

“THE TALE OF TWO GROUPS”
MALACHI 3:13-18

INTRO: The BOOK OF MALACHI, though it was written around 450 years before Christ, is very APPLICABLE FOR US TODAY! One of the the themes of the book is “THE SINS OF THE SAINTS” because Israel had become SPIRITUALLY STALE and had stepped away from the Lord in their daily living and worship. A study of the BOOK IDENTIFIES SIX SPECIFIC SINS ISRAEL WAS COMMITTING. They include: 1) They Doubted God’s Love – 1:1-5; 2) They Dishonored God’s Name – 1:6-2:9; 3) They Profaned God’s Covenant – 2:10-16; 4) They Questioned God’s Justice – 2:17-3:6; 5) They Robbed God’s House – 3:7-12; 6) They Despised God’s Service – 3:13-4:6. In a way, **ISRAEL WAS IN THE SAME CONDITION AS MANY CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES ARE TODAY.** When the Lord led Malachi to write the prophecy, Israel was facing a VERY LOW time spiritually and they needed to hear the WORD OF GOD! **MANY CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES TODAY ARE FACING A VERY LOW TIME SPIRITUALLY AND NEED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD TOO!** Malachi was the last OT prophet before JOHN THE BAPTIST and clearly proclaimed a message we need today on “SINS OF THE SAINTS.” In this message we are going to examine a portion of the SIXTH SIN OF ISRAEL which was **DESPISING GOD’S SERVICE** as many Christians find themselves there at times. The title of the message is THE TALE OF TWO GROUPS.

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I. TWO TYPES OF RESPONSES TO GOD

A. The Response of the Self-Righteous – Vss. 13-15

GOD DESPISES THOSE WHO ARE SELF-RIGHTEOUS... AS THEY ARE “HOLIER THAN THOU.”
(CP. ISAIAH 65:1-7)

OBSERVE ISRAEL’S SITUATION

1. Israel said **HARSH THINGS** against the Lord – Vss. 13,14
 - a. They said that Serving the Lord is Vain (A futile drudgery) – Why? Because they were more focused on pleasing themselves - SAD!
 - b. They said that Serving the Lord is Not Profitable (Not getting anything out of it) – Why? Because they were serving with the wrong motive - SAD!
 - c. They said that Serving the Lord is Mournful (No Joy) – Why? Because they thought things were getting worse and worse – SAD!

ILLUSTRATION: **Words of Warren Wiersbe on complaining Christians.**

2. Israel **COMPLAINED** that the Heathen were better off – Vs. 15
 - a. They Said the Proud were Happy – (The wicked prospered)
 - b. They Said the Workers of Iniquity were “set up.” - (Exalted)
 - c. The Complained the Wicked Tempted God – (In seeing how much evil they could commit before God dealt with them)

ILLUSTRATION: **J. Vernon McGee’s words on criticizing Christians**

B. The Response of the Spiritually Mature – 3:16-18

GOD LOVES AND APPRECIATES THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY MATURE.

EVEN THOUGH MOST OF ISRAEL WAS SELF-RIGHTEOUS, THERE WAS A SMALL REMNANT OF THOSE WHO WERE SPIRITUALLY MATURE. OBSERVE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS.

1. They Feared the Lord
 - a. They held Him in awe and worshipped Him as the Lord Almighty.
 - b. This is an example for us as it seems to be a lost concept today.
2. They Met Together in Fellowship
 - a. They regularly got together for fellowship to encourage and edify each other in the midst of a spiritually defunct nation.
 - b. This is an example for us, but today more and more people are forsaking the assembly of the believers.
3. They Thought upon the Lord’s Name
 - a. They talked to each other about Him and **WERE NOT AFRAID** for Him to hear what they were saying.

b. This is an example for us, but it seems as though people want to talk about anything but the Lord these days.

NOTE: **THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL WHO WAS SPIRITUALLY MATURE WAS ACTUALLY INVESTING IN ETERNITY. THEY WERE FOCUSED ON THE LORD NOT THE WORLD.**

QUESTION: **INTO WHICH CATEGORY DO YOU FALL TODAY? ARE YOU OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS GROUP, OR THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE GROUP?**

ILLUSTRATION:

II. TWO TYPES OF RESPONSES *FROM* GOD

A. God Withheld a Blessing from the Self-Righteous – Cp. 3:11

-This is always the principle that takes place with the Self-Righteous!

B. God Blessed the Spiritually Mature

1. He Heard what the Spiritually Mature said about Him and put their words in His Book of Remembrance. **Isn't that Precious? This is a twin thought of Psalm 56:8 where God puts our tears in His bottle. GOD DOES NOT FORGET WHAT WE SAY AND DO FOR HIM – HEBREWS 6:10**

2. He Claimed the Spiritually Mature as His Own

a. The Spiritually Mature Christians are God's Precious Jewels! That is, they are VERY VALUABLE TO HIM!

b. The Spiritually Mature Christians are Spared from Judgment by God.

NOTE: Vs. 18 – Many of God's faithful servants become discouraged because times are difficult, results in ministry are slim, and their work seems unappreciated. **BUT THE DAY WILL COME** when God will RECOGNIZE and BLESS His PRECIOUS JEWELS. Cp. Exodus 19:5; Deut. 7:6

ILLUSTRATION:

APPLICATION:

In a time when there seems to be a lot of STALE AND SPIRITUALLY SELF-RIGHTEOUS CHRISTIANITY GOING AROUND, let's place our focus on God. **GOD DESPISES THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS WHO ARE "HOLIER THAN THOU" BUT LOVES AND APPRECIATES THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE WHO CENTER THEIR LIVES AROUND HIM.** Determine today to follow the model of the FAITHFUL REMNANT of Malachi's day and:

1) Fear the Lord.

2) Fellowship with Other believers of the assembly

3) Talk about God with others.

YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE AND JOY WILL BE ENHANCED IF YOU DO AND GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED!

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ILLUSTRATIONS:

WORDS OF WARREN WIERSBY

"I hear this complaint from some believers about their churches, "We are not getting anything out of it." But a church is like a bank or a home: YOU DON'T GET ANYTHING OUT OF IT UNLESS YOU PUT SOMETHING INTO IT. We serve God because it is the right thing to do, not because we're rewarded for our service. Oh, we shall be rewarded, but that is not our main motive to serve God.

WORDS OF J. VERNON MCGEE

"I want to make a strong statement right now. There are some people who attend church who, very frankly, I think would do better if they would just take a drive on Sundays. Their hearts are not in it. They do to church to criticize. If your heart is not in it, my friend, if you don't love God, if you don't want to praise Him and serve Him and worship Him, IT IS OF NO VALUE TO GOD!"