

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MALACHI 1

A man was backing his car out of a crowded parking lot when he accidentally hit the car behind him. He got out, surveyed the damage, looked around, and not seeing the owner of the car he took out a piece of paper, scribbled on it, and stuck it to the windshield.

The people in the parking lot who witnessed the accident admired the man for his apparent honesty and integrity. When the owner of the car discovered the damage, he looked for a note. He saw the piece of paper on the windshield and opened it up. It read...

"I have just smashed your car. The people who saw the accident are watching me. They think I'm writing down my name and address. I'm not. Good luck."

The man who appeared "noble" had led the onlookers to believe he was something he was not! His actions said one thing, but his attitude said another!

A fitting title for the first chapter of Malachi could be, "[The Anatomy Of A Hypocrite](#)." In this chapter Malachi takes a spiritual scalpel and dissects the heart of a hypocrite. The Scripture is sharper than any double-edged sword. It's able to cut between soul and spirit.

The truth of God exposes the lies of men.

The sacred Scriptures differentiate *the factual from the phony - the genuine from the gyp - the bonafide from the bogus - the candid from the counterfeit.*

Remember, Jesus saved His harshest words - His sternest warnings - not for the blatant sinner, but for the bogus saint. The Pharisees were the hypocrites of His day - outwardly righteous, but inwardly rotten.

And Jesus didn't mince words. He called them blind guides - *leading folks on a path to God - a path they'd never traveled themselves*. He called them unflattering names like "snakes" and "sons of hell." The plight of the hypocrite is hidden only from his own eyes.

When archeologist, Howard Carter, discovered King Tut's ancient Tomb he found the body of the former pharaoh in an elaborately decorated casket.

When the first casket was opened he found another. When the second casket was opened he found a third. And when the third casket was opened he found a fourth. All four caskets were made of solid gold.

When he finally found the corpse it was wrapped in a gold cloth and wore a gold mask, but when the shroud was removed the body was leathery and shriveled.

And this illustrates the life of a hypocrite - gold-plated carnality. *Clean on the outside - corrupt on the inside.*

It's been said, "A hypocrite is like a straight pin, pointed in one direction, but headed in another."

Like the Greek word from which it comes, the hypocrite is an actor. A hypocrite was a stage performer who played a role - hidden behind a mask.

A hypocrite plays a part instead of being themselves.

And Malachi delivers the same strong message as did Jesus. In a nutshell he says end the masquerade! If you're living a *sham* this Hebrew prophet gives you a reason to *squirm*. Malachi shoots straight for the heart.

Far be it from me to call anyone a hypocrite, but I think if we were all honest with ourselves, we'd have to admit that there's *a little bit of baloney* in each of us!

There are times where I'm not what others think I am... or what I know I should be... or even what I want to be... Yet I give off airs of being something I'm not.

It sounds disgusting doesn't it? Well, it is...

Tonight, we need to let Malachi put the knife to our life. Let him dissect the hypocrisy in us. God knows we'll never be perfect, but at least we can be honest.

Before we jump into the chapter, let me outline it for you so you'll know where we're headed. The entire book of Malachi is structured around a number of verbal exchanges between God and His people.

Three issues are addressed in chapter 1... In verse 2 the people have **denied God's love** - in verse 6 they've **despised God's name** - and in verse 7 they've **defiled God's altar**. And they defiled His altar in three ways: **in what they brought to the altar** (verse 8), **in why they came to the altar** (verse 10), and **in the way they behaved at the altar** (verse 13)... *Let's get into it...*

Malachi begins, **"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi."** The Jews that returned from exile in

Babylon didn't do so all at once. Three waves of immigration took place over a period of ninety years.

The first Jews returned in 536 BC on the heels of Babylon's fall to the Persians. They were led by a man named Zerubbabel. Along with the help of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel brought certain Jewish patriots home, and together rebuilt the Temple.

The second homecoming of Jews didn't occur for another 78 years, in 458 BC. A small contingency of Jews, about 1700, returned under the leadership of a priest named Ezra. Ezra was instrumental in reestablishing the authority of the Scriptures and the role of the priesthood in the new, post-exile Judah.

Zerubbabel worked on the Temple... Ezra built up the people... and Nehemiah reconstructed the walls...

