

Wherein Have We Despised Thy Name?

by Oran Rhodes

The sermon calls for a return to genuine worship and commitment to God's teachings amidst the spiritual decline of the church.

Duration: 44:43

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, Acts 20:27, Romans 15:4

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that preaching the word of God is not just about making people feel good, but about conveying the whole message of love, grace, and the plan of salvation. The speaker highlights the importance of knowing and understanding God's expectations for our lives and living in a way that pleases Him. They also stress the need for purity in our homes and the importance of discipline, both in parenting and within the church community. The sermon warns against tolerating sinful behavior and emphasizes the need for spiritual leaders to guide and instruct based on the Word of God.

Transcript

Many, many congregations of the Lord's people are in deep, deep trouble. Too many people are living in deep denial that there's anything wrong about the direction of the church and those connected institutions, and I use that advisedly. We have a problem that some, even to this day, are still living in the glories of the past, and they want to talk about back when the church was the fastest-growing religious body in the United States, which had been the fifties and sixties.

That's a long time past. We also realize that compromise has found a home in both liberal and conservative thinking and practice. Don't want to think about it that way sometimes, but it's a fact, and we'll touch just briefly upon that in this lesson.

Another thing that creates a problem in our thinking is too many people look at the restoration as a once-for-all done deal. That has never been the case, never can be the case, because every generation that comes along must be thoroughly convinced of the principles of restoration, and while at various times men have come up and understood what needs to be done in the organization of the church, the terms of admission, the things we always talk about, but you know, you have to teach that. You have to instill that again, or you have the second generation past, and all people are doing is doing it because we've always done it, which is a basis for absolutely nothing.

Rather than confronting the onset of doctrinal and moral error that's within, too many among the leadership and in pulpits have chosen to bury their heads in the sands of denial. And unless people once again awaken to the spiritual work of the church, the purpose of glorifying God in worship, and glorifying God in the daily lives of his people, then indeed the remnant is going to be small. We cannot deny the principle of the remnant.

It's too clearly been shown in Scripture. We have had it pointed out time and again in our lessons this week, but let me tell you, the size and the quality and whether we are a part of that remnant depends on us, and we must become aware of that. I would like for you to turn to the book of Malachi, chapter 1. Paul says, For whatsoever things are written aforetime are written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

We have a message from the past, beginning with verse 6 of Malachi, chapter 1. A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is mine honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priest that despised my name? And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offered polluted bread upon my altar. And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye 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 you, that this hath been by your means. Will he regard your person, 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.

I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand." Enough time had passed in Israel that the earlier enthusiasm for restoration had died. They had been back in Babylon for about a hundred years, and during that period of time, instead of growing spiritually, they were now back in deterioration. Indifference toward moral and ceremonial aspects of the divine law was what prevailed, and one of the reasons that it prevailed was because the priests were corrupted.

It prevailed in their midst. If you notice verse 6, he is talking about profaneness. It is actually when he is talking about despising my name that you use it emptily, profanely, which is the word which we get profanity.

You despise my name, you use it pointlessly, empty, without serious thought or meaning. Well, I hate to bring it up again, but have you noticed in our world that people cannot seem to speak a sentence without using God's name to begin it? Emptily, without meaning to them, but it has great meaning to God when they do that. And it has encroached upon and we find brethren, as is a tendency, falling right into the same trap.

But here it is dealing with calling upon him, desiring his blessings, seeking to please him through all these empty gestures and thinking that will satisfy the requirement. He says you are despising, you are profaning my name by calling upon me without thought, without purpose, without any substance. If you notice in verses 7-9, he says it is clearly shown in the way you offer up sacrifice.

This is not sacrifice, this is not worship, this is sacrilege, offering up polluted bread. Does that have any sound to you like the leftovers, the scraps? Does that have anything to do with any practices that you are familiar with? Offering up to him something to get by, to get over, what does it make any difference? After

all, this is just a symbolic gesture. That is what gets on the part of those who are polluted priests.

And so they offer up all kinds of sacrifices that are worthless, and he makes the point. He said, you know, just try taking a blind sacrifice, a goat, a sheep, and offering it up to the governor and see how he is going to feel toward you about that. But that is what you are doing.

You are not giving the best of your flocks. You are getting rid of those that are not worth anything anyway. After all, it is just going through the motions.

Parts of that which I did not read here in this first chapter, in verses 10 and 11, he points out their greed. These priests were greedy. They were serving for money.

We have plenty of that today, too. In verses 13 and 14, he points out how they have wearied, and the ultimate conclusion is they are totally indifferent, wherein, have we despised thy name? Oh, their empty ritual. If you notice verse 10 very carefully, the Lord of hosts, which means the bringing forth of judgment to them, he says that this empty ritual is worse than no worship at all.

