

## Fearing God in Reverent Worship

February 5, 2016

*"Then those who feared the LORD spoke often to one another. And the LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed His name." - Malachi 3:16*

A call to holy living and reverent worship is the vital center of our Christian faith. It is also the heartbeat of the Old Testament prophet Malachi. God's people had fallen into idolatry and disobedience because they had forgotten the grace and mercy of God towards them. The people observed the formalities of religion while being deficient in true, spiritual life. Belief was widespread that God delighted in them and would overlook their hypocrisy, irreverence, and treacherous behavior towards one another simply because they were God's covenant people—forgetting that covenant blessings require covenant faithfulness.

In the midst of these calamitous times came the stirring message of Malachi: "Turn from sin—for the day of the LORD is coming soon. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of Hosts." Malachi told the people that two things are important in God's sight: to fear Him and reverence His Name. Failure to fear God and reverence His Name is the root of all sins. To fear God is to be in awe and reverence of Him—and to dread offending Him through disobedience.

Lamentably, the fear of God and holy reverence of His Name are conspicuously absent in the modern Church. Sunday morning 'worship' is often indistinguishable from Saturday night entertainment. In some churches, congregations observe beautiful, ceremonial, religious practice in a merely perfunctory way. Without inward awe, fear, and obedient reverence—flowing from personal, vital commitment to the LORD Jesus and His Word—all such so-called 'worship' [whether of the informal or formal variety] is offensive to our Holy and Majestic God. When worship is void of awe, fear, heartfelt repentance and faithfulness, both clergy and people are simply 'going through the motions', much like the nominal believers of Malachi's day.

The people had dishonored God by unholy worship, unrighteous behavior towards their neighbors, and robbing God of tithes and offerings. Yet God's breathtaking promise in Malachi 1:11 is, "My name shall be honored by people of other nations from morning until night who offer sweet incense and a pure offering in honor of My Name." The Hebrew word for "pure offering" means an offering that is morally, physically, and ceremonially pure. How can sinful man ever hope to offer God a pure offering? Only because of the death of the LORD Jesus upon the Cross. Because of Calvary, we who belong to Him may now offer ceaseless prayer and praise to God the Father for the sacrifice of His Son, commemorated, symbolized, and received in Holy Communion.

God is searching for true believers—those who fear the LORD and continually offer Him the pure offering of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. Are you one of God's faithful few? Do you fear the LORD? Do you long for holy living and reverent worship? Then offer God your humble repentance and obedience. Delight in the narrow path which leads to everlasting life. Speak with others who fear His Name—meet together to pray and share the Scriptures. God promises to be with you as you obey Him: "But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings," (Malachi 4:2). To fear God in reverent worship is the joy of the Christian life. Beloved in Christ, let's intentionally, daily, make holy living and reverent worship the passion of our hearts!

