



GOING DEEPER

Discussion Questions and more from Sunday's message, before we begin, here are the verses for this week's study! Open your bible to the book of Malachi 2: 6-9; James 3:1.

How much time have you spent this past week reflecting on Jesus and the hope of the gospel? How has reflecting on Him been of help to you? Because that is how we grow in how we think about our relationship to God and how we bring Him Glory each day, in each conversation, interaction, our work, our family. **In everything.** The gospel and the love of Christ should indwell us, and we should be burdened to share that good news with others in these last days. **Have you shared the good news with anyone this week? Have you showed the love of Jesus to anyone this week?**

Pushback: Leftovers for God

Malachi 2: 6-9

RECAP from last week: *Historical Context of Malachi (meaning "My Messenger,")*

1:1-5 is set in the **post-exilic** (means related to the exile) period—after Judah returned from Babylonian exile and resettled in Jerusalem.

Sometime between the completion of the temple, (515 BC) and the period of Nehemiah (444-432 BC).

Audience & setting: The message is addressed to **Israel/Judah back in the land** ("Written to Israelites living back in Jerusalem after exile"), living under **Persian rule**, with limited political power and ongoing hardship.

Temple status: **The temple had been rebuilt**, so worship was functioning again outwardly, but the community's spiritual life was drifting.

The mood of the people: They expected God's big promises to feel immediate—**Messiah, restoration, a renewed kingdom**—but **"none of that happened the way they expected."** The result was **poverty, injustice, and spiritual disappointment**, which fueled cynicism (hence, "How have you loved us?").

Covenant background in 1:2-5: God answers their doubt by pointing back to **Jacob and Esau** (Israel and Edom), **Edom** had a long conflict with Israel and was judged over time;

Malachi uses Edom as a visible example that God's covenant choice and justice are real—despite Israel's current discouragement.

Malachi is the priest and prophet, summoned the people from religious indifference and carelessness to a new respect, honor, and love for God expressed in obedience and to an understanding that God still loved them.

People expected: God's promises fulfilled - The Messiah to come - A restored, unified, kingdom

Reality: None of that happened the way they expected

Result: Poverty - Injustice - Spiritual disappointment

THIS WEEK: Chapter 2 God turns directly to the people in charge... The Priests

They have been entrusted to teach TRUTH, rightly.

They have become careless, soft, and corrupt.

This hits home! We are often failing.

God confronts worship that has become casual and convenient.

Who do you trust to explain hard things in life?

"It is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error." Adrian Rogers

1. We must guard the truth entrusted to us

Malachi 2: vv. 6,7

6 "True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. 7 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people[d] should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

"Getting close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades"

What stands out to you about the description of the priest in verse 6 (true instruction, no wrong on his lips, peace/uprightness, turning people from sin)?

Verse 6 ties speech ("in his mouth/lips") to walk ("he walked with me"). Why do you think God connects those two?

GPS Old school directions vs. "Close Enough" Navigation

GPS that's "mostly right" still gets you lost... **Truth must be precise, not approximate.**

This is about "truth" ... Doctrinal (theology) Truth.

NOT "lying" ... enemies, ex-spouses, politicians, etc..... But SCRIPTURAL INTEGRITY

There is a weight in teaching truth

Think about when you followed directions that were 'almost right,' and it still went wrong. What happened?

Vs 7 "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. "

Truth" here isn't just accuracy—it's **God's instruction**.

The priests were delivering opinions.

They were creating a culture of favor

They wanted to be popular... rich... relevant... politically correct.

The problem is this... **People don't just hear your truth... they mirror it.**

Billy talked about his granddaughter, Eliza imitations... Parenting Language Patterns

Kids often repeat phrases and tones from parents almost verbatim.

They don't just repeat content... they ABSORB the DELIVERY

Verse 7 says people should be able to seek instruction from God's messenger. Where do you see people today looking for "spiritual instruction" (good or bad sources)?

"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." **James 3:1**

Who is discipling you right now in life? Who are you discipling?

We are all called to be teachers.

2. Truth mishandled is more dangerous than truth rejected.

Malachi 2:8 "But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts,"

Vs 8 "Turned Aside from the Way"

This is what WE Do...

They didn't reject truth outright, they *drifted*.

Most spiritual failure is subtle before it becomes visible.

Bottom line... **The check engine light...** you have to fix it!

And if we don't...

“When have you seen (or experienced) spiritual harm because God’s Word was handled carelessly—either taught wrongly, applied harshly, or ignored—and what would faithful, loving instruction look like instead?”

Vs. 8 “You have caused many to stumble by your instruction.”

“Caused Many to Stumble” ... This creates multiple impact.

One leader’s failure becomes many people’s downfall.

So what is God going to do about it?

