



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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JUMP START #312

Malachi 1:8- “But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly? Says the Lord of hosts.”

Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament and the final message before the coming of Christ. Four hundred years would pass between Malachi and Matthew. We call those the “silent years” because no recorded messages from God take place. God is silent. Malachi ends with a prophecy about the coming Elijah, which is fulfilled in John the Baptist.

Much of Malachi involves trying to awaken a sick and sleepy nation up. They have taken God for granted. It became reflected in their attitude and worship toward God. Our verse today represents that. Instead of offering God the best, which he required, such as unblemished lambs, they offered diseased and crippled animals to God. From a farmer’s perspective he may have thought that the animals were going to be slaughtered in a sacrifice to God, they couldn’t be eaten by humans since they were sickly and you didn’t want to breed such animals. Seems like a win-win situation. The problem is that God got what no one else wanted. God got the leftovers and the throwaways.

I don’t know why, but we can easily take things for granted. We forget. When we are reminded we feel ashamed, and we should. It’s easy to take our freedom and the price it took to keep that freedom for granted. Shame on us for that. It’s easy to take our marriages for granted. We can grow tired, bored and careless in our relationships with our mates. Shame on us. We can take the work of others for granted, even in worship services. Every Sunday, the lights are on, the temperature is comfortable, the sound system works, the song leader is ready, the preacher is polished, the Lord’s Supper is ready and it’s that way every week. People make all those things happen. It’s easy to take that for granted. Shame on us.

But the worst of all is to take God for granted. He’s always there. He’s supposed to answer our prayers. Our thoughts can become casual and lazy. Our songs flippant and lifeless. Our sacrifices just the leftovers—the leftover of time, energy and passion. Another day, another worship, another song, another prayer, another sermon, and off we go to do what we really want to do. Are we taking God for granted?

There was a young man who fell in love with a young lady. At their first dates, he appeared at the door with a flower in hand, politely opening every door that they came to, speaking kindly and thoughtful to her. But the more they dated, the more he got used to her. He quit bringing flowers to her. She had to open the car door on many occasions. He would even walk into a restaurant before her, leaving her to

open the door for herself. A few times when he came, he didn't even get out of the car---he just honked the horn. When she showed up, he snapped at her for making him wait. What happened? He took her for granted. He forgot what a blessing it was to have her.

Have we done that with God? Malachi's people had. It can happen. We can be so busy with life that we fail to see God, at all, even in worship services. I have been at churches that seemed tired, bored and simply going through the routine. Wow! Those services seemed to drag and drag because there is no energy, no life, no essence of God among them.

Psalm 34 tells us to magnify God. Make God big! You can't make him larger than what he is, but our attention and focus can be centered supremely upon God. Give God your best! Jesus wants us to love him with ALL of our heart, not just whatever is left over.

There is an old expression among Navy people that says, "Shape up or ship out." It may do us well to "SHAPE UP." God deserves the best---simply because he is God. He always gives us his best.

Here are a few thoughts:

1. Try to get to bed early on Saturday night so you won't be so sleepy on Sunday morning. Give God our best, remember? Tired eyes, tired minds, tired hearts aren't going to impress God. Using the words of Malachi, "Would your governor receive you kindly?"
2. Get busy for the Lord. Everyone has talent. We are all gifted by God. It's time to get off the sidelines and get into the game for God. Have you taught a class? Why not? Have you invited a friend? Why not? Are you helping out? Why not? Too busy? Too tired? Too much on your plate? What does God get? Leftovers? What if one Sunday everyone said, "I'm just too busy." The song leader had no songs to lead because he was too busy. The Lord's supper wasn't prepared because folks were too busy. The building was a mess, because some were too busy to clean it. The preacher? He was too busy to write a sermon. Bible classes? The teacher was too busy to prepare. We'd think, what kind of a place is this? What is going on? Some would never come back. Some would say a few choice words. The preacher would probably get fired. We'd fire anyone else that we could.

Taking things for granted....not a good thing. No wife longs to hear her husband proudly say, "Honey, I take you for granted, and I'm glad I do."

No more leftovers for God---give him the best you have---in words, in service and in heart. It starts today!!!

Roger Shouse