The third wave of immigration took place in 444 BC. A Persian king, Artaxerxes Longimonus, commissioned a Jew named "Nehemiah" to return to Jerusalem to rebuild and refortify the city's walls. With a sword in one hand and a shovel in the other, both building and battling, Nehemiah was successful in his mission.

Twelve years after Nehemiah left Persia he returned to Artaxerxes to report on the progress of the work.

Yet you've heard the old saying, "While the cat's away the mice will play." While Nehemiah was *in Persian* the Jews began to *act like Persians*. They ignored God, neglected the Temple, and forgot the Scriptures. These people had come back to God's land, but they had turned their backs on God Himself.

Nehemiah eventually came back and served a second term as governor, but during his year-long absence God raised up a prophet. *“Malachi”* ministered in Nehemiah's absence and paved the way for the governor's return and the reforms he would initiate to deal with the people's sin. Malachi told these Jews...

Verse 2, *“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’* Here is God's first beef with the His people. They **deny His love**. God says He loves them, but they question that love.

Understand, *our backsliding* always causes a *blindness*. **Sin is the smog of the soul**. It causes a haze. Truths that were once crystal clear to us now become barely recognizable, especially God's love!

In order for the hypocrite to harden his heart he first has to deny God's love. The love of God is so enchanting, and compelling, and engrossing, and disarming, and captivating - *it feels so good, heals so deep, lasts so long, grows so sweet* - it's impossible to harden your heart in the face of God's love.

Listen to this poem, and take note of the hold the love of God can have on a person's heart... *“Oh the bitter pain and sorrow that a time could ever be when I proudly said to Jesus all of self and none of Thee. Yet He found me; I beheld Him bleeding on the accursed tree - and my wistful heart said faintly, some of self and some of Thee. Day by day His tender mercy, healing, helping, full and free, brought me lower, while I whispered, less of self and more of Thee. Higher than the highest heavens, deeper than the deepest sea, Lord, Thy love at last has conquered, none of self and all of Thee!”*

God's great love draws us in. The more we're aware, the more that love endears us to God.

This is why the first step toward hypocrisy is to harden your heart to the love of God. It's easier to keep God at arms length if you dismiss His love for you.

The religious hypocrite replaces the love of God with rituals, and rules, and remembrances, and recitals of doctrine. He or she has substituted *the things of God* for *the touch of God*. They create a loveless religion.

Rituals often remind us the majesty of God. Rules can communicate the righteousness of God. Recollections shine a light on the faithfulness of God. And the reciting of doctrine reveals the wisdom of God. But to know *the love of God* it takes *the touch of God*.

This is why the hypocrite keeps religious things between him and God. He keeps God at a distance.

Yet God is undaunted by the rejection of His people!

In these verses He proves His love for Israel by pointing to both **the roots** and **the fruits** of His love.

God takes them back to the founding of their nation, and their forefather, Jacob... **“Was not Esau Jacob's brother?” says the Lord. “Yet Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.”**

The Jews have questioned God's love, but God reminds them that He loved them from the beginning.

Understand, the original language. The text isn't saying that God literally hated Jacob's brother, Esau.

The Hebrew expressions aren't always meant to be taken literally. It employs hyperbole and exaggeration.

A good example is Luke 14:26. Jesus says, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Obviously, Jesus doesn't mean to be taken literally.

To hate our family members would contradict other Scriptures that teach just the opposite. Jesus is using a figure of speech to say that even though we love our family, our love for Him should be so very much more.

God certainly loved Esau, but He loved Jacob in a different way - a more intense way. He chose Jacob to be the recipient of a love that entitled him to special status and privilege. God loved Esau, but His love for Jacob made His love for his brother look like hate.

So the question arises, "Why did God choose Jacob over Esau?" Only God knows for sure. Who knows the mysteries of God's sovereign, amazing grace?

A thoughtful man once approached Bible teacher Griffith Thomas with a problem. He was perplexed by this passage, "The Bible says God hates Esau, what gives?" Thomas responded, "I've got a problem harder than that. The Bible also says 'God loves Jacob'."

Its not hard to see why God would hate a sinner like Esau, but why in the world would God love a sinner like Jacob, or any other sinner for that matter?

