

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

I never cease to be amazed at your mercy and grace. You sent Malachi and Nehemiah to deal with the spiritual apathy and sin that had infected your people, and even though you were angry and hurt at how they had treated you, you urged them to repent and return to you. I praise you today as the God who disciplines your children! What a privilege it is to call you my Father! Glory to God in the highest!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Malachi's prophecy to the remnant and Nehemiah's reforms. The walls of Jerusalem were completed in 444 BC, and Nehemiah remained in the city as governor for several years. Eventually, he was recalled to Persia (Neh 13:6), and in his absence, the spiritual fervor of the people began to cool. The days of national repentance and commitment receded into the past, and old habits and attitudes crept back into their hearts. This teaches me that the true test of my character comes *after* a great spiritual victory. It's one thing to do right in the midst of a national revival; it's another to continue to do right when the excitement is gone and the trials of life return. Eventually, the people developed a harsh, critical attitude toward you. They complained about the sacrifices they had to bring (Mal 1:12–13), they resented that the wicked seemed to prosper (Mal 2:17), and they claimed that they had served you "in vain" (Mal 3:14). In answer, you sent Malachi to confront them for their sin. How had they sinned? They had despised your name by offering blind, lame, and sick sacrificial animals (Mal 1:6–8), they had been faithless to you by divorcing the wives of their youth (Mal 2:14–16), they had robbed you by refusing to bring tithes and offerings to the temple (Mal 3:8–10), and they had thumbed their nose at you by claiming that there was no profit in obedience (Mal 3:13–15). This teaches me that when people point the finger of blame at you, they are really trying to silence their own guilty conscience. Malachi rebuked the remnant for their sin and called them to treat you with the honor and respect you deserved. He warned them that if they would not repent, you would punish them severely: "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. On that day the arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw" (Mal 4:1 NLT). Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem not long after Malachi's prophecy, and he was furious when he realized how sinful the people had become. He threw Tobiah out of the temple, restored the tithes to the Levites, enforced the keeping of the Sabbath, and punished those who had married foreign women. This teaches me that a righteous leader confronts people for their sin and refuses to overlook wrongdoing.

Reflection

Apostasy comes a little at a time: first, the occasional indulgence, then neglect, and finally outright disobedience. Am I saying no to temptation, or am I permitting myself a few small sins on the side?

Request

Father, how easy it is to be pulled off course by the currents of this world. Help me reject the passing pleasures of sin and run my race with endurance! May my life always bring honor and glory to you!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for men like Malachi and Nehemiah. They spoke truth to their culture and stood firm against sin in the midst of spiritual compromise. Grant me a double portion of their courage!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: "Living for Jesus" – Thomas O. Chisholm.

Meditation Verse: Malachi 4:2.