

Title: **THE BURDEN OF**
 THE WORD OF THE LORD

Text: Malachi 1:1

Subject: *The Burden of Preaching*

Date: Sunday Evening — March 22, 2009

Tape: Malachi #2

Readings: *Frank Hall and James Jordan*

Introduction:

I am here to speak to you as God’s ambassador, as a man representing God, as one standing before you in Christ’s stead! — I am here to talk to you about eternal matters! — And what I have to say will be of eternal consequence!

Turn with me to Malachi 1:1. My subject is “**THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD.**” Malachi, being inspired of God the Holy spirit, begins his prophecy by calling it “**THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD.**”

(Malachi 1:1) “The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.”

The word “burden” is not used here to suggest that God’s Word is a grievous weight. It is a heavy, heavy burden; but it is not a grievous weight. It is a blessed burden, a burden of great importance and of great consequence, but a blessed burden. “The Lord’s burden,” Hawker wrote, “brings with it the Lord’s blessing.”

Still, God’s prophets of old referred to the message God gave them to deliver, as Malachi does in our text, as “*The burden of the LORD,*” or “*The burden of the Word of the LORD*” (Jeremiah 23:33; 34, 36, 38; Zechariah 9:1; 12:1). Those faithful men were not triflers. They did not run from place to place to entertain sinners on their way to hell. God’s prophets of old were men who carried a burden, as men sent of God.

As it was then, so it is now. Those men who speak as God’s ambassadors to eternity bound sinners, who dare stand and speak to immortal souls in Christ’s stead, have a burden to bear: — “*The burden of the Word of the LORD.*” I am sometimes shocked by the levity with which men who profess to be the servants of God speak of their work. They joke about preaching,

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joke about their sermons, and joke about their work. Little wonder that this generation looks upon religion as a joke!

God's prophets get their message directly from God himself, by prayer and study; and that message is weighty, so weighty that it is called "*The burden of the Word of the Lord.*" And any preacher who does not find his ministry a burden now will find it a burden hereafter, a burden that will sink him lower than the lowest hell!

God's servants are men who take their responsibilities seriously. They do not engage themselves with society, but with study. While others play, they pray. While others seek to please men, they seek to persuade men. They are men with a message, a message that must be delivered. They are not sent into the world to tickle men's ears. Theirs is an errand of life or death to souls immortal. They have a something to say which so presses upon them, that they must say it. — "*Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!*" The Word of the Lord is as fire in their bones, consuming them. As the servants of God they must speak the things which they have seen and heard.

They have a burden to carry that is worth carrying. Their message is truth, solid truth, precious truth, divine truth, eternal truth! It is not froth and foam, phrases and poetry, cute stories and clever sayings, but the weight of matters that concern heaven and hell, time and eternity. They are men who speak with urgency and earnestness. They have to. They speak for God! They dare not speak lightly.

God's servant, the gospel preacher is a man who bears the weight of eternal realities heaped upon him. He moves with decisiveness and speaks with firmness, as one who carries "*The burden of the Word of the Lord.*"

Do not misunderstand me. God's servants carry the burden the Lord has put upon them willingly and cheerfully. I would not be without it or give it up for all the world. Sometimes, a preacher is tempted, when things are not going right in his eyes, to think about turning away from his work; but it is a thought not to be tolerated. — Yes, we bear a burden, but we are honored to bear it.

William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, said, "Poor Felix is shriveled from a missionary to an ambassador." He was at one time a missionary, a gospel preacher. When he became a government employee, an ambassador

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representing the British crown, his father thought it no promotion, but said, “Felix has shriveled into an ambassador.”

May God the Holy Spirit give me grace to preach and give you grace to hear, as I try to speak to you about “*The burden of the Word of the Lord.*” Why is the Word of the Lord a burden to his servant?

GOD’S WORD

First, it is a burden because it is the Word of the Lord. It is God’s Word! If what we preach is only of man, we may preach as we like, and there is no burden about it; but if this Book is divinely inspired, — if Jehovah is the only God, — if Jesus Christ is God incarnate, — if there is no salvation except through his precious blood, — then there is a great solemnity about that which the servant of God is called to preach. That makes this business of preaching a weighty matter upon the shoulders of a mere man. Modern religion is child’s play. Current theology is a trifle as light as air; but the truth of God is more weighty than gold!

- Gospel preachers realize that they are responsible to faithfully declare God’s Word. I am responsible to faithfully expound to you the meaning and message of Holy Scripture.
- Gospel preachers understand that they must seek, must have, and must deliver God’s message to those who hear him (Isaiah 40:1-2; Jeremiah 23:28). — In 2nd Samuel 18 we are told that Ahimaaz out ran Cush, but he had nothing to tell. He ran without being sent!

(Jeremiah 23:28) “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What *is* the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.”

- Gospel preachers know that the Word of the Lord is the instrument by which God does his work among men. This Book holds the gold, silver and precious stones with which the church of God is built (1 Corinthians 3). — The Gold of Christ’s Person! — The Silver of His Atonement, of His Blood! — The Precious Stones of His Accomplishments!

