

February 16th, 2025

Malachi 2:17-3:5 - How Great is the Justice of God! (Sermon Transcript)

Alright, turn to Malachi chapter three. We're actually gonna be starting in verse chapter two, verse 17, last verse of chapter two, but we'll be in chapter three as well today. Growing up. I was a good kid, alright? I never got in trouble. It was always, if I did, it was always my sister's fault. That was what I would tell my dad.

None of that is true. But I always, being a kid, get in trouble, and always dreaded hearing my dad say, go to your room. Does that elicit anything for you? Oh my goodness, I'm, alright. And so I would go to my room, and I would just sit there, and I would wait, how bad is this going to be?

Like, how bad is this punishment going to be? How can I get out of it? Who could I blame? As I'm sitting there trying to lie about getting out of whatever this was, what I was about to deal with. Even the thought of, could I live on my own? I think I can escape this room and live to get out of this situation.

I had a lot of my dad was very clear on the rules. He said, this is the rules. If you cross the line, you face the consequences. And did I agree with those rules? Absolutely not. But I knew if I crossed the line that I would be facing the consequence. And maybe you didn't deal with that as a kid, but maybe you've been called into the principal's office.

Where your boss calls you in, and you have no idea why, and you're immediately like, have I done something wrong? This could either go one or two ways. I'm getting fired, or I'm getting a bonus. There's no in between, right? And you just feel this dread of anticipation of impending consequences for your actions.

In Malachi chapter 3, we see that mankind is, a waiting period, waiting for the judgment of God towards sinners. But God has a bigger plan in mind. God does not sit by and not deal with sin. He is a just judge and will righteously punish evil. But in his grace, Jesus took the punishment for sin and through his righteousness, we are no longer condemned.

Today's text of scripture is heavy, because we don't often talk about God's justice and his wrath. And in light of that, when we look at God's just and righteous judgments, When we compare ourselves to that, I think we in anticipation should sit back and say, Alright what must be done for me to avoid this?



And Malachi is going to share with us that answer. So let's read the text from Malachi chapter 2 verse 17, and then we'll read to chapter 3 verse 5. It says, You have wearied the Lord with your words, but you say, How have we wearied him? By saying, everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them.

Or by asking, where is the God of justice? Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. And the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming?

And who can stand when he appears? For, he is like a refiner's fire and like Fuller's soap, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings and righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old.

And as in former years, then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker and his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner.

And do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts. This is the word of the Lord. Father, open our eyes to behold the wonderful truths from your word. Today as we behold your divine justice. May we leave in awe of your mercy. And it's in your name we pray. Amen. We start this verse, and I think you can hear the audible sigh of the Lord.

You have wearied me. Ah. The word weary, it means exhausted and annoyed. He has grown exhausted and annoyed by his people. This is a side application and really has nothing to do with the text. But parents, aren't we thankful that God feels this way too? I am exhausted and annoyed. The children, alright?

That God understands a lot of this. He's wearied by these people. It's a verse you read and you're like, you can hear God just going, Ah, okay. And then, the people, as they have been doing throughout Malachi, ask a question. How have we wearied you?

And God says, oh, you've wearied me. You've exhausted me. You've annoyed me. Two ways. One, you've said that everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and you delight in them. Now, this is a major indictment on God. With the people in Malachi's day, the children of Israel, these are the people who are God's people.



What they are saying is, God only cares about evil people and he delights in evil people. He does not delight in good people. This is a big deal what they're doing. An indictment on God's character. They have grown frustrated with the people in their area. They're saying, we've done all that God has said that we should do.

These people aren't. Nothing's happening to them. God must love them more than he loves us. So they've grown frustrated with God's timing. They've alleged his lack of involvement dealing with people that are sinning. They've grown suspicious of his character.

It's the question that maybe we've heard asked. Why do good things happen to bad people? Why are all these evil people getting all the blessings? Should not the blessings be for Christian people? God, why are you not blessing me? Should I not also get a trillion dollars for being your child? It's a misunderstanding of God's character and his blessing.

