

Good morning. Welcome to Bible Moderators. It's wonderful to be together this April as we continue our study of the book of Malachi. We're looking at our study book together, The Next to the Last Word. Only one chapter this month, chapter 17. And then you'll notice I've put a few page numbers that go back to the previous chapter, page 220 to 223, which is really his autopsy, his analysis of the church in Malachi's day, and corresponds with our scripture, which is Malachi chapter two, verse 10, through chapter three, verse seven. And so let's begin, though, with a word of promise. You know, God's given us his word as promises that we can cling to as anchors for our souls. And one promise that we'll study more next month is based, is our theme verse for our study this year from Malachi chapter four, verse two. Let's recite or read or say our memory verse for the year. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. Malachi 4.2. And we'll study something about the one who is coming in our passage as we look more into the beginning of chapter three, as well as the importance of fearing the Lord. Let's go to him in grateful praise. Our Father, we do rejoice in you. We praise and extol your name for your mercy and your great love that you are the God who purifies your people And we know we need your cleansing, your purifying power. I thank you for each of these women who are serving as Bible moderators. We pray that they may meet with you, our living God, as they study your word and as they teach that their words and lips will be anointed by your spirit to the women in their circles. We give you thanks for this time. We praise you that you are a God who is at work. And we pray for your work of renewal, of power, of grace in our hearts. We give you our praise in Christ, our Redeemer's name. Amen. So we are looking at Malachi chapter two, starting at verse 10, through chapter three, verse seven. The word of our God. Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah has been faithless and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign God. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts, And the second thing you do, you cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, why does he not? Because the Lord was witness

between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless. though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. For the man who does not love his wife, but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit and do not be faithless. You have wearied the Lord with your words, but you say, how have we wearied him? By saying, everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them. Or by asking, where is the God of justice? Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? and for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in the former years, Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker and his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. I thought it'd be helpful to begin with a brief review of what we know a little bit about Malachi from our study last month. Remember, he is now ministering 60 to 70 years after the completion of the wall to a people who were disappointed in God. God did not deliver according to their expectations. And they blamed their problems upon the Lord. And they nursed along their spiritual hard-heartedness against the Lord. They thought they were justified, even in their own disobedience to the covenant, to their obligations to their God. But the glory of this passage is not only the exposure of sin or, as Michael Barrett uses this great imagery, of a spiritual autopsy in which there is a depth of analysis and penetration of understanding of their spiritual condition. I drew this little sentence from last month's. He constructs an expose of the people's perfunctory, dead, external, formalistic religion. To quote Michael Barrett on page 213. He's looking at the underlying cause of their sin and of the ensuing misery that comes Sin and misery always are paired together. Sin leads to misery. We find this in the garden itself.

Think about that original match of Adam and Eve. As sin entered to the world, as they themselves gave themselves to disobedience to God. the impact of that on their own lives. So he's been looking at kind of the causes, the signs of dead religion, and doing a bit of an analysis. And we see that this analysis continues in chapter two, verses 10 to 16. Perhaps the most important question of our lives may be, how is my relationship with the Lord, the one who is my creator and maker, the one who is the father of all, all who are in his covenant? You know, we have been created by God that we might know Him, that we might love Him, that we might enjoy Him, that we might live in covenant friendship and fellowship with Him. It is this vertical dimension of life that is primary. I often meet with couples. I've done so this last week. where their relationship with one another is affected by the fall. Every marriage is affected by the fall. We all are affected by the fall individually. And there is a spillover effect. If the one's vertical relationship with God is, I'll just say, out of whack, Then, typically, there's a spillover of that into relationships with others on the horizontal plane of life. And what Malachi is doing, he's looking at the problems in their lives, particularly in that most intimate and closest of relations, that of marriage, and how that that shows their horizontal problems reveal that there are problems on the vertical with the Lord. He's getting at what I've entitled here as spiritual treachery. The word treachery appears. And I've divided this passage just as Michael Barrett does in two sections, the first being spiritual treachery, and the second being spiritual renewal and divine justice. We'll kind of look at it from that perspective, though there may be other good and helpful headings to consider here, but, you know, Our relationships with one another, especially in the family and especially in marriage, if we're married, reveals our relationship with the Lord. it can mirror that relationship with the Lord. And so, their impoverished spiritual condition is demonstrated in their poor relations in the family. And here, Malachi reminds them, first of all, of God's authority and God's ownership of us. We are not our own As it were, as the New Testament says in Corinthians, we've been bought with a price. And here, he argues that God has exclusive authority of his people, of his children. He is the father who is to be honored and obeyed. He is the one who is the creator. who made us, who exercises authority over the heavens and the earth. He is the one to whom we owe our due. This is where he begins in verse 10, as he goes into this analysis of their wayward relations with one another, revealing their poor relation with the Lord. as followers of Jesus Christ and our triune God, our relationships with one another are to reflect and mirror our relationship with God, that God is the one who

