

Malachi 2:17; 3:18

When we look around us nowadays, - ... in our newspapers, on our radios and television screens, - we see all types of examples of humanity at its worst. But the thing about it that is hard to understand is this, ... many of the worst types of people seem to be getting on far better than those of us who are trying to live life with proper decency and due care for others. Why is that? Why does God allow evil to prosper?

Have you ever asked that? ... Why does God seem to allow the evil men and women to get on well and to prosper in life? ... and the rest of us have to work hard for everything we get.

Isn't it so true that some of the most beautiful Christians on the face of the earth go from one dark valley to another! Why is that? Why does God allow it? ... while the biggest rascal on two legs seems to be getting on better and better in life.

Many is the person, - ... aye, even some Christians, - and they infer that God does not give due attention to the sins of the wicked. That's what they were saying in Malachi's day, (2:17)

“Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; Where is the God of judgement?”

In the days in which we live it is important to be reminded again that God *does* make a distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous, (II Tim. 2:19), “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

I believe that we are fast approaching the last of the last days, and that this time in the history of the world will spiral until wickedness becomes the order of the day and unrighteousness will become the norm. Today sin is no longer called sin. You may hardly dare decry another man's lifestyle no matter how demeaning or wicked it is. All religions and philosophies are increasingly receiving a larger measure of acceptance, ... except one, ... i.e. those who continue to hold on to the message of God's sovereign and saving grace.

These people in Malachi's day were 'wearying' the Lord. It is good for us this morning to remind ourselves that we are precious unto the Lord as we consider the subject of the GREAT DIFFERENCE between the righteous and the wicked.

In the prophecy of Malachi we have ...

THE SIGNS OF SEPARATION

- * The two types of people can be distinguished by their *character*; but we are primarily thinking about the saved; first of all, ...
 - * 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.
- * Praise God, in the time of Malachi there was a people who faithfully followed after God, - there was a remnant saved from idolatry and apostasy.
- * God always keeps unto Himself a remnant, - throughout every period of history.
- * they that feared the LORD, - they believed in the holiness and in the power of God.
- * They didn't doubt His will to act or His ability to distinguish between righteousness or wickedness.
- * When they brought their sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem they brought their very best, - they didn't make do with the feeble offerings that their neighbours sacrificed on the temple altars.
- * How did they come to fear the Lord? ... you know, a fear of the Lord is the work of God's grace, - it's not something you can conjure up!
- * In the midst of all the bustling crowds of Israel, God kept unto Himself – by His grace – a people that would be faithful to His Name.
- * They didn't belong to those who wearied the Lord with their words, - indeed, until the end of the world, there will always be a people wholly given over to God and who stand in awe of His presence.
- * Yes, the great dividing line between the righteous and the unrighteous begins with the matter of the heart.

- * And then it moves on from the heart, and it affects the mind; here's what it says, "feared the LORD, and that [thought upon his name.](#)"
- * If your heart is given over to God, then it is only natural that it affects your mind, - the things of God bear a new interest for you, and it's an interest that will always require feeding.
- * Uppermost in your mind is not the things of the world, but the things of God, - that was the difference between these two sets of people in Malachi's day.
- * One group were not reckoning on God; the other group was constantly taken up with thoughts of Him.
- * "What would God do if He were in my place?" - that was how they would have thought.
- * There was a line of distinction drawn between these two groups of people, - the righteous and the wicked, - and it affected their hearts and their minds.
- * While one talked about God, the other had no interest, - aye, and the thing about it was, outwardly, they were both members of the people of Israel.
- * So it affected their hearts and their minds, it also affected their conversation, "[they that feared the LORD spake often one to another](#)".
- * What would they have been speaking about? ... No! *Who* would they have been speaking about? They would have been speaking about the One Who they loved with the heart and considered with all their mind.
- * They would have heard others running down their God, - laughing at Him and mocking Him.
- * And what did they do? They spoke to each other regularly and often, - they encouraged each other in the things of God.
- * They would be sharing with each other the encouragements and the battles they faced on a daily basis.
- * They had a common bond that had its roots in their love for God, and they encouraged each other to persevere.
- * And when God's people are affected in the way that Malachi describes they are ready for a Pentecost, - like the small number meeting in the upper room, - they are ready for a fresh anointing of God the Holy Spirit in revival power.

- * Yes, God makes a difference between those who are His and those who are strangers to His grace.
- * Aye, as far as God is concerned, there is a vast abyss between the righteous and the wicked.
- * Here today, we have hearts that have been transformed by God's grace, minds that are 'tuned' into the things of God, and lips that testify to His goodness in our lives.
- * Where is the God of judgement? Are you starting to see the difference the separation makes? - God indeed sets the believer on a different plain to those whom He describes as belonging to the wicked. ... *They are not the same!*

So firstly, there are **SIGNS OF SEPARATION**; the second thing is this, ...

