

Malachi: The Silence of God

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Malachi 1-4
Preached On: Sunday, August 18, 2019

Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

This morning, we're going to somewhat depart from previous weeks. I'm actually gonna ask you to turn to a passage in the Bible that's somewhat easy to find, it is the book of Malachi. Now I know some of you are thinking, "Well, Malachi, that's not the easiest of books," but it is the last book of the Old Testament and so if you're struggling finding passages in the Old Testament, just go to the Gospel of Matthew and hang a hard left and I promise you're gonna run into Malachi. But if you're a guest or visitor with us, we are continuing on about a three year journey as a family of faith, walking through the Scripture typically about a chapter a day and I understand that sometimes it only takes two or three minutes to check off the box and say, "Well, I got through that chapter," but kind of the purpose of this journey is not to check off the box but to allow the words of God to soak into our lives, maybe to read them a little bit slower than we have in days past, maybe to re-read them throughout the day, but today when you get to the book of Malachi, you'll notice that I did not ask you to turn to a specific chapter yet for I want you to turn to the end of Malachi and I want you to notice what's between Malachi and Matthew, a blank page. Let me tell you what that page represents: 430 years of silence. As we joke all the time, "So-and-so gave me the silent treatment," usually that's just for a couple of days, maybe a few weeks, guys, you're in a whole lot of trouble a couple months, but can you imagine 430 years of silence. You see, in the book of Malachi we have chronologically the last words that the Lord gives his people inspirationally through what we commonly call today as Scripture and what you see in the book of Malachi are several not accusations but, shall we say, revelations that the Lord gives his people and he's asking them rhetorical questions because he knows what the answer is, he knows that they are in a spirit of rebellion, he knows that they're not where they're supposed to be, and he calls their attention to it. Here is the problem: they began to make excuses, they began to justify, they began to say, "Well, if you were here you would understand." What we see at the end of the book of Malachi is the Lord simply saying that it's gonna be four centuries before I speak in this manner again. Why was it? Because simply that which he revealed to them, they did not respond appropriately and I want to take the historical lesson and I want to apply it to our lives today. I want to deal with the subject matter that each and every one of us has struggled with at some time, maybe we've verbalized it, maybe we've held it to ourselves, I'm not gonna ask for a raise of hands or a head nod because I know we're all in the same boat here, we struggle with this issue: when God is silent in our life, when we get on our knees and we cry out to God and we feel like our

prayers hit the ceiling, and oftentimes we wonder, "God, why? Why do I not hear your voice? Why are you not responding?" Today we're not gonna go the road of Job, that's a whole other message for those who are in the perfect will of God, today we're gonna deal with subject matters in the book of Malachi that oftentimes creep into our lives and maybe we don't realize it until there's silence.

In the book of Malachi, now we're gonna go to the first chapter. There are five areas that the Lord addresses in their life as the cause for the future silence. Now I want to be clear from the very beginning, you do not have to have all five of these problems in your life to have the silence of God in your life. If you just have one of them, there shall be silence. So today is kind of a litmus test, so to speak, and I want to challenge you to ask yourselves some hard questions. Is this who I've become? Is this who I am? Is the reason that I feel like I'm getting nowhere with the Lord because of one or more of these items? And what we'll discover today is that when we come honestly before the Lord and we deal with these issues, then all of a sudden the silence is no longer deafening.

The first of the things that we see is the issue of your heart. If your heart is not in the right place when it comes to the Lord, do not expect a fruitful conversation with him. Beginning in verse 7 of chapter 1, notice what the Lord says,

7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

In other words, they're beginning to kinda push back with the Lord and saying, "God, you're saying we're not doing this right, then what's the problem?" Notice verse 12 and 13,

12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. 13 Ye said also [this is what the Lord is saying their heart was saying], Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

The first revelation we have here is that they had a heart problem. They said, "O God, you're asking too much of us. Your standards are too high. Your expectations are too much. It is wearisome. It is loathsome." You know, we've just been challenged today song after song to focus upon the cross of Calvary, the wounds in his side and in his hands and in his feet, and how dare we look at that image of the cross and say, "God, you're asking too much of me," because he was willing to give the entirety of himself.

