

# Malachi 3:2

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Preacher: Chris Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] Turn back to Malachi chapter 2 and 3.! There's one thing that I want you to take from this passage this morning.

! It's that God cleans up. God cleans up. The God of the Bible is the God who sorts out mess, who sorts out dirt, who gets rid of stains, who gets rid of impurities.

God cleans up. The big image that he describes himself with here in this passage is in verse 2 if you look there. He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap.

Malachi there speaks of a messenger, doesn't he? A figure who will come into the world and do God's laundry for him. Malachi speaks 400 or so years before the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He speaks of him that he will be sent to sit and refine and purify God's people. If you've been here while we've been looking at Malachi, we've gotten to know God's people quite well, haven't we, in Malachi's day.

[ 1 : 22 ] And they are full of impurity. Their worship is not as it should be. They are not what God wants them to be. Their relationships, we saw last time, their outward religion, their worship is a stain on the carpet in God's house.

He says to them, back in chapter 2, you have profaned my sanctuary. You've stained it. They are like a lump of ore from the ground, like a dirty rock dug up from the ground.

They are a mess. But in there somewhere, God knows that in that ore there is some precious silver or precious gold. In his messenger, Jesus Christ, God cleans up.

And he will be like this hard-working silversmith, a cleaner. Why does the silversmith get out of bed in the morning?

Why does he work? Why does he open up his workshop? To purify and to refine. Why does God send this silversmith, though?

[ 2 : 38 ] He is active and zealous. He is ready to go to work on Monday morning. It's go, go, go. But why? Well, strangely, first of all, we see Jesus the silversmith, the refiner, gets to work because he is weary.

Because he is weary. Just look at verse 17 of chapter 2. God says, you have wearied the Lord with your words.

But you say, how have we wearied him? There's that line again that comes up in Malachi, time and time again. But you say, but you say. There's always an excuse from God's people, isn't there?

Always an explanation. Always a reason. But the starting point for Jesus' refining work, this messenger, is that God is weary.

Jesus' motivation is his fatigue. He is tired of something. How do you weary the God of the universe?

[ 3 : 44 ] How do you tire God out? How do you weary the tireless one? The one who never needs to go to sleep ever. The one who has no limits. Well, God speaks in human language here, doesn't he?

There is one thing that if I could get tired, would tire me out. It would make me weary. And it's a real drag for me. It's when my people falsely caricature me.

When after I've created them, they try and recreate me. And it's particularly here to do with a question of God's justice.

It's when people think that they can tell me how to do my job, God says. See what the words they are saying weary him, don't they, in verse 17.

The words you are saying, by saying everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord. And he delights in them, in evil. And by asking, where is the God of justice?

[ 4 : 54 ] There's a kind of arrogance here that wearies God. An arrogance with the question of justice and of suffering and of evil in the world.

It's an incessant, rebellious, doubting of God's ability to do his job. Now let's be fair to God's people. They were disappointed, weren't they?

We've seen that. After the return from exile, they got a vision of what things should be like in the land of Judah. And it's not happened.

They're still surrounded by their enemies. They're still occupied by Persia. And they say to God in their hearts, what practical relevance has your justice really got in our lives?

Our lives which are so full of disappointment. There's no visible connection with what we're seeing on the ground and what you say you are going to do.

[ 5 : 56 ] The nations around us are all doing pretty well. And they're not loving you and living for you. They're evil. And Persia is doing very well. So you're not up to it, are you God?

You're either a very good God but not powerful enough. Or you're very powerful and not good enough. And it turns out to be practical atheism, doesn't it, at the end of chapter 2.

Where is the God of justice? God is not wearied by so many things that we'd expect him to be wearied of.

Things that we'd get weary of. He's not weary of watching over and caring for his people. Psalm 121 says that the God who keeps Israel never slumbers.

He never sleeps. He's not weary of you coming to him in prayer. Nagging him. He's not weary of that.

[ 7 : 02 ] His eyes are always open. His ears are open to the prayers of his children when they come in faith. He doesn't get fed up if you keep bothering him.

He loves to be bothered by you. You can't tire him out by coming to him. He merely gets tired when you don't. He gets wearied when we think God is powerless and we stop praying.

Powerless to bring justice and to do good. And they were arrogant, weren't they, God's people here. Saying, come on God, prove us right in the world.

How dare you withhold blessing from us, God? God. And nothing wearies God like the belief that God is not who he says he is.

Who does not keep his promises. God's people. Their faith has turned into presumption, hasn't it? And a warped sense of entitlement. And that wearies God.

[ 8 : 08 ] There comes a time when presumption and arrogance and twisting God's character will push his patience to the limit.

