

Is God Hot on Truth?

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[0 : 00] Good morning everybody. Good morning. Now I want you to meet Steve Chalk, if you haven't already.

! He used to be one of those really strong Bible-believing Christians, very conservative. But now I quote, he says we need a radical rethink. What he means, I think, is we need a rethink on core gospel truths.

Because in his own words, he says, In my understanding, the principles of justice, reconciliation and inclusion sit at the heart of Jesus' message.

And there's something to that, isn't there? Right? But what is the assumption there? The assumption is probably there's a pecking order in God. And perhaps truth isn't near the top.

[1 : 24] And maybe an assumption, well, is God that hot on truth? Is God really that hot on truth? You know, lots of people think like this today.

You know, wouldn't God, if he wanted you to hold some kind of truth, wouldn't he just want you to be sincere about it? It doesn't really matter what it is, just be sincere. Wouldn't God in a world that's just so divided by lots of different points of view and opinions just say, come together, forget truth, get along.

Now, most of us aren't really kind of there. You can kind of feel the pull to there, though, can't you? It would feel more uniting to just get along with that liberal church down the road.

It would be easier if we could just follow the world on every single ethical issue. Maybe we, that slightly counts are cultural. It would be easier if we didn't have to hear challenging bits of the Bible like Malachi every week.

Can't we just focus on the nice bits of the Bible? Well, we are in Malachi. And it's a book where the people are starting to wonder if being faithful even makes a difference.

[2 : 48] Because they took that big risk. They were so faithful. They left their cushy life in Babylon to come back to Jerusalem, to rebuild the temple, to be wholehearted.

Do you know what? It's not met their expectations. It's not gone that well. Maybe they think, well, does it even matter if I'm wholehearted anymore?

I'm not getting any payback from this. Now, what more can I do? How wholehearted can I be? Last week, we saw, you know, they were thinking, is God that hot on not bringing lame animals to sacrifice?

This week, is God that hot on not having lame Bible teachers? Well, God is hot on truth.

And he will go the distance for it. How far will God go so we receive his truth? He will go the distance.

[3 : 54] Firstly, this is a slightly longer point. Firstly, to shame bad Bible teachers. To shame bad Bible teachers.

Now, it might surprise you, Israel's teachers, okay, they were the priests. So the teachers in this passage are the priests. They don't just do animal sacrifices. And they were supposed to be teachers like this.

If you look down at the passage, we'll look at this a bit more in detail a bit later. But have a look at verse 5. There's lots of things here, but I'll just pick out a few. They were supposed to revere God.

Verse 6, they were supposed to instruct the people to have nothing false on their lips.

Is that happening? No. Verse 9. Have a look at the end of verse 9. You have not followed my ways, but have shown partiality in maths to the law.

Partiality. Picking and choosing. I'll call it chocolate box preaching. You like the nice kind of caramel one over here. You don't like the nutty one, right? I don't like this bit of the Bible, but I like this bit over here.

[5 : 00] We're going to just focus on that bit. We're going to ignore that bit. Do you know what? That is twisting the truth. That's twisting the truth.

Because you're not giving the whole truth. And God is hot on truth twisters. Enough to shame them. Look down with me at verse 1. And now you priests, this warning is for you.

If you do not listen, if you do not resolve to honour my name, says the Lord Almighty, I will send a curse on you. And I will curse your blessings.

Yes, I've already cursed them because you have not resolved to honour me. They don't care about what God thinks. They just want to be liked.

They don't want to be honouring him. They want the honour. So God brings a curse, verse 2. If you notice that little phrase there, he says he's going to curse their blessings.

[6 : 07] Now what does that mean? Well, you've probably heard the service leader at the end of the service say this. Have you heard the service leader say it before?

Well, the priests, they used to say that at the end of their services, right? But now because that blessing is turned into a curse, it essentially translates into this.

Now stay for some homemade manna after the service. Let me bless you. The Lord curse you. The Lord abandon you. May the Lord be displeased with you.

May the Lord drop you. May the Lord turn his face away from you and give you angst. Not mediating covenant blessing anymore.

