

Malachi 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

Analysis

Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law. God's judgment matches the crime. **I also made you contemptible and base** (וְשַׁפְּלִים וְנִבְזִים אֶתְכֶם נָתַתִּי וְגַם־אֲנִי, vegam-ani natatti etkhem nivzim ushfelim)—**base** (nivzeh, contemptible/despised) and **base** (shafel, base/lowly) describe public humiliation. The priests who despised God's name (1:6) are themselves despised. **Before all the people** (לְכֹל־הָעָם, lekhol-ha'am)—their shame is public, not private.

The reason: **according as ye have not kept my ways** (כִּי אֵינְכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת־דְּרָכָי, ki einekhem shomerim et-derakhai). They failed to guard God's ways as they should have guarded knowledge (v. 7). Worse, **ye have been partial in the law** (וְנִשְׂאִים וְנִתְּוָה נִשְׂאֵי פָנִים, venoseim panim battorah). **lift up face** (nasa panim, lift up face) means showing partiality or favoritism. They twisted Torah to favor the powerful while oppressing the weak—the exact opposite of God's justice (Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 1:17, 16:19).

This principle operates throughout history: those who exalt themselves are humbled; those who humble themselves are exalted (Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:14, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).

Historical Context

Priestly corruption in Malachi's time included favoritism—accepting bribes, showing partiality to the wealthy, oppressing the poor. This violated explicit Torah commands against partiality in judgment (Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 16:18-20). When spiritual leaders become political operatives serving powerful interests rather than God's truth, they forfeit divine blessing and public respect. Jesus condemned similar partiality in Pharisees who devoured widows' houses while making long prayers (Luke 20:47). James warned churches against favoritism based on wealth (James 2:1-9). God's justice requires impartiality; His judgment falls on those who twist it for personal gain.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does showing partiality in applying God's word corrupt ministry and bring divine judgment?
2. What does it mean that God made the priests 'contemptible' in proportion to their contempt for Him?
3. How should church leaders guard against favoritism toward the wealthy, powerful, or influential?

Interlinear Text

וְגַם	אֲנִי	נָתַתִּי	אֶתְכֶם	נִבְזִים	וְשָׁפְלִים
H1571	H589	H5414	H853	H959	H8217
		Therefore have I also made		you contemptible	and base
לְכָל	הָעָם	כַּפִּי	אֲשֶׁר	אֵינְכֶם	שָׁמַרְתִּים
H3605	H5971	H6310	H834	H369	H8104
	before all the people	according			as ye have not kept
אֶת	דְּרָכָי	וְנִשְׁאָרִים	פָּנַי	בַּתּוֹכָה:	
H854	H1870	H5375	H6440	H8451	
	my ways	but have been partial		in the law	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 1:17 (Parallel theme): Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

1 Samuel 2:30 (Parallel theme): Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Luke 10:29 (Parallel theme): But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

Luke 11:42 (Parallel theme): But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Galatians 2:6 (Parallel theme): But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Ezekiel 13:21 (Parallel theme): Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

1 Kings 22:28 (Parallel theme): And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.

Malachi 2:8 (Word): 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.

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