Jacob didn't deserve God's love. He was a thief, and a liar, and a manipulator - yet God chose him anyway.

And God has also chosen you! If you're in Christ, you're chosen by God, not because you deserve it, but because He loves you! He's given you special status, and spiritual privilege, and tons and tons of blessing.

He's taken the initiative, with no reason from you.

The only thing that hinders us from receiving God's blessing is if we ignore His love. That's why we need to embrace God's grace. Stop questioning His love!

Verse 4, “Even though Edom has said, “We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places,” thus says the Lord of hosts: “They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, ‘the Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.’” The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. They became perpetual enemies of Jacob. Over the centuries God judged the Edomites for their idolatry, and their hostility toward the Jews.

Edom was conquered in the 6th century BC by the Babylonians - again in the 5th century by the Nabatean Arabs - in the 4th century by Greece - and in the 2nd century by the Maccabean Jews. By the third century AD, according to the

early church father, Origen, the Edomites had ceased to exist as a distinct people.

We'll learn more about God's judgment on the Edomites when we study the little book of Obadiah.

Here, Malachi's point is that God judged the Edomites without giving them a second chance to rise up and rebuild their nation. Edom said, *"we will return,"* but God refused to bless their efforts.

The Jews were upset God had judged them. They had moaned, *"Oh, God doesn't love us,"* but that wasn't the case at all. **His love was demonstrated in the opportunity He gave them to start over.**

We often say, our God is not only the God of the second chance, but the third chance, and the fourth chance, and the fifth chance, and on and on. Jesus told us to forgive our brother, not just seven times, but *"seven times seventy"* - or in essence, an infinite number of times. And if that's what He asks of us we can safely assume Jesus practices what He preaches.

Yet don't take God's love for granted. Recognize the mercy He's shown. Don't ignore the grace we receive.

God loved His people, and He'd gone out of His way to show the Jews His compassion. Now it breaks His heart to hear His people question and doubt His love.

Nothing is more frustrating than to serve and help someone only to have them be skeptical of your love.

You give, and give, and give to your child; then one day you say *"no"* for their own sake, and they start whining, **"You don't**

really love me!” This is what God's kids, the Jews were saying about Him! It was frustrating. Their *bellyaching* had given God a *belly full*.

Verse 6, **“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts to you priests who despise My name.”**

Here's God's second beef with the Jews. The priests **“despise His name.”** They ridicule God's name.

Remember, it was God's name that revealed His nature. In Exodus 34, on top of Mount Sinai, **“The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with Him there, and... the LORD passed before him and proclaimed the name of the LORD.”** And how did He proclaim His name? We're told it was by giving a list of attributes, **“The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.”**

In Numbers 6:27 after giving to Moses the priestly blessing, the Lord said, **“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel.”** The people were to wear God's name. As a bride takes the name of her husband as an example of her unity and oneness with him, so the people of Israel were to share God's name, both in title and in substance. Yet this was the problem. **The Jews laid claim to God's name, but ignored God's nature.**

Once, on the news show, 60 Minutes, a story was reported on of a pathological liar who pretended to be the son of movie star, Sidney Portier. This man put on quite a charade. For months, he fooled almost everyone in Hollywood. Under his

alias he hobnobbed with the jet set before he was finally exposed.

This is a hypocrite! He'll *profess* what he doesn't *posses*. He claims a name, but his claims are bogus.

AW Tozer once wrote "*We settle for words because deeds are too costly.*" This was a microcosm of the Jews. They liked their rank, but not the relationship.

This is why God says to them, "*You claim you're my son, but why don't honor me as a Father? You claim you're my servant, but why don't you treat me like a Master?*" They weren't living up to the claims they were making. There was no *substance* to their *statements*.

I once read of a private who knocked on the office door of a newly appointed Army Colonel. This Colonel wanted to appear busy and important, so he picked up the phone and he faked a conversation, "*Yes Sir, General, I'll call the President this afternoon. No sir, I won't forget.*" He put the phone down and turned to the private, "*Now how can I help you?*" The private replied sheepishly, "*Sir, I'm here to connect your phone.*"

The Colonel was pretending to have relationship he really didn't have. *Are you doing the same with God?*

Jesus told us some would claim a relationship they didn't possess. In Luke 6:46 He says, "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things that I say?*"

In reality you despise God's name when you resist His Lordship. "*Lord*" is a title. And a title implies a relationship. If God is my Lord; then I am His servant.