It would be better to close up the temple. Now, think about how they were tied to the temple. It would be better to shut it down than you go in there and profanely, emptily go through the motions of worshipping me.

Now, these are the spiritual leaders of Israel he is talking to. Is it any wonder where the people were? The obtuseness on the part of those who should have been spiritual leaders is pointed out when he points that they are going to say, What are you talking about? What do you mean that we are despising thy name? Oh, surely we are not conscious of anything. We are clearly, clearly innocent.

We do not have any consciousness of any sin. Folks, I hear this all the time today among those who ought to be leading people by the instruction of the Word of God. Why are you practicing that? It is unscriptural.

What are you talking about? Claiming innocence of all things. Well, I do not see anything wrong with that, and I will talk about that again in just a minute. But let me tell you something.

I want you to think about this. Without a sense of sin, which they did not have, because after all, they were going through the minute details of carrying out their responsibility. It was empty as could be, but they were doing all that.

And they did not realize that they had done anything wrong. Oh, at least they claimed they did not realize they were doing anything. They had gone so far as, We are just going through this, doing this, not worrying about it.

Without a sense of sin, folks, there can be no knowledge or understanding of the love of God. When people want to talk all the time about love, and that is all they want to talk about, they do not know what they are talking about. It is not until you realize what sin is, and that we sin, and the need that we have, that we can ever come close to understanding what the love of God is, and what He has done for us.

This was the condition described in Malachi 1 in Judah, and it also describes in principle what we have existing today. Let us think a minute. We, too, despise God's name when we forget to whom the church belongs.

Jesus said, I will build my church, Matthew 16, 18. No one else has right to a claim to it. And put all things under his feet, and gave the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that

fillet all in all, Ephesians 1, 22 and 23.

Jesus did not die to purchase a church, as we find in reading in Acts 20, to turn the church over to human control and worldly pursuits. When people determine that they have decided to take the church into a different direction, have you ever heard that term? Then there is human control, and if we think that the church is ours to do with as we please, then it has nothing to do with God. It is just a glorified social club.

And when congregations decide we can make these changes, we don't have to do these things, we don't have to pay attention here and there, they have an organization. But it's not the Lord's church, and I don't care what kind of name they put on the front of the building. It's certainly not a remnant of God's people who are true to him.

We stop and think, this is so simple, but we stop and think about the church belongs to our Lord. He is the King. He is the purchaser, and it is for him to determine what it is to be, how it is to act, what is to be performed.

When we forget what the church is, that he is the head of the body, the church, Colossians 1, 18, that we are added by the Lord unto the church. When we fail to keep comprehending that the body of Christ is a spiritual body for spiritual life, it is not to garner in as many folks as we can get using any means possible and allowing anything so we can have what we've got. The failure to be the pure bride of Christ, now you're not going to like what I'm going to say, but the failure to be the pure bride of Christ intimates, if we're a part of that thinking, that we see the church as a prostitute to be used for our own devices.

And you have people then using the church for popularity's gain, for financial gain, for fame gain, and you have people then using the church for popularity gain, for fame gain, for fame, it has nothing to do with God. Only in name, the emptiness that's described in Malachi 1 is there. When we forget what the work and the purpose of the church is, we despise his name.

What are we to do? We're to declare the whole counsel of God. That's not just preachers. Acts 20, verse 27, the whole of it, all of it, every bit of it, it also entails what we're going to do.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have given unto you, and the law be with you always, even in the end of the world, Matthew 28, verses 19 and 20. When we fail to evangelize, it shows a total disregard for God's instructions, for what He told us to do. And when we fail to evangelize because we're waiting for a program to be set up, that's a cop-out.

I don't recall anything in Scriptures where He says every congregation needs to set up an organized evangelism program. Now it may be the most expedient thing to do, but you don't have to wait on it to talk to somebody about their soul, and every one of us has an individual responsibility to do that and see if it's an individual responsibility, what are we waiting for a group for? You think about that. Playtime and worldly pursuits don't, as I find in Scripture, have any part in the work and purpose of the Church.

Now, I'm not saying it's not good to get together and do all sorts of things, but it's not what God instructed us as the work. Yes, we're to have association and fellowship because we are brethren and because we love one another. We're the family of God.

And families, if they're what they're supposed to be, enjoy being together. But that's not what the work is. If it benefits the work and it's Scriptural, that's wonderful, but it seems to me like too many times the end is

the fun, that that's what the end we're seeking for at the end of the day to get to.

And I know it is in many places because that's the way they advertise themselves. When we fail to stand firm upon what God teaches, we despise His name. We are to contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints.