And the people of Israel have missed the point. The second way they have caused God to grow weary is they have said, where is the God of justice? Where are you, God? Evil is running rampant. And so the people of Israel just assume that God's just letting this slide. That they're, that everybody's just getting to do whatever they want to.

God's not going to deal with them. He is delighted that they get to do this. They're frustrated that it seems like God has disappeared. They looked at their life. And they compared themselves to the evil and said we are better than they are. We are holier than they are. They deserve destruction. They were mad that God wasn't working on their terms and in their timing.

In fact, where is the God of justice is not them saying, as we'll see throughout this text, God come and make the wrong things right. Which is a good plea. They're saying you're not doing what you said you would do. You're doing it wrong. This is what we think we should do. Because this whole book, they have been just attacking God's character.

We can't just say they have a good perspective here.

They want God to do things the way they want him to, the way they want it to be done. God's grown weary by it.

One author said God is offended. When people accuse him of injustice. We can grow very impatient with God. Just like the people here in this text. Where we see



evil and wickedness. God, you need to do something about it. And often times it comes out of frustration that we think we're not getting what we deserve.

Because we're God's children. And that God is just sitting by silent. But what we see throughout scripture is God has a plan and he is going to deal with sin and he's going to deal with evil in his timing. And he's also a very, let's add one more in there for good measure, right? Very merciful God.

Because what the people don't understand is that the fact that they are breathing and have life is an act of grace and mercy from a holy God towards sinners. They do get one thing right though. That God is a God of justice. Now they've grown frustrated that he's apparently disappeared, but he's not. But they know, do understand that God is a God of justice.

And all throughout scripture we see that God is a righteous judge. All throughout scripture. Here's just two verses. And we're going to read a lot of scripture today. My suggestion is write down the text next to the point and then we'll keep moving, okay? Isaiah 33, 22 says, For the Lord is our judge.

The Lord is our lawgiver. The Lord is our king. He will save us. Psalm 96 13, before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in faithfulness. All throughout scripture we see that God is a righteous judge. It's a characteristic of God that we don't discuss a lot.

We began this series talking about the love of God. We love talking about the love of God, right? You would think that, hey, that's the sermon we preach on Valentine's weekend, not the justice and wrath of God. Should have delayed this series, right? We talked about the holiness of God. We're going to be talking about His generosity next week.

There's parts of this, God's faithfulness. But scripture talks a whole lot about God being a righteous judge. He is a good judge. The job of a judge is to uphold and execute the law. It's the only standard you must adhere to and you must do it unflinchingly. Here's the law, I'm going to uphold it. And God has given His law to His people.

This is the first five books of the Old Testament. We're going to summarize them. And He, God summarized them to us in the Ten Commandments. There's a lot more than this, but here's the summary. And I want to read the Ten Commandments today. We don't do this often, but I want us to work through this, okay?



So quickly. Exodus 20. Verse 2, and it's 2 through 17, and we're gonna skip over a couple verses that are add more context to that commandment, okay? I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Look at what God's done. He's delivered them from slavery. I am your God.

You are my people. Commandment one, you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. Don't bow down to any of them, God says. Verse seven, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Verse 12, Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be longed in the Lord, land that the Lord your God has given to you. Parents say amen there. There we go.

Parents also say the next commandment is you shall not murder. I don't, I think specifically God put them in that order, probably on purpose, okay? You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not cover your neighbor's wife. Or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. That's the Ten Commandments. And God said, this is the law. Keep it. Keep the law.

If you keep it, you're good. If you break it, you'll face the consequences. A few weeks ago, Julie and I went to New Hampshire for, to celebrate our anniversary. We stayed at this place. We paid for and enjoyed it. It was great. Lovely time. We went on a tour of, or we rode a train up to up a mountain, and on the mountain the guy says Hey, you need to go and visit this other resort.

It's the Mount Washington Resort. In order to go in there, you have to pay, but let me tell you the back way you can sneak in. It's the locals know about it. And then you can explore it. We did it. We like, alright? Now here's what I find out. It's fine, okay? We did not do anything illegal, alright? But the whole time, I have this dread of we are going to get caught.