All too often, we settle for a portion of God and allow Him only a portion of us. Again, Tozer wrote, "It's not that people don't want God, it's that people have things they want more than God! We are determined to have what we want most." *What is it that we want most?*

Here's a thought provoking poem, "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please."

Have you settled for \$3 worth of God, just enough to carry around in a paper sack, but not enough to transform your life? God doesn't come in minute quantities. He comes in bulk only. If you want the living God, you've got to want all there is of God.

It's an amazing fact of human anatomy, but a person can't smell his or hers own BO. That's right. You could be suffering right now from a horrible case of body odor or bad breath, and you'd be the last one to know.

Likewise, our hearts can stink, and we're immune to the smell. We should all ask God to crack the door of our hearts, and let us get a whiff of what's inside.

The Jews in Malachi's day had despised God's name, because they had no desired for His nature.

At the end of verse 6, the priests ask God, “Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’”

And in verse 7 He answers them, “You offer defiled food on My altar, but say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘the table of the Lord is contemptible.’” Here's God's third beef. They **defiled His altar**.

In essence, they watered-down their worship. They stopped taking their service to God seriously. They made a mockery of ministry. These priests were going through the motions without any of the devotion.

Religion had become rote and routine. The priests called it “*religion*,” but the word “*rut*” was a better term.

It’s been said of our society, “*We worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship.*”

Seldom are we really serious about what we believe.

Too much of what Christians do today is a game that's played to make them feel good, but it actually accomplishes little. It surely falls short of pleasing the heart of God. *Are we content to do what’s convenient for us, or are we willing to do what satisfies God?*

The Jews, especially their priests, were defiling God's altar in three ways: **in what they brought... in why they came... and in how they behaved...**

Verse 8, “And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” says the Lord of hosts. But now entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us.

While this is being done by your hands, will He accept you favorably?" says the Lord of hosts." The Jews were defiling God's altar by bringing Him their leftovers - *what cost them nothing*.

In Deuteronomy 15:21 the Jews were told, "But if there is any defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD..." When a sacrifice was offered it was to be the best of the herd. Yet the Jews of Malachi's day were bringing *lame lambs, crippled cows, goats with gout!* They were bringing to God their throw-aways. These beasts were going to die soon anyway - they were of no use now - so why not give them to God... This was inexcusable.

In verse 13 we're told that some of the people had become so calloused they even tried offering stolen sacrifices to God. They were treating *the Father as if He were a fence*. They were using the Temple worship to launder stolen goods. This was an abomination.

In verse 8 Malachi reprimands them. They wouldn't offer a hated Persian governor what they were offering Almighty God!... *And what about us?* If we were called to a meeting with Nathan Deal would we give it more consideration than we've given God this past week?

Here's the question, "Have you been giving God your leftovers? Your sick, and lame, and stolen, and blind?"

Malachi mentions the **sick sacrifice**. This is what can't be saved. You can't take it back or fix it - you're going to throw it

away anyway, so why not give it to God? Donate it to the church. Get a tax deduction.

The **lame sacrifice** is that which will never be strong again. You're going to have to replace with something better, so why make room and dump this one on God?

You can't show-off the **stolen sacrifice**, or you'll be discovered. This is something that'll never enhance your image, or fame, so why not just give it to God.

And the **blind sacrifice** will always be a hassle, a bother. It'll require extra effort. Again, dump it to God.

It's a sin to give to God what can't be fixed or will never be strong, or really doesn't belong to you, or is a hassle to you in the first place, *and call it a sacrifice.*

Hey, you can give your hand-me-downs to the Salvation Army, or the Goodwill, or even the Church - that's fine. But just don't call it a sacrifice to God.

God is never pleased with our table scraps.

Here's where we need to take inventory. *Are we giving God crumbs?* After we've poured over the paper, or relaxed with the novel, or wasted the evening channel surfing the TV, do you then pick up your Bible when we're half shot and try to concentrate? No wonder you don't get anything out of our Bible study.

