

Malachi on Repentance and Honor

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung emphasizes the critical need for repentance and honoring God among both believers and the church community.

Duration: 46:06

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of respecting and honoring God's will. He criticizes the lack of reverence and professionalism in serving God, stating that simply carrying out religious activities without true respect for God is unacceptable. The preacher refers to a passage in Malachi where God rejects polluted offerings and desires pure oblation from all nations. He also highlights the need for repentance among God's people, drawing parallels to John the Baptist's message to the Jews and the call for repentance in the book of Revelation.

Transcript

First it was repentance. And then at the beginning of the dispensation of grace, of the new dispensation, you'll find the message, the first message, was also repentance. Repentance was preached by Malachi, and repentance was preached by John the Baptist.

We often think that the message of repentance is for those who do not know the Lord. Now certainly they need to repent. Certainly the world needs to repent.

Repent of their sins. Repent of their rebellion. Repent of everything.

And then believe in the Lord Jesus that people may be saved. That is true. Without repentance, no one can really come to the Lord.

That's the reason why John the Baptist must go ahead to prepare the way of the Lord. If a person desires to believe in the Lord Jesus, the first thing is he must repent of himself. And then he turns and receives the Lord Jesus as his Savior.

That is necessary. But oftentimes we think that repentance is just for the unbelievers. We do not know that the message of repentance has a very large place among believers.

Believers need to repent. Just as unbelievers need to repent. Even though the things we need to repent may be different.

And yet, if we are not in our normal condition, if we have become subnormal, if we are not what we should be, if we are not where we should be, then there is the necessity of repentance for us. The book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. And yet you find in the book of Job there is repentance.

Job was a perfect man. He was upright. And God could even challenge Satan with Job.

God said to Satan, Have you seen Job? Have you observed Job? Do you not know that Job was upright and perfect and fear God? He was such a man. And then, when you come to the end of the book of Job, chapter 42, you find Job himself says, I abhor myself. I repent in dust and ashes.

Such a perfect man like Job needed to repent. He was so perfect he became self-righteous. He was so perfect he loved his integrity.

He was so perfect that he dared to challenge God with his own righteousness. He needed to repent of his own self. In dust and ashes.

He needed to abhor himself. Himself was terrible to him. So that God might be everything to him.

Job needed repentance. You read the collection of the 150 songs. And everybody knows Psalm 51.

That song written by David. The man after God's own heart. And yet when you read the Psalm 51, what do you find there? You find the man after God's heart needed to repent.

And how he repented before God. How he asked God to cleanse him. To give him a clean heart.

And a proper spirit. David needed to repent. Because he failed.

All the prophets that God sent to the children of Israel. The children of Israel, they were God's people. And yet when God sent prophets after prophets to them, rising early to prophesy to them.

You know, in their prophecies, the message was, as many times, the message of repentance. Return. Return! And I will return.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord. And his message was directed not to the Gentiles, to the nations. His message was directed to the Jews at that time.

And who were the Jews? They were supposed to be God's people. God's covenanted people. They had a temple in Jerusalem.

They had a priesthood in the family of Aaron. They had the sacrifices going on. They were supposed to be God's people.

And yet, when John the Baptist came into their midst, he said, repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. God's people needed to repent. And when you come to the book of Revelation, you find the Lord Himself.

He was walking among the seven golden lampstands, which represented the seven churches in Asia. And what did you find there? You find the message of the Lord to the seven churches was the message of repentance. The word repent was used eight times in these seven letters.

For five of the seven churches, they needed to repent. Because they were not where they should be. They were not what they ought to be.

They needed to repent. So dear brothers and sisters, the message of repentance is as needed among believers as the unbelievers. Are we where we should be? Are we what we ought to be? If we are not, then there is a need for repentance.

We cannot go on as if there is nothing. We cannot go on as if everything is all right. If we go on like that, one day when the Lord shall return, and we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, then we will suffer loss, even though we may be saved, barely saved.

