

## Lay it to Heart – Malachi 2:1-2

### I. Introduction:

- A. A part of our official church doctrinal statement reads: *“We believe that the Holy Bible... is verbally and plenary inspired...”*
1. To put it another way, *“We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Word of God.”*
  2. Most people understand the word *“verbal,”* but *“plenary”* is used sparingly in ordinary conversation.
  3. It means *“full”* or *“complete.”*
  4. I would hear that word more often in Canada when there would be a plenary session of Parliament.
  5. Our doctrinal statement is saying, we believe that **every word** has been given to us by the Holy Spirit; it is **verbally and plenary inspired by God.**
- B. Practically speaking, it means that God **MEANT** to say every word which He **did** say in His Word.
1. Remembering that the Lord gave us His Word through Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek-speaking people, every jot and tittle is important.
  2. Every *“thee,” “thou”* and *“the”* mean something, and each should be understood within the context.
  3. But of course 75% to 85% of all words are simple things, used to support the more important words, making a study of those little words rather tedious.
  4. On the other hand, sometimes we skip over words and statements which we shouldn't.
- C. And we have an example of that here in **verse 2.**
1. The Lord tells the priests of Israel that He had a special commandment for them.
  2. It involved giving proper glory to His name.
  3. *“If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you.”*
  4. Are *“not hearing”* and *“not laying it to heart”* the same thing?
    - a. Is this an example of Hebrew poetic parallelism? Saying the same thing twice but differently?
    - b. Or is the Holy Spirit making a special point to which we need to pay attention?
  5. Remember, we believe that **every word** has been given to us by the Holy Spirit;

### II. With that in mind, what does God mean when He says *“Lay this to heart?”*

- A. It would be nice if this was one Hebrew word, with a crisp, neat definition, but it is a three-word phrase.
1. So there are no lexicons to explain it.
  2. But there are a few scriptures which use the phrase or something similar.
  3. **Ecclesiastes 7:2** says: *“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.”*
    - a. **Solomon** is essentially saying, *“Death is common to all men, and living souls should pay attention.”*
    - b. *“It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment.”*
    - c. Here is a lesson every living person needs to learn before he gets to the point of death.
  4. **Isaiah 57:1**: *“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”*
  5. In **Isaiah 57:11** God says: *“Of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? Have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?”*
  6. **Jeremiah 12:11**: *“Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard... they have made it desolate... the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.”*
- B. With verses like these, can't we define *“laying something to heart,”* as saving something important; storing it in the safest of all places, our hearts?
1. In regard to God's law, **Deuteronomy 11:18** says: *“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart.”*
  2. *“To lay something to heart”* is to **store it up** and to **treasure** it; to **study** it; to **meditate** upon it.
  3. And this means: what we lay to heart is important.

### III. And, again, **WHERE** were these priests exhorted to store this commandment?

- A. God says, *“Listen to me, and lay my instruction up in the storehouse of your HEARTS.”*
1. The Bible has a great deal to say about the human heart.
  2. My concordances each have about four pages of references to the heart, in a variety of contexts.
  3. Of course, sometimes it refers to **the organ** which pumps blood throughout the body.
  4. And at times represents **the person himself** – the seat of the emotions and passions.
    - a. **Lucifer said “in his heart,” “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the starts of God.”**
    - b. **Israel** was exhorted **not** to say *“in their hearts”* that the heathen were too strong to be defeated by God.
  5. Hearts in the Bible are considered to the center of our moral, spiritual and intellectual being.
- B. And because of who we are, human **hearts** are often described as **very evil places**.
1. There are dozens of negative adjectives linked to the word heart.
  2. There is no need to take you to all of them.
  3. But you know scriptures which speak about **hard hearts; stony, perverse, wicked, godless** and **uncircumcised** hearts.
    - a. **“The HEART is deceitful and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).**
    - b. **Genesis 6:5:** *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his HEART was only evil continually.”*
- C. But in contrast, there are also hearts which have been **renewed** by the grace of God.
1. And saintly David pled with God saying, *“Create in me a clean heart.”*
  2. There are **fixed** hearts, not only in the sense of repaired & renewed hearts, but settled & pointed hearts.
  3. *“Hey, you priests, fix your attention on this my commandment; lay it to heart.”*

### IV. But **HOW** were they to do that? It was expected that they already knew how.

- A. *“If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you.”*
1. The first step to taking something to heart is to **take it in somehow**.
  2. I suppose there are two ways in which this can be done, one of which is mentioned here.
  3. We must **either hear** what God has for us to treasure, **or we could read** it in His verbally plenary inspired Word.
- B. I just finished rereading my friend, Forrest Keener’s, book *“Grace not Calvinism.”*
1. That man had a way with words which I’ve never heard in anyone else.
    - a. For example, who else but Forrest Keener would ever say that someone *“fell out of a well?”*
    - b. He might have said at this point in our message that no one is going to learn what God has for him through osmosis *“while sleeping with the Bible on his head.”*
  2. God’s message for us will enter our hearts either through our eyes or our ears.
  3. Only as an illustration, a metaphor, can a person eat the Bible and receive God’s message.
  4. The blind person may read the Bible with his fingers, but that is only as a substitute for his sight.
  5. Carrying the New Testament around in your breast pocket will not bring God’s Word into your heart.
  6. *“That’s as logical as a screen door on a submarine,”* to quote one of Keener’s favorite statements.
- C. God told those priests to listen to the commandment and then to lay it to heart.
1. Where were they going to hear it? Not by watching their television screens.
  2. They weren’t going to hear God’s word by going to the movies, listening to Fox News or watching Monday Night Football.
  3. Rather, they were going to have to listen to Malachi and others who were true servants of God.
  4. They were going to have to *“go to church,”* or to pick up their Bibles and read.

- D. But obviously it was not enough to simply attend a religious service or to read the recommended number of scriptures to meet their daily quota.
1. What the Lord was demanding was the **deliberate implantation** of the message to, or within, their hearts.
  2. And once again, this isn't going to happen through some sort of extended osmosis.
  3. Just by listening this sermon isn't going to be laid upon your heart, any more than bringing a lost friend to hear a gospel sermon is going save his soul.
  4. There must be a **deliberate appropriation, application** and **appreciation** or there will be nothing more than passing of the message through one ear and out the other.
  5. God wanted these men to hear and then implant and impliment His commandment.

#### V. And WHY was this important?

- A. The easy answer is: ***"IF ye will not hear, and IF ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings."***
1. One of the rules of life, a rule governing nearly everything, involves cause and effect.
  2. ***"The soul that sinneth it shall die."***
  3. ***"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart... in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."***
  4. When one thing is done, another will naturally result.
  5. God told the priests, ***"If you don't lay my commandment to heart, I will send a curse upon you."***
- B. But there is perhaps a more important answer, taking us back to the actual condition of our hearts
1. The **sort** of person a man is **at his heart**, that is the prson **he truly really is**.
  2. In **Proverbs 23** Solomon warns us of politicians, and others, who want to use us for their own purposes.
    - a. He says, stay away from the man with the ***"evil eye;"*** the man with the sinful purpose.
    - b. ***"For as he thinketh in his heart so is he."***
    - c. Look not on his countenance or outward appearance. Dig more deeply.
  3. If that ruler was more like King David, with a heart surrendered to the will of the Lord, then he'd be someone worthy of your time and service.
  4. And similarly, **you would** be a better person, too, if you heard and laid to heart the things of God.
  5. Because it is what you are at heart that you truly are.
- C. The Lord Jesus had been rebuked by the Pharisees because He permitted His disciples to eat with hands that hadn't been ceremonially cleansed.
1. He responded by addressing the crowd, saying something which sheds light on our subject.
  2. In **Mark 7:14** we read: ***"And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:"***
    - a. ***There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.***
    - b. ***And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.***
    - c. ***And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;***
    - d. ***Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.***
    - e. ***For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:***
    - f. ***All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."***
  3. If we are filling our hearts with sinful things – laying sin up in our hearts – those hearts will become warped.
  4. And eventually what we have put into them come out, defiling our outward lives.

- D. Another lesson of the Lord Jesus which highlights our subject, is found in **Luke 12**.
1. *“Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things (food, clothing, glory) shall be added unto you.*
    - a. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*
    - b. *Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.”*
    - c. *Empty yourself of those things which are not worthy of the Kingdom of God*
    - d. *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*
  2. With Biblical justification we can turn that last statement around – the things you truly treasure will be stored within; in your hearts.
  3. So make sure you love the right things and lay up things which bring glory to the name of God.
- E. In **Proverbs 4:23**, Solomon says, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”*
1. One of the requirements of keeping our hearts right, is its care and maintenance.
  2. We need to feed our hearts with the good Word of God; we need to memorize it and meditate on it.
  3. The word which the Lord uses here is *“commandment.”*
  4. We need to hear and lay to heart the best things: yea, even the law of God.
  5. We also need to draw nigh to the Author of those beneficial things.
  6. *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength.”*

## VI. Conclusion:

- A. Immediately after telling us *“the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?...”*
1. God says, *“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways.”*
  2. David said in **Psalms 139**: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*
- B. Not only will people be judged for what they do with their lives, they will be judged for what they have laid up in their hearts.
1. Not only will these priests be judged for sacrificing faulty animals on God's altar, but they will be judged for their **reasons** for doing so.
    - a. Perhaps they were cowards and wouldn't correct the people.
    - b. Perhaps they were greedy and wanted the meat off the sacrificial animals.
    - c. God knew that they despised His altar. They despised His service. They despised God Himself.
  2. Not only would they be judged for their deeds and their intentions, bringing God's curse upon their blessings,
  3. But they would be judged for simply not laying to heart those things which they should have treasured.
- C. This example gives you and me all the more reason to hear and to lay to heart those things which we should use to give glory to God's name.