When it comes to our involvement at church are we giving God our crumbs? If nothings on TV, or if we've got nowhere else to go, or if it's not raining we'll come.

When it comes to your mind do you give God the crumbs? The last meager tidbits of your concentration.

When it comes to your talents do you give Him the crumbs? After you've exhausted your creative energies trying to make buck, then you give God what's leftover.

When it comes to money do you give God the crumbs? You'll think nothing of dropping \$100 on two tickets to a concert or a game, but you slip God a \$5 bill on Sundays. Don't call it *tithing* - it's more like *tipping!* And it's not even a respectable tip at that!

After eating fish and lamb in Israel for the last two weeks, Monday night I went to Longhorns for a steak. Afterwards I got the bill, and it listed three suggested tips... what 20% would be, a tip at 18%, and at 15%.

But I notice, 10% wasn't even listed. Apparently, a 10% tip is no longer considered acceptable - *then it hit me*. For the last 2000 years all God has asked for is just 10%. His suggested tip hasn't changed. And yet most Christians can't even manage the bear minimum.

It's shocking, but I read recently that the average Christian loses more cash than he or she give to God.

We spend more money in this country on pet food than on foreign missions... We can watch a ball game. Really get into it. We're intense, we scream at the TV, but when it comes to worship we're blase', our mind wanders, we're nonchalant, we get easily distracted.

We're insulting God with our leftovers!

God requires our first-fruits - the very first of the harvest, the pick of the litter. We need to save the best for God! *Are we giving God a respectable sacrifice?*

Verse 10 reveals the second way the priests defiled God's altar. God was upset over **why they came**.

“Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, so that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,” says the Lord of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from your hands.”

There are two possible interpretations for the phrase, “*in vain*.” First, it could refer to a lack of spiritual sensitivity. They had forgotten the meaning behind the sacrifice. It was now just an empty, hollow, vain ritual.

The priests were merely going through the motions, and everyone knew it; yet no one had guts enough to close the Temple doors. As far as God was concerned they could've extinguish the fire on the sacrificial altar until the fire was flaming again in their hearts.

If Calvary Chapel Stone Mountain ever gets to the point to where we're just playing religion - if we lose sight of our goal - I hope someone has the gut to just shut the doors, and say “*enough is enough*.” God would rather our praise be *silent* than *insincere*.

But the second possible translation for the phrase “*in vain*” is “*with gratis, for pay*.” The priests wanted to be paid to open the Temple doors. No one would worship God anymore on a volunteer basis. Everyone wanted to get compensated with cash, for serving the Lord.

This happens in churches today. It becomes easier to pay people - custodians or musicians than it is to find willing persons who really want to serve the Lord.

As a result there are contemporary churches full of professionals who view the ministry as a job. They're all performance and no passion. I love the word "[amateur.](#)" Its French. It means, "[for the love of it.](#)"

Even though the church supports me financially, I want to always be an amateur. I want to serve the Lord because I love Him, not because I'm drawing a salary.

Years ago, Russell Hitt, of Eternity Magazine, interviewed Henrietta Mears. Henrietta deeply loved the Lord. She founded Gospel Light Sunday School curriculum. Later Hitt reflected on his interview...

"[She began to reminisce about the wonderful things God had done in her life. She talked of the Lord Jesus as simply and genuinely as a new convert possessed by first love. The tears flowed down her cheeks. It was thrilling to be with a Christian worker that had not become a pro.](#)" I hope this is the impression people come away with after they've been in my presence.

Verse 11, "[For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations,](#)" says the Lord of hosts."

In their backsliding the Jews forgot the greatness of God. They became narrow, and provincial, and myopic.

They had lost sight of the scope of God's reputation and the breadth of His admirers. They forgot there was a world outside their tiny boundaries that adored the Lord they took for granted. Malachi reminds the Jews that wherever the sun shines on the Earth it falls on believers who are greeting a new day in praise to God.

“But you profane it, in that you say, ‘the table of the Lord is defiled; and its fruit, its food, is contemptible.’

