

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

204

Dearest grandchild,

Today letter will deal with the people of God during the days of Malachi. He wrote about their worship with these words. **“When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord Almighty.” (Mal. 1:8)**

Like many of us, these Hebrews were apparently short on cash and trying to save money. Unfortunately, they decided to do so by “robbing God” This was the specific charge leveled against them in Malachi 3:8. This is a common mistake. When you rob the governor the tax man shows up immediately. When you rob God the consequences are not usually as quick. It is absolutely foolish, of course, to fear the governor more than you fear God. Unfortunately, “many” make that mistake. Jesus said that on Judgement Day: **“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt, 7:22, 23).** There was obviously something fundamentally wrong with their faith. Perhaps they wanted to disrespect God and still be saved. In the days of Malachi the whole nation was cursed because of the way they treated God. If they had only honored God He would have opened the floodgates of heaven and poured them out a blessing too big to receive (Mal. 3:10)

As we have pointed out before, Christianity is like a marriage. Just imagine coming to the marriage altar and finding out that your fiance loves and respects someone else more than you. Yet this is precisely what the Hebrews were doing. They were loving and honoring the governor more than God. Remember! God is a Jealous God (Ex. 20:5). He forbade the Hebrews to build an altar of dressed stones or to use any tool on the altar (Ex. 20:25). The reason for this was apparently to avoid being detracted from our worship of God by admiring our own handiwork. Of course, you cannot fool God. He knows what we are thinking. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Judging from outward appearances the Hebrews seemed to be killing a sacrificial animal, while in their hearts they were killing a man. They appeared to be offering a lamb but in their hearts they were breaking a dog’s neck (Is. 66:3). We cannot try to fool God and get away with it.

Remember! Not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21) What we “do” is more important than what we “say”. When wicked King Belshazzar disrespected God a sleeveless land wrote his doom in unforgettable letters on the wall. Daniel reminded him of his folly: **“You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.” (Dan. 5:23).** Do you see it? It is the same problem that raises it’s ugly head in every generation. If we fear men more than we fear God we cannot be a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10). Jesus said: **“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.” (Lk. 12:4, 5).**

While some may be offended by such strong language, it is only common sense to honor God. When you are going for a job interview, it is stupid to dress, talk, and act to please your peers. You

ought to be concerned about what the Boss thinks about you. In the same way common sense compels us to realize that someday we will have to give an account of ourselves to God.

There is an old joke about the man who jumped off the Empire State Building. As he passed the 35th floor he said: "Everything is all right so far". Someday "so far" won't be good enough!

Solomon said: "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge**" (Prov. 1:7). Not only does fearing God pay off after we die, it is also the key to happiness while we live. When we live our lives serving God we not only have life, but life abundant (Jn. 10:10). Even in the days of Malachi it still made sense to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. If they would do this, God promised to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so great they would not have room to receive it (Mal. 3:10). Please do not make the mistake of honoring anyone more than you honor God.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce