

## Praying for Grace – Malachi 1:8-9

### I. Introduction:

- A. So Satan has once again come to you; this time through the portal of your conscience.
1. For the umpteenth time you have committed **that** particular sin – that special weakness of yours.
  2. What was it? **Pride** over something you've done? **Coveting** something your neighbor has?
    - a. Maybe it was seeing someone and remembering what she had done to you, and you **resented** her.
    - b. Was it a **lack of forgiveness**? Was it another fit of **unjustified anger**? Some sort of **lust**?
    - c. Maybe it was a **more outward** reaching sin: a **lie**, a **small theft**, something **mean**.
  3. Whatever it was, your conscience has been stirred and some ambassador of Satan has taken advantage.
- B. *“Look what you have done. Once again you have brought shame to yourself and to your Saviour.*
1. *How can you go to prayer now? How can you, with that filthy heart, call on the righteous name of God?*
  2. *Not only are your shoes unfit for God's holy temple, but you can't take off your shoes because your feet are unfit as well.”*
  3. *“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”*
  4. Has an evil spirit ever taken the righteous conviction of the Holy Spirit and turned it against you in an attempt to keep you from praying or serving God in other ways?
  5. That was the thought that came to me as I was reading **verse 9** the other day.
- C. I mentioned in our last lesson that the experts are divided about the **attitude** or **intent** of the words: *“Now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us.”*
1. This is something Malachi was saying; he was not quoting the Lord.
  2. Nevertheless, it was uttered under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  3. But we must remember that the Spirit's inspiration never robs the human instrument of his personality, and it doesn't lift the revelation out from under the circumstances.
  4. Malachi, as a member of that Jewish society, was living under the judgment of Elohim.
  5. Israel was not the country it was during the days of David and Solomon, and even the most righteous people were living under the stress of divine chastisement.
  6. That judgment was due in a great part to the wickedness of the priests. *“This has been by your means.”*
  7. Was it **with irony** that the prophet telling those sinful priests to pray for God's grace? Or was he **sincere**?
  8. I will say a bit more about this in a moment, but now, for the sake of a lesson or two, let's assume this is a sincere exhortation: *“Pray for grace.”*
- D. This brings us back to you and me.
1. We have sinned once again and brought the chastisement of God down upon our little society.
  2. While the minions of Satan tell us that the righteous God will no longer listen to us, the prophet of God is exhorting us to pray for grace.

### II. Does God hear sinners when they pray?

- A. In **John 9** the Lord Jesus healed a man who had been born blind.
1. He sent the man to the Pool of Siloam where he washed his eyes and came away seeing.
  2. He was immediately taken to a group of Pharisees who started an interrogation.
  3. One of the things they said was, the man who healed you, *“is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?”*
  4. The former blind man replied with one of the greatest of all comebacks: *“Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind now I see.”*
  5. When the Pharisees pressed the issue, the man defended Christ by saying, *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners,”* therefore I conclude that the One who healed me is not a sinner.

B. *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners.”*

1. Is that an accurate theological statement, or was it only an accurate recording of a neophyte’s opinion?
2. There are other scriptures to help us decide.
3. The **Psalmist** of **66:18** says, *“If I regard iniquity in mine heart **the lord will NOT hear me.**”*
4. **Solomon** says, *“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be **abomination.**”*
5. **God** says in **Isaiah 1:15** – *“When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, **I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.**”*
6. There are other verses like **Micah 3:4**: *“Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but **he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.**”*

C. Getting back to you and me: *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners.”*

1. Let’s say, this morning I faced another temptation to that particular sinful weakness I have, and I gave in.
2. If this was only the tenth time I have committed this transgression, I’d tell myself I think God can live with it.
3. But I am addicted to this sin, and I have fallen before its pressure a hundred times or more.
4. How can I expect God to listen to my prayers when once again I have brought shame to my Saviour?

### III. Again I ask, does God hear sinners when they pray?

A. There are two obvious things to keep in mind when you ask that question.

1. First, **God is omniscient**, so he is going to hear everything.
2. He’s going to see what desires lay at the bottom of your heart, whether they are spoken or not.
3. I know that is a simplistic statement, but it has some bearing on the point.
4. **God cannot NOT** hear the prayers of even the most wicked person.
5. But that is not the meaning of those scriptures I quoted, and it probably wasn’t the meaning of the former blind man.
6. The fact is, **God can ignore or refuse to respond** to someone’s prayer; He can turn a deaf ear to them.
7. *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners,”* is not a blanket statement, covering every situation and every sinner.
8. It suggests that God has the sovereign right to refuse to grant someone’s prayer request based upon the spiritual condition of the person.

B. I think **Jonah** probably applies to this situation.

1. Jonah was a genuine servant of God with an important commission to evangelize the lost in Ninevah.
2. But the man had a particular sin which was crippling his ministry – he hated Assyrians.
3. So he ended up under God’s righteous chastisement, sinking into the Mediterranean Sea and into the mouth of one of its largest creatures.
4. *“**THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly,***
  - a. *And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he **HEARD me;***
  - b. *And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.”*
5. God not only heard the prayer of sinful Jonah, but He blessed the man’s request because it was His will.
6. So God can hear the prayers of sinners and when it pleases Him, He answers with a positive blessing.