Here's the third way they defiled the altar of the Lord. They defiled it in the way **they behaved at the altar.**

They obligated themselves to serve the Lord, then despised having to do so. They hated every minute of their service. They viewed it as laborious and dull.

“You also say, ‘Oh, what a weariness!’ And you sneer at it,” says the Lord of hosts. “And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?” says the Lord.”

Here is a tragedy! The Jews viewed the things of God as a bore. Service to God had become a chore.

The sacrifices had become a drudgery, a burden.

They were tired of serving the Lord. They were burned out. They called it *“a weariness.”* DL Moody once said, **“I get tired IN the work, but I never get tired OF the work.”** To the contrary, these Jews served God, but they griped and complained the whole time they did it. They’d forgotten it was an honor to serve the Lord.

Have you ever heard yourself say, "O no, another weekend at the church." or "Why did they schedule a Men's Prayer Breakfast on the same Saturday Georgia has a home game." or "Man, I hate cutting this check" or "Yea, I'm Christian, I got to do it, but I don't like it."

Well, if you can't do it without complaining or grumbling; then just don't do it! If you've copped an attitude you're probably not having a very good impact anyway, and you're certainly not going to be rewarded!

2 Corinthians 9:7 tells us, "God loves a cheerful giver." Literally "a hilarious giver." If you can't do it with joy in your heart, and a smile on your face, and praise on your lips, then don't do it! Hey, God doesn't need your help. His work is not dependent on you. If it's not your pleasure to serve the Lord; then don't serve Him.

God doesn't want His altar to be defiled: by **what we give**, or **why we give**, or even **the way we give**...

Once, a family went to church. After they'd come home they were sitting around the table eating lunch.

The teenage son remarked, "Sure was a boring sermon today." The sister chimed in, "I can't believe how the pastor stumbled over the Scriptures like he did." The mom added, "I guess you're right, it wasn't as inspiring as it usually is." Finally the dad said, "Hush, quit your complaining, what'd you expect for 5 bucks?"

If you're don't put much into your relationship with God; then you're probably not going to get much out!

Verse 14 closes the chapter, “But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished - for I am a great King,” says the Lord of hosts, “and My name is to be feared among the nations.” He is “*a great King!*”

Malachi closes with the antidote for hypocrisy and a pseudo spirituality. He mentions it twice in Chapter 1. Once in verse 11, and here again in verse 14.

The remedy for hypocrisy is the fear of the Lord!

Verse 14 points ultimately to the day when even the Gentiles will fear the name of Lord. Messiah will return a great King and establish His Kingdom. He'll rule the nations with a rod of iron. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We don't see the Lord at this time. His glory and greatness are not always visible, but when we look to the future the gravity of God becomes crystal clear.

When we see God for who He is we realize He's not someone to treat casually or flippantly. He's not just my “*buddy*” or “*main man.*” He is the holy God - immortal, invincible, incomprehensible. “*Elohim,*” as Hebrews called Him. The God of creation, the powerful One.

He is “*El-Shaddai (God Almighty), El-Elyon (God Most High), El-Olam (God Everlasting), El-Roi (the God who sees).*” These are a few of His many names.

We speak a lot of the “*glory of God,*” but few of us know what the word means. The Hebrew term “*glory*” means

"heaviness, weightiness." God's glory is His intensity, His heaviness. It's the presence He brings.

God said to Moses, "no man can see My face and live." Our corrupt bodies would melt in His heat.

In essence, God isn't someone you put on hold when He calls, or cancel His appointment. You don't tell him "no" or "I can't." You don't make excuses, or snub Him, or ignore a holy God. He's not someone to trifle with.

One day God will judge all men. Even we Christians will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. There'll be no glib attitudes then. The answer to hypocrisy is to fear the Lord and give Him the respect He deserves.

Leonard Wood went to visit the King of France. The King enjoyed Leonard's company and invited him back the next day. When Wood arrived the King was surprised to see him. The king said, "I didn't think you would come?" Wood replied, "*Why, was I not invited?*"

The king answered, "Yes, but you didn't respond to the invitation." Leonard Wood replied, "A king's invitation is never to be answered, but to be obeyed."

Is that the kind of respect and reverence you and I have toward our God? Do we wait on His beck and call? Is His wish our command? *Let's fear the Lord!*