is the God of the covenant, who always keeps his word. He is ever faithful. When has God failed you? truly. They thought God had failed them constantly. But see the argument here is that God is ever faithful. You are the ones who are unfaithful and it's displayed in your life. It's written all over your life and it's written in the most intimate of relationships in your marriage. So we're called to live in fidelity with the covenant that we have with God, in terms of our relationship with Him, but also with those horizontal relationships of those who are in the covenant. And yet, as Michael Barrett states, the nation's behavior was contrary to expectation and incongruous. In other words, what he's saying is that there is a great disparity, a disparity from what they professed with their lips and the way they truly lived their lives. There was discord, there was disagreement, there was tension, there was animosity between the reality of what they say they believed and how they actually lived. And this is especially shown in their fundamental choice in marriage. Here it is described as what they did as treachery. God's design and his plan. is that Christian believers marry fellow believers. That is what we find so clearly in the scriptures. Deuteronomy 7 verse 3, you shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods. And that's exactly what happened.

The men, it's highlighted the men. It doesn't mean that covenant women were perfect in this regard, but the covenant men intermarried with foreign pagan women. And the emphasis is that these were unequally yoked marriages. It wasn't so much of a racial thing as much as the race of faith, of two races, of believers and non-believers. And believers were to marry within the faith. But these jettison that fundamental principle. forsook what God had clearly said because of their own desires and their own wanting to follow the pattern of this world. And it's described as treachery, of traitorous, of abandoning the very heart of the fundamental nature of the covenant with God. It's also depicted in the next verse here, in verse 11, as spiritual abomination. With whom believers marry is a very important question. The most fundamental and central aspect of the teaching of Scripture, first of all, is that believers are to marry in the faith with fellow members, believers, men marrying women, of course, within the covenant of God's people. That we are to find true satisfaction, ultimately, in the Lord. That's what this is about, ultimately, is the people did not delight themselves in Him. They didn't find their joy, their satisfaction, their meaning in the Lord. And so they're pursuing it, finding it the world's ways, abandoning his precepts and principles that they may be gratified and satisfied as this world promises. But the people of God are called