And we don't belong here. I'm like fighting it. And Julie's it's fine. We're okay. It's okay. Everybody, you're allowed to walk in there and tour the place, okay? And so the whole time, I'm like, we gotta get out of here. I'm like, we're not gonna make it back to Florida. I don't know the laws here. And so you know those feelings. There's



a place of, I have nothing to worry about. I'm safe here. Okay? I've done nothing wrong. But then there's this feeling of, I hope I don't get in trouble. Let's make this a little bit more realistic. You ever been driving and you see a police officer up ahead and you automatically, they're going to pull me over?

And you're like, you're going to speed limit. And you're like, this, we all feel this, right? If I do what is right, I don't have to worry about it. If I do something wrong, then I have to worry about it. The consequences. From a human. Perspective. Because God has given his law and said if you keep it, you're good.

Nothing to worry about. If you break it, consequences are coming. And all of us have broken the law. And there is something that we need to be worried about. We can face the consequences for our sin against God. Here's what James says in chapter 2 verses 8 through 10. If you really fulfill the royal law according to Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You are doing well. But if you show partiality, you're committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point, has become guilty of all of it. One point. So let's go through the list of the Ten Commandments. Alright, and we read through there and we just say, Alright, I've never murdered anybody.

Good. I'm not so bad. But let's go down a little bit, okay? Have you ever lied? Let's just start there. I don't think we have to keep going any further, right? That is a breaking of the law and according to James if you break it in one point You're guilty of breaking all of it. You're no longer a law abider You are a law breaker.

Romans 23 23 says just in case we're not clear and just in case we try to justify that lie I was trying to get out of something and it wasn't a big deal I was trying to protect somebody we can keep we try to justify our sin. It's fine. It's not a big deal I didn't murder anybody. I'm not Hitler.

That's where we keep going, right? We want to make ourselves look okay. But here's what Paul says in Romans 3. 23. For all have sinned, and have fallen short of the glory of God. They have fallen short of God's standard of perfection. Who has sinned? One more time. Who has sinned? All have sinned, and we have broken the law.

God, as a righteous judge,



does he not have the right to judge sinners? He is up, he is perfectly kept the law. Have we not broken his laws? Should we not face the consequences? Are we not deserving of the punishments? Is there anyone else to blame?

It's on us. So it's just us and God in his courtroom and all the evidence is laid out. God puts it right on the table. Have you done this? No? You just lied. So now we're gonna add that one to the table too, okay? We've done this, and God lays the evidence. And God knows all the evidence. I love watching these shows where they just got some of the evidence and that helps make the case.

Alright? And you're like, that's enough. We can pin them for that, alright? But God says, here's all the evidence. He knows every way we have broken the law. And we look at it and we say there's nothing I can do to get out of this. We are guilty of breaking God's law and deserving of the consequences.

And according to scripture, This punishment, this consequence for sin is an eternity in hell. Romans 6, 26, 23, For the wages of sin is death. Free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Matthew 25, 41, Jesus will say, Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

There are consequences and punishment for sin. You might say, what about good people? What about the people that are good? This is a great question. I don't think it's one we dismiss. I think it's one that, I think, logically people want to ask. Okay? And I think it's the people of Israel here in this text have a misnomer because they think they're good.

They think they've just avoided all the consequences here. But God is actually saying, we're going to lump you into this too because you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing either. They have a holier than thou attitude. The people of Malachi Verse 2, 17, believed it was time for God to dole out the punishment on all evil.

But they didn't realize they too had broken the law. They were not good. And this is the trap we fall into. People, all people, we even do it as Christians at times, we look at our lives and think, I am good compared to this person. And that is not the posture we should be taking. We should be taking our lives and saying, who am I compared to a holy God?

That's the comparison. So good people. Romans 3, 9 12 says, What then? Are the Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, this is all people, are under sin. As it is written, none is righteous.



Who's righteous? None. No one. Not one. No one understands. Paul's just to be clear, no one's righteous.

Not one. No one. No one understands. We got it? No one is righteous. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. Isaiah 64. 6, We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

A few months ago, my kids were doing a science project for their co op. And it was, let's see all the germs and bacteria on the different things we touch in life, okay? And they collected some samples. They took the swab, and they went to a doorknob. All right, and they went to a chair and a table and some other things.