Notice what it says, they gave that which was torn, they gave that which was lame. Let me put this in 21st century teenager language, they were giving God their sloppy seconds. In other words, everybody and everything got more or their time and attention than God did. You see, oftentimes when we talk about that we have a heart problem or a sin problem, we always love to talk about sex, drugs and rock'n'roll, but sometimes it's not

those overt sins, sometimes it's that which we are withholding, that our best energy, our best time, our best resources we're allocating to someone other than him.

You want a good picture of this, just go to Genesis 4 and watch Cain and Abel go to church together. What happens with Abel? The Lord makes it very clear he brought the first of that which he possessed. He brought the Lord the greatest, the best, in other words, he represents for us my best time, my best talents, my best treasures, whatever you want to fill in the blank with. What did Cain do? Cain strolls on in, grabs a little bit of the leftovers, throws them down and says, "How about that one, God?" And the Lord comes to him and says, "Hey, we've got a problem, friend." He says, "I don't see a problem with this. I mean, everything's yours after all. Why do you need what I got?" And what he didn't understand is that our worship and our attention toward the Lord isn't because he needs it, it's because we need it. And what did the Lord say to him? "Sin lies at the door."

You know, when it comes to this one issue, sometimes our prayers are hitting the ceiling, sometimes we're just not hearing from God, let me give you the challenge of King David. It's found in Psalm 139:23-24, here's what he says, "Search me, O God, and try my heart," show me if there's any iniquity in me and if so, I," paraphrase, "will do business with you." You see, King David understood that there are times where God falls silent, King David understood there are times where our prayers hit the ceiling, but he learned his lesson from Bathsheba and that whole incident. Remember he wouldn't admit there was a problem. Oh, he knew something was awry, it took Nathan the prophet to come to him and reveal it. He wised up. He gained maturity and he said, "I don't want Nathan to show back up again. God, if there's an issue, show me and I will deal with it." You see, sometimes God is silent because we have harbored sin, we have secret sin, we have placed him on the second seat or the third seat or way deep in the bench of our life.

They said, "Oh, it's wearisome, God. You're asking too much. The standards are too high." And so they brought that which was torn and that which was lame. Oftentimes is that not how we respond to the Lord? "God, I've exhausted myself on everybody and everything else, I'm gonna give you the leftovers." Do not expect a thriving communication with the God the universe if you give him your leftovers.

The second thing that the Lord reveals, now remember it's just one of these and that may not be your issue, it may be this next one, I'm referring to it as "the church." Now I know "the church" as we now know it did not exist in Malachi's day, and when I speak of a church, I'm not speaking of sticks and bricks, I'm talking about what you and I know as the body of Christ, believers in Jesus Christ. Fast forward to chapter 2 beginning in verse 11, it says,

11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

Now you read that verse and you say, "What does that have to do with the church? I mean, it's speaking of Judah and he married somebody he shouldn't have married, what's happening?" Understand that in the Old Testament we have the faith of what we know the person of Jesus Christ that came to us through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Jacob had what we know as the famous 12 tribes. Those 12 tribes were to live among themselves – listen, it's gonna relate – even though they were separate tribes, they acted as one single common organism. They needed each other to thrive, much like 1 Corinthians talks about that we're the body of Christ and all members must work together. The Levites didn't own any property. The only food that they received was if their brothers and their sisters helped them. You had those on the northern side who were responsible for safety and security for invasion, Judah, the smallest as we hear later, would be the mechanism by which the Lord would bring the Messiah Jesus Christ. One of the provisions that the Lord gave was even though they were separate tribes, that they were to keep it within the family. In other words, they were not to go outside of the family because they would introduce false concepts, false beliefs, they would bring, as it says here, the heathen pagan gods.

So what did Judah do? Those that represented that tribe decided, "We're gonna go out and we're gonna mix and mingle and become more worldly than we are godly." I make the parallel to the church because today as believers in Jesus Christ, we all have different gifts, we all have different talents, and we're to operate as a single unit together, the problem is that Judah decided to disparage the body and God does not take it lightly when you disparage the body of Christ. In fact, I want you to understand something, that the Bible speaks very clearly that the body of Christ is his bride, that we're the bride of Christ.