So dear brothers and sisters, when you read the book of Malachi, you will find that the message is the message of repentance. God's people need to repent. And I do believe that this is the message for us today.

How we need to repent before God. Last night we mentioned the first issue that God had with the Jewish remnant. And it was an issue over this matter of love.

God said, I have loved you. I have loved you. And yet, the Jewish remnant returned and said, Wherein hast thou loved us? We don't know that you have loved us.

We don't know your love. In other words, there was a spiritual insensitivity. God's love was so great towards them that they were blind, insensitive to God's love.

And if a person does not appreciate God's love, he cannot love God anymore. In other words, he has lost his first love. Where comes our first love? It is when we first realize how much He loves us.

And when you are constrained by the love of Christ, you cannot help but love Him. And that is love. That is first love.

But one day when you begin to wonder if He has loved you, or you forget that He has loved you, that means you have lost your first love. And God said, I love Jacob. I hated Esau.

By divine election, it shows how much God has loved us. Now, brothers and sisters, just think of that. Who are we? Why is it that God should choose us? Even before the foundation of the world, He has chosen us in Christ Jesus.

We are not born yet. We have not done anything good or anything worthless yet. It shows that it does not depend upon our work.

It is pure grace. God has chosen us in Christ Jesus. And being chosen, that shows how much He has loved us.

And not only that, when God disciplined the children of Jacob, God disciplined them, but disciplined for the purpose of perfecting them, that they may be partakers of the divine nature of God. Then look at Edom. Look at Esau.

When Esau was punished, that was his end. That was the end. So, dear brothers and sisters, when we think of the chastening of the Lord, when we think of the discipline of the Lord, that the Lord will not let us go our own way, remember, this is love.

This is love. This is an evidence of how much He loves us. So in Hebrews 12 you find the father will chasten his son.

If you are his son, he will have to chasten you. But if you are a gangster, then he will leave you alone. So, here you find the issue was over this matter of love.

Now, let's continue on this morning. And here in Malachi you'll find the second issue was raised. God had a controversy with the Jewish remnant at that time.

And the issue was a son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. If then I be a father, where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? The first issue was the issue of love. And we know love is always the basic of all relationships.

Then here you'll find God came to the second issue with them, and the second issue was a matter of honor. A matter of respect. A matter of His name.

Where there is love, you don't need to fight over the matter of honor or respect. Why? Because where there is the love, you will give respect to those that should be respected. You will give honor to those that should be honored.

There will be no problem. But when love is lacking, then you have to talk about this matter of honor and respect. In other words, a matter of duty.

There is a level, which is the level of duty. We have our duty. As children, we have our duty to honor our parents.

So in the Ten Commandments you'll find there is the commandment saying honor thy father and thy mother. You have to pay respect to those that should be respected. It is defined by the law as our duty, as our responsibility.

And brothers and sisters, when people cannot rise above to the level of love, then you have to deal with them on the level of the law, on the level of duty. Now, what is the duty? These people, they did not love God. They said, where have you loved us? So God said, all right, I'll come down to a lower level with you and see if you have performed your duty.

A son honoreth his father. That is defined by the law. A son ought to honor his father.

And a servant ought to fear his master. You know, of course here, the servant in the old days is a slave. A slave.

And a slave should fear his master. That is to say, he should do everything that his master has told him. And he should be fearful lest he fail, and he will be punished.

His duty is to fear his master. So God said, if I be a father to you, where is my honor? Where is my honor? Now, of course, if you read the Old Testament, God is a father to the children of Israel. You know, in one sense, God as our Father is a special revelation to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is through the Son, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we know God as our Father. You remember the Lord Jesus said, I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God. God as our Father is the special revelation of the Son.

In the Old Testament time, people have a vague idea of God as Father, but certainly not in a personal way. It's more in a national way. In a national way.

For instance, in Isaiah 63, you'll find the thought there. In Isaiah 63, verse 16, this is not spoken in a personal way, more in a corporate way as a nation. For thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.