Covenant curse. And verse 3 shows just how far God goes. Look at this.

[7 : 13] Verse 3. Because of you, I will rebuke your descendants. I will smear on your faces the dung from your festival of your sacrifices.

And you will be carried off with it. Do you know what? There are some basic rules for preachers, okay? One, don't make yourself a hero of an illustration. Two, don't say which political party to vote for.

And three, don't mention disgusting things in the pulpit. There are three pretty basic rules. Now I'm going to break one of those rules today because Malachi does. God is hot enough on truth that he shames corrupting Bible teachers.

Enough to do a biff from Back to the Future. Have you seen that film? I love that biff. I hate manure. Falls in his face. Enough to smear poo.

I can say that word. Poo on their face. Every parent knows what a Poonami is like. You want to clean up.

[8 : 16] You want to get rid of it as quick as possible. That's on their faces. It is quite disgusting.

Do you feel disgusted? Do you feel a little bit uncomfortable? Good? Quite good? It's supposed to make you feel like that because it's a faint illustration of just how disgusted God feels towards people like this who are twisting his words.

How far will God go so that we are receiving it? He'll go the distance to shame them. Shame corrupting Bible teachers. Now the point of this passage is not this.

It's not to show you that truth is kind of at the top in God and love is kind of maybe a little bit underneath or something. Right? There's no pecking order in God.

You can't split God into little bits where one bit's a bit bigger and, you know. God is all love and he's all truth. All the time. Don't miss that God is truth.

[9 : 31] Don't miss that God is truth. Don't miss God's attitude to people who twist the truth. To progressive Christian teachers.

To those Jehovah's Witnesses who knocked on my door the other day. To those cool and friendly but heretical Christian YouTubers or people who might scroll on your TikTok.

To those churches in Farnham that have abandoned Jesus because they've abandoned his teaching from the Bible. If they do not repent one day they will be shamed.

Maybe now. You know, maybe that's why the liberal wing of the Church of England isn't doing so great. Absolutely on the last day. This all feels a little bit extreme for a Sunday morning, doesn't it? Maybe you're thinking, right? Maybe you're thinking, this is a little bit of an overreaction from God here. Is it really that bad what they're doing?

[10 : 40] Is he that hot on truth? Why is God so hot on truth being taught well? Well, God goes a distance because bad Bible teachers lead astray.

Look at verse 8. Just one verse here. But you have turned from the way.

And look at this. By your teaching have caused many to stumble. You violated the covenant with Levi. By your teaching you've caused many to stumble.

Not be turned away from sin. Led into sin. Away from life. This is why God goes a distance. This is why we should be so disgusted.

Bad teaching. Because good teaching keeps you spiritually safe. Bad gospel denying teaching puts you in spiritual danger. Do you know that? I don't want that.

[11:46] That we're in Mother Bear. With their cubs territory here. Loves them so much. That when someone tries to take them away.

You better get out of the way. God loves his people so much. That when they're being led into sin by bad teaching. That's what bad teaching does.

You go to these lengths to protect. To vindicate. Listen. When a dad. Or a mum. Sees their son being led astray into drugs and alcohol.

Are they fine with that? When a shepherd sees a wolf. Coming to tear his sheep apart. Is he fine with that? When God sees his precious sheep.

In churches up and down the country. Where they're being told. You know. It's okay. You don't need to repent of that. That's fine. That's fine. Oh no. Judgment isn't real. Hell doesn't exist.

[12:50] Oh you know. We believe in the same Jesus. You know. Your one's God. But my one isn't. You know. Do you think Jesus is fine with that? That leads people astray.

These people into sin. To hell. I think we need to get this clear as well. The God of this Old Testament passage.

Every Old Testament passage. Is the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus. Has precious sheep. Who he cares for.

And who he loves. And look at him. With his precious sheep. His disciples. Who aren't that great sometimes. Who are asking him questions.

The sinners who are seeking him. With the waywards. What is he like? He's gentle. And he's lowly in heart. A bruised reed.

[13:52] He will not break. He's so patient. And he's so merciful. Our Lord Jesus. And he's so forgiving. To those who seek him.