They did a toilet seat. Let's be a little gross here. Okay, they're checking the toilet seat. None of those were the dirtiest things sampled. You want to know what the dirtiest thing, the grossest, nastiest thing? It was their cell, a cell phone. All right, so think of this for a moment. All right, everybody's like bleh, all right.

We touch this thing all the time. What any of us can look at and say it's not dirty. It's fine. But when you look at it, it's filthy. It's disgusting. You can deal with that how you want to, okay? And we look at it and say, it's fine, it's good. But God looks into it, like a microscope into our hearts, and looks past what everybody else thinks and says, This is gross!

It's disgusting! He can look at the inner parts of our hearts, and he looks at it and goes, Bleh! Like we would do if we saw the samples of what's on our cell phones. Worse than a toilet seat? We would never think that. And this is God saying, your heart, It's like a polluted garment. It's filthy. It's disgusting.

There is no good. The evidence is stacked against us. We stand in God's courtroom guilty and the doors to hell are wide open. A just judge must execute a just and deserving sentence. And he would be right in making it. And then we get to Malachi chapter 3 verse 1. And we see this wonderful word to open The chapter.

Behold. Can we say behold? Behold. This is a look. Take your eyes that are looking down and gaze up. Behold, I send my messenger. It is God's way of telling the people, you need to look up. I'm about to do something incredible here. Behold, I send my messenger. He's going to tell the people what his plan is.

What's really fascinating about this prophecy in chapter 3 is that for the people of Malachi, it's forward looking. It's all future. For us, we're right dab in the middle of it.



Because God has prepared the way for his impending judgment towards sinners. He's already set everything in motion. It's inevitable.

His judgment is inevitable. And he's going to send his messenger. to make the announcement that he's coming. Now, after, remember, after the book of Malachi, it appears to the people of Israel that God's gone quiet for over 400 years. That he has not spoken. So where did this messenger go? Is God gonna send his messenger?

Boy, does he. The next time God speaks to his people after Malachi will be through a messenger that he sends to prepare the way for his coming. That messenger's name is John the Baptizer. I love this. I love being on the other side of this story. Because the people in Israel are like, alright, where is he at?

And we're over here whoa, it already happens! So let's look at Luke chapter 7. Let's look at John the baptizer for a little bit. What then did you go out to see? Jesus is talking to his disciples. A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he, referring to John the baptizer, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.

John the baptizer shows up. He looks rough. He's dressed in camel hair. He eats wild honey and locusts. And he is telling the people, Listen, the Lord is coming. He is coming soon. You better be ready. He is coming. He's come to make things right. He is the messenger promised in Malachi chapter 3. That's his only job.

Proclaim the coming Messiah. And in John chapter 1, as John is preaching, this is a different John, by the way. This is the John who wrote the book is the disciple John. John the baptizer is two different people. John the baptizer is teaching, proclaiming that the Messiah is coming. And then stops in a moment.

The next day, he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, What? Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Look up, the plan is here. Look, that man right there, that's the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world. It's God's plan of justice, right before their very eyes. John the baptizer, this messenger, shows

us that God's plan is far bigger than we could ever realize. If you look at it in the verses in chapter 3, I will send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. And the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.



We actually, in this context, have two messengers. There's a messenger that is coming to proclaim the way of the Lord, and we have a second messenger. In this case, it is the Lord. Okay? So we have the messenger that's coming. Make way! The Lord is coming. The second messenger. Is the Lord and God is saying sarcastically here because these people are not doing this and I and the Lord whom you seek They're not seeking the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight They're not delighting in this Lord in this messenger.

He is coming says the Lord of hosts So God is saying okay, you want me to bring just you want me to bring justice on evildoers? I am here's the plan I'm going to send a messenger He's going to make a proclamation that someone else is coming who's going to deal with sinners.

Why is Jesus coming? Because he's drawing near to judgment. We see in verse 5. Malachi 3, 1 is intended to entice fear on evildoers against the Holy God. Growing up, as I'm in my room, waiting for my dad to come and deal with me, and you just don't know when it's gonna happen until you hear a Up the stairs, and I'm like, here we go.