to be set apart, to be separate, to be dedicated to the Lord. for living for him and his glory, not according to the ways and pattern of this world. But they ditched God's way and behave like foolish heathen by marrying those who are not in the faith of wanting to be like the world. And so they're described as those who are profaning the covenant, And they have a marvelous show of religiosity. Did you hear it here, how that they were weeping with tears? They were coming to the altar, groaning and grieving. Verse 13, with weeping and groaning, because the Lord was not regarding their offerings, they gave a great production. You know, it was quite a show of religiosity. but they were far from God in their own heart. And the Lord sees through religious antics. He knows whether people are genuine, are just going through the motions, are putting on a show, a front, pretending. He knows us. He sees right through us. And he knew that they were set on this world and on the things of this world. I don't have the quote in front of me. I think I've mentioned this quote a time or two over the years teaching the Bible moderators, but C.S. Lewis in The Eternal Weight of Glory talks about how children enjoy playing and building mud pies when they have the offer to be at the beach. And he talks about how that we are caught up with the things of this world. instead of finding our true delight in the Lord. It's an easy search. Just do CS Lewis mud pie quote. It'll come up under any search engine. And it really is a marvelous, beautiful quote that really has bearing on this in terms of finding our satisfaction in the Lord. and instead of following in the ways of this world, I'm sure someone will find that quote and read it to us in just a moment, perhaps, as I see phones are being picked up, which is great. And so, these are men who broke the covenant, in that they violated, they were married to within the covenant, and they abandoned their covenant commitment of marriage. They abandoned their wives. They abandoned their fellow believing women to pursue godless, pagan, heathen. It was a witness against them. Yes? We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition. when infinite joy is offered to us like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased. That's the quote. And it's a marvelous quote that really ties in to our passage here. But you know, God himself says, I am the witness. I know this. I know what you have done and that you have abandoned your covenant commitment. to one another in marriage. And you men have taken up with pagan, ungodly women who are not of the covenant. And God is not pleased. And the church just didn't. I mean, surely they got married with the rabbi's blessing. And so he was the counselor to my son and his wife when they were getting married. And he

made a statement that they had to do something, and they did, because he wanted them to not to fall into sin. And so he made them think about what they were doing. And so here we have an example of not doing it, not doing it, not to have that. It's something we, it's very important, these relationships. I was very grateful that you did that. So we know, I mean, and so it's so easy to overlook in our world because everybody's doing it. And interestingly, there's no blame cast upon the women who lure the men. That's true. That is not the emphasis of this passage, though there are other passages of scripture that would bear witness to the sin of women involved in that. But also it's because men are supposed to be our leaders. That's right. And that's why the book stops with the man. That's why men are under such attack, because the book stops with them. Godly men are supposed to be leaders. Exactly. And Satan hates a godly man. He hates a godly man. Yes? They felt so neglected by God that they hadn't received the blessings and all of the, you know, not necessarily the wealth, but what they were expecting. They were seeking it, you know, marrying, it was advantageous to marry women from stronger countries that had more lucrative links, family links, to gain power and wealth. So they were intermarrying to gain more prestigious positions and to gain more wealth from these stronger and more wealthy surrounding countries. but it's such a perfect illustration of where their spirits were, where their hearts were. A perfect illustration of where they choose to align their loyalties. I think what you're saying is true and so much more because there's something here about this pagan culture and these men supposedly of the covenant that has to do with abandoning God's, this is more than we're going to get into fully here, but abandoning God's call to faithfulness in terms of purity and sexual faithfulness. What's implied here also in the Hebrew is part of this was about sex and these men longing, craving for these pagan women who may have had different practices and standards than maybe God's word teaches. That's a deeper subject than we're going to pursue, but I think we need to be aware of it. Well, and this may be overkill, but the thing that struck me about this passage is how allegorical it is. I mean, on a very literal level, we are talking about what you were just talking about. But it also, when you look at Revelation and God's plan for ultimately the marriage of His people, it's all kind of one and the same. But you can look at it as two levels of meaning. Sure. And he reminds them of his design in marriage. You know, I think it's verse 14 here is this reference, and I think it starts even and carries on to 15, you know, that she is your companion. And that goes back to the language even in the book of Genesis, how God created the woman and she was a suitable fit helper. It's that same Hebrew root word that goes back to God's original design