And come to him. In faith. And want to turn. But look at Jesus. When people try to harm. His precious sheep.

He says this. If anyone causes one of these little ones. Those who believe in me. To stumble.

Same word. It would be better. For them to have a large millstone. Hung around their neck. And to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Doesn't that sound extreme?

It's a mark of extreme love. It's a mark of extreme love and care. And aren't you glad that Jesus loves you that much?

[14:50] Listen. Some of us haven't been cared for well. By teachers. Some of us maybe haven't been cared for well in life. And if that's you.

Come to the one who cares for you more than you'll ever know. Come to the one who's disgusted that you're a victim.

Actually even more than you. He is hot on truth. Because he's hot on love for his people to not be led astray. Isn't he? Isn't he? So listen.

If this is truly the heart of the Lord Jesus. Part of the point of this passage is this. Now how much do we share his heart? Do we think it's that important to have good Bible teaching here?

Is it a priority? Would it be okay if it got sloppy? The reality is actually.

[15:55] We won't abandon the Bible overnight. Will we? That's just not what we're going to do.

But it's a slippery slope. How do we not slide down? Well we need to feel the disgust Jesus feels at leading astray teaching.

Before we get so used to it that we stop noticing. At university. I stayed in some kind of university accommodation. And you can imagine.

It started out the room pretty pristine clean. My mum probably came in and gave it an extra once over. Even though. So they had some cleanings in before. Over time.

You can imagine. Also. 18 year old me. I've changed now. Don't worry. Right. Ready meal packets will be all over the floor. Food still in them. Sheets wouldn't be changed for months.

Toilet will be disgusting. It wouldn't clean it. Did it bother me? Uh. Not really. I'll tell you why.

[16:56] Because it just sort of gradually built up. And I just got. I just got used to the stench. Until my parents visited. James.

James. How can you live like this? Shame on you. Oh yeah. That is a disgusting toilet. Isn't it? How did it get that bad? Listen. We never want to reach a point. Where the stench. Of false teaching. Becomes so normal.

We didn't even notice it. Happening to us. What would that look like?

Maybe when we start to get a little bit softer. Maybe less of that bit of a Bible. It's too challenging. Shh.

[17:58] About judgment. No, no, no. Or one day maybe you have to call another pastor. And you might say. Well, you know. He's an okay Bible teacher. He's not the strongest.

But. We just really like him. And that makes up for it, doesn't it? No. We just stop ourselves there. Before it gets too late. How far will God go that we receive his word? He will go the distance. The shame bad Bible teachers whose teaching really harms others.

And it could harm us too. Again, I want to ask you kind of how this lands with you. It might sort of feel heavy.

Perhaps. Maybe like, almost like the future of this church, the future of the church rests on us. And being able to spot bad Bible teaching and having that discernment.

[18:59] Or maybe even rests on the next better generation of Bible teachers that come in and just get going to sort it all out and make the Church of England great and whatever. But we are kind of accountable for what we hear.

And what we hold to. But Malachi says that's only half the story. It can't rest on us or a better generation. Because look at Malachi's generation.

They are that generation actually. Because they were the keen ones. They were the people who left comfort behind to rebuild God's temple. Maybe a bigger sacrifice than some of us here have made. But they weren't the hope. God's people still, they're still being taught badly. They're still being led into sin.

And actually they don't really have a heart to hear good teaching anyway. It's not going in. We need a teacher who can fully and finally lead us towards life.

[20:14] And that is how far God goes. So we receive his words. Because God goes the distance to come and be that good teacher that we so desperately need.

So that we don't stumble. And he comes to be that teacher himself. The whole Old Testament, you have to realise this, is just brimming with expectation all the time for a Messiah, for a new covenant. For people to actually continue and keep going. And this is one of those passages that just builds that. And by the time, near the end of the Old Testament, you're thinking, I know exactly what we're expecting here.

Here's a description of the ideal priest. Verse 5. Look at it with me. Verse 6.

Can you feel the longing in this passage?

[21:51] The teacher you need, Malachi says. Can you feel it in the air? The anticipation. Well, he says, good news. He's coming.

