweh Sabaoth? Bible teacher, Kay Arthur said, "It is God's name for man's extremity. This is a name for those who find their resources inadequate in the midst of a struggle." That's why in some of your Bible translations you might see the name translated, "Almighty," instead of "Hosts." Even the idea of LORD of Hosts is that he is over the hosts or enemies of Israel.

God, Yahweh Sabaoth, is going to get the last word. In fact, in the OT book of Malachi, this name LORD of hosts is used 24 times. In 22 of those occurrences the title is accompanied with "Thus says the LORD of hosts." He will have the last word in your life and in history. Since this is true why not make Him first place in your life today and commit to keep Him in first place for the rest of your life.