in marriage, how that he made men and women complementary, men and women of the covenant complementary indeed to one another in that She was your wife by covenant. That means you made covenant vows. You made a covenant commitment to this woman. And yet you have abandoned her. And it continues even on to verse 15. Did he not make them one? And then another question there. And what was the one God seeking? And while human sexuality is more than just the procreation of the race, it is for there to be a godly offspring as well. And that is one of the things highlighted here, that there'd be others who would be in the covenant, who would know God and walk with God and love him and make his word in ways known. But with intermarriage of a believer and a non-believer, it just undermines God's purposes for the family and the confusion that it introduces to children, that we each could go around this room and bear testimony of that truth. But it's right here in the Scriptures. You know, this threatens the plan of the covenant for there to be successive generations that call upon God as great and know Him and love Him and worship Him and revere Him. So there is much at stake in the covenant community with these men abandoning their covenant vows and their wife putting her aside, the word divorce is used, and pursuing a relation with pagan heathen, basically is what it says here. And it's a very serious matter. It's something that God is very much displeased with. This type of end, a termination of a marriage on this ground, indeed is something that God despises or hates. It's a very strong language here. And I think Michael Barrett has some very helpful insights where he talks about marriage and the marriage covenant as being something ordained by God for the family, and how that family is to be a safe, secure place where there's the school of Christ. I think I mentioned Deuteronomy 11 a second time. I really meant to mention on the top of page... 3, I guess it is, where I mentioned Deuteronomy 11 a second time. I really meant to mention Deuteronomy 6, 4 to 9, which is a well-known passage in which we are to live God's word, study it, live it, and teach it to our children. And it's to be such a part of our lives, whether as we go to sleep or as we awake, as we go through the day, that our children will have a front row seat of the gospel. In a Christian home, in a Christian marriage, children are able to have the gospel before them. It's imperfect. They see the forgiveness of husband and wife. And they see the beauty of Christ and his church displayed as it's displayed in that relation of marriage. And it is a wonderful beautiful thing. So what he drives at is there, the horizontal discord in the family mirrors vertical spiritual disintrigation with the Lord and abandonment of his covenant. Or as Michael Barrett puts it, discord in the home is evidence of dead, inactive religion, in

most cases, godly homes make for godly churches. And our enemy knows this. That is true. Absolutely. Yes. What are your thoughts on this first section? Spiritual treachery. and what he is teaching or exposing here of the people of the Lord. You think it's relevant for our own day? And you know, in the body of Christ, we are to help each other. As women, y'all have a powerful opportunity to come alongside other women and encourage them in their faithfulness, in their relation with the Lord, in their family, their husband. It can be a great opportunity. Many women are in a situation like some of these women where their husbands are not living in the truth of the covenant that they profess. And those women need some encouragement and support and help as they're trying to obey and honor the Lord in a very difficult situation for many of them. Because if a man marries outside the faith, she will lead him into sin. And that's why men have to leave, because when they stop leading, then family, that's what happens. And, you know, because it could have been, because like with Eunice and Lois, I mean, those women were faithful and look what we have with Timothy. But he knows the power, the allure that women have, because he gave it to them. And so that is, again, another admonition to men to be strong and to be faithful. Any other thoughts on this as you think about the ladies in your circle or the importance of the teaching of this passage for our day? I certainly think about adultery and leaving your wife for someone else, but within the marriage I see in my age group is more like putting your children above your marriage, putting your home above your, like the looks of your home above marriage or your career. And so, I mean, I don't know, I guess that the adultery to me is more just discord within the marriage and the women can be the ones allowing that to happen. I don't know if that's what it's really saying, but that's what I'm feeling with my age group. It's taking your eyes off your marriage. There are all kinds of ways of being involved in covenant unfaithfulness without outright adultery in a marriage in terms of putting other things before the marriage relationship and such. commitment in the very beginning of the marriage. and a low opinion of marriage like this is just nothing you know and if it doesn't work out okay well just divorce um but you know that should not be the thought of a christian um but there are many like that and i'm i mean i hate to say it but i've seen it and it is just it's just a lack of commitment they don't want to commit their lives, first of all, to Christ, their hearts and lives, but they also are unable to do that with their wife or their husband. And that is a great summary of the main heart of this passage, is that it really reveals a lack of spiritual commitment to the Lord. The power of sin is really, really strong. Yes. It's really strong and I think that we can get swept up in that really, really easily. Absolutely. I think if we realize the power