Jude verse 3, Paul said, To the Corinthians now I beseech you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. Is that the reality of the world we are living in, or does that mean something is badly wrong? And it comes back to giving book, chapter, and verse for what we teach and what we practice. The failure to defend what the Bible teaches demonstrates we didn't really believe it to begin with.

When we, in thinking about standing firm, claim ignorance, as so many do, well, I don't know. I didn't realize that. I got to thinking this morning.

Most of us can relate to this, and it's really while I'm talking about children, parents, most of you who will relate best are those who are older, those who are parents themselves. Do you think back, and if on an occasion someone came to you and said, I have a message from your father. He left a letter for you at home with instructions of the things he wants to do until he gets back.

And you say, fine. And you go home, and you go about your business, and you never open that letter, never pay any attention to the instructions, and when Dad gets home he says, why didn't you do what I gave you the instructions to do? I didn't know you said that. How well would that go over with Dad? God gave us instructions, and if we don't know what they are, who's to blame? Are we going to give an excuse? I didn't know! Well, the Father, would He not say, how come I gave the instructions? I made them available to you for you to always have.

How come you don't know what you're to do, and how you're to live, and why this was wrong? Ignorance, as we've always heard concerning the law, is no excuse. Well, it's certainly no excuse with all that God has done and provided us for if we don't know what He expects us to do, and how we're to live, and what we are to do to please Him. So if, in defense of the Bible, we say, well, I wouldn't know, Peter said we're to be ready to always give an answer.

Did he not? 1 Peter 3.15. How do you do that? You read the instructions. You come and make it a part of your life, and we despise the name of God when we make a claim of ignorance of, I didn't know what to say. But when Eris taught, or we're confronted with some of the nonsense that is in the world around us today by some of our family and friends, there's also the problem of thoughtlessness.

And many times if you quiz somebody, why in the world are you doing this in that congregation where you attend? I don't know. I never thought about it. Well, thoughtlessness can get us in trouble in every aspect of life.

God gave us a brain for a reason, and when people in the religious realm just follow along, just go along, and never individually on their own make sure that what they are doing is right, there is no excuse. And then there is one more thing in this line, and that's compromise. Well, we had some folks in the congregation who wanted to do this, and we really didn't feel comfortable with that, and some of the other brethren were opposed to that.

So we kind of decide to, you know, kind of meet them halfway. Well, if it's a matter of opinion, that's well and good, if that's all it is. Let me tell you the way I picture compromise on truth.

Since truth is an absolute, to compromise truth is to take a table and knock two legs off of it and expect it to still stand. Now, you think about it, it can't do it, it's utterly impossible. And so is compromise of truth, it's an impossibility, you make it a lie.

You cannot compromise an absolute. So we despise God's name when we live as though God is just simply an afterthought. We go through the week, we work our jobs, we do the things we do for fun and do things with the family, and oh, yes, that's right, we've got to get ready and go and make it late sometime for some service on Sunday.

That's God as an afterthought. To live our lives without it never ending, the picture of what we're doing or what we're thinking and never having any part in a decision we make all week long, and yet we kind of come and give him a passing kiss occasionally on Sunday, that is despising the name of God. It's despising him, in other words, and his authority.

We're to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us in Matthew 6, verse 33, if ye then be risen with Christ. Seek those things which are above, for Christ saith on the right hand of God, Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. If we loved God like some people love their television sets, we'd be spending six hours a day with him.

Is there a problem here in despising the name of God? If God is not at the center of our lives, then we have no place in his kingdom, and that's an absolute. Every major decision that we make should be based upon what's best for the Lord's cause, because whatever it is, it will be best for us. And until we get to thinking that way, we're not going to be a part of the remnant.

Now, what must be done? It's just about as simple as you can possibly get. We must be sure that we teach the whole counsel of God, again, Acts 20, verse 27. If all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and all of it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and righteousness, then we'd better make sure we know it all, study it all, apply it all appropriately with an understanding of rightly dividing, handling aright the word of truth.

Teaching or preaching is not just about feel-good stories. It must be mighty easy on some of these hirelings, because they only have to speak for 15 minutes, and all they have to do is make everybody feel good. That's not what it's about.

It's not just about love and grace. Is it about love and grace? Absolutely. But it's not just about love and grace.

If those who are always constantly harping and hammering about love and grace, it's like a body, or it's like a heart without the bones and muscles, and a head without a brain. Love and grace. They're absolutely essential, but within the framework and context of the whole.

It's not just about the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation, folks, we are to make sure and get out to a lost and dying world. Brethren, we need a whole lot more than hearing that over and over and over and that alone.

