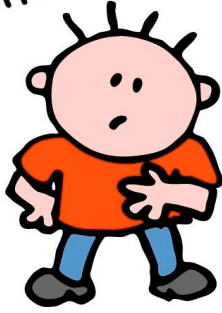


who me?



Have you ever had a conversation with the Lord or heard a message or teaching from the scriptures that the Lord may be using to bring correction to you, personally? As you were hearing and listening to it, have you ever answered back in a way that reflects the following thought, "What are you taking about God? That has nothing to do with me. When am I like that or when have I done that?" If you are honest and answered "yes," be encouraged for you are not alone. We all have a tendency to get a little "stiff necked." Hey, after all, I **never** do **anything** wrong. Everything I do is **always** "led by the Lord" and it is **always** right – isn't it?

Somewhere along the line we all, at times, come to the erroneous assumption that we have "arrived" and know it all. It is fine when we correct others, however, that is where it stops. As Christians, especially those of us that have been around a while, many times, we feel that we are above being corrected - even by God.

In the Book of Malachi, we see that this was the attitude that had crept into the people, as well as the priests, scribes and teachers. God through the prophet Malachi, as well as his contemporaries - Haggai and Zechariah, wanted to let the people know that He was a little displeased with their "attitude of heart." The time period of these prophets was during the rebuilding of the Temple following their release from exile by Cyrus from the captivity in Babylon and then to the Medo-Persians. The children of Israel were miraculously allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. There was great joy and excitement as they were allowed to now go back, rebuild the Temple and begin worshipping Yahweh once again. However, a faulty attitude had crept into the people as well as much of the priests. They began to get into bad habits and do things their own way instead of God's way, thinking that it would be okay with Him. God wanted to make it very clear to them that what they were doing was not making Him very happy.

In the Book of Malachi, God began to describe and list out the items that He wanted to reprove and bring correction to His beloved people for their benefit. However, the people were so deceived into thinking that nothing was wrong with what they were doing, that they began to question God. Imagine, having the arrogance to question what God was telling them!!! How could they have come to this place of thinking? Where did this "attitude of heart" come from? How did they get from having such a great heart of thanksgiving to God for setting them free, to the mindset of thinking that God did not know what He was talking about and that they could now do no wrong? Somewhere along the line, their "attitude of gratitude" became an, "I can take it from here, God" attitude or we can say an, "I'll do it my way" attitude.

In the Book of Malachi we read of seven interactions between God and His people, but more pointedly, to the priests. God, knowing the hearts of the people/priests, prophetically declares through the prophet Malachi, things that will expose what is within their hearts. He already knows what their response would be which would be in a form of questioning Him. God then "responds" to their "questioning" of Him with the truth of what is really in their heart. We will see that instead of being open to receive correction, the people "played dumb" with God as a rebellious child would answer a loving correcting parent. Below is a brief survey of those "prophetic conversations."

- In Malachi 1:2, we see what is grieving God's heart the most. It is the very first thing that is upon His heart. In verse 2 God states, "*I have loved you...*" Notice what the people then ask, "*...how or in what way have you loved us?*" (Amplified Version)"
- In Malachi 1:6 we read, "*A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?*" (KJV)

- In Malachi 2:14 the priests ask again, "*Why do you (God) reject our offerings?*"
- In Malachi 2:17, God declares that the people have made Him "weary." In that same verse the priests respond, "*When and in what way have we made you weary?*"
- In Malachi 3:7, God implores them to "*Return to me and I will return to you.*" They respond with a tone of arrogance, "*How shall we return?*"
- In Malachi 3:8, we read the very familiar question, "*Will a man rob God?*" We all know the response by the priests, "*Where or how have we robbed You?*" We all know God's response, "*... in tithes and offerings.*"
- In Malachi 3:13, we read that God exposes what had really become the root of the problem. They had entered into an attitude of deep distrust towards their God. God states, "*Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?*" The priests responded with, "*What have we spoken against you?*"

In Malachi 1:2, we see what is grieving God's heart the most. It is the very first thing that is upon His heart. In verse 2 God states, "*I have loved you...*" Notice what the people then ask, "*...how or in what way have you loved us?*" (Amplified Version) Are you kidding?? What a statement to say to the God. He just rescued them - again - from captivity and in unprecedented form. A king from another kingdom allowed them to return back to their homeland to build their Temple to their God. Not only that, he gave them materials to build it and an army to protect them as they went back. They began to get the attitude that they were something real "special" and better than anyone else or any other people. They forgot that it was not about them but it was about God. It was nothing they did. It was all God.