C. The second obvious truth which relates to our question is: **we are ALL sinners.**

1. There is not a non-sinner among us, and yet here we are for a prayer meeting.
2. Let’s say, there are no addictions in your life, other than coffee & chocolate; there are no sinful addictions.
3. But you do get **jealous** now and then, and there are their moments when you fill with **self-righteous pride.**
4. *“If we say that we have not sinned (recently), we make (God) a liar, and his word is not in us.”*
5. With the reality of our sinfulness, it might be argued, especially by the nearest Pharisee, that God should not be interested in the prayers of any of us.
6. And yet the Bible is filled with exhortations for us to pray.
7. At this point, I could give you so many commands to pray that we wouldn’t have time this evening to pray.

- D. In lieu of all the others, consider just two: **Luke 18:1** and **Ephesians 6:18**.
1. Paul said, *“Praying **ALWAYS** with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”*
  2. And Christ Jesus *“spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought **ALWAY** to pray and not to faint.”*
  3. The Lord Jesus, the mediator between us and God the Father, tells us to pray **always**, which I would assume includes those days when we have shamefully sinned again.
  4. He says, *“men ought **always** to pray and **not to faint**.”*
  5. Don't let your demon-directed conscience cause you to faint; keep praying.

#### IV. Now let's return to Malachi 1.

- A. *“I pray (you wretched priests), beseech God that he will be gracious unto us.”*
1. The thing which first caught my attention was idea of **praying for grace**.
  2. I'll come back to that in just a minute, but first just a couple background points.
- B. The words *“I pray you”* and *“beseech God”* are different in their original language.
1. *“I pray you”* is used only nine times in the Bible and usually in a secular sort of way, meaning something like, *“would you please.”*
  2. *“I encourage you to beseech God that he will be gracious unto us.”*
  3. *“Beseech”* is a far more common Hebrew word, but its meaning is far more complex.
  4. It is translated *“beseech”* and *“pray”* or *“intreat”* **twelve times**, but then **forty times** or more it speaks of someone who is *“sick,” “wounded”* or *“grieved”* calling out for help.
  5. What I draw from that **removes the idea of irony** from this exhortation.
  6. Malachi seems to be saying, *“pray to God like a sick and dying man.”*
  7. An illustration of this might be seen when Christ left the house of the ruler whose daughter He healed and, *“two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us” (Matthew 9:27).*
- C. That is probably the meaning of Malachi.
1. But earlier, with the fact of the priests' wickedness, and with the idea of irony planted in my head, what first caught my attention in reading this verse was the **prayer for God's grace**.
  2. *“I pray you, beseech God that he will be **GRACIOUS** unto us.”*
- D. What is the common **definition of divine grace**? Isn't it God's unmerited favor?
1. The Lord's grace comes directly out of the divine heart; it has no other source.
  2. Human beings may display a form of grace from time to time, but that is not our subject.
  3. God's grace is **totally unprovoked**; we **cannot entice, induce, impel** or **persuade** God to be gracious.
  4. So isn't it against proper theology to beseech God for grace?
- E. While it may lack not be theologically logical, to pray for grace is clearly Biblical.
1. First, it could be argued theologically that sinners shouldn't pray at all.
  2. But again, the only kind of people in this world are sinners.
  3. If only holy people can pray then that would exclude everyone but Pharisees, and I think there is a problem with that idea.
- F. Second, is it not true that no matter what our request, we are **always asking for grace**?
1. We cannot ask God for anything that we actually deserve.
  2. When we pray for something miraculous, like the healing of a terminally ill friend, obviously, we are praying for God's grace.
  3. The Lord may or may not bless with that healing; He is under no obligation because neither of us are worthy. Grace is God's unmerited favor.
  4. The Lord doesn't have to protect us from COVID, and if we ask Him for that protection we are beseeching Him for grace.
  5. Everything we have from the Lord is undeserved favor.

- G. So there is nothing wrong with asking Him for things, from the miraculous to the mundane.
1. But remember, our prayers should always come with a recognition that we have no right to call upon Him in ourselves; we are wretched priests.
  2. We must come to the Lord, beseeching Him like people dying or grieving.
  3. We must come in the Name of our Lord and Saviour, not in our own name.
  4. We don't deserve to stand before God's throne of Grace, let alone open our mouths.

## V. Conclusion

- A. Let me take you back to **Psalm 66:18** which I quoted earlier.
1. Whoever this Psalmist was, he said, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*
  2. But then, directed by the Holy Spirit, he added, *"but verily God **HATH heard me**; he **HATH attended to the voice of my prayer**. **Blessed be God, which hath NOT turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.**"*
- B. So you've sinned against the Lord once again, and the Devil is trying to keep you from prayer, from service, from even showing up in the House of God amid all those other super-godly people.
1. Forget about making people-comparisons and listen to the exhortation of God.
  2. *"Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face **CONTINUALLY**."*
  3. Remember, *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; **then WILL I HEAR from heaven...**"*