

The Sallow, Shallow Sacrifice – Malachi 1:6-14

I. Introduction:

- A. Before we get into the application of this scripture, please remember the **historical context**.
1. Malachi, the last of God's Old Testament prophets, served the Lord **after** Israel returned from **Babylon**.
 2. Some commentaries place his ministry during the days of **Zerubbabel**, but I think most of his service was while Nehemiah was temporarily back at the palace at Shushan, reporting to King Artaxerxes.
 3. It was somewhere within the century from **536 BC to 445 BC** or thereabout, and probably towards the end.
 4. A lot can take place in any society in a hundred years: from economic growth to moral disintegration.
 5. Any society is in trouble, when, even if there are a few faithful servants of God... when the majority is strong, powerful, and wicked, controlling the government, the media, the schools, the entertainment industry and religion.
 6. Such was the case in Israel four hundred years before Christ. And such is the case today.
 7. So herein is the purpose for this message today.
- B. In my preparation, I threw together an alliterated outline of these nine verses, but I'm not going to preach them.
1. That outline may be cute, but it isn't very practical.
 2. And yet I will share them with you just for the purpose of an introduction.
 3. We see here examples of **irreverence** and **ignorance: verse 6**.
 - a. *"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?"*
 4. The primary message of this paragraph deals with **sacerotal imperfection**, beginning with **verse 7**.
 - a. *"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.*
 - b. *And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.*
 - c. *The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.*
 - d. *Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD."*
 5. The Lord speaks of **impotency** in **verses 9 and 8**.
 - a. *"And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts. offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts."*
 6. There is **ingenuousness** in **verse 10**.
 - a. *"Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought."*
 - b. The priesthood of Israel was primarily interested in receiving a paycheck than in sacrificial service.
 7. And yet, still above all this there is the **illustriousness** of our God in **verses 11 and 14**.
 - a. *"From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."*
 - b. *"I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."*

II. Whether we are talking about Nehemiah's day or ours, Jehovah deserves mankind's utmost reverence.

- A. That means **YOU** and **ME** – **WE** need to give the Lord the glory due unto His name.
1. *"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"*
 2. From how many points of view does Jehovah deserve man's honor?
 3. We could probably start with any one of the Lord's attributes, but we won't do that this morning.
 4. I will say, as **CREATOR**, the Lord deserves our gratitude and praise, because He made us; we live.

5. But what does the average human being do in regard to the question of our origin and life?
6. Despite all the evidence, we try our best to find secular or humanistic ways to explain our existence.

B. As Creator, Jehovah is our **FATHER**.

1. **Paul** says, *“to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.”*
2. He is the *“Father of GLORY;”* the *“Father of MERCIES and the God of all comfort.”*
3. Christ said, *“God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”*
4. But is Jehovah honored as a Father should be? Is He loved and obeyed?
5. I’m afraid that not even Christians properly treat God as our Father *“which art in Heaven – hallowed be His Name.”*

C. As Creator, the Lord is also our **MASTER**.

1. The Hebrew word is translated *“Lord”* **twice as often** as *“master,”* and even **once** as *“owner.”*
2. Like it or not, we are not our own, whether or not we have been bought with the blood of Christ.
3. God has said, *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine.”*
4. Assuming the Lord is our owner and master, how do we show him the respect and honor He is due?
5. Are we, as born again Christians, as dutiful and regular as we ought to be in your honor of Him?

D. Israel should have thought of Jehovah as their **REDEEMER**, just as the Christian knows Him to be.

1. He brought Malachi’s Israel out of Egypt many centuries earlier, and out of captivity more recently.
 - a. He redeemed them with blood and with promise. He judged evil nations in order to bless them.
 - b. He judged wickedness in order to bless them with righteousness.
2. And He says to all of us, *“Where is mine honour, where is my fear?”*

E. Analyze your approach to the Lord today.

1. Did you wake up, thanking Him for another day of blessing and more opportunities to serve Him?
2. And on this Lord’s day, here you are in the House of God.
 - a. With how much of your heart have you sung the sing the songs of Zion?
 - b. With how much attention did you listen to the reading of God’s Word?
 - c. Did you honor the Lord with the sacrifices of your praise? Have you served Him at all today?
3. Was **Paul speaking** like **Malachi** when he wrote to New Testament saints in **Hebrews 12**?
 - a. *“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:*
 - b. *Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*
 - c. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.”*

III. The people in Malachi’s gun-sights were living in an attitude irreverence.

A. And under the Lord’s inspiration, he said, *“Don’t deny it.”*

1. *“A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master... where is mine honour?*
 - a. *and ... where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name.*
 - b. *And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?”*
2. *“Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say (by your offerings and attitude)... The table of the LORD is contemptible.*
 - a. *And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?”*
 - b. *“The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.*
 - c. *Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept*

this of your hand? saith the LORD.”