In God's response (verse 2-5), He tells them very clearly that it had nothing to do with how good they were or that they were better than any other nation. He simply chose them through Jacob over Esau. It was not because they were anything special. It was simply because He chose them and wanted to allow them to experience His goodness and love for the purpose of showing the world and revealing, through them, Who He was and what He would do unto those He loves and calls His own.

This speaks to us today. Jesus chose to die and set free everyone from their sins. John 3:17, "*For God so loved the **world**...*" There was nothing better or "special" about any of us. We were all dead in our sins. Through Jesus, salvation was made available to us. When we accepted His invitation, we were able to enter into and experience new life in Christ. We have been set free from the bondage of sin and the sting of death. Yes, we were very thankful when we "got saved." However, after a while, we can begin to take this great love of God for granted. We begin to forget that we were really nothing but sinners - yet God loved us and set us free. Our "attitude of gratitude" begins to fade and gets shoved to the back of our mind. It many times becomes a, "What have you done for me lately, God," attitude.

All of the "discussions" between God and His people found in Malachi, reflect an "arrogance" that had developed within His people. They came to a place where they seemed to think that they knew better than God. They came to a place where they were thinking that "their ways and thoughts were higher than God's ways and thoughts." This is in direct opposition to the scripture found in Isaiah 55:8,9, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, **saith the LORD.** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, **so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***"

Unfortunately, within the Body of Christ today, many have come to the same kind of arrogance that the children of Israel began to walk in. We find expressions within the church today such as "God understands that you can not follow His Word and keep His commandments. That is why we have Jesus so now we don't

have to be concerned about following His commandments." "It is okay to live in fornication and adultery because Jesus' died for us which tells us that He understands and it is now okay to do these things because His grace covers that." We also hear the lies from many leaders that the Bible was written in a different time and many of the principles and precepts and moral attributes found within the scriptures have become "obsolete" for today's society. The list goes on but I think you catch what I am trying to say.

God is getting "weary" of this. In Malachi 2:17, we read one of the most glaring statements that is so true today - "*You have **wearied the Lord** with your words. Yet you say, In what way have we wearied Him? [You do it when by your actions] you say, Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them. Or [by asking], Where is the God of justice?*" (Amplified) The Lord is tired of this constant rhetoric concerning sin. He makes the statement that He is weary of this constant negligence and misrepresentation of His precepts concerning what is "right or wrong," in His eyes. The priests were telling the people that it didn't matter what they did any more - good or evil for the reason being that God delights in you even if you do evil because His "grace covers it all." What????!!! Sound familiar? It is the new and improved inordinate "grace message" that is being perpetrated throughout the Body of Christ. However, this deceptive message is not so new as we see through these scriptures. The Body of Christ is very close to getting to the mindset expressed in Judges 21:25 where "...every man did what was right in his own eyes."

God desires to be honored and revered for who He is. We are sons and daughters of our Father. We are the bond servants of our Lord. We must give Him the honor and respect that is due unto Him. Therefore, we must give Him our best. If not, God tells us that with this faulty attitude of heart, we literally "*despise His name.*" We must stop offering "*polluted and unclean*" offerings and sacrifices to a holy Father who is a Holy God. The "best" does not mean giving Him what we think is the "best" and pleasing to Him (as Cain did) but giving unto Him the sacrifices that He tells us are pleasing and acceptable to Him. Ask Ananias and Sapphira how well that worked out for them when they gave to God an offering that was given with an impure "attitude of heart" (Acts 5:1-10). It did not work out too well for them. The offering that blesses God's heart is a life that is presented with an "attitude of heart" that is no longer conformed to this world but rather is continually being transformed into a "*living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to Him*" - Romans 12:1,2.