3. Trading truth for influence leads to destruction.

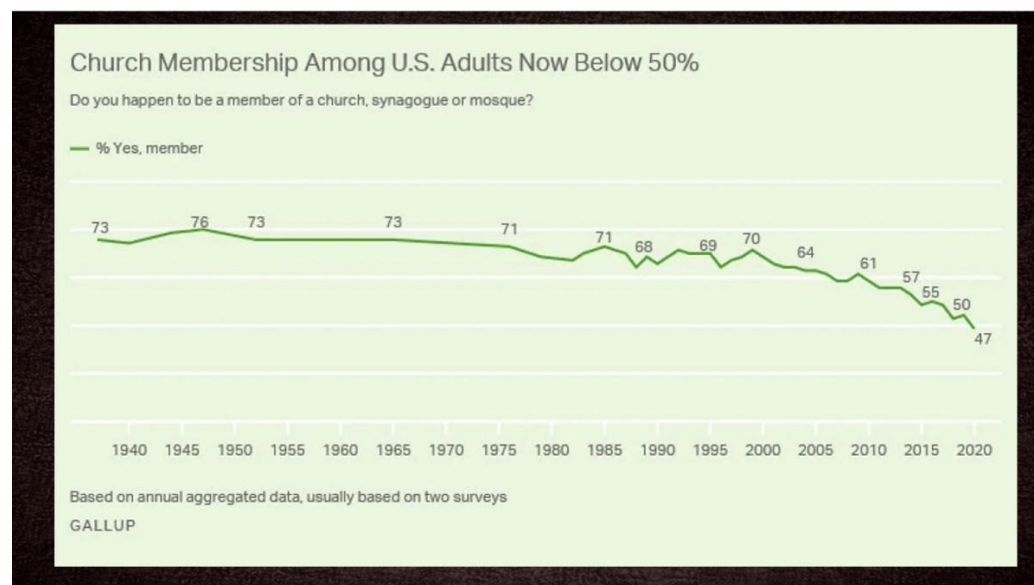
Malachi 2:9 “and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction.”

Why are we in the shape we are in? Because the church has traded truth for influence.

God now takes it to the next level

Vs 9 “and so I make you despised and abased before all the people,”

Yep... It’s time for a chart... the Church decline since the 1940’s **Gallup**



This isn't a new thing... A Scriptural list

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
• Hosea 4 (c. 755–710 BC) "Like people, like priest." • Isaiah 28 (c. 740–680 BC) Priests and prophets stagger; truth becomes obscured. • Micah 3 (c. 750–686 BC) "Priests teach for a price; prophets divine for money." • Jeremiah 5 (c. 626–586 BC) "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their means." • Ezekiel 34 (c. 593–571 BC) "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves." • Malachi 2 (c. 460–430 BC) Priests corrupt instruction; covenant is profaned; people become spiritually mixed.	• Acts 20 (c. AD 57–59) "From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things." • Romans 1 (c. AD 56–58) "God gave them up..." as truth is rejected and moral collapse follows. • 1 Timothy 4 (c. AD 62–64) Some depart from the faith through deceitful teaching. • 2 Timothy 4 (c. AD 67) People will not endure sound doctrine; they want pleasing teaching. • Titus 1 (c. AD 63–65) Deceivers upset whole households. • 2 Peter 2 (c. AD 64–67) False teachers secretly introduce destructive heresies. • Jude 4 (c. AD 65–80) Certain people have crept in unnoticed. • Revelation 2–3 (c. AD 90–95) Churches are judged for tolerating false teaching and compromise.



PUSHBACK
When We Resist God

Four places where the church today is BLOWING IT!

1. Downplaying the Authority of Scripture

Truth becomes negotiable

Teaching becomes selective

That's exactly what Malachi calls **Vs 9 "partiality in instruction."**

If Scripture is no longer the final authority... We are wasting our time.

2. Moral Failures Among Leaders

Leaders loving the world rather than the word... Falling to sin.

High-profile scandals (sexual abuse, financial misconduct, hypocrisy), poor judgment of churches and denominations have proven... **Vs 9 "You will be despised before all people"**

Kingdom building insanity Billy talked about the history of **Jim Jones**

If church leaders are allowed to fail... they will!

3. Failure to Disciple the Next Generation

Weak catechesis (no deep teaching foundation)

Entertainment-driven programs.

No structural biblical support from parents and often churches

If "what's next" is not a priority... Nothing we do is!

4. Blurring the Line Between Church and Culture (Political or Social)

Fully aligning with cultural movements.

Becoming more political than spiritual.

Affirming same-sex relationships, ordaining openly LGBTQ clergy

Want to see some blurred lines... **Israel Festival**

The official X account of Israel, Israeli Foreign Ministry

Four-day LGBTQ+ pride festival in June at the Dead Sea

20 miles S/SE from Sodom

As a result, we are seen as a voting block, social club, an activist group.

