

Going With God Into A New Year.

Malachi 1.

Sunday morning, January 3, 2009.

I. Go with understanding.

A. The people in Malachi's days lacked deeply in their understanding.

Twice our text points to the people's ignorance.

1. "I have loved you says the Lord. Yet you say, in what have You loved us.?"
Malachi 1:2.

2. "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master where is My reverence says the Lord to you priests who despise My Name. Yet you say, in what have we despised Your Name? Malachi 1:6.

B. Two other OT prophets point to the perils of a lack of knowledge. Not just any knowledge is in view. Specifically it is the knowledge of the covenantal bond with our God. We live in His house; we live in His world, and we will be held accountable for our actions.

1. Isaiah complains about the people's lack of knowledge saying: "Therefore my people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge." Isa. 5:13.

2. Hosea laments the lack of knowledge on the part of his people saying: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6.

C. The Heidelberg Catechism asks in the second question: "What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort?" The comfort spoken of refers back to the first question: "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" The answer is: "That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

It answers with two kinds of knowledge which are reflected in our text:

1. How great my sins and misery are.

The lack of this specific kind of covenantal knowledge is reflected in the answer of the priests: "In what way have we despised Your Name?" Vs. 6.

2. How I am delivered from all my sins and misery.

The lack of this specific knowledge is reflected in the answer of the people: "In what way have you loved us?" Vs. 2.

Application:

How do I get such knowledge, and how do I grow in such knowledge? The answer would be to seek it; and you need to seek it in two ways. The kingdom of God has two dimensions: a heavenly and an earthly one; a supernatural and a natural one.

1. You need to seek it prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit for His help in opening your spiritual eyes and your understanding.
2. You need to seek it along the pathway of earthly means. Set the Lord's day apart for this. Come to Bible school; come to morning and evening worship.
 - Here our children learn the history of the covenant people on the earth.
 - Here they learn the significance of that history in the catechism.
 - Here we all grow in the dynamics of our walk with God in the Christian life.
3. Re-enforce this by reading a good children's Bible at home to your children, and by

reading through the Scriptures yourself. 15 minutes a day will get you through the entire Bible in a year.

4. Avoid the attitude of the people in Malachi's days described in vss.12,13. The people regarded the things of God as defiled, as contemptible, as a weariness, and as something despicable (something to be sneered at).

If this is your experience ask the Lord to forgive you and to give you a love for the things of His kingdom.

II. Go with humility.

- A. This is the direct fruit of the knowledge of our own sinfulness.
- B. The prophet Micah lists this as an aspect of his threefold description of our walk with the Lord: "He has told you O man what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micha 6:8.
- C. It is the only way to have favor with God, for He resists the proud, but gives His grace to the humble. James 4:6.
- D. It is the only way to have favor with men also as they are made in the image of God. Humility will enable you to stand next to your brothers and sisters rather than above them; it will enable you to sit with the publicans and harlots of this world; it will enable you to sympathize with the felt weaknesses of others.
 1. Humility makes our Lord a faithful and able High Priest in our behalf.
 2. Humility made our Lord an able teacher for He says "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matt. 11:29.
 3. Humility gives the qualities of gentleness and compassion to His rule as King, for "The Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; He will feed His flock like a Shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." Isa. 40:10,11.

III. Go with faith.

- A. This is the direct fruit of believing the Lord when He comes to you as He did to Israel at the outset of this chapter: "I have loved you says the Lord."
- B. Be careful how you respond. Do not be like Israel when she said: "In what way have you loved us?"
 1. Those were words of skepticism at best and of unbelief at worst. God calls you to faith, not to doubt, and much less still to unbelief.
 2. Those words would be acceptable however if they expressed sincere inquiry.
 3. Be careful of an uninformed surface response. "If You love me, then I will love You too!" You will do nothing of the kind for you have a selfish heart and are much in danger of exploiting the love of God for selfish purposes.
 4. It would be better to respond saying: "Lord if You love me, then teach me to love You too."

IV. Go with joy.

Joy is the fruit of humility because of the knowledge of my sinfulness coupled with faith in the knowledge of God's love for me..