THERE ARE PREPARATIONS FOR A FINAL SEPARATION

- * 3:16 makes reference to these preparations, "**the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord**"
- * The Lord Jesus spoke about a day that was coming in which a great, - and final, - separation would take place.
- * That which is good and pure will be retained, while the polluted and filthy will be thrown away.
- * It will be like a courtroom trial, - the evidence will be heard, the **book of remembrance** will be read out and the judgement will be given.
- * All things are recorded in the book, - while some were thinking and speaking against God, there were others who spoke on His behalf and thought upon His Name.
- * ... All their actions will be recorded in the book,
 - * The prayers you prayed for your family,
 - * The wee word of witness to your neighbour,
 - * The example of Christ in your life,
- * ... it's all recorded in the book, - will it make good reading?
- * This is the evidence that is being collated to be presented before the Throne,
- * Notice that God not only **hearkened**, but He also **heard**.

- * ... and what is the difference that is being drawn here, ... well, it is this, the activities of the Redeemed are written in red, - they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb of Calvary, and they have been separated and sanctified unto God. *That's the difference!*
- * That's the difference between the mocker and the scoffer and the child of God.
- * Aren't you glad you are a child of the King, and you are different to the unbeliever!
- * So, we see that both in the **SIGNS OF SEPARATION** and in the **PREPARATION FOR A FINAL SEPARATION** we're different, but here is something else to consider in relation to the great abyss that separates the righteous from the unrighteous, ...

IN THAT SEPARATION GREAT TRUTHS WILL BE DEMONSTRATED

- * In God's Sovereign plan of election He will draw His people unto Himself, **3:17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;**
- * The particular love of God will rain upon His redeemed Church, - His jewels.
- * Our God, Who inhabits all the splendour of Heaven treasures His precious jewels, - of which you - believer – are one.
- * Because of God's grace, you are precious to Him, ... and isn't the jewel that is so finally honed with all the work and attention of the craftsman so beautiful beyond price!
- * Look at what He says, **"They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts"**.
- * The Lord Jesus will present His Bride before His Father, ... **a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but ... holy and without blemish.**
- * And of course, it is beautiful to see that He regards His children as precious jewels, but look closer, **and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.**
- * That's the righteous Judge speaking, and He is telling us that the matter has been settled, the Lord's people have no fear of death or hell, **I will spare them**, saith the Lord.

- * These truths are not for the unsaved, or for those who mock God, ... they are for the Redeemed, sinners saved by grace.
- * The unrighteous cannot boast in terms like these.
- * It is the Christian who is privileged with these definite promises, ... and finally there comes a very definite truth, ...

THE SEPARATION ITSELF WILL BE CLEAR TO ALL

- * No one will miss out on this truth, [3:18](#) **Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.**
- * The Bible only ever talks about two classes of people, - the believer and the unbeliever, ...
- * When the book of Remembrance is opened every person that has ever lived is judged.
- * The 'religious' person who wallowed in his own righteousness will be judged alongside the filthiest sinner;
- * No amount of good works or church-going will save; the bank balance, or the size of the house or car will make no difference,
- * ... only what you have done with Christ, - that's all!
- * This final separation will determine the eternal outcome of all those standing before the Throne, - some to eternal life, some to everlasting hell.
- * Yes, look at the lot of the saved, the people of God, ... the people who remained faithful to God even when it wasn't fashionable or to our advantage.
- * Do you see the distinction that is drawn between the two different types of people?
- * Believer, in front of you is Heaven's glory,
 - * There will be no sin, death, suffering, - no trace of them!
 - * There will not be a voice raised to laugh when you mention the Name of Jesus,
 - * There will be no emblems of idolatry or superstition,
 - * There will be no pubs or gambling halls,
 - * You will be with people who love Him and whose heavenly desire it is to serve Him forever.

CONCLUSION.

- * The people of Malachi's day asked, **Where is the God of judgment?**
- * They mocked and taunted, **Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them.**
- * They don't have the hope we possess.
- * Yes indeed, there is a great distinction between what awaits the righteous and the wicked.
- * Your inheritance has been purchased at Calvary; if you love the Saviour He's coming back for you to take you unto Himself,
- * The unbeliever, - on the other hand, - no matter how it seems he is getting off has a day coming when He must stand before God.
- * Today, never doubt God's goodness; He is in control and not a thing misses His gaze.
- * It may seem as if the world is going crazy and is in danger of losing all discipline,
- * It may seem as if the unsaved are getting off with mocking God,
- * But there is a day coming when the Church will rise to meet our Saviour in the air, and when we look into His face we shall be glad we are His!