



## **Malachi 2:1-9 – What Are The Blessings and Dangers Of Spiritual Leadership?**

February 11, 2018

### **1. What does God do with bad spiritual leaders?**

*“And now, O priests, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 2:1–4 (ESV)*

#### **1. God promises to curse their blessings.**

#### **2. God promises to rebuke their children.**

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. Hosea 4:6 (ESV)*

#### **3. God promises to rub feces on their faces.**

*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 (ESV)*

*“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. Mark 9:42 (ESV)*

## 2. What does a good spiritual leader look like?

*So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. 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. 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. Malachi 2:4-7 (ESV)*

### 1. A good spiritual leader will be honored by God.

*My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him....*

*And Moses said, "Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day." Exodus 32:29 (ESV)*

*See also Numbers 25:11-13*

### 2. A good spiritual leader fears God.

*It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name...*

*And of Levi he said, "Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one, whom you tested at Massah, with whom you quarreled at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. They shall teach Jacob your rules and Israel your law;..." Deuteronomy 33:8-11 (ESV)*

### 3. A good spiritual leader is committed to teaching God's Word.

*True instruction was in his mouth...*

*Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. Nehemiah 8:7-8 (ESV)*

### 4. A good spiritual leader is committed to truth.

*No wrong was found on his lips...*

*"If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the Lord your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. Deuteronomy 17:8-9*

### 5. A good spiritual leader is committed to a godly life.

*He walked with me in peace and uprightness...*

*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)*

*"According to your holiness, shall be your success. A holy man is an awesome weapon in the hands of God." - Robert Murray McCheyne*

## 6. A good spiritual leader turns many from sin.

*He turned many from iniquity...*

## 7. A good spiritual leader holds out God's truth in a culture that challenges it.

*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...*

## 3. What does a bad spiritual leader look like?

*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, 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.* " Malachi 2:8-9 (ESV)

## 1. A bad spiritual leader doesn't hold to old truth but creates something new.

*you have turned aside from the way...*

*They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it...* " Exodus 32:8 (ESV)

I don't know why as a Christian you would have to make such declarative statements. [Why would you] want there to be a literal hell? I am a bit skeptical of somebody who argues that passionately for a literal hell, why would you be on that side? - Rob Bell, *Ooze Interview*, 2007.

*and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* Revelation 20:15 (ESV)

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:46 (ESV)

There will be endless opportunities in an endless amount of time for people to say yes to God. At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God's presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most 'depraved sinners' will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God. - Rob Bell, *Love Wins*, p. 107.

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, Hebrews 9:27 (ESV)

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:27 (ESV)

## **2. A bad spiritual leader doesn't lead people to a transformed life.**

*Caused many to stumble by your instruction....*

## **3. A bad spiritual leader is living for popularity.**

*But you show partiality in your instruction...*

## **4. A bad spiritual leader has God fighting against him.**

*So I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways...*

Spiritual leadership is an important responsibility that leads either to God's blessing or the danger of great judgment.

## Digging Deeper Sermon Study

1. **Read Malachi 2:1-4.** What will God do to the priests if they do not begin honoring his name? What does this tell you about the importance of pastors and teachers honoring God and teaching Jesus?
2. **Read Malachi 2:4.** After God's firm rebuke of the priests, He says he will maintain His covenant with Levi (who symbolizes the priesthood). This is shocking! What does this show us about our God?
3. **Read Malachi 2:5-7.** God describes the ideal way the priests (Levites) should have acted. What should the priest be doing? Do Christians have a similar calling (Romans 15:16)?
4. **Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.** What is required of pastors?
5. **Read Jeremiah 23:9-29.** What does this passage teach about false prophets?
6. **Read Hebrews 7:26; 10:10.** While the poor leadership of the priests in Malachi's day cursed the people so God took them away, we enjoy Jesus the perfect priest. How has His leadership blessed and transformed your life like the leadership of a good priest should?