that we as women have, but the power for good. Yes, the power for evil, but the power for building up our husbands and encouraging them to be the leader. Not, you know, being the neck and turning them. No, the power to encourage them to lead and to be strong and the power to pray for them and to show our children respect for them. We are powerful. To encourage and to build up, that's our power. And to show a godly example, that's power. Exactly, yes. Well, all these things just came to my mind because, you know, I love it and God's Word amplifies itself, you know, but I'm up and down I-77 as much as I'm invited, you know, and there's a billboard. I've seen it for at least a year and it says, life is short, get a divorce. Yes. Wow. And it's advertising attorneys. And the first time I saw it, I mean, you know, my chin just dropped. I thought, But, so today, in all this reading, I was, in my reading through the Bible, I landed in Samson. And, you know, the fact that he goes to his dad and basically says, I want that woman, that Philistine woman, you get her for me. You know, and this is the absolute opposite of what he's supposed to be doing. His father says, you can't basically, you can't find anybody over here in Israel that I have to go over here. And Samson's like, I don't care. That's what I want. You know, and where that led as far as everything. You know, we and we were talking last week, the final week of our small group book study. And it was, you know, you have to end up with the Proverbs 31 woman, don't you? You know, and what this means for women, and how women today are are torn between what the world thinks you should be and what the Bible says you need to be and it's just something that's very hard and we had a really good discussion about that but you know what I have always found is that a family home that's stable, stability, is you just can't get around it. That is where children flourish, and I think the marriage flourishes, and everything flourishes in a stable situation. And it begins with that covenant fidelity with the Lord, his husband and his wife. And that is what Malachi is after. The end of this section, looking out chapter three, the final words. And do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. God's concern is that his people fear him. And that is a term for that reverence, that delight in God, that wanting to honor him, wanting to please him. And that is what this next section is about, how that God promises to bring renewal to his people. but judgment to the wicked. Unfortunately, when we abandon our covenant relation with God, we can invent God in our own minds. We can have misconceptions and various idolatrous thinking and misunderstanding of who God is and how is it that he works. And so, you'll notice at the end of this previous section, the concern that they had has

to do with the justice of God. how that they have come to God in such a way that describes God anthropomorphically as a human. God does not have fickle emotions like we do, okay. He's not like us. His ways are not our ways. His thoughts, our thoughts certainly are not his thoughts. And here he's described as being wearied. How have we wearied him? And what they have done is they've compared themselves and their circumstances with the heathen, the pagans, with those who prosper, those who are opposed to God. And it seems so in their misunderstanding that God has blessed the prosperous, whom they think are prosperous, and that he has passed over them in his provision and in his care. And so it's quite a, the way

Michael Barrett puts it, the self-righteous are comparing themselves, the apparent prosperity of the wicked with the apparent adversity of the righteous. The people are clamoring for justice on the wicked, on the unrighteous, on those who are not following the Lord, but they have completely misread their providential circumstances. They think that God is against them because they are not experiencing his blessings. But God has withdrawn his blessings and for a season of time has given them his disciplined curses of the covenant, going back to the end of the book of Deuteronomy, that they might learn to fear him and rely on him and come to him. And yet they completely misread it. They excused themselves in their sin, downplaying it, calling for the justice, the judgment of God upon others. They thought they deserved better, that they deserved more, that God, they were looking for the gifts the gifts and blessings of the covenant without the God of the covenant, if that makes sense. And they concluded that God was perhaps more pleased with these ones who were sinners than with his own people. And as a result, like God's children in the wilderness, they murmured. They complained. They griped. They went to God in complaint. And they assigned Him as the one who was at fault. They blamed Him for being a God who was stingy or not loving or caring, who did not care for and provide for His people, is the gist of it. But God reminds them that the wicked will be judged. There is perhaps prosperity of the wicked in this world for a time, but that is just for a season. I think Michael Barrett had a really helpful description. It was a little long for me to put in the notes, but I'll make reference to it in the middle of page 223. It is foolish, therefore, to envy the wicked because they are under God's certain wrath and condemnation. Faith knows that this life, even at its worst, is the best it will ever be for the ungodly. And that this life, even at its best, is the worst it will ever be for the godly. Living religion looks to eternity. But when all you can see is yourself, and self becomes the criterion for judging God, misconceptions

