

Untitled (54)

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[0:00] Amen. Okay. We've heard three readings from the scripture today.! A Blessed Promise, which in my opinion I think we're going to need after we contemplate the other two passages.

So let's go back to the book of Malachi for a few minutes. Let's talk about life. This passage in Malachi is addressed to believers.

And these particular believers to whom this book was first addressed kind of got things mixed up along the way. And by that, it kind of reminds me of the struggles that you see in the Psalms.

And I'm sure many of you have spent a lot of time in the Psalms. But one of the themes in the Psalms is, why do the wicked prosper? Why do the wicked appear to be at peace?

Why do they appear to have lives of comfort and ease? Why does it seem like they don't really suffer? Why do they appear to be at peace? Why do they appear to be at peace? Meanwhile, I'm worried about my sins.

[1:30] I appear to be suffering from my sins. My life is hard. And heck, I don't even seem to have their prosperity half the time. If this goes on long enough, and let's be honest, if we allow this to chew at us and eat at our minds and eat at our spirits, it can get to us.

Just like those folks in Malachi, I'm sure those thoughts have been eaten at them for a long time. Which is why they thought what they thought and they said what they said.

That's why the Lord said, hey, you know, you guys have spoken harshly against me. Because when we start thinking there's no difference in outcomes, when we have a life based on service to the Lord, and we compare it to a life not based on service to the Lord, and then we start thinking there's no difference in outcomes, there's no distinction, and then we start thinking about how people literally get away with murder, and we start thinking, man, what's the point?

What's the difference? So the Lord obviously overheard that conversation and responded. He said, no.

One day, when I do take up my treasured possession, which is the people who serve me, the people who believe in me, there will be a distinction made between those who serve God and those who don't.

[3:12] The ones who serve God will be taken home, and the ones who don't won't go home to be with the Lord. So a lot of you could hear what I just said and read that passage in Malachi and think, well, you know, that's good.

But in a way, that kind of talks about the things that are external to us, the things that are far away. Like we can turn on the news, we can see things like this.

We all maybe have acquaintances who go through experiences like this, and we can think these thoughts and fall into this trap over time, but it's external to us in a lot of ways.

But, you know, as we think about it, is that the way life really is? What about the things that hit us at home?

The hard things that hit us right here, where we live? I mean, how many of you have been a child who's had to bury a parent?

[4:22] Or how many of you have had to be a parent who's had to bury a child? Or maybe some of you have had to do both. Or maybe along the way you've lost a marriage, or two.

We all know how messy that can be and how painful that can be. Or maybe you've lost a job. Or a couple jobs. Maybe you've lost everything you've had.

And I mean everything. Or, what about illness? How many of you have seen a loved one suffer and battle with an illness over time?

When I thought about this, I thought about my aunt. My aunt contracted multiple sclerosis in the middle of her life, which, if anyone knows about the disease, it's a long, slow, painful death.

Then, comorbid with that, she had a stroke. Lost part of her speech. Lost a lot of her movement. Got put down into a wheelchair. Then her husband went blind. And then he died.

[5:30] My aunt still has faith. Which encourages me. But if we're honest, I mean, we've all seen people live who probably should have died.

And we've all seen people die that we maybe think, you know what? They should have lived. And this is especially true if it's a loved one. This is the kind of stuff that hits really close to home. That we don't usually talk about in church. Because it's not proper. But you've got to ask yourself a question. That passage that we read in Hebrews today, that was a very, very grim passage. That passage was aimed at believers. Why would the Lord put that passage and many others like it in the book of Hebrews when it's intended for believers?

It's because sometimes life can get really hard. Things happen to us along the way that cause us to question, cause us to think and ask why.

[6:49] And sometimes, as hard as we try, we can't make sense of it. We can't discern the meaning in it. We don't understand how it benefits us.

We don't understand how it benefits the kingdom of God. And the question eats at us. And eats at us. For some of you, this may only be a short time. But for others, it could go on for years.

I mean like decades. So what do you do? What do you do?

Well, fortunately for us, there's someone in the scriptures who had to battle with the emotion of despair. And that's really what I'm talking about today. Is a despair that can beset a believer. A despair that can cause a believer to lose confidence. And maybe think, you know, maybe I didn't make the right choice. There's a little passage in 2 Corinthians 1, verses 8-11.

[7:49] And I won't read it to you for the sake of time. But basically, Paul and his companions went through such a dangerous and dire situation that they despaired of life.

When Paul was saying he despaired of life, he was saying, what am I doing? What am I accomplishing? What is the point to this? But if any of you know, 2 Corinthians is what we call the comfort book in the New Testament because God says, I am the God of all comfort.

This passage is in a book that's all about comforting believers. And Paul went on to say that this terrible thing happened to him and his companions so when God delivered him and his companions, others would see it and have confidence and have faith and be encouraged.

So, going back to that passage in Hebrews, what does it mean when it says those who keep on sinning deliberately after receiving knowledge of the truth face the fury and the displeasure of a holy God?

And I'm paraphrasing. Theologians have two views on this passage. Some theologians will say, well, you know, it applies to people who never really believed in the first place and, you know, they didn't make it.

[9:18] other theologians believe that it applies to genuine believers because at the beginning of the passage he uses a pronoun, we. So that means the author of Hebrews is included.

And you see the we pronoun a lot in the book of Hebrews, meaning us and the author and the company of believers. And Hebrews goes to great pains and to great lengths to point out that the salvation bought for us by the blood of Christ is ironclad and sure.

So the second viewpoint in this passage is that we can lose reward, we can lose fellowship, we can lose blessing, and God can get mad at us.