We're gonna talk about more of this in a moment in Ephesians 5, and I don't know a man, and I'm gonna speak personally in just a moment, who enjoys when someone disparages his bride. In fact, let me just be very honest and transparent with you, I know this is gonna shock some of you but not everybody likes every decision I make. I know it's shocking. I know it's shocking that not everybody likes every word I preach or a sermon that I speak. I know it, and there are times where people decide to express their disdain for me a multitude of different ways and I won't go through all those, but I want you to know I've got pretty thick skin. I've been doing this almost three decades. I haven't heard it all but I've heard a lot. I've been called a lot of different names both inside and outside of the church, but that's a whole other story, and I just want you to hear something: I can take it. I'm a big boy. I can take it. I can read the letters, I can read the email, I can have the conversations, I can smile and I can go down the road and I can deal with the Lord, but you want to see Jeff get all up in your face? You talk about Tracy. Oh, you want to see me get upset, mad, head spinning on my shoulders, knocking down some walls? Talk bad about Tracy. I'm being serious. You can be ugly to me, don't touch her. She's off limits. She's my bride.

If I'm that passionate about my wife of 23 years, how do you think the Lord feels about the church? We are his bride. How dare we speak bad of the bride. How dare we take advantage of the bride. How dare we be divisive of the bride. How dare we join the world

in criticizing the bride of Christ. Judah dealt treacherously and he joined himself with the pagan gods and actually worked against the body of God in those days. I've got news for you, if you are disparaging or divisive to the body of Christ, do not expect a wonderful prayer meeting with the Lord. If you speak ill or if you have motives or if you have ulterior items in your mind when it comes to the body of Christ, in fact, there's a phrase I like to use sometimes and I know people struggle with this, but sometimes we are guilty of what I call prostituting the church. We use the church for our own personal gain whatever that may be.

You see, sometimes we've got a heart problem and we've just got unconfessed sin we've gotta deal with. Sometimes it's how we're responding to each other as the body of Christ that causes the silence, ah, but there's the third one, beginning in verse 14, one of the most famous passages here in the book of Malachi. We'll deal with the most famous one in just a moment. It's the one I'm gonna tell about your family. Beginning in verse 14 it says,

14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Now he's coming on the backside of what Judah was doing and he's speaking specifically to all of them saying it's fine to criticize Judah and he's in the wrong, but now I'm gonna turn the tables on all of you and how are you treating your family? And I'm gonna divide this in two sections and the first one is in the issue of what we know as marriage. Now there are those of you today that are single, there are those of you that used to be in a marriage relationship, and so for some of you this may not be as applicable as in days past or for some of you days future, but do you understand that there are only two relationships that the Lord utilizes to picture our relationship with him? The primary relationship is as a husband to a wife. In fact, in Ephesians 5, you've probably heard at many wedding ceremonies that you've attended beginning in verse 21 and ending in verse 32, the Lord makes it very clear that there are specific expectations of the wife and there are specific expectations of the husband. I like to remind grooms at their wedding day that those expectations of the husband are actually three times as long as the expectations for the wife, but what we discover at the end of Ephesians 5 is that the whole purpose of marriage is so that we can picture Christ's relationship with humanity through his willingness to give of himself on the cross, and what's happening here is what you see is an individual who is not treating their spouse properly. They're dealing treacherously with them and there's a whole three day seminar that we could talk about in relationship to that.

But let me explore it just a little bit more. You know in 1 Peter 3:7 – guys, pay attention – it says if you do not treat your wife properly – listen to this exact quotation from the word of God – "your prayers will be hindered." Sometimes our prayers hit the ceiling because of how we're treating or not treating our wives. Now, ladies, you're in the same boat because Ephesians 5 explores that concept in your life as well, and oftentimes you'll say, "I just don't understand why is it that God seems so silent? Why am I not seeing anything as far as communication is concerned?" Maybe you ought to check how you talk to your spouse or don't talk to your spouse, or the way you act when your spouse is not around in relationship to your spouse.

But there's a second layer there. It's kind of a subset of this. There's another relationship the Lord uses not as frequently and not as clearly as the husband to a wife, but he says in John 1:12 that if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have the privilege of being called the sons of God, that he is our Father, we are his children. Romans 8 expands on that and says because of that we're now joint heirs with him, we are his children. At the end of chapter 8 of Romans, and aren't we grateful for this, it says that nothing can separate us, there is no height, there is not depth, there is no principality, there is no power that can do so.