Thou, Jehovah, art our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name. And 64, verse 8, And now, Jehovah, thou art our Father, we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we all are the work of thy hand. So in the Old Testament time, you'll find that God was a Father to the nation of Israel.

And God said, if I be a Father to you, where is my honor? You do not honor me as you should. If I be a master, where is my fear? Now certainly, He is the Lord. He is the Lord to the children of Israel.

But where is His fear? And then the Lord turned especially to the priests, because the priests represent the spiritual condition of the people. And He directed to the priests and said, Why do you despise my name? What do you mean by honoring the Lord or despising His name? When you honor a person, you respect the person, you listen to him. If you honor His name, you will do the things that He wants you to do.

In other words, you will do His will. That is honoring His name. But if you do not do His will, you despise His name.

You do not give Him the honor that is His due. So the Lord said, Why do you despise My name? You do not do My will. And yet you find the children of Israel said, Wherein have we despised? They said, We haven't despised Your name.

They were so blind. Were they really so blind? God said, You despise My name. You do not honor Me.

You do not fear Me. You haven't done your duty to Me. And yet they came and answered back and said, Wherein have we despised Your name? Oh, brothers and sisters, you know, here probably is the beginning of the Pharisees that you find at the time of Christ.

The Jewish people, they profess to honor the name of the Lord so much, you know, it developed among them a kind of concept that they should not mention the name of the Lord in vain. And because they wanted to feel that, to show that they did not mention the name of the Lord in vain, they did not even dare to mention His name at all. And by not mentioning His name, they give an appearance of they really honor the name of the Lord.

That's Pharisees, you know. And yet, they did not do the will of the Father. They did not do the will of the Master.

They did not do the will of God. Awkwardly they professed to have great honor for His name, not even mentioning His name. And yet, actually, they did everything contradictory to His name.

That's hypocrisy. That's Pharisaism. That's worshiping the Lord with their lips, but their heart was far away from God, as you remember our Lord Jesus called Him Isaiah.

You worship with your lips, but your heart is far away. Therefore, in vain do you worship. That's the beginning of Pharisaism.

And you know what happens? They say, where in have we despised your name? We honor your name so much, we even dare not mention your name. And the Lord said, you offer polluted bread upon my altar, and you say, where in have we polluted thee? Polluted bread. Now, what is polluted bread? Now, of course here it does not refer to the showbread on the table of showbread, even though the altar here is sometimes called the table of the Lord.

But it does not refer to the showbread on the altar. Why? Because the showbread is not a sacrifice. And here you'll find the polluted bread is a sacrifice.

So evidently this refers to the sacrifices that the priests offered on the brazen altar. And because these sacrifices, as they were all offered on the altar, they were as food to God, as bread to God. You know, of the different offerings, there were offerings that were sin offering, like sin offering and trespass offering.

These were non-sweet-savor offerings. But there were offerings such like the burn offering, the oblation, and the peace offering. And when they offered these unto God, they were a sweet-smelling savor to God.

And they were food to God, bread to God. In other words, God was satisfied. God's hunger, as it were, was being satisfied.

When you offer these sweet-smelling offerings to God, and God was satisfied. They were God's food. But when they offer these sacrifices, it was clearly defined in the law that they should never offer any sacrifice that was imperfect.

When they offer a sacrifice, they had to offer a perfect sacrifice. There should be no blemish, there should be no spot, there should be no blindness, no lameness, no corruption of any kind. The priest had to examine those sacrifices, and only the perfect could be offered.

Why? Because all these sacrifices were a type of Christ. Only a perfect Christ could be offered to God and satisfy God's heart. Nothing else.

Nothing else. And yet these priests, what did they do? They offer up the blind and the lame and the crippled and the imperfect sacrifice. And yet they say, where have we corrupted, polluted your table? We haven't.

Did they know the law? Certainly they did. Because they were Levites. They studied the law.