You know that pit in your stomach? Am I the only one that ever got in trouble growing up? Alright, okay, I'm like, goodness, alright. It's coming.

And that's why Malachi says in verse 2, Who can stand? Who can endure his coming? Who can stand when he appears? It's a, it is a, it is an understanding that no one is able to do this when he comes. Who can stand as a sinner in the face of a holy judge? No one. He's like a refiner's fire in a fuller soap, it says.

No one can stand unless someone intervenes and wipes away the evidence that we are guilty. Jesus is purifying sinners and making them righteous. Jesus came to this earth and upheld the law perfectly. You go through those ten commandments, Jesus kept every one of them. Every one of them. Even when he got angry because people were corrupting the temple, he did it from a righteous heart.

He did nothing evil. He kept the law perfectly. And not once did Jesus walk around Man, I hope I didn't make God mad. I hope dad's okay. No, he walked around knowing that he was living in perfect communion in the law of God. He never got nervous when he walked around a Roman centurion. He was perfect.

This is what makes the cross of Jesus so powerful. As Jesus hung on the cross, beaten, bloodied, nailed, he was enduring the punishment that we deserved.



He had no sin in Him.

And He steps in and intervenes for us. All the judgment, all of the torment, all the excruciating punishment was poured out on Jesus as He died in our place. Colossians 2, 13-15 says, And you who were dead in your trespasses, In the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This, he set aside, nailing it to the cross. This is something we did not deserve.

You stand before a judge, you've done something wrong, you've been convicted, the evidence is there. There's no way you're getting out of it and the judge says, okay, I'm going to issue the punishment. And the punishment is death door's open. You're handcuffed, you're being sentenced. And it's not an unjust sentence. The judges looked at everything and said, you're guilty. This is the punishment you knew.

You break it. This is the, this is what happens. It's the death penalty. And as you are being led to your punishment in walks a man who says, hold on a second, hold on a second.

What if I stepped in and took his punishment? How would you feel in this moment? You're like, whoa, wait a second.

And the judge says, whoa, you've done nothing wrong. I'm looking at your file. It's empty. You're perfect. Clean slate. Says, yeah. Why do you want to step in for this person? Because I loved them.

And the judge says, okay, and sentenced this man to die in our place. And as we watch him ushered into his punishment, would we not see and behold wonderful grace and mercy? That we deserve that. But a man intervened for us, died for us so that we could live. And the judge says, okay, you've seen this punishment played out.

You're free to go. How ridiculous of it would for us to say I don't really believe that happens. The judge by says, by faith, this is what's happened. You're free to go. Unshackled, we walk out a free man or woman.

Our slate has been wiped clean. How would that just, can you see the weight being lifted off there? As you walk freely out the doors, rejoicing because a man stood in



your place, this is what Jesus has done for us. In our sin, we deserve death, but he came to purify sinners and make them righteous.

He has made a way to set mankind free. In saving you, look at what Jesus has done. The second half of verse 2. Jesus purifies us. We get a refiner's fire, as mentioned. This is, it is getting rid of all the impurities. It is making it something beautiful. It was disgusting and broken and unclean and now a refiner's fire is getting rid of all that.

It's burning out all of it, making something beautiful. And then we get a fuller soap. Now this is, I had to do some study on this one. Here's what this is referring to. And the image is important here. This is not just your normal laundry detergent. This was a type of soap that was intended to get rigorous stains out.

Everything else couldn't remove that. This was intended to get rigorous stains out, and then a fuller would come by with a stick, lay this garment over, covered in this soap, and just beat the stains out of it. This is what Jesus is doing to us. This is what it means to be purified. He is refining us and removing the impurities.

He is cleaning us up of all of our sin and this is the joy of salvation, right? Can we not see this over time? That wow, Lord has really refined me a little bit and he's got more work to do. There's still some things I'm dealing with here. It is. It is harsh, but it is good. He's purifying. For himself, a people, zealous for good works, as Titus 2.

Man, what a good process the Lord is doing in us. I can look around the room and I can see just, hey, knowing some of you for just, even for a few moments, and some of you for years. And having conversations, I'm like, man, three years ago, that would not have been your response. But now, because of the Lord's purifying work in you, man, He's removing those anxiousness, worries, and fears, because He is making you into something beautiful because of His work that longs to trust Him.