So not only is it our family as far as our marriages are concerned, but how about our children? Now I know there's not a lot of individuals in this service that are under 18 years of age, but if there were and if you know some, you might want to text them because that's how they communicate nowadays. Do you know what the Bible says in Ephesians 6:1, it's a wonderful verse if you're a parent. Are you ready? "Children, obey your parents." It's a beautiful verse because you don't have to say, "Ah, I don't know what God really meant by that." I mean, it's just right there, "Children, obey your parents." And as a young child in the home of your parents, if you are constantly in rebellion and contrary to them, don't expect a thriving relationship with the Lord.

But then you get to verse 3 and here's what it says, specifically to fathers but then it adds the entirety of the family, "Do not provoke your children." Now I don't want to expand too much on that but can I just be completely transparent with you? You realize that as a believer in Jesus Christ, if you are raising a child, a grandchild, or if you have influence on someone who is young in this world and you do not hold them accountable to their life and their behavior and you do not discipline them when they get outside of the will of God, you are provoking them. You see, oftentimes we read that verse and say, "Oh, just don't make them too mad." I've got news for you, some of you need to make your kids mad. Some of you need to get in your kid's face and say, "What are you doing? Have you lost your mind?" Can you tell I say this frequently? Because if you don't discipline them, what are you provoking them to? To continue their rebellion and to continue to be and act as the world.

Sometimes we cry out to God and say, "God, I don't get it. I'm praying and I'm crying, I just don't get anything in return." You know, maybe it's how we're treating our spouse or maybe it's how we're not parenting our children. The last book of the Old Testament is kind of fun, isn't it? Let's go to the last verse of chapter 2, the culture. Oo, this is about a

three part sermon series in and of itself. It says, "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" Do you know what the Israelites were saying? That to do contrary to the will and the word of God was actually the best course of action. Isaiah addressed this before they went into the captivity in chapter 5, he says, "Woe unto them," and by the way, anytime the Lord says, "Woe," you need to pay attention. He says, "Woe unto them who call evil good and good evil." Woe unto them who call black, white and white, black, up down and down up. In other words, the Lord is saying very clearly that if we join the voice of the culture and we champion and we celebrate those things which are completely contrary to his word, do not expect a reply in your prayer life. You may be popular with the world, you may receive the accolades from the world, you may receive a standing ovation at your company banquet, whatever it may be, but you're gonna get silence in your prayer closet. The Lord makes it clear that if you champion sin and if you champion that which is evil and you go contrary to his word, your prayer life is gonna be a one-way conversation. You're gonna be crying out and begging and you're gonna hear silence on the other end. You cannot champion sin and expect the one who gave his blood for sin to say, "That's okay, don't worry about it. That's no big deal." It is a big deal because he paid the price for that which you are celebrating that is completely contrary to him.

What we discover in Malachi, sometimes we have a heart issue, sometimes it involves the body of Christ, the other believers and our action towards or not towards them, sometimes it's within our own home, our family, our marriages, our children, sometimes it's the world out there that we walk through day after day. We get on our knees and we cry out to God and we hear the proverbial crickets of life, it causes us hopefully to kind of have a gut check and say, "Okay, God, are one of these issues in my life?" Be like King David and say, "Okay, God, search me. Show me if this is who I am, if this is who I've become. I didn't mean it to go this way but it has."

Oh, there's one last thing that the Lord deals with in chapter 3 of Malachi. It is the most famous of the book of Malachi. It's an issue that none of us like to hear about yet the Lord says it is such a problem in our lives. He talked about it over 2,500 times. That's the financial resources that he's entrusted us with. I want you to listen in verse 7 of chapter 3, it says,

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

In other words, they've said, "We don't have any problems." Verse 8,

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of

heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Now some of you say, "Well, we just went from preaching to meddling." No, we just went from chapter 2 to chapter 3 of the book of Malachi and it says that if you, A, withhold, or B, misappropriate the resources the Lord has given you, there may be silence from the other side. Now I want you to notice the article or the pronoun that I've used up to this point: your heart, the church, your family, the culture, his money. You know, a lot of times it's days like this where you say, "Well, you're gonna talk about tithing and 10%." I'm not gonna talk about the 10%, I'm gonna talk about the 100%. It's all his and I think we've got this problem, "Well, it's mine. I'm a self-made man." No, nobody here is self-made anything. You have the gifts God gave you, the brain God gave you, the relationships God gave you, and at the end of the day whatever your bank account says, it's his, it's not yours, you don't get to take it with you. The Bible says that you and I are stewards. Do you know what a steward is? Somebody who owns nothing but is in control of everything.