They read Leviticus. They knew that it was definitely stated there that no imperfect sacrifice should be offered and if they should do that they would be completely rejected. They knew all about that.

And yet their spiritual condition had sunk to such a low state. Knowing the law mentally and yet they were so rationalized that they could offer imperfect sacrifices. And yet they say, where have we polluted thee? We haven't done anything wrong.

Think of that. How did they rationalize the whole thing? Except they said. They may not say it in words but the prophet put the words in their mouth.

They said the table of the law is contemptible. So long as the law got something, that's enough. That's enough for them.

Oh, how they despised. They were priests. They were to serve.

And yet they became so professional. Oh, professionalism had entered into here. They were just going through the motions and they said, well, who is God? As long as He got something He should be satisfied.

That's professionalism. There is no respect there. There is no honor there.

There is no fear there. And the law said, if you offer a lame, a blind, to your governor, will he accept it? And if your governor will not accept it, how much more it will be rejected by God? In other words, they do not honor God even as they honor a human being, a governor. And you know what was the reaction of God? The reaction of God was strong.

And God said, oh, if any man will come and just close the doors. I don't want all these offerings. These offerings were abominations to me.

If someone would just come and shut the door, that's much better. Then have the whole thing going on as a profession. God doesn't want it anymore.

Doesn't want it. I will not accept. Brothers and sisters, we may think this was such an extreme, almost unbelievable.

Even the Gentiles, when they offered to their gods, who were not gods, they knew how to offer the best. How much more God's children, who were to serve the living God, they shall offer the perfect sacrifice. How much more they should know that, they should do that.

It was almost unbelievable. Believable. And more than that, this was the Jewish remnant.

They came back for the testimony of God. They were supposed to be a committed people to God. And yet, they could be so degenerated as to become farisic and professional to such a degree.

There was no fear. There was no respect. But brothers and sisters, are we better than these people? Do you think that God has such an issue with us too? Of course, God's issue with us in the first place is the issue over love.

Do we love Him with all our hearts? Is there the first love there? Last night, one brother talked to me and to his understanding, he said first love is love Him first. I think that's a good explanation. Do you love Him first of all? That should be the first issue.

But, oh but, if we, our spiritual condition can drop so low that God cannot deal with us on the level of love and God has to come down to try to deal with us on the level of duty. Brothers and sisters, if God should deal with you on the level of duty, that is tragic already. God said, do you honor me? Do you fear me? Do you respect my name? Do you do my will? In Matthew chapter 7, at the closing of the sermon, so-called Sermon on the Mount, the Lord said, one day many will come and say, Lord, Lord, have we not done this and done that in your name? In your name we cast out the demons.

In your name we heal the sick. In your name we do this and do that. And the Lord said, I do not know you.

And the word know here means I do not approve of you. You use my name, but you are not doing my will. What God wants is that we do his will.

Whoever does the will of the Father, the Lord said, is my mother, my sisters, and my brothers. Doing the will of the Father. Wherever two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of

them.

What do you mean by gathered together unto his name? That is to say, you honor his name. You put yourself under his name. Under his authority.

And let him have rule over us. This is what the church is. When we pray and say, in your name, Amen.

What have we prayed for? What is our prayer? Is it according to his will? Or is it something that we want him to do? In my name. How do we honor his name? And you'll find in the case of the church in Philadelphia, God Christ recommended the church in Philadelphia in Revelation chapter 3. And three things he recommends. Number one, brotherly love.

They love each other as brethren are to love. Number two, they honor his name. They keep his name.

His name is enough for them. They do not want any other name but the name of the Lord Jesus. They put themselves under his name.

They do his will. And they do not depart from his word. Brothers and sisters, how about us? Do we give him honor? Respect? Do we respect his name? Are we doing his will? Or have we come to a place as if God should receive anything that we give him? If only we gave him something.

Oh, how we offer up sacrifices that are not Christ. How we offer up polluted bread. Offer up our own works.

Offer up our own flesh. Offer up our own cleverness. Offer up our own energies.

