

Malachi 2:1-2

*"And now this admonition is for you, O priests. If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name," says the LORD Almighty, "I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me."*

The prophet Malachi brought to the people of Israel the symptoms of spiritual bankruptcy from God's perspective. Malachi was the messenger but God was stating His case directly to the people. The Israelite's insensitivity to God's love and carelessness in worship had made them lukewarm in their faith. The power had left their relationship with the Lord to such an extent they believed they were pulling the wool over the eyes of God with impunity. They could offer God their leftovers and He was somehow obligated to continue to bless them because of His covenants.

Malachi referred them back to the time Israel was on the verge of entering the Promised Land. The Canaanite kings turned to Balaam, offering him tremendous wealth if he would only curse the people of Israel. Balaam agreed to the request with the one caveat, that he could only do what the Lord allowed him to do. Three times Balaam approached the Lord as to what he would be allowed to do. And each time the curse he wanted to proclaim came out as a blessing for Israel leaving Balack the king of Moab to tell him in Numbers 23:11-12 *"What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!" Balaam answered, "Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?"*

It is a wonderful thing to know that God can turn the curses of an enemy into blessings for His people. But have we given any consideration that God, considering how His people behave, can turn their blessings into curses? Nothing in God's Word fails, not one smallest letter or stroke until all has been accomplished. There are many blessings the Church has inherited which are gifts from God. But God can also take those blessings when His people forsake Him and turn them into curses to discipline His people. We need to understand when we show contempt for God, especially we who should know better; the punishment will fit the crime.

God still looks for obedience to bless. But the thing which has pierced my heart is how do I measure up? It is easy to see the failure of obedience in others; the priests in Malachi's day were weighed in the balance and found wanting. But how do we compare? We accept the sacrifice made by those who came before us because we are better off for their faithfulness. Yet the price we have paid for our comfortable Christianity is far smaller than the price they paid for their faithfulness. Would we recognize we have lost God's smile or are we too blind to see it?