

To Appease or to Please

Scripture Reading — Malachi 1:6-7

But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. — Malachi 1:7

Yesterday we noted that the priests were damaging God's reputation. Today's verses give a bit more detail. The priests of Israel were carrying out their -religion half-heartedly. They were trying to appease God, not please God.

When we are truly in love with someone, we test ourselves to see how much we can do for them. A young man treats his girlfriend to a fancy restaurant even though he knows she would be satisfied with less. Love prompts us toward -extravagance.

Fear pushes the opposite way. When we fear someone, we try to get away with giving less than they deserve. It's sinful, but we tend to hurt those who we fear might hurt us.

In the book of Malachi, God explains that he is the loving Father of his people. He doesn't want them to be afraid of him. He wants love and respect. God wants the people to know that he's not out to hurt them. But they have been acting as if he were. Instead of testing themselves to give as much as they can, they try to give God less than he deserves.

God loves us and wants our love in return. He's not satisfied with our misunderstanding or thinking he's out to get us. Sacrifices offered out of fear show God that we don't understand him. Sacrifices offered out of love show that the God of love lives in us.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, drive out our fear with your perfect love. In your name we pray. Amen.

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