This is the Lord's work in us, and it's a continual work. Now, I'm thankful here, I don't know what the next year holds for my life, right? I got plans, got some things on the calendar. But here's what I know, the Lord is working in me continually. And even so much Philippians 1 tells me that He who began the work is going to complete it.

One day, one day in the future. I will stand before Jesus, the one who died for me. I will look at his scars, his hands, and on his feet. And I will understand I have been fully purified because of what he has done. He has gotten rid of all the sin, all the impurities, he's dealt with it. This is what Jesus is doing in us.



And Jesus also produces a pleasing righteousness in us. You see these priests, the Levites, they are now offering a pleasing righteousness to the Lord. We're no longer filthy rags. Clean,

pure, perfect because of Jesus. Now, this does not mean we are all perfect right now, okay? There is this misnomer that once you become a Christian, you no longer deal with sin. That's not true, alright? If it were true, then all of us would be like I got some things I gotta figure out here, okay? Because I'm still fighting this.

Anybody else fighting their, just sinful flesh here? Okay, thank you. Alright, I'm starting to feel alone today with all my discussions of my own sin, alright? But we're all working through this. The Lord is just purifying us and making us more like himself. This does not mean I am without sin. It just means that the power of Christ reigns in my life, not the power of sin.

And one day, the power of sin is going to be just destroyed and put to death. But now, I look at my life and I don't see, God doesn't see sin. He sees the righteousness of Jesus. I just mean Jesus. Protects us. Purifies us. He produces a pleasing righteousness in us, and he protects us. Now this is not a he protects us from the boogeyman type of protection, right?

This is a, he protects us from the wrath and judgment of God. Far greater than any boogeyman. When God looks at those who by faith have believed in the finished work of Jesus Christ, He does not see a sinner, He sees the righteousness of His Son. Romans 5, 6 9. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one would scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare to even die. But God shows his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have not been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

God looks at our lives and sees the righteousness of Jesus. Not by our own works. We can't clean ourselves up. There's nothing we could do to wipe the slate clean. It is all Jesus. Jesus purifies us. Jesus produces this pleasing righteousness in us. He protects us. So here's how I look at this. You've been freed from your sentence.

The judge has let you go. You are free. No longer condemned. You go about your business. You go to Publix, a couple weeks later, you have a new life, that old life's gone. And you're just getting some groceries, and you turn the aisle, and you see the judge. Now, because we're still working through this, the first response is



probably Oh no, he's gonna realize he made a mistake, and he's gonna lock me up right here.

But this judge does not do this. He does not see us as a criminal, he sees us as a free citizen. Man, it's good to see ya. I'm glad you're enjoying this freedom that you have. Too often we think That God looks at us and just is so angry that he's going to condemn us to hell again. And while we do not live perfectly, and while God is still working in us and purifying us, He looks at us as His sons and daughters.

Because He sees the righteousness and the finished work of Jesus in us. Yes, He wants us to live into freedom. Yes, I think He still at times grows frustrated when we don't do this. And yes, there are times we have to repent. At times, I say, like, all the time, it feels as we seek to be more like Jesus.

The judge does not look at us and say, Sinner. See, a good and righteous and merciful judge, who sees that Jesus paid the punishment for us, looks at us, those who by faith have believed in him, and says, that's my son. So glad to see them. See, the gospel, I saw this quote this past weekend, it's so good. The gospel of Jesus.

The good news that Jesus died for sinners, rose again conquering sin and death. The gospel changes heaven's courtroom from a criminal trial to an adoption ceremony.

This is the love and mercy of God towards sinners. Through grace we are saved and when we believe by faith that Jesus died for us and his righteousness covers us.

Romans 8, 1 through 4, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death for God has done what the law Weakened by the flesh could not do by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh In order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh But according to the Spirit I think too many of us often live our lives as if we are still condemned instead of living in the freedom that we have because of Jesus who frees us to Love the way He loves.

Frees us to set aside our pride and live in humility. It's the fruits of the Spirit laid out. Patience. Faithfulness. God is doing this purifying work in us. And here's why it matters that God's righteousness protects us. Because God will punish those who do not fear Him. In verse 5 we see a list of things God says, My judgment is coming.