And it will run out. And when he gets weary in that way, he gets to work at refining his people. We see Jesus Christ, don't we, coming in the Gospels, in the New Testament.

And he comes to his people. And he arrives in Jerusalem. And it's an amazing section in Matthew, Matthew 24. I'm going to turn there really quickly.

It's on page 829 if you've got a black Bible. Matthew 24, Jesus curses the temple. He refines the temple.

He refines his people. Beginning of chapter 24 in Matthew, not one stone will be left on top of another in this temple. I will cleanse it.

[ 9 : 10 ] I will refine it. I will bring it down to the ground. And the thing is that we see moments earlier before this why he does it. As Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, the mighty Saviour, the mighty silversmith, what motivates him?

It's his weariness. It's him breaking down. And earlier in chapter 23, lamenting over his people and over Jerusalem.

It's a stunning moment, isn't it, where the God of the universe comes down and he laments. In Luke, he weeps over Jerusalem.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. The city that kills the prophets and the stones that are, stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings?

And you were not willing. So, see, your house has left you desolate. There's one place where we see in the New Testament where the Son of God, who became incarnate, was active before the incarnation.

[ 10 : 19 ] He didn't just sort of appear from nowhere. He was active before he became a man. He was active during the time of the prophets. Longing to see his ancient people coming to him.

Wooing them, but they wouldn't. And he breaks down here. He weeps and he laments. Probably exhausted, just as a human being, isn't he, near the end of his ministry.

But weary of them and their refusal to come to him. And then zeal for his house consumes him. His weariness gets him to work. So he gets to work at refining. Not because they keep coming to him and hassling him.

But because they won't. So that's the why. Now let's get to the what. I want you to see two things about the refining work of Jesus Christ here.

[ 11 : 19 ] Both the severity and the beauty of his work. Of his refining craft. Of his alchemy. In drawing gold and silver from that kind of impure rock.

That aggregate. In Malachi 3, God gives us an insight into the workshop of Jesus Christ. And the people are going to be taken into that workshop.

And it will be brutal and beautiful. There will be heat and sweat. And smoke and burning. And melting.

Like in the refining process of metal. And pain. There will be bleaching. And washing. With a fuller's soap.

And abrasion. But then a dazzling transformation of gleaming silver. And of precious gold. So firstly.

[ 12 : 21 ] Jesus refines severely. Jesus refines severely. Do you see the irony of what the people are asking. And what they are complaining about with God here.

It's really great writing the way that Malachi kind of builds up the suspense here. Because the people are saying aren't they. Come on God. Where are you? Where is the God of justice? Bring your justice then.

But it's not a cry in suffering of a faithful hope. How long oh Lord? Looking to God for answers. But it's a cynical and sarcastic and atheistic taunt of entitlement.

But chapter 3. Malachi begins doesn't he. It's okay. It's okay. God is answering your prayers. God is going to send someone.

The one you seek will come. The covenant that you delight in. A messenger will come. And bring justice. God says I'll send you what you're asking for.

[ 13 : 32 ] I'll send you justice. God says I'll send you justice. God says I'll send you justice. But then the twist comes in verse 2. Doesn't it? Who can endure the day of his coming?

Who can stand when he appears? They complain about his apparent absence. And God says okay you will get my imminent presence.

Why don't you get rid of all the evil in the world? Why don't you get rid of all the scumbags in the world? Without coming to Jesus in faith and trust.

He says to his people here doesn't he? Well to answer that prayer I am going to have to get rid of some of you. And my servant must refine you. We might have an outreach event in church.

And we do have them. Quite a lot don't we? Where we try and address certain questions that people ask of the Christian faith and of the God of the Bible. We've done them at the lunchtime talks.

[ 14 : 36 ] And one of the most popular questions people ask is if God is good why does he allow suffering? It's a good question. It's a really good question. And you can ask that question.

Please ask it. In suffering we find that God has much to say about that in scriptures. And as we look at the person of the Lord Jesus we see that God is well acquainted with suffering himself.

But you can ask that question in two ways can't you? You can ask it genuinely and humbly. Looking for an answer. Or you can ask it in a defiant way.

Where the question becomes an accusation of God. An accusation hurled at him. As if we can't think of an answer to the question then God possibly cannot.

Sometimes we ask the questions not to get answers don't we? But to accuse. And to pretend that God is something that he isn't.

[ 15 : 39 ] To recreate God. So that he is somebody we would be a lot happier to ignore. And not worship. So that we can pretend that he is malicious and unloving.

So we can justify our hatred of him. And that wearies God. And so Jesus comes to burn off that kind of attitude from his people.