3. Why was the Lord forced to answer His own questions? Because the people were too dumb mouthed.
 4. Israel was either blind to their spiritual condition or they were simply unwilling to admit to their contemptible religious habits.
- B. Of course, it was easy for Malachi to assess the quality of the sacrifices Israel was making.
1. If a man had to carry his blind, arthritic old ewe into the temple for sacrifice, the condition of the animal was obvious.
 2. If a wolf had attacked a lamb, so that it was lame or useless as breeding stock, that was the animal some shepherds were presenting to God as sacrifices.
 3. If that Jew knew an animal wasn't of sufficient quality to pay his tribute to the governor, then it was not good enough to give to the Lord. *“Should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.”*
 4. By their actions, attitudes and beggarly sacrifices the people and priests of Israel were declaring that the table of the Lord was contemptible in their sight.
- C. During my study, I noticed that several *“experts”* arguing about the words *“bread”* and *“table.”*
1. *“Ye offer polluted **BREAD** upon mine altar,” verse 7.*
 2. And the next verse, *“If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. The **TABLE** of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.”*
 3. The scholarly argument was whether or not the *“table”* was **the Table of Shewbread** inside the Temple.
 - a. It is not. Rather this is all speaking about the brazen altar of sacrifice standing outside.
 4. The word *“bread”* is used generically for *“food,”* and is sometimes mentioned in regard to the brazen altar.
 5. **Leviticus 3:11**, *“The priest shall burn (the Peace Offering) upon the altar; it is the **FOOD** (or bread) of the offering made by fire unto the Lord.”*
 6. **Ezekiel 42** describes a future altar, specifically saying, *“This is the **TABLE** that is before the Lord.”*
 7. While it is very possible the priests of Israel were not as diligent in their preparation of the Shewbread, Malachi is speaking of the altar where the blood sacrifices were to be laid.
 8. *“Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.”*
- D. Now, in the light of all this, do I have reason to fear for us... for the professing Christians of the last days?
1. Are we spiritually-minded when we perform our religious rituals?
 2. When you put **your tithes** and **offerings** in the box, do you give that action much thought?
 - a. Is there any thankfulness for the financial blessings of God?
 - b. Is there isn't any recognition of the Lord's kindness in paying your bills and maintaining your health?
 3. Is **your singing**, during the worship service, engaging **your heart** and **mind**, as well as your **voice**?
 4. **Do you leave** the service with **joy** and **praise**, and if so, is it because you have been blessed, or is it because you are happy to be leaving?
 5. Are your **Monday's** and **Thursday's** just as spiritual as your **Sunday's** and your **Wednesday evenings**?
 6. The Lord asks of us, as well as of Israel, *“Should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.”*

IV. What might have been the cause of Israel's irreverence?

A. Was it **familiarity without intimate knowledge**?

1. The old adage is not necessarily true: *“Familiarity breeds contempt.”*
 - a. But familiarity often does breed **carelessness** and a **lack of consideration**.
2. We all come up the stairs from the front door to the landing before entering the auditorium.
 - a. And no doubt we do that with our eyes opened, watching our steps or the people in front of us.
 - b. But I wouldn't be surprised if some of us couldn't come up those steps blind-folded and know exactly when we are at the top, because we have done it 4,680 times in 30 years.

3. There is such a thing as **muscle memory**, and there may be **religious muscle memory** too.
4. Before we got our new hymnals, some of us didn't have to turn to "page such-and-such," because we knew exactly what hymn was on that page.
5. We didn't have to consider the words on the page or even to draw them from our hearts, because they were tattooed to our tongues.
6. Some of us pray, using the same phrases week after week, because that, too, is ingrained into us.
7. Have we become so familiar and comfortable in our worship that it takes no thought, effort or heart?

B. How often do you refer to the **Lord Jesus Christ** as merely "**Jesus?**"

1. I have mentioned this often enough that most of you have learned to avoid it.
2. When I see the name "**Jesus**" on bumper stickers, license plate covers, billboards and other public places, I wonder if the people using that name are really referring to my Saviour?
3. When we slip from addressing the eternal Son of God to merely "**Jesus,**" aren't we losing something?
 - a. "**Jesus**" is a name. "**Jesus**" could be a person's neighbor or his buddy.
 - b. "**Jesus**" might be the man at the bank.
 - c. But the "**Lord Jesus Christ,**" should lift our hearts, minds and eyes, into Heaven and onto the Bema judgment seat where sits the Judge of Heaven and Earth.
 - d. Speaking of "**Jesus**" verges on the offering a lame and sick offering to the King of kings & Lord of lords.
4. Should we ever speak of "**Jesus**" without adding "**Lord**" or "**Christ?**"
5. I can't help but think that some people are putting their well-intentioned hand upon the Ark of the Covenant.
6. Many times they are trying to give honor to the Saviour, but they are actually being flippant and far too familiar.