God will also reject our offerings because, even though they may be given with good intentions, the heart and lifestyle of the person say something different. Malachi 2:11-expresses this idea. The priests were allowing the men to divorce their wives and marry other women. God emphatically, declares that "He hates putting away (divorce)..." In today's society, we all know that divorce is common place. Unfortunately, it has become that way within the Body of Christ. We have allowed people to enter into the sacred covenant of marriage with a mentality that there is always a back door out. I have known Christians that have spoken out strongly concerning this issue. However, when it came to themselves or their own family members or friends, all of a sudden it seemed that God made an "exception" for that case and it was okay.

I am not advocating guilt and condemnation to those that have had to go through the pain and heartbreak of divorce. I am advocating a repentance within the Body of Christ, in general, concerning the way we have come to think about marriage and divorce by not taking the marriage covenant seriously prior to entering into marriages. These attitudes need to change. God declares that there are consequences when we do not take seriously what He takes seriously. Yes, we are saved through the blood of Jesus. Yes, we are forgiven. Yes, God loves us. However, if our attitude towards this central theme of God's heart does not change it will affect many in ways that we may never know or see. The marriage covenant is serious business to God. It speaks to the marriage of the Bridegroom, Jesus, with His Bride, the Body of Christ.

In Malachi 3:13, 14, God declares that some have been speaking “*harshly*” concerning Him. He goes on to say that they have actually said that it is “*vain and useless*” to serve God. Be honest, haven't some of us, on bad days, had this thought pass through our minds. It seems as if God is just allowing sin and wickedness to prevail. We pray and pray and pray but it just doesn't seem like God is doing anything other than allowing wickedness “to get away with it” going unpunished. We see sin and wickedness going forth full throttle. It looks as though anything and everything that is based on Biblical truths and values are being tossed aside and ignored, both in the secular world and, as we have mentioned previously, even within the Body of Christ. It would seem as if the enemy is winning.

However, we must remember one thing – there was, is and always will be, a “remnant.” There are those that will not give in to the arguments of the enemy. There will always be those that will connect supernaturally, somehow, someday, and find others of similar and like faith, and speak words of life and encouragement to each other. That is what we read next in Malachi 3:16–18. It reads as follows from the Amplified Version: *“Then those who feared the Lord talked often one to another; and the Lord listened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who revered {and} worshipfully feared the Lord and who thought on His name. And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I publicly recognize {and} openly declare them to be My jewels (My special possession, My peculiar treasure). And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then shall you return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who does not serve Him.”*

What a wonderful and awesome promise from our God. It is a promise to those who will stand and not yield or submit themselves to the lies of the enemy. It is a promise to those who will not listen or give credence to the arguments of the enemy and not fall into compromise. It is a promise to those who remain steadfast in the things of God no matter what it may seem like in the natural realm. It is a promise to those who gather with others of similar and like faith and “talk often one to another” and encourage one another that the Lord **has** actually “listened and heard” their prayers and most importantly, their hearts.

Most importantly, the above promise is given to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see what the Spirit is saying to us as a Body of Christ, as well as individually, in this hour. Will we take the correction and reproof of the Lord when it comes to us as a Body, or individually? We will not become so arrogant to think that His correction and reproof is for everyone else and not us. God never brings condemnation. However, he brings conviction. He will show us our faulty attitudes to give each of us the opportunity to “own up” to our faulty ways. He wanted the children of Israel to stop questioning Him and His ways. He wanted them to stop their arrogance. He wanted them to return to Him with an attitude of heart of pure worship.

God is crying out to us today within His Body. The time is soon coming when we will hear the sounding of the trumpet and the great shout declaring the coming of our beloved Bridegroom. The Father, through the Holy Spirit, is imploring His people to turn from their wicked ways and turn towards Him with an attitude of heart that desires to bless the heart of their King. To express their love by and through their obedience to Him and His ways and thoughts. He is desiring to prepare us as that spotless, unblemished Bride for when that day comes when our beloved Jesus will come for His beloved Bride. We must allow Him, through the Holy Spirit to prepare us and bring us to a place of having an “attitude of heart” of pure, passionate love and worship for the One whom we love. We must stop trying to justify our unrighteous ways and thoughts and stop our arrogance towards God as He lovingly brings His correction and reproof. We must get rid of the attitude that would say to God, “Who me???!?”