Offer up things that we want. And how we offer the offerings of Cain. It is not Christ.

If it is not Christ, God will not accept. This is not honoring him. Many activities, and yet how much is the will of God.

Brothers and sisters, how evil we get to be professional in serving God. We carry on a service, and yet there is no respect in our heart towards God. No respect of his name.

As if, Lord, as long as you are served, you should be happy about it. Now, the Lord said, I would that somebody would close the door. I will not accept this.

And then the Lord turned around and said, You, my people, are offering polluted bread, as if I am a beggar. You can drop a penny, and I shall be happy with it. The Lord said, No.

The day is coming when from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, all the nations, they will offer to me pure oblation. And my name shall be great among them. Is it not a prophecy? Because the Jewish people, they become so professional, they become so fanatic in their relationship with God, then you remember how the gospel of Jesus Christ has come to the nations.

And now from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, out of every nation, every tribe, every tongue and every people, God has made for himself a people. And they shall offer pure oblation. That is to say, they are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If we do not respect him, God will find some other people that will respect him. And yet, they were still contentable of the table of the Lord. And you know what happened? They said, what a weariness.

Oh, serving God was a weariness. These priests would rather go home and kill their own field. But because they were priests, they had to come to Jerusalem and do some offering.

But when they were doing all these things, their heart was not there. They were just doing these things. And when they were doing them, they said, what a weariness.

Brothers and sisters, does it come sometimes to you that you are weary? What a weariness. If you are lucky, you will never be weary. But if there is no love and you are just doing it as a duty, as a routine, someday you will get that weary feeling in you.

There isn't that freshness anymore. There isn't that livingness anymore. It becomes just a routine.

And if it goes on as a routine, one day you will get weary of it. Is it true? Are you weary in serving the Lord? Because it has become so routine now. The spirit is not there.

And yet the Lord speak to the children of Israel, especially the Levites. And the Lord reminded them by saying, have I not have a covenant with you? God had called the tribe of Levi to himself. God had a covenant with them.

It was a covenant of life and peace. It was a covenant that they would fear him. And because they feared him, the law of truth was in their mouth.

In other words, they were not only to bring sacrifices to God for the people, but they were to teach the people, instruct many in righteousness. There was God's covenant with the children of Levi. And yet, how they have departed.

How they have judged unrighteously. So the Lord said, repent. If you do not repent, then I will drive you away.

The covenant will be canceled. Will be canceled. And brothers and sisters, is it not true that we are all priests unto God? His blood has washed us clean.

He has made us kings and priests unto God. He has made a new covenant with us. And this new covenant is the covenant of life and peace.

And we are to serve him as ministers of the new covenant. You'll find in 2 Corinthians. We are to serve the Lord as ministers of the new covenant.

We are to serve him in the spirit. Because the mind of the spirit is life and peace. But dear brothers and sisters, when we are not walking in the spirit, when we are serving him in the flesh, then the truth will depart from us.

And soon, we will lose our function as priests unto God. You know, this is an honor. A privilege.

That we may serve him. That's a privilege. But if we should despise his name, we will be despised one day.

We will get it. So dear brothers and sisters, here you'll find it is the second issue between God and the Lamb. And it is the issue of honor of his name.

So may the Lord have mercy upon us that we may truly honor his name. That is to say, we will do his will in the power of his name. And this is what God is looking for among his people.

Shall we pray? O Lord, we do pray that we may honor thy name as we should. We pray that we may not be of people who honor thee with our lips, and yet our hearts are far away from thee. We pray that our worship may be in spirit and in truth.

Deliver us from Pharisees. Deliver us from professionalism. Deliver us from weariness.

O Lord, quicken us that we may rise up in our spirit to honor thee, to respect thee. And Lord, furthermore, we want to rise higher into that level of love O that our whole life and our whole service may be of love. How we do desire that thy heart may be satisfied, more than satisfied, because thou hast satisfied us over abundantly.

We praise and we worship thee in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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