It is at hand. If you look closely, Malachi 3, 2 through 5, are all future related. Fact, here's what's really cool about this passage. We've got a past, on this side of the



cross, a past work of Jesus. He sent John the baptizer. We have a present work of Jesus. He's purifying himself for people with righteousness.

And we have a future work of Jesus, meaning judgment is coming. This passage actually refers to the second time Jesus comes. The time where he's going to come.

And we'll not be bringing peace.

Instead, we will all stand before the righteous judge. None of us are exempt from this. Everybody who's ever walked this earth will stand before holy God in the courtroom of heaven. And God's gonna see one or two things. He's gonna see your sin, or he's gonna see Jesus.

And if you place your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, one day you'll stand before God. And yes, we'll have to give an account for everything we did. At the end of that conversation, the righteous judge does not say off the hell you go. He looks at us and says, you belong to me because of Jesus.

You're free to enter eternal life in heaven.

Second Corinthians 5:10 says, where we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. I read this text and here's why this is such a tough text to navigate and deal with. I know because of Jesus and his righteousness, my hope is in eternity in heaven.

But I look out and I see a lot of people who do not have that hope. It's why we are to be bold missionaries as we proclaim the gospel. That message is a message of life and death. It's a message for you here today who have not believed. It's a message of life for you. It's a reminder that we are not to live holier than thou, and judgmental towards people who may not even know who Jesus is, but to champion the message of the gospel.

Because if it were not for Jesus, we would be in their shoes as well, would we not?

It's a reminder that one day everything we are dealing with

will be made new because of Jesus. That he is a merciful and good and just God. I read a story this past week, a man named Richard Lee Tabler, 2007, who was convicted of a capital murder for killing two people. He later confessed to killing two other women. He was sentenced to die on February 13th, 2025. So this past week, as his sentence was coming, he was given his opportunity to share his last words.



And he says this. There is not a day that goes by that I don't regret my actions. I had no right to take your loved ones from you. And I ask and pray, hope and pray that one day you will find it in your hearts to forgive me for those actions. No amount of my apologies will ever return them to you. And if you feel that this is what you need to get closure, I pray it helps you have that closure.

Just hope that one day you will find that forgiveness to forgive me for taking your loved ones from you. I am deeply sorry. To my mom, my sister, my niece, my friends, my family, I love you. This isn't the end. This is only the beginning. Everybody back at the Polonsky unit filled ministers and everybody there.

Thank you for your love and support and your compassion and allowing me the opportunity to show you that a person can change and become a better man. I thank God for allowing me to seek him out. And finding him and show that this isn't about me. We are all here today because of my actions, but in the end, it comes down to God, praising him and giving honor to him.

I have accepted Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior years ago, and I just want you guys to know how deeply sorry I am. But I know when this happens and this goes through, it's going to be the end of this life. It'll be the beginning of my ultimate life in heaven. I'm sorry. And as Philippians 121 says, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

With that said, word and strong, thank you, I am finished. I read this story and just this man who had committed these awful crimes but in, through the course of prison, had come to faith in Jesus Christ. And not just a final, I hope I get this right before I die. This was a Life transformation only possible because of Jesus.

He still faced the consequences of his earthly actions. But he fully knew that his death was the worst thing that was going to happen to him because of Jesus. One day we're all going to, whether it's in a, hopefully not in this situation. But one day we are going to close our eyes in death. For the Christian, there's nothing to fear.

It's the worst thing we'll probably ever go through. Because when we open our eyes, we will behold the Savior. whose righteousness covers us, but for those outside of Christ and why we are to be gospel champions and proclaim the gospel of hope. Death is not the final thing, the worst thing that they will face.

They will stand before a holy God who will sentence them to eternal punishment and why we should leave here in all of God's mercy towards centers because he is rich in mercy. He has saved us. And why as we leave here in all of God's mercy, we proclaim that same grace and mercy to those who do not know him.



Because as Malachi chapter 3 says, judgment's coming, but because of Jesus we can all stand ready before a holy judge, knowing our lives are secure in his hands.

