



“The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 2:7).

The Messenger of the Lord

Central Truth: The prophet exhorted spiritual leaders to follow God.

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Topic: Preaching; Prophecy.

The messenger of God must speak the Word of God. He has no choice of what he says when he is directed by the Spirit of God.

The people of God must hear the messenger as if they were hearing God. That is not to place undue importance upon human agency, but to show respect for the God who has sent His message to us.

Jeremiah was taught that message well. God told him, *“Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.”* Jeremiah reported, *“Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jeremiah 1:7-9). Such a messenger of God can be heard with profit.

There are false messengers who pervert God's message and speak lies under the guise of religious truth. We must recognize such ambassadors of Satan and give them no heed. On the other hand, we must recognize the true messenger of God and follow him as he follows God.

Think of your pastor, your Bible teacher, as we study of God's messenger. Thank God if you have a faithful man who shares God's words with you. This study aims to create a spiritual awareness of the place and power of a faithful teacher of God's Word.

I. JUDGMENT ON FALSE MESSENGERS (Malachi 2:1-3)

A. Messengers may err from the way by not hearing God and not

laying His message to heart (verse 2). Such neglect will rob God of the glory due to His name. What a tragedy when *“the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so”* (Jeremiah 5:31). One's personal desires might pervert the message he carries. The great challenge of God's preacher today is that he deliver the message just as God gave it to him.

“Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. . . . Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:1, 2). It is sad when one goes into error. But when a spiritual leader goes astray and takes others with him, the tragedy is multiplied.

B. Messengers who err are under the judgment of God. *“I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart”* (Malachi 2:2). To curse one's blessings is to cancel his ministry and make it void. Read the list of God's curses upon an apostate people (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

C. Messengers who err will be shamed before God and mankind. They will be disqualified for service and see their family blemished before their eyes. Their shame will be in proportion to their sin. He will bring down those who are lifted up by their selfish pride (Isaiah 26:5).

If you have a faithful preacher of the Word, thank God for him. Support him; pray for him; be a friend to him. He is God's messenger to you.

II. QUALITIES OF A TRUE MESSENGER (Malachi 2:4-7)

Six marks of a true messenger of God are set out in Malachi 2:4-7. Review them and relate them to your spiritual leaders in your church.

A. He is in the family of the called. God established a covenant with the tribe of Levi which made them special ministers of God about the tabernacle and temple. Descendants of Aaron would be the priests. One must be of that family to serve God as a priest.

The messenger of God today must be one of the called. He must be called of God to salvation and be born again (John 1:11-13). More than that, he must be called of God to the office of God's spokesman (John 15:16). The call to salvation and the call to service will enable one to be God's messenger.

B. He is a partner in the holy covenant. *“My covenant was with him of life and peace”* (verse 5). God has made an everlasting covenant, *“ordered in all things, and sure”* (II Samuel 23:5). That covenant shall still continue after the mountains depart and the hills melt (Isaiah 54:10). The

new covenant of grace (described in Jeremiah 31:31-34) enables us to know God personally and serve Him effectively.

C. He speaks the truth of God. *“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips”* (verse 6). Wisdom is found in his mouth, the wisdom that comes from God's written Word as taught by the Holy Spirit. The Christian way involved putting away all falsehood and everyone speaking truth with his neighbor (Ephesians 4:25).

D. He lives purely before God. *“He walked with me in peace and equity”* (verse 6). Again we are at the divine requirement for holiness. It is God's intent that we all be *“blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom (we) shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life”* (Philippians 2:15, 16).

E. He has a holy influence. He *“did turn many away from iniquity”* (verse 6). The apostle Paul resolved to do what needed to be done to bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 9:19, 20). We are to *“be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation”* (I Thessalonians 5:8). Such a lifestyle will lead people to Christ.

F. He has a message from God. Knowledge of God and seeking the message at His mouth will enable one to be *“the messenger of the LORD of hosts”* (verse 7). Blessed is the man who has *“prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach . . . statutes and judgments”* (Ezra 7:10). Revival comes by teaching the Word of God (II Chronicles 17). To be taught in the right way, and to experience the delight of walking in God's paths, is to know the joy of the Lord (Isaiah 2:3). The faithful messenger delivers to the people just what he receives from God (I Corinthians 11:23).

III. THE TRAGEDY OF AN UNFAITHFUL MESSENGER (Malachi 2:8, 9)

A. He misses the way of God, being “departed out of the way”(verse 8). *“The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you”* (II Chronicles 15:2). Each person has a choice concerning whether he will walk with God or forsake Him. The way of blessing and cursing is set before each of us (Ezra 8:22).

To miss the way of God is to increase sin. It is like forsaking a flowing spring of fresh water to chase a mirage across the burning sand (Jeremiah

2:13). The one who rejects the way of God indicates that he never belonged to God in the first place (1 John 2:19).

B. He leads others from the truth of God. False prophets and corrupt priests have “*caused many to stumble at the law*” (verse -8). Jesus said false Christs and false prophets would arise, showing signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, the very elect (Mark 13:22). Error often arises within the Christian community itself (Acts 20:29, 30). Any gospel other than what is recorded in Holy Scripture is not the same gospel that we have received in Jesus Christ. Do not be led astray by persuasive persons or high-sounding arguments. Hold to the Bible.

C. He breaks the covenant with God (verse 8). To refuse to hear the Word of God is to turn back from Him to one's unregenerate state (Jeremiah 11:10). To break a covenant with another person in ancient times was a horrible offense. Shame on the person who dares to break covenant with the living God!

D. He loses the respect of the people of God. God said to the priests, “*Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways*” (verse 9). The respect of God's people is a great treasure. But for one to sin so as to lose that respect is a loss beyond estimation. Take care that you do not falter in the way so as to blemish your reputation before others.

Consider these summary statements in conclusion. (1) God has faithful messengers who teach the Word in truth today. (2) Not everyone who claims to be God's minister is truly of God. (3) Exercise spiritual judgment based on the Bible before you accept the teaching of any person. (4) Study the Bible for yourself, and under the direction of faithful teachers, so you may know the truth when you hear it. (5) Be a messenger of God yourself to those who need your witness.

Questions

1. What is the preacher's message?
2. How should God's people react to the message?
3. Why do some messengers err from the way of God?
4. What are the marks of a faithful messenger of God?
5. Why is personal purity so important in God's messenger?
6. Why is doctrinal error so tragic?
7. What should be your attitude toward an erring teacher?
8. What can you do to strengthen God's messengers in your church?