are inevitable. and misconceptions they had, grave misconceptions that were not based on God's revelation of who he himself is. But Malachi speaks of a day, a day to come, a day that's referred to in the Bible as the day of the Lord. It is this, this coming day that is a great antidote to dead religion. To know that this day is coming and live in light of it is what can bring them from spiritual lethargy and deadness to spiritual life and vitality. Barrett describes this day is a day when God directly interrupts the affairs of time for either the judgment of the wicked or the blessing of the righteous. So this day looks forward to our Savior Jesus' glorious and triumphant return. It will be a day of surprises. He will come, as it were, as a thief in the night. He comes not only to judge the wicked, but also those whose hearts are far from Him, but who are play-acting their faith, who truly do not know Him. They may profess Him with their lips, but their hearts are far, far from Him. They, as Michael Barrett says, themselves stand in jeopardy of judgment. God promises to send this messenger, this messenger who would be the preparer of the way, just as a king would send out agents ahead that the path might be cleared and safe and made ready for the royal coming of the ruler and king. We find in the New Testament that John the Baptist is a forerunner. He was the forerunner of our Savior's coming. as Christ was incarnated in this world and began his earthly ministry, as John called the people to repentance and to faith. But there is another coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Savior shall return from glory. Michael Barrett refers to the two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11. that are also preparing the way, as it were, for Christ's return. And there are promises in God's word that have not yet been fulfilled. I mean, the yearning of the Christian should be, Maranatha, come Lord Jesus. And I know you may have days where you say that. Please return, Lord Jesus, and deliver us out of this world. And Malachi sees that this Lord, and notice it's capitalized if you have a ESV, this Lord is the covenant name of God. And this Lord is described as one who is divine. and yet distinct from the Lord God, the creator of heavens and earth. Here we have two persons of the Trinity. We've already seen a reference to the Spirit of God in this passage, but what he's underscoring is the divinity of this one who is to come. You know, that He is the Sovereign, Lord, the Creator and Ruler of the heavens and the earth. And I just put in here the coming one is much greater than their divine jute box of a God. They had an idea that if you put in your dollar and pull the buttons or maneuver God, he can give you what you want. He can bless you if you do this or that in a mechanical way. But the one who is coming indeed