(Jeremiah 23:29) “*Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?”

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The word of the Lord is **a burden to his servant in the reception of it.** I do not think that any man can ever preach the gospel aright until he has had it borne into his own soul with overwhelming energy. You cannot preach **conviction** of sin unless you have experienced it. You cannot preach **repentance** unless you have been turned to God. You cannot preach **faith** unless you exercise it. You may talk about these things, but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proved in your own soul.

It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he merely parrots forth secondhand information. God says to his prophet, “**Son of man, eat this roll.**” — You have to eat it before you can hand it out to others. **True preaching is the bursting forth of a well bubbling up from the great depths of the soul.** It is the outflow of that which God the Holy Spirit has put within. If Christ has not made a well within us, there will be no outflow from us.

The Word of God is a burden; **in the delivery of it.** It is no trifle, it no easy thing to stand before the people and deliver a message which you believe you have received from God! **He that finds it easy work to preach, will find it hard work to give an account of his preaching at the last great day.**

I know that most preachers lament the fact that they do not have larger congregations. They engage in denominational politics, and move from one place to another, until they have landed a church large enough and respectable enough in the eyes of men to match their own high opinions of themselves. For my part, I find that I have the responsibility of preaching to as many as I want to give an account for in the last day. — **Whenever the Lord God increases the area of our influence, he increases our responsibilities .**

When we have preached the message, the gospel becomes a greater burden still. — It is a burden in the study, a burden in the closet, a burden in the pulpit, a burden in the heart, and a burden in the life of every faithful man!

WEIGHTY MESSAGE

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Second, the Word of the Lord is called “*The burden of the Word of the Lord*” because its message is a weighty message. — “*Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy name*” (Psalm 138:2). The message of this Book is all about eternal realities.

- The Eternal God!
- His Eternal Salvation!
- Eternal Life!
- Eternal Heaven!
- Eternal Death!
- Eternal Hell!

“There is a dreadful, dreadful hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains.”

It is the responsibility of your pastor, my responsibility to discover, expose, and rebuke your sin. It is the preacher’s responsibility, by the direction of God the Holy Spirit, to find and press hard the matter that his audience needs to hear.

- Christ and the Samaritan Woman
- Harry Simms at Antioch
- The Point of Rebellion
- The Gospel Issue at Stake — Election — Redemption — Righteousness — Regeneration — Will-worship — Law and Grace!

If men are offended by the truth of God, it is my responsibility to offend them.

Illustration: *Bob Lipps and Limited Atonement*

Every true preacher of the gospel is careless of man’s esteem, and speaks God’s Word faithfully. At the place where God’s glory is at stake, at the point at which men rebel against his right to be God, there we must be found bold and faithful!

Next, the Word of the Lord, the doctrine of the gospel is shaped on purpose to bring all human pride down into the dust, to destroy the glory of man. — “*Christ is all*” (1 Corinthians 1:17-31).

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- Every thought of Human Merit and Righteousness!
- Every high thought of Intellectual Arrogance!
- Every thought of Distinction among Men!
- T.-U.-L.-I.-P. — The offense of the cross has not ceased (Galatians 5:11).

(1 Corinthians 1:17-31) “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (26) For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

WEIGHTY CONSEQUENCES

Third, when I think of the weighty, weighty consequences of preaching the gospel to you, I cannot tell you what a burden it is to carry in my soul, “*The burden of the Word of the Lord*” (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 33:7-19; 2 Corinthians 2:15-17; 3:5).

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(Ezekiel 3:17-21) “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. (18) When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (19) Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. (20) Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (21) Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.”

(Ezekiel 33:7-19) “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. (8) When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (9) Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. (10) Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? (11) Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (12) Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth. (13) When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not

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be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. (14) Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; (15) *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. (16) None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. (17) Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. (18) When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. (19) But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.”

(2 Corinthians 2:15-17) “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: (16) To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? (17) For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 3:5) “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;”

AN ACCOUNTING

Fourth, the preaching of the Gospel is called carrying “*the burden of the Word of the Lord*” all who truly preach the gospel know that there will soon be a day of accounting before God. Soon you and I must give account before God!

(Hebrews 13:7) “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation.”

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

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- Those who preach, but do not preach the gospel must give account (1 Corinthians 9:16; Ezekiel 3: 17-21; 33:7-19).
- Those who preach the gospel faithfully must give account to God for all who have heard their message, and all who could have heard it.
- You who hear me, all who hear God's servants, must give account before God!

Brethren, pray for the preacher; and pray for yourselves. We have to bear the burden of the Lord; but there was one, the Head of all prophets, the great Lord of all true gospel preachers, who bore a far heavier burden. "*He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*" Preacher, do you ever get weary? Let us look to him as he bows beneath his cross, take up the burden of "*the Word of the Lord*" cheerfully, and follow after the Savior.

Amen.