Instead of... **Messengers of the Lord**

Billy showed the last service at Trinity Memorial Baptist Church

Founded 1967/ Montgomery Alabama... up to 500 in the 80's. Gone. Last service was this Sunday.

"How you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God," Henry Blackaby

LIVE IT OUT

Bible Study should ALWAYS lead to taking action with what you learned. Think of it as Vitamin A. "Application" into your day, week and interactions.

Here are some real-life ways we can take what Malachi is warning and calling us to (Malachi 2:6–9) and live it out in our church, families, workplace, and community:

In our church

Handle God's Word carefully: before we teach, repost, or correct someone, we ask: "Is this actually what Scripture says, and am I saying it the way Jesus would?" Does it glorify God?

Be the same person on Sunday and Monday: Malachi links lips and life—so we pursue integrity, not a platform.

Don't play favorites: we refuse "partiality in instruction"—meaning we don't soften truth for people we want to impress, and we don't weaponize truth against people we don't like.

Protect the vulnerable: if our words or leadership could cause someone to stumble, we slow down, listen, and lead with humility and clarity.

In our families

Speak truth with a steady tone: not just “right words,” but right spirit—especially with children and spouses, because people mirror what they hear.

Apologize quickly when we misrepresent God: when we overreact, shame, or use Bible language to control, we come back and say, “That wasn’t Christlike—will you forgive me?”

Lead by walking, not lecturing -consistent prayer, repentance, kindness, and follow-through teach louder than speeches.

Make faith practical at home: short Bible + prayer times, honest conversations, and showing what grace looks like when someone fails.

In the workplace

Be trustworthy with words: no exaggeration, gossip, half-truths, or “spin.” We aim for “no wrong found on his lips.”

Choose conviction over approval: we don’t trade truth for influence—so we don’t bend ethics, cheat, or stay silent when we should speak.

Be a calm presence: “peace and uprightness” shows up as patience under pressure, fairness, and not throwing people under the bus.

Use influence to build, not trip: if you have authority, you don’t use it to manipulate—you clarify expectations, own mistakes, and help people grow.

In our community

Represent Jesus accurately: neighbors should experience Christians as honest, helpful, and consistent—not loud, confusing, or hypocritical.

Practice “truth + mercy” in public: we can have convictions and still be kind, attentive listeners, and good neighbors.

Serve in a way that turns people toward God: Malachi says the faithful priest “turned many from sin”—often that starts with relationships, hospitality, and humble conversations.

Be careful with what we share: online or in town—if it misleads, stirs division, or drags Christ's name through the mud, we don't pass it along. Does it glorify God?

How should I pray for this life change?

"You don't want to ask the Lord for a trouble-free life. You should ask the Lord this, "Lord, work Your work in my heart, don't give me more than I can endure. Show me grace and compassion, you know my weaknesses and frailties. I want to see Your lovingkindness, but I want You to do Your work. I want You to do Your perfecting work. I want You to do whatever it takes in me to make me what You want me to be." You need to come to terms with that. You need to be able to say that." John MacArthur

Remember:

"We are to run the race with endurance, not in our own strength, but by fixing our gaze on Jesus. He is not only the goal of our faith—He is the source and sustainer of it." R.C. Sproul

***"The gospel is not only about changing WHERE you will live for eternity, it's also about changing HOW you will live today." Shane Pruitt
And that is a heart change. So that we glorify God in all we do.***

Having Jesus as Savior will cost you nothing. Having Jesus as Savior will cost you everything. How so?

Who do you say God is? You cannot "come after" Jesus unless you come to Him.

Two roads stand before us in this world today. There is the way of the divine things of our Lord, which is the way of Christ. And there is the way of human things of the world. There is a way to save your life, and you will lose it there. And there is a way to lose your life for the sake of the Kingdom, and there you will find it.

How do we follow Jesus' ways? First of all, we turn from our sin and entrust our lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. Then, we seek His will in His Word each day and put it into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We learn to deny our selfish desires and give ourselves completely to following Jesus.

This choice we have — to seek first the kingdom of God — is the fundamental choice everyone makes when they first repent and turn to Jesus Christ. Yet every day after that, our Christian life will either reinforce that decision or deny it.

Remember the gospel is personal. Your changed life shows that to others around you based on what happened at the cross. You are at a crossroads if you have not accepted Christ. Which road are you traveling on right now? Are you on God's side?



Are you in a Growth Group at First Baptist? In this isolated world, Growth Groups help people connect in a healthy way. God has created us for a deep longing for community. We grow when we are living out our faith in a small group with others and we do this by loving, caring for, and encouraging each other. If you have any questions about our Growth Groups, contact the Church Office for more information.