is much greater. He's the messenger of the covenant. He himself is the covenant. He's on divine mission of redemption and fulfilling the plan of God. He is the one who will appear at the temple. That's referring to the Lord Jesus and even his earthly ministry as was taught to Ezra and to Nehemiah and the people of God and rebuilding the temple when the temple was built. It didn't have the glory of the previous temple as we read in Haggai and some of the older believers were weeping and so Haggai reminded them. We even saw this, didn't we? That God had a greater purpose of the one who was coming. And this is the same one who is coming. He's coming to purify. And he's coming to punish. I think it's Handel in Messiah deals, lifts up that he shall purify the sons of Levi. He is like a refiner's fire. That's what I was in there too. Well, the refiner's fire. Y'all may have seen that little story about a lady who was in a Bible study and went to see how silver was refined. And the silversmith said, well, I have to stay right beside it while it's in the heat. because it happens quickly and I've got to remove it from the fire. And she said, well, how do you know when it's ready? And he said, oh, that's easy, because I see my face reflected in it. And it gives us a picture of how Christ holds us in the flame to make us more like him. Yes, that is a beautiful picture. He is the one who is refining and purifying His people. Salvation, redemption is not just fire insurance from the fires of hell. It is that purifying fire of the Lord that we might be becoming more like him, that will show forth the character and grandeur of our God and Savior in our own character. As Michael Barrett says, as fire separates dross from the metal, and soap separates dirt from clothes, so the Messiah will do a cleansing and purifying work. He cleanses us, He purifies us, so that we are made righteous in Him and through Him. The Bible speaks how that in Christ. There is now no condemnation. We are justified. We stand justified before God. We are also declared righteous. It is a beauty, a wonder of what the gospel has done to not only forgive us and cleanse us, but to renew us and to grant us a standing with God because of the work of our Redeemer and our elder brother. You know, we do not have clean hands, do we? Our hearts are not pure, but there is one with clean hands and a pure heart who ascended the hill, the hill of Calvary that we just remembered as this past week of Easter and of Holy Week and the righteous sacrifice of Christ that was accepted, that He was vindicated with His resurrection and that His sacrifice once for all for His people in their place was accepted by the Father so that we now stand absolved of our sin and declared righteous, even publicly. It will be made known, declared by God, that those united to Jesus by faith, or truly united to him, are righteous altogether. But the fire that purifies is also the fire that burns. It burns in judgment and

in torment. And the Bible has many passages, very graphic, to warn us, to woo us back to God. And it's for those who do not fear the Lord, or live as though they fear the Lord. And he gives some examples. I don't think this list is an exhaustive list. There are other lists, kind of similar lists. The book of Proverbs, six things God hates, even seven. And it goes through some of these. So there are other lists. But this is those who have abandoned the covenant, sorcerers, adulterers, false worshipers, false swears, sorry. Opposers, those who take advantage and oppose to the weak, widows, orphans of the covenant, aliens, strangers. God's judgment will come swiftly. And the desire of the prophet here is that the people of God would respond, that they might fear him again in a new way and that they may return to the God of the covenant and following him. Any final thoughts? We have about two minutes.

Any

final thoughts and we'll land the plane on time. It was really interesting that in Chapter 3, it says, but who can endure the day of His coming, and who can stand? And last year in Revelation, in Chapter 6, we got who can stand. And then chapter 7, we saw the multitude in heaven, you know, from every nation and tribe, glorifying God. And that's who could stand. They were all standing up, praising. Right. Because the Lamb was in the midst of the throne in that same chapter, I believe. And so here we have, and who can stand, and then in verse 6, for I the Lord do not change, therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. And so it's here the end of the Old Testament and the end of the New Testament both have that Great, maybe we can discuss and even develop that more as we come together next month. I think we have a new date, a

different date than our normal order. We usually meet the Wednesday following the board meeting of the women of the church, which would put it later, but this month, coming month, it'll be Wednesday, May 1st. May Day, May 1, right here, we'll look at the final section of the Book of Malachi. So May 1st, I believe that maybe has gone out to y'all. I don't know, I know I got an email on it a couple weeks ago. So. No. Oh, is that when it is? Okay. Yes. Very good. Well let's, we're to our hour, let's pray. Our Father and our God, how glorious you are. We confess as we read this portion of your word, we yearn that we who have tasted your grace, that we might live ever more so for your glory. that we might be those who are further refined by your fire of purification. We thank you for the work of our great Redeemer, the one who came, the one who is the covenant, the Lord Jesus. And I thank you for each of these women and pray that you'll give them great wisdom and insight as they teach your word, as they go through this portion of it. We praise you that you have not left us in our sin, but you have

worked in such a way that we are not only forgiven, but our hearts are increasingly changed to be conformed to the image of your Son, our Savior. In Christ's glorious and triumphant name we pray. Amen.