

Priestly partiality – Malachi 2:9

I. Introduction:

- A. You might be wondering why we are spending so much time dealing with Israel's priests.
 - 1. It is not simply because they are part of the text.
 - 2. If that were the case we would probably go through this more quickly.
 - 3. The thing to remember is that **we** are a kingdom of priests, and many of the things mentioned of these Old Testament servants of God apply to us in perhaps a more spiritual way.
 - 4. One of the scriptures I have not quoted in regard to this thus far is **Revelation 20:6**.
 - 5. *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on such the second death has no power, but they shall be Priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

- B. As we have established, many of the priests in Malachi's day were not serving the LORD properly.
 - 1. I assume there were probably some good priests among them, but the majority were shameful.
 - 2. And **there** is certainly one area in which they compare with us.
 - a. Christendom, and even genuine Christians are a mixed bag.
 - 3. Malachi's priests had broken and corrupted the original covenant which God had made with Levi.
 - 4. And in the process, they had caused many others to stumble at the law.
 - 5. Therefore God was under no obligation to bless them according to the principles of that covenant.
 - 6. And in **verse 9**, He declares *“therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people. You have not kept my ways but have been partial in the law.”*

- C. Extending the Lord's words from those priests to us, how can we apply that statement, *“you have been partial to the law?”*
 - 1. There are ways that it might apply to all of us **generally**.
 - 2. And there are special ways they apply to me as your pastor.

II. But together, we must not be partial in our love, appreciation, and service in the things of the Lord.

- A. I hope you remember the two Sisters, Mary and Martha.
 - 1. Without doubt they both were true servants of God, but they each had their preferred method of service.
 - 2. The Lord was not particularly displeased with either sister, or the ways they served Him, but He pointed out that they needed to stay better balanced.
 - 3. In another context He said, *“these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone.”*

- B. Some of this might sound a little silly, but I have known Christians who appreciated the **preaching** of the Word but not the **teaching** of the Word.
 - 1. By that I mean they faithfully came in at 11:00 to hear me preach, but they never came for Sunday School.
 - a. It wasn't simply a matter of laziness or distance & travel time, they actually did not like Sunday school.
 - b. The father of the family would even quotes scriptures to me in explanation.
 - 2. And then there are others who enjoy the Sunday services, but don't come on Wednesday night because of its emphasis on prayer.
 - 3. Many people are happy to speak to other human beings, but they aren't particularly keen on talking to God.

- C. Something a little more common and problematic is the way that many Christians pick and choose the Biblical doctrines and themes they prefer.
 - 1. Even preachers can be very guilty of this.
 - 2. I have known pastors who have had their particular thematic hobby horse.
 - 3. They had hymnals with 600 choices but they only sang their favorite 50 tunes.
 - 4. Every month they had a new message on wine in the Lord's Supper, or on the nature of a Godly marriage; or baptism or Landmarkism.
 - 5. Some preacher's sermons seem to be geared to attacking other preachers or other doctrines. Their ministries became known as negative rather than positive.

6. Years ago I knew a pastor in Oregon whose ministry seemed to be geared to telling Christians they were not saved.
 - a. To him most Church members are lost, and his presentation of the gospel became skewed.
 - b. He severely hurt some churches that I know.
 7. Some men of God sound more like defeated political candidates than ministers of the word of God.
- D. The rest of us Christians can get into the same mindset.
1. I have heard of a church where the deacons criticized the pastor because he didn't preach often enough on women's head coverings.
 2. The ears of other Christians yearned to hear more and more on cultural issues or eschatology.
 3. They certainly don't want to hear about their sins.
 4. They don't want to hear about the neglected areas of their Christian lives.
 5. Yes, they may want to be comforted, but they don't want to be exhorted.
- E. I have pointed out before, but I'll do it once again, there is an advantage preaching through books of the Bible.
1. In a study like we're doing right now the Lord gives us themes and issues which we might not otherwise consider.
 2. There are other themes more exciting than the partiality of priests.
 3. I would probably never preach on this subject, if we didn't have it right here in the text.
 4. Expository preaching keeps both the preacher and the church out of the ruts in the road.

III. Another area of priestly partiality is in the public application of the law.

- A. **James** tells us in **chapter 2**, *"Harken my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor.*
1. *If you fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, you do well.*
 - a. *But if you have **respect to persons**, ye commit sin and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*
 - b. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all."*
 2. Paul, very pointedly, tells Timothy, *"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without **preferring** one before another, doing nothing by partiality."*
 3. The Lord tells the judges of Israel in **Leviticus 19**: *"Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shall thou judge thy neighbor."*
- B. It is not just the preacher, or the judge, who shows respect to certain people over others.
1. We can all be guilty of this.
 2. When strangers come into the church service, do you gravitate toward some more than others?
 3. Do you judge some people to be worthy of your greeting, because of the way they look, by the length of their hair, the length of their dress, or some other outward thing?
 4. Are young teenage Christians less worthy of your attention than others in their twenties or thirties?
 5. One problem with partiality is that it is usually accompanied by prejudice.
 6. That is a double punch which almost always brings the victim down.

IV. I suppose the most dangerous application of partiality is in its personal application.

- A. This is where these priests in Malachi's day were the most guilty, but this is where it most clearly intersects our lives.
1. People say, "This law doesn't apply to me. This commandment belongs to other people, not me."
 2. Tithing comes up later in Malachi. Apparently they were people who said, "I don't need to worry about tithing, because my income isn't as great as the next person's."
 3. Others think, "I don't need to assemble with the saints on Wednesday evening, because I'm tired at the end of a Long Day's Work."

4. Different people might say, I don't gossip, I just pass on necessary information.
5. My pornography addiction is not as sinful as adultery.
6. Yes, I chew tobacco, but that's not as bad as smoking marijuana.
7. I hate my neighbor, but despite what Jesus says, it is not really the same as murder.
8. We could go on and on with things like this.
9. The point is: people often pick and choose their sins just as they pick and choose at the all-you-can-eat buffet.

B. But picking and choosing between the laws of God is it more dangerous to practice than picking and choosing between the laws of man.

1. When there's a stop sign in front of you, it's probably a good idea to stop.
2. When the speed limit is 70 miles per hour, driving 90 miles per hour is not highly recommended.
3. But there may not be any traffic crossing your street at that stop sign, and there may not be any traffic on the interstate or any highway patrol either.
4. But there is always an omniscient God looking over everything that you do.
5. He can point out the priests' partiality because He is intimately familiar with them.
6. Disregarding the Lord's precepts guarantees judgment, because, not only does God know our transgressions, He is obligated to respond to them.

C. Priestly partiality is a no-win situation.

V. What can we do to protect ourselves from this problem?

A. First we need to keep our eyes on the Lord.

1. As we have seen, this was something that the priests in Malachi's day had forgotten to do.
2. When we lower our eyes from the Lord to either ourselves or our neighbors, we are going to get into trouble.
3. Partiality becomes inevitable.

B. And even if there is no intention of disregarding the will of the Lord, we can become so preoccupied that we miss our responsibilities.

1. So it becomes necessary for us to keep our eyes scanning across His Word.
2. We need to know what is God's will for us, and the only way we can do that is by knowing what He has revealed.

C. And another necessary part of the solution is to constantly examine our hearts.

1. *"Search me, O God, and know my thoughts; try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me."*
2. When we slip into any of these different varieties of partiality, we need the Lord's Grace and wisdom to bring us back out.
3. To avoid being contemptible and base in the eyes of our Saviour, we need to keep the Lord's ways and not be partial in the law.