It's about how we should live, who we are to be, what our relationship should be with God and what our relationship should be with one another, what our relationship should be with the world, what our work is, and the consequences of what transpires if we follow him or we don't. That's preaching the whole counsel of God. We also must emphasize proper biblical authority, sanctified unto thy truth, thy word is truth.

Not the preacher's word is truth. Not that some lead elder's word is truth. God's word is truth.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God the Father by him, Colossians 3.17. The authority, God's word, not man's opinion. Think so's, hope so's, wish so's. It is what God has said, and it has not changed and will not change.

And the very fact of it is that biblical authority affects every aspect of your life. You don't believe that? Think about it. Does it affect the home? It tells us what God will accept and will not accept in a marriage.

What he expects in the training of the children at home. What he expects in the way that that home is to follow him. It gives us instruction on how to work as a Christian, how to be an employer as a Christian, on and on and on.

Every aspect of our lives is affected by going back to God's authority. Then also the Bible authority concerning leadership's role. And it's already been touched upon, it's so important to understand the leadership begins with the king, who is the good shepherd.

And as was also pointed out, that means everybody else's sheep, including the under-shepherds. And that it is a work to be done, not an office to be held. And the benefit for God's kingdom is the goal.

Thirdly, we must regain purity in the church. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church. He gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy.

That's pure. And without, we began that it must be pure in its construction. We don't have an ecclesiastical system.

Though I wonder when I look at some bulletins, and they have twenty-seven people listed as staff, understand that it is the simplicity of the church, the Lord's body, the autonomy of it, that must make sure that we remain pure in our teaching, in the doctrine, that it is indeed, we have the capability of saying, Thus saith the Lord, that those who are members of any given congregation are living a life that is exemplary. We've learned to tolerate far more than the Lord's going to tolerate, and that's where we're in trouble. There must be purity in our work, in other words, doing what God said we're to do and doing it, if he's given us instruction on how to do it, in the way he said to do it, and not be carried away by church growth seminars of all these new manners and ways of doing things.

Or as was pointed out to me this morning in the headline of the current Christian Chronicle about all the benefits of the purpose-driven church, which has nothing to do with spirituality whatsoever, no matter what the claim is. And there must be purity in our homes, as was so well described last night. Fourthly, there must be discipline.

Second, that's only three verse six now, we command you, either in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not act with the tradition or

teaching which you have received of us. If people disciplined their children like most congregations discipline the unruly, we would wait until our child had been sentenced to prison before we tried to discipline them. We wait until brethren have--we see them heading in the wrong direction, and we wait until they have leaped over the cliff before we do anything about it too many times.

Are we of the cause we will tolerate things because we don't want to disrupt things? And it's going to create a problem, not as much of a problem as it creates for God for us tolerating it. There is nothing unkind about proper discipline. It begins to make sure people understand the difference between right and wrong, to understand what God says.

That's instruction. And then we must follow it up, as we should with our children. Maybe we need to have lessons on that, but as we should with our children, when the failure to do that which is right, which brings reproach upon the Lord, that we then have to have a little corrective discipline.

It must be done. It's not just when there's a failure to live, as we should, and it's not just an occasion when there is a failure to teach purely. There are also occasions where we must take a different kind of action, at least the way I read my Bible, and mark and have no fellowship with congregations who have departed the faith.

And those who are unwilling to return, that means we have made an effort, not just talked about them, made an effort to point out that error and get them to change. Or sometimes there are folks who will not even talk to you about it. They say, No, I'm not going to talk about it.

Well, that's enough said. If you're not willing to do that, then we can't not understand where you're coming from. We can't have any close association with you.

Until we start getting back and not turning our heads and looking out the corner of one eye so we can kind of hold our nose and go along with some of those around us, we're not going to be what we're supposed to be. We've got to get over that. Then finally, men and congregations who are like-minded must make a conscientious effort to work more closely.

We've almost carried the autonomy business too far in the wrong direction. In fact, unless it's happening here, we're not interested in what's happening there. We don't want to take a little extra time to go and try to uphold the hands of faithful brethren in another place.

That's wrong. We've got to get over that. And with those who are of like, precious faith, those who are seeking diligently to do that which God is pleased with, we must be supportive far more than we've been in the past.

Now, the God of patience and consolation grants you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that you may be one mind, one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Folks, every time that we claim to be what we're not, we despise the name of God. Every time we fail to defend the truth, we deny His name.

Any time we refuse to serve Him in the ways that we are capable of serving Him, we shall despise His name. Any time we compromise His truth, we despise Him, His name. Isn't it time that we all individually and as a body re-evaluate what we believe, what we preach, and how we live?

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