You see, when it comes to the financial resources of life, none of it's actually yours. You think it might be but it's not. He has entrusted you and, by the way as an aside, I've learned that the more we're willing to let go, the more he's willing to entrust us with. But I want to address this section. You know, I got pretty passionate about Tracy a while ago, and rightfully so because she's the woman of my youth, but I'm gonna give you some Tracy wisdom and advice. I know I'm the one up here speaking, I'm the one up here preaching, but on this issue my wife has something she communicates, it's just gold that you need to hold onto. You see, when we're dealing with the silence of God, you know, sometimes you go, "God, do I have a heart issue?" And you wonder because you know what Ephesians 2 says, that we walk by faith, right? And if you have a heart issue, it's not always written on the wall like it was in the book of Daniel and sometimes if you've got an issue with other believers, sometimes it can be a while you don't know, in your home you kinda know but you don't know, and at least as a man sometimes we don't know what we did and we apologize for it and we still don't know what we did, but nonetheless we did, and when it comes to the culture it's so easy to get wrapped up in all the noise, but here's one of the things that I love my wife's communication. She says, "You know, when it comes to this issue, it's pretty simple, all you've gotta do is move the decimal point one place. That's it. It's not by faith, it's actually by sight." And she says, "Here's the beauty of trusting God with your resources, here's the beauty of tithing," are you ready for this? When God goes silent, at least you can say, "Well, I know it's not that one." I mean, think about it for a moment. It's the only thing in Malachi that's tangible, it's visible, you move the decimal point. Done. Over.

Now I've gotta deal with the rest. Did you know of the five that are mentioned in Malachi, it's actually the easiest of them all? You say, "No, it's not the easiest of all. It is hard to let go." It may be hard to let go but it is the easiest to know if we're in step with God because on the other issues, sometimes, "Did I offend that person? How am I doing

in my family?" But on this issue, you move the decimal point, case closed. And maybe one of the five, maybe two of the five, maybe all of the five, here's the good news: you don't have to be like the Israelites in Malachi, you don't have to be those that go, "Oh, we don't have a problem," and then spend 430 years in silence, maybe today your prayer would be King David's prayer, "Search me, God. Show me what it is and I'll just come clean before you."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, today as we deal with certain issues in our life, struggles in our life, you know, maybe you're that individual who says, "You know, I struggle with some of those things here and there but at the end of the day, I don't even have a relationship with the Lord. You talk about hearing from the Lord, I'm not even his child, I'm not even a part of his bride." I've got great news for you, the Bible says in the book of Romans 10 whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved, and maybe you're that person today who just needs to call out to the Lord not only for the forgiveness of your sins but to enter into that relationship with him. If you're that person today, can I encourage you just to do so, just to cry out. Now this doesn't happen necessarily by crying out out loud verbally or even repeating the same words that I might say, but maybe your heart's cry, maybe your prayer to the Lord would be something like this, "God, today I just want to come clean. I just want to be honest. I just want to be transparent. I'm on the wrong road of life. God, I've been trusting in anybody and anything but you and today I believe, today I understand that I'm the problem and Jesus Christ is the only answer. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf and, God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf, and God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that, Lord, as we heard earlier, his, my sins held him there, that he took the payment for my sins on his cross and, God, I believe three days later when he rose from the dead, he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to the problems of life but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. In the best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, if you're that one today who had that conversation with the Lord, we want to celebrate with you. In just a moment, I'm gonna pray over us, we're gonna stand and sing together. We just want to invite you just to step out and step forward. We've got a team of individuals who want to pray with you, hear from you, and just encourage you. But maybe today there's no need to step out and step forward. Maybe you've been "walking with Jesus" a long time, it's just been for a period of time it's been awfully quiet on the other end. Maybe today the Lord showed you something through his word that's not right in your life and maybe today it's not about walking forward, it's about walking out in a moment with a new directive and a change of heart.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, thank you, God, not only from the challenge of Malachi but the relevance of today even when we're out of step with you, even when we are wayward from you as your children and as your bride, you desire

nothing more than for us to be within your fellowship and in your fold. Help us, O God, today to be wherever, to do whatever, to decide whatever it is to be in that right relationship with you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.