

**Major Messages from the Minor Prophets**  
**The prophecy of Malachi**  
**Confronting the Imperceptible Abrasion of Faith #2**

**Intro:** Let's continue the conversation from our morning's lesson. All of us may experience at times what we're calling the "imperceptible abrasion of faith". The book of Malachi gives us valuable insight into the warning signs of such a condition; but it also offers helpful insight into how to prevent it.

The key to preventing this condition is found in the quote I shared with you this morning. Baldwin refers to "the imperceptible abrasion of faith that ends in cynicism because it has lost touch with the living God". The truth is that our faith wanes to the extent that we lose touch with the living God.

In the paragraphs that identify the manifestations of a weakened faith we also find the keys to a vibrant faith that stays in touch with the living God. Tonight we ask a different question: **What can we do to avoid what happened to Israel?**

**Constantly remember God's call and choice of us as His people**

*When Israel questioned God's love, He simply asks them to recall their own national history as contrasted with their kindred nation, Edom.*

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation, and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." And your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!" (Malachi 1:2-6)

What God wanted the Israelites to see is that they had truly been loved by God; they had just lost touch with the truth of His redemption.

They had forgotten what a difference His love had made and would make in the future, if they would only believe His words.

*So in a similar way we must never forget His love for us that was manifest in His calling and choosing us.*

To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(Revelation 1:5-6)

**Daily reflect upon the superior greatness of God over everyone and everything**

*What God made clear to the Israelites was that they had lost touch with His greatness as their heavenly Father. Thus their worship become second rate and bored.*

***“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, “How have we despised Thy name?” (Malachi 1:6)***

***If we are to avoid this condition we must sincerely reflect upon the greatness of God. Maybe like Israel we don’t get a “miracle a day”, but there are still plenty of reasons to exalt Him in our hearts!***

God made this amazing world we live in and He made us to live in it!

He gave us guidance on how to live in it!

When we turned away from that guidance, He lovingly sent His son to redeem us!

When your faith in the greatness of God think of a song like “How great thou art”.

### **Align ourselves constantly with God’s spiritual purpose of holiness**

***The Israelite men’s practice of divorce was disturbing on two levels.***

First what was there about the ungodly women that so attracted them?

Is this not a clue here that their wild hearts were open to women that would be less modest and less moral than the holy women of Israel?

Second it reflected a failure to appreciate the real goals of God’s requirement of marrying in the faith. They lost sight of the goal of God’s law to serve as a means to holiness.

It is interesting to notice the statement that immediately follows God’s prohibition to inter-marrying with the heathen peoples:

*“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6)*

***And we must realize at all times that the goal of all our relationships should be to encourage holiness.***

*...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. (Ephesians 1:4)*

We must, at all times, think about what our relationships are doing to the spiritual purposes God has in mind for us.

### **Reaffirm the justice of God in rewarding righteousness and punishing sin.**

***When Israel spoke about God’s judgments they were critical. They thought that God was not fair and that there was no advantage to serving the Lord. God’s response to that attitude was powerful and decisive.***

*“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the Lord of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.” (Malachi 4:1)*

***In a similar way the NT expresses both the reward of faithfulness and the punishment of the evil doer.***

**Realize that God deserves gratitude and has power to bless those who show gratitude by giving to His work**

**God's answer to Israel's lack of generosity in giving was a challenge:**  
*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the Lord of hosts. And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:10-12)*

**Although God does not demand tithing in our age, the truth of Malachi is timeless. In fact Paul evoked this truth to encourage the Corinthians to generosity toward the needy.**

*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed...Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. (2 Corinthians 9:8,10-11)*

**God has not lost the power to bless those who appreciate His blessing enough to want others to experience them. He will give them what is needed to be a channel of blessing to others.**

**Conclusion: God's words to Israel through Malachi convey the timeless truths about a God that says, "I do not change" (Mal. 3:6). If we will stay in touch with God allowing these timeless truths to affect our lives, then we will have protected ourselves against the "imperceptible abrasion of faith".**