There are two messengers spoken of in this passage. And they map on to the coming of John the Baptist. And of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

This passage from Malachi 3 is in the first verse of Mark's Gospel. You can look at it later. It speaks of John the Baptist who prepares the way for the coming of the Lord.

For the Lord Jesus. It's like if an envoy is sent ahead of a king. To kind of clear the traffic from the road. And make sure there aren't any obstacles. This is John the Baptist. Clearing the way for the king.

[16:42] The king Jesus. And just as Malachi predicts. Jesus comes doesn't he to the Gospels. And he begins somewhere.

And he heads towards the temple. It's an interesting pattern in the three Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke. He heads on a journey towards the temple.

And he ends at the temple. And he dies just outside the temple. He comes to the temple to refine his people. Matthew tells us that in that passage that we saw.

Matthew 23. One of the biggest discourses of rebuke. That Jesus lays on the Pharisees. Happens just before he leaves the temple.

He's at the temple. It's the same in Mark. He curses a fig tree at the temple. Picture of his judgment on the temple. And Malachi tells us he does that.

[17:42] Not just because it's the temple. Some random building. But because it's his temple. It is his house. Jesus' mission is to come and clean.

His house of worship. His church. To fumigate it. To put it into the kiln. And to refine it.

As Jesus comes. God comes in judgment. And his refinement is severe. He says. I will come near to you for judgment. In verse 5.

Jesus is sent. And in Jesus. God is smelting off. The metal. The metal. Of his people. He is burning off the dross.

And it's. It's actually quite devastating. John the Baptist. Says of Jesus. His winnowing fork. His winnowing fork. Is in his hand. And he will clear.

[18:42] His threshing floor. The place where. You get grain. From the husks of wheat. And he will burn. The husks. With. Unquenchable fire.

After Jesus. Hangs up his apron. And closes up for the evening. You're not left with much. Are you? After he's refined. His church. And his people. What we see from Jesus.

The silversmith. Is quite brutal. He gets into some heavy. Heavy. Chiseling. And he comes. And he rebukes. The Pharisees.

Woe. Woe. Woe. He pronounces woes. Upon the falsely religious. He filters people out. In his preaching.

Preaching in parables. His workshop. Will scold many. It will be hot. And sweaty. And painful. God.

[19:42] Will clean up. He is the ancient. Refiner of silver. Jeremiah. And Ezekiel. Picture God. In this way. As one gathers.

Silver. And bronze. And iron. And lead. And tin. Into a furnace. To blow the fire on it. In order to melt it. So I will gather you. God says. And at times.

We know this. Don't we. From experience. In church. In church history. He has. The Lord Jesus.

Refined. His church. Drastically. One of the reasons.

Maybe. Maybe. Why the church. Has been in decline. In this country. Is that. Jesus. Is refining. His church. He's refining it. From nominalism.

And cultural. Christianity. Christianity. He's burning off. The Christianity. That is merely. A statement. On a birth certificate. And nothing more. And that feels brutal.

[20:41] Doesn't it? Almost like. There's nothing left. If you do a. Before and after. The ministry of Jesus. What was.

God's people. What were God's people. Like before. And what were they. Like afterwards. God's. Well. Instead of a whole. Ethnic nation. You've now got a bunch of. Disciples. And a few women.

And a few followers. And a few fishermen. And a tax collector. And what not. The temple building. The church building. Rather than getting built.

Gets demolished. Doesn't it? In 70 AD. He doesn't just clean the house. He wipes it out. All together. The severity.

Of his refinement. I've got to tell you. This morning. That. That there is a way. That you can weary God. With defiance.

[21:33] And unfolding your arms. And shaking your fist at him. Saying. I could do your job. So better than. So much better than you. When the questions.

Turn ugly. And you say. Where is. Your justice God. Where are you? What are you doing? And one day. He will answer that prayer.

Rage about his absence. And we will get his imminent presence. His refining presence. Jesus work can be brutal. But. Secondly and lastly. Jesus. Work is beautiful.

Jesus refines beautifully. In the furnace. It's brutal. It's painful.

It's painful. Transformation. But Jesus work. Has a strikingly attractive goal. Here. You see where it's heading.

[ 22 : 32 ] Don't we? In verse four. After he has refined. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem. Will be pleasing to the Lord. As in the days of old.

And as in former days. The story goes. That a silversmith. A guy who worked with metals. Burning off. Dross from metal.

Was asked. How does the process work? And he explained. That the lump of. Dirty rock. Is put into the hottest. Part of the fire.

And I have to watch it. The whole time. I keep my eyes on it. The whole time. I never look away. And as the silver. Or the gold. Melts. The impurities.

Rise to the top. And you can. Scoop them off. But you don't just do it once. You do it again. And again. And again. Until you get. 100% pure. Gold.