But we may retain our salvation, but we lose a lot of other things along the way. So depending on how you view this passage, I am of the opinion that it applies to believers who just kind of get messed up and misguided and get tempted to give up.

Because if we're honest, if we're all brutally honest, some of us, maybe not all of us, but many of us are going to have a season in this life where we're tempted.

[10:28] I've been there and I'll be honest. So I know this applies to other folks as well. This passage in Hebrews is the Lord being faithful to us.

because sometimes we need a gentle rebuke, but sometimes we need a real good one. We need a good dose of fear. And the kind of fear I'm thinking of is the kind of fear described in the Deuteronomy after the Hebrews get in trouble for having the golden calf incident.

And if you look at those scriptures, it talks about the mountain that's on fire, the lightning, the thunder, the tempest and the storm and God speaking to the people and the people are so terrified that they say, Moses, go talk to God and tell him to stop talking to us so we live.

And God says to Moses, yeah, that's a good idea. Those people were terrified. In Hebrews chapter 12, it talks about how the new covenant initiated by Christ replaces the old covenant given to us in

the Old Testament.

God spoke to the Hebrews on earth but Jesus, our Lord and Savior, speaks to us from heaven which is one of the reasons why the new covenant is greater than the old covenant. The new covenant replaces the old covenant.

[11:50] The good news here is we have a Savior who's up to the task. We have a Savior who is up to the task. One of my favorite traits about our Lord is the fact that he's fully human.

It's not just the Son of God sitting next to God the Father. It's the Son of Man. Jesus is a man, a human being just like us.

He knows what it's like to be in our shoes. He is sitting at the right hand of God. He is the perfect high priest because he led that sinless life so he could access the Holy of Holies and he could intercede for us and pray for us and always be there for us.

And because he was the Son of God he could take our punishment, take the death and the crucifixion that we deserved and come back. So his life is our life.

His blessings are our blessings. His holiness is our holiness. His righteousness is our holiness.

holiness. So the reason why I picked the passage I picked today in John chapter 17 is I think we all need to take a glimpse at the end game.

[13:10] What's in store? In John chapter 16 there's a famous verse. Jesus says, Fear not, I have overcome the world. I believe it's 16 verse 33 if anyone wants to look.

But going back to John chapter 17 in Jesus' high priestly prayer there's a few stunning things in this passage.

It could be the subject of many sermons. I'm just going to focus on a few. In this prayer Jesus is basically saying God the Father loves you the believers, you as much as he loves God the Son. In fact, Jesus wants the world to know that the Father loves you as much as he loves him. That is one of the things that Jesus prayed for.

Have you ever stopped and think about how much God the Father loves God the Son? Have you ever stopped to think and contemplate that for a few minutes?

[14:19] Now just try to imagine that's how much he loves you and he loves all of us.

I mean, this is staggering. This is staggering if you think about it because what he's saying is the way that the Father is in the Son and the way the Son is in the Father, we will be in him and he will be in us.

So in other words, the blessings of the Trinity, the love, the fellowship, the relationship, the blessings of the Trinity, he's sharing with us the glory.

One of the glorious things about God is the unity and the bond between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God is giving that to us. He is sharing that with us.

That's staggering. That is staggering. John chapter 14 kind of talks about this a little bit.

[15:34] It says, one day that you will know that I am in the Father and you are in me and I am in you. Other versions of the Bible use the word realize.

What's important to notice about this is that you realize it. Why is the word realize important?

Because it is unconsciously experienced at first and consciously realized by the mind later.

so you experience it before you know it. You experience it before you know it, but one day you realize it.

I don't know about you, but when life gets really tough, sometimes I think I need a reminder like this, and I think a lot of you do too. Because when I was teaching the lesson in Hebrews chapter 10, the Lord really laid it on my heart that we needed to hear what he had to say.

But it wouldn't be fair to go to that passage without an explanation of why and because. And that's what Jesus gives us in John chapter 17. It's a why and a because.

[16:51] You know, someone may come up to you and say, all right, what is the work? What is a Christian supposed to do with their life?

What is the one work that we are given to do in response to all of this? John 6, 29 gives us the answer. The work of the Lord is to believe in the one whom the Lord has sent.

The one sent is Jesus Christ. Your work, my work, the work of all of us who believe, is to believe on him until the end, no matter what.

That means the confidence that we had at the first, we need to hang on to that. The habit of attending church and praying, we need to hang on to those habits.

That's part of what it means to believe in the one that is sent. What it also means is to do the good works that the church has been given to do. It may be feeding the poor, it may be helping the sick, it could mean hundreds and thousands of different things.

[18:04] But these are the things the church does in the name of the Lord for the sake of his name to benefit and bless the world and others. And the other thing we need to remember too is what Jesus said would be the mark of his disciples, the one unique, distinguishing miracle of the church that separates it from all other things.

Jesus said this is how the world will know that you are my disciples, by how you love one another. One of the most important things you need to do is encourage and love each other with the same love that the Lord has for you.

This is the same love that we need to have for each other. Because when the world outside looks inside of the church and they see this, they're seeing what they need the most and what's the most missing from their lives.

It's the love of God. So this is our great work. It's to believe until the end. And I think we can take heart, because based on the staggering blessings and the promises that we've been promised, it'll be worth it.

It will most definitely be worth it. So I'd like to just conclude with a word of prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are our Savior.

[19:29] We thank you that you came for us. We thank you that you died for us. Help us to imitate your love and your life, and help us to walk in the path that you've walked, and follow the pattern that you set before us.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen.