

Malachi 2:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. The indictment returns to current priests. **Ye are departed out of the way** (וַאֲתֵם סָרְתֶּם, ve'attem sarterem min-hadderekh)—סור (sur, depart/turn aside) indicates apostasy. They abandoned God's way. Worse, **ye have caused many to stumble at the law** (הִקְשַׁלְתֶּם רַבִּים בַּתּוֹרָה, hikhshaltem rabbim battorah). The verb קָשַׁל (kashal, stumble/fall) in Hiphil (causative) means they made others stumble. Their false teaching led people into sin.

Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi (שִׁחַתְתֶּם בְּרִית הַלְוִי, shihattem berit haLevi)—שָׁחַת (shahat, corrupt/ruin/destroy) indicates they violated the Levitical covenant. What God established for life and peace (v. 5), they corrupted for personal gain. Teachers who lead others astray face severe judgment (Matthew 18:6, James 3:1). The priests' corruption had generational consequences—they caused many to stumble, multiplying guilt.

Historical Context

The prophets consistently condemned false teachers who led Israel astray (Jeremiah 23:1-2, Ezekiel 34:1-10). When spiritual leaders corrupt doctrine or live wickedly, their influence multiplies evil throughout the community. By Malachi's time, generations had been affected by priestly corruption. Jesus would later

confront scribes and Pharisees for similar failures—teaching human traditions as divine commandments, laying heavy burdens on people while refusing to bear them (Matthew 23:1-36). The warning remains urgent: those who teach bear special accountability for the souls under their care (Hebrews 13:17). False teachers face stricter judgment (James 3:1, 2 Peter 2:1-3).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does departing from God's way inevitably lead to causing others to stumble?
2. What does it mean to 'corrupt the covenant,' and what are the consequences?
3. How should the severity of judgment on false teachers shape both the calling of pastors and the discernment of congregations?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲתֵם H859	סָרְתֶּם But ye are departed H5493	מִן H4480	הַדֶּרֶךְ out of the way H1870	הַכְשִׁלְתֶּם to stumble H3782		
רַבִּים ye have caused many H7227	בְּתוֹךְ הַ at the law H8451	שִׁחַתְתֶּם ye have corrupted H7843	בְּרִית the covenant H1285	הַלֵּוִי of Levi H3878	אֵם saith H559	
יְהוָה the LORD H3068	צְבָאוֹת: of hosts H6635					

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 13:29 (Covenant): Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

Jeremiah 18:15 (Parallel theme): Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

Isaiah 30:11 (Parallel theme): Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Jeremiah 17:5 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

Ezekiel 44:10 (Parallel theme): And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.

Malachi 2:5 (Covenant): My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

1 Samuel 2:17 (References Lord): Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.