C. A few years ago, my Christian neighbor, knowing that I am a pastor, gave me a book to read.

1. He said that it was what he was teaching his home Bible study group, which was obviously far more important to him than attending the Lord's church.
2. He suggested that his book was the epitome of modern Christianity. I read it, as I was asked.
3. It was filled with Christianized philosophy and worldly techniques for serving God.
4. There was no theology; no examination of the Lord; no application of the essential attributes of God.
5. It was religious, moral and full of "**Jesus,**" but I couldn't find the One before whom Moses was commanded to remove his shoes, or the Christ who ordered the death of the fig tree, because it bore no fruit.

D. What was wrong with the religion of Malachi's day? What is wrong with Christendom today?

1. Despite the safeguards, over time, the Lord Himself was left out of their service.
2. The people **no longer** really **knew the Lord**; they were **no longer listening** to His **voice**.
3. And because, for example, they couldn't see **God's holiness**, they were content to give Him inferior sacrifices.
4. They refused to see that **Jehovah is omniscient**, and well aware, not only of their sacrifices, but also of their hearts.
5. Because they had forgotten **the Lord's justice**, they didn't realize they were on the verge of judgment once again.
6. They descended into 400 years of silence, because they had turned off their spiritual hearing aides, and were no longer listening to God's voice.
7. "**Ye said also, Behold, what a WEARINESS is it! and ye have SNUFFED at it, saith the LORD of hosts.**"

V. Conclusion:

- A. "**Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.**
1. **And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.**
 2. **The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.**"

- B. What was the **ultimate purpose** of the Old Testament **sacrifices**?
1. They were **not expiatory**.
 2. There was **not a single sacrifice** which **washed away** the **sins** of Israel or any of her citizens.
 - a. There were sin offerings and trespass offerings; there were thank offerings and peace offerings.
 - b. There were special offerings, like the Passover, which were presented to God once a year.
 - c. And there were daily offerings – every morning and every evening.
 - d. And not one of those bloody sacrifices made a complete and effectual atonement for sin.
 3. It was not the death, the blood of any animal, or the consuming fire which met the needs of Israel.
 4. It was **the faith** of the man who was making that sacrifice.
- C. **Paul** dealt with this subject in **Hebrews 9** and **10**.
1. *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”*
 2. If those sacrifices had been effectual, there wouldn't have been any need to repeat them.
 3. *“But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”*
 4. Going on, Paul brought up the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 5. *“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.*
 - a. *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*
 - b. *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*
 - c. *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*
 - d. *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*
 - e. *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”*
- D. Those sacrifices which the priests in Malachi's day offered on behalf of Israel, should have represented our Saviour, the ultimate Lamb of God. But the **illustration** was **as marred** as the **people's faith**.
1. Those bullocks and rams were often blind, lame and sick; falling infinitely short of the perfect Christ.
 2. *“If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?”* Yes it is evil.
- E. Just as Israel's priests were polluting the atonement and using inferior sacrifices, so does Christendom today.
1. When our sacrifice is **merely** the **human “Jesus”** rather than the holy Son of God, we are offering a lame lamb.
 2. When our sacrifice is **only making atonement “possible,”** instead of actually and completely covering sin, we are offering a defective sacrifice.
 3. When our sacrifice of the Mass must be **made again** and **again**, just like the offerings of the Jews, then it is not the sacrifice which the Son of God made.
 4. **If the salvation** which was purchased by the blood of Christ, is **only temporary**, or it has to be maintained by the sinner, then it's obvious that a lame sacrifice has been made.
 5. **Hebrews 10** once again, *“But this man (Christ Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”*
 6. Elsewhere God says, *“Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”*
 7. And Paul adds, *“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”*
 8. The preachers of Christianity today, need to ask themselves if they are not offering lame and blind sacrifices when they preach their Arminian gospels.
- F. And there is one more point.
1. Isn't Malachi looking four centuries into the future when he says in **verse 11**:
 2. *“From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts?”*

3. While Israel snuffed at God's sacrifice and the lesson it taught, the Lord was shifting His focus and attention toward the nations: the Gentiles.
4. The people whom Israel hated would soon be given the good news of God's grace in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.
5. Soon there would be people from among the people which were not God's people who would be saved by blood of the Lord's ultimate sacrifice.

G. And my question to you this morning is: are you one of those Gentiles?

1. Is your faith firmly placed upon the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ which He made at Calvary?
2. Don't trust the polluted offerings of self-righteousness, self-improvement, and self-deprecation.
3. There is only one way to approach the infinitely holy God, and that is through the infinitely perfect sacrifice of His own dear Son – the Lamb of God.
4. How do we make that offering? By humble repentance and faith in Christ's finished work.
5. Are you trusting the proper sacrifice for your salvation? The Lord's sacrifice?