And good news for us because he's come. And there can only be one person. Jesus. Only Jesus. Fully resolved to honour God's name. I would love you to pray for me. That the one thing I would do is resolve to honour God's name.

And give him glory. I will try by the Spirit. There's only one who's done that perfectly. Only the Lord Jesus lives completely consistently.

Only the Lord Jesus has true instruction. The summing up of the law. Showing how everything points to him. Interpreting it perfectly. Only the Lord Jesus brings life and peace.

[22:57] You don't get life and peace from any other teacher. From your therapist. From that influencer. They're not going to offer you life. Or even that amazing preacher.

That you heard at Rising Lights the other week. In and of themselves. You don't get it from me. You don't get it from Johan. You don't get it from anyone else. You do get it from Jesus.

The perfect lawgiver. Who's overflowing with life. That he's offering. Jesus is overflowing with life. In his teaching. But also a teacher who can actually turn you away from sin.

This is the whole issue isn't it? To stop you being led astray. And actually this is the bit I've been really excited to tell you about. This week. It's really come fresh for me.

Jesus comes with truth. Right? It's so powerful. So life changing. That it can transform us. And actually turn us away.

[24 : 02] From sin. And that's what this teacher promised to do. Didn't he? In that verse. Because he comes with the truth of the gospel. And he embodies the truth of the gospel.

And he has the truest instruction in his mouth. And he says this. I will take the public shame that you deserve. I will be spat on. I will go to the cross.

Forgiving your sin. I'm going to forgive your sin. But I'm going to enable you to turn away from sin. Not perfectly now. Truly.

Truly. When you come to Jesus. He comes to you with that true instruction. But then he writes it on your heart.

And he pours out his spirit. And he will cause you. To walk in his statutes. He will keep you. From stumbling. That's the Jesus. That we know.

[25 : 05] That's the kind of truth that he brings. It's that life transforming. Jesus goes a distance. To give us exactly.

What we need. We've all heard. A story a little bit like this. You know. Two mountaineers. Two best friends. And one of them. Well gets really badly injured.

On a mountain somewhere. And he can't move. And he says to the other friend. You know. Stay. Stay there. I will go and get help while you're there. And I'll come back. And I'll get you everything you need. So what does he do? He treks like 48 hours.

To the base camp. And he comes back. The supplies on his back. And he's dragging out of the hill. And he comes back. And he saves his friends. And in a news interview. A few weeks later.

He says something like this. About his friends. Well I couldn't have just left him there. Jesus looks at his people.

[26 : 06] And he says. I couldn't have just left you there. Unable to listen. Unable to be wholehearted. Unable to turn to him.

Helpless. Led astray. Unable to be. And do you know what he says? Precious one. Loved one. I will go the distance for you. Even to shame on a cross.

To give you my life giving. Sin forgiving. Spirit filled. Law in your heart truth. That leads you to life and peace with me. That the gospel is not just a simple kind of belief system is it?

You believe this. You believe this teacher's truth. And you keep coming back to it. And you keep loving it.

And. You have the power to keep going. To keep you from stumbling. Are you ever worried that you won't make it? That you're not able.

[27 : 14] To fully. To truly turn away from sin. We can't fully turn away from sin now. But we can truly can do that. This is the gospel he's promising. This is the teacher we have.

Look at Jesus. And marvel at him. Come back to him. Find Bible teachers hot on this kind of truth. Teaching the Bible. In context.

Pointing to Jesus. Please know this about him. He is not the sort of God to sit back. And watch you fall.

Come to the saviour today. Who goes the distance. To give you. Everything. You need. Let me pray. Lord without you we would be nowhere.

We're not good enough in ourselves. We're not able enough. Lord without you. We'd still be led astray.

[28 : 28] Thank you so much. You sent your son to be the true teacher. To forgive us. To give us life. To come with the gospel.

To come with your spirit. To change us. And walk with us. Thank you so much for our better. Amazing teacher.

Please would we. Looking for that sort of teaching. And loving that sort of teaching. More and more. We pray that in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.