

# DEEP DIVE

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

May 2026 - June 2026

REV. AARIF G. BRADLEY, M. DIV

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## LESSON 3

SUNDAY MAY 17, 2026

# UNFAITHFUL PRIEST

Malachi 2:1–9

### KEY VERSE

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#### | KJV

“And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 2:4

#### | NIV

“And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 2:4

### LESSON AIMS

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As a result of this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Understand the responsibility of spiritual leadership
2. Recognize the dangers of compromised integrity
3. Apply the call to faithful living in both leadership and daily life

## KEY TERMS

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- Priest – One appointed to represent God to the people and the people to God
- Covenant (with Levi) – God’s established relationship with the priesthood, marked by responsibility and promise
- Rebuke – A strong correction or warning
- Corrupt – To distort or pervert what is right
- Partiality – Showing favoritism or bias
- Instruction (Law) – God’s truth meant to guide His people

## INTRODUCTION

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Leadership carries weight, especially spiritual leadership. Those who speak for God, teach His Word, and influence others are held to a higher standard, not because they are better, but because their role shapes how others understand and further develop their relationship with God.

In Malachi 1, we saw unworthy worship. Now in chapter 2, God addresses the priests themselves, those responsible for maintaining that worship. The problem is no longer just what is being offered, but who is leading it. This passage reveals a sobering truth that when spiritual leaders lose reverence for God, the consequences ripple outward. People are misled, truth is distorted, and God’s name is dishonored. But this is not just about ancient priests. It speaks to anyone who influences others spiritually, pastors, teachers, parents, and believers who are called to represent God in everyday life.

### | Analysis of the Biblical Text

#### A DIRECT WARNING TO LEADERSHIP (MALACHI 2:1–2)

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### | KJV

1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, 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.”

## | NIV

1 “And now, you priests, this warning is for you.  
2 If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name,” says the Lord Almighty, “I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me.”

God speaks directly, He says, “This command is for you, O priests.” This is not general instruction but targeted accountability. God warns that if they do not listen and honor His name, He will send a curse instead of blessing. Notice the progression; hearing is not enough, knowledge is not enough; but God’s word must reach the heart. The priests were going through the motions, but inwardly they were disconnected. God is not satisfied with outward compliance. He requires inward reverence.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Where in your life are you hearing what God says but not actually allowing it to shape your decisions or behavior?

## CONSEQUENCES OF DISHONOR (MALACHI 2:3)

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## | KJV

Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

## | NIV

Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it.

God declares that He will rebuke their descendants and spread refuse (the waste from sacrifices) on their faces. This imagery is intentionally strong. It shows that their ministry has become defiled and what was meant to be sacred has become offensive.

In the sacrificial system, waste was removed from holy space. God is essentially saying to them you will be treated like what you have made of My worship, unclean. When God's people treat holy things casually, God takes it personally.

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH LEVI (MALACHI 2:4-5)

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### | KJV

- 4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

### | NIV

- 4 And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue, says the Lord Almighty.
- 5 My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name.

God reminds them of His covenant with Levi which was a covenant of life and peace that was rooted in reverence and awe. Originally, the priesthood was marked by respect for God, faithfulness to truth and a deep sense of responsibility. This covenant was not just a privilege; it was a calling. Leadership before God is never neutral. When it is handled with reverence it leads to life, and when it is handled carelessly it leads to corruption and judgment.

## THE STANDARD OF FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP (MALACHI 2:6-7)

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### | KJV

- 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.
- 7 For 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.

### | NIV

- 6 True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned many from sin.
- 7 For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth.

God describes what a faithful priest looks like:

- True instruction is in his mouth
- Nothing false is found on his lips
- He walks with God in peace and uprightness
- He turned many away from sin

The priest was meant to speak truth, live truth and lead others into truth. Spiritual and faithful leadership is not about position and titles it is about faithfully representing God and being swift to repentance when missing the mark.



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do your words and actions influence others spiritually, and are you helping lead them toward God or causing them to turn away from Him?

### | KJV

- 8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

### | NIV

- 8 But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi, says the Lord Almighty.
- 9 So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.

Instead of leading rightly, the priests, turned from the way, caused many to stumble, violated the covenant and showed partiality in the law. This is the heart of their failure that they distorted truth, they used their position for personal bias, and they misled people rather than leading them to God. Because of this, God says they would be despised and humiliated before the people. When leaders compromise truth, they lose credibility both with God and people.

### | A Closing Thought

The tragedy in this passage is not that the priests lacked responsibility, but that they abandoned their responsibility altogether. They still held their positions and performed their duties. But they no longer honored God in how they lived or led. This reveals a critical principle that spiritual failure is rarely sudden it happens gradually. It begins when reverence fades, truth is softened, and responsibility is taken lightly. God's concern is not just what leaders do publicly, but who they are privately. Because eventually, what is internal will shape what is external.

## | Your Life

This passage is not only for pastors or leaders, it applies to all believers. Ask yourself: Where has my reverence for God become casual? Am I living in a way that reflects the truth I claim to believe? Do my words and actions help others move closer to God or further away? Faithfulness begins with integrity. You must align what you know with how you live by not treating God as optional in your daily life and decisions that you may represent Him accurately in public and private.

## | Your World!

We live in a time where influence is everywhere through conversations, relationships, and daily interactions. People often form their understanding of God not just from Scripture, but from those who claim to follow Him. This means that every believer is, in some sense, a representative of God and that every action either clarifies or distorts who He is. The call is not to perfection, but faithfulness that we may speak truth without distortion, live with consistency and refuse to treat what is sacred as common.



### Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Help us to take seriously the responsibility of representing You. Where we have been careless with truth or casual in our reverence, correct us and restore us. Teach us to live with integrity, to speak with honesty, and to reflect Your character in all that we do. Guard our hearts from compromise and keep us faithful to Your Word. When we fall outside of your way, help us to be quick to repent. Let our lives lead others toward You, not away from You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



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