[ 23 : 28 ] And they were asked. Well how do you know. When to stop. How do you know. When to stop the process. And he said. Well. Simply when I can see my face. In the silver. Jesus.

Refines his people. Quite brutally. Refines his church. So that his church. Will look more like him. When we will bring offerings.

In righteousness. When his people. His. His messed up people. Will gleam. With purity. That he might say of.

Of you. Right now. You are. Precious to me. Your offerings. Your service.

In the church. Your. Your work. Your faithfulness. Is precious. It means something. To me. I value it. You don't work.

[ 24 : 28 ] Just. Just. Because you've got to. And you've got to please me. Or other people. It is valuable to me. So that. That we will. Adorn.

God's house. And God will say of us. Well done. I love it. So that we might be the people. That beautify God's house.

Church. Full of emeralds. And diamonds. And gold. Look at the before. And the after. Again. Of Jesus's ministry.

The refiner comes. Doesn't he. And it's so brutal. He rebukes. And woes. And in the end. Destroys the temple. But he rebuilds that temple.

Doesn't he. In his own body. In the church. There are. Only a few. Apostles. And disciples. Tiny band. But the silver gleams.

[ 25 : 26 ] The temple is destroyed. And the Holy Spirit. Dwells in his church. And the false religion. Of one nation. Is refined. And all the nations. Then come in.

Even the Gentiles. Come in. And the church. Is reduced down. To a few. Isn't it. But then it. Explodes out. Into the world.

To the many. And it happens. Over a weekend. Pretty much. When the furnace. Was at its. At its. Hottest. And brightest.

The silversmith. Comes. Doesn't he. And he puts his apron on. And he opens up. The workshop. The master refiner. And the forge. Is ready. But the wonder.

Of the work. That he does. The wonder. Of the refining. Process. Is that his people. Are refined. And purified. In the forge. In the crucible.

[ 26 : 22 ] Of his own suffering. At his death. And resurrection. You can watch. Can't you. As the hammer. Comes down. On the metal. And it chisels.

Away the impurities. You can listen. As the molten. Silver. Bubbles. And you can feel. The heat. And the sweat.

And the pain. You can see there. The brutality. And the beauty. Of his work. You can watch.

As people. Leave him. And are refined. As they're disgusted. With what happens. At the cross. But at the same time. The church. Is transformed. And the dross.

Rises to the top. As he dies. And is risen. Purifying. And cleansing. His people. This whole.

[ 27 : 17 ] Refinement thing. It continues. Through Christian life. Doesn't it? Jesus. Is committed. To doing that. In and amongst his people. And we ask.

Don't we? Well. It's great. I want to be refined. Purify my heart. As we sing. But. Can't it happen. In some other way. Does. Does the process.

Have to involve this. Does it have to involve that. Can't I be refined. On the beach. God's people. Are no strangers.

To his workshop. Are they? Both corporately. And individually. Jesus can be pretty brutal. With us. He says. I'll walk you out.

Into the dead. Desert. Into the wilderness. I'll sail you. Into a storm. I'll send you. Into exile. I'll bring your enemies. To your very gates.

[ 28 : 11 ] I'll send my messenger. God says. Sometimes. We'd rather. Just keep our impurities. Wouldn't we? Than face all of that. But God.

Refines his people. And sometimes. He says to us. No. No. He will take things. Away from us. And he will take things.

Out of our hands. And from our perspective. It's like the end of the world. Isn't it? When that thing happens. God takes something. Or disappoints us. In some way. And we might question.

Where's the God of justice? Lord. That thing was all I wanted. In this life. That was everything to me. And without it. I am nothing.

But God says. No. I am the ancient refiner. Of my people. And I want you. To be beautiful. Beautiful in my house. I want you.

[ 29 : 08 ] To have the surpassing delight. Of being precious. In my sight. Spurgeon said. And Spurgeon was so good. Wasn't he? On counselling.

Suffering Christians. He said. God is too good. To be unkind. He is too wise. To be confused. And if I cannot trace his hand.

I can always trust his heart. In this process. Of refinement. Whatever trial. You face. Jane says. Count it all joy.

Brothers and sisters. Brothers. Because. Jesus has taken. The worst of the brutality. Actually. Hasn't he? At the forge. The forge of Calvary.

In his death. And as he. As he rises. So. That in the process. Of refinement. And of sanctification.

[ 30 : 05 ] The pain. Of the heat. Is not designed. To destroy you. But. But to beautify you. For his pleasure. Making you fit. For his house.

So that God. Can say to us. You. Are pure. In my sight. God. Cleans up. Pray. To destroy.!