

Staying Warm in a Cold, Cold World – Malachi 3:16-17

I. Introduction:

- A. It has been cold for a couple days, with the temperature dropping to below zero, and the wind has is blowing.
 - 1. Right now the world is a cruel place in which to live without something to keep us warm.
 - 2. There are legitimate concerns about people freezing to death
 - 3. Despite the conditions, there are some outdoor things which must be faced head-on.
 - a. We may have to walk down the block or out to the street to get the mail.
 - b. The snow must be shoveled off the pathway. There are birds who demand some food.
 - 4. So what do we do to get things done?
 - 5. We cope. We put on extra clothing. We glove our hands. We cover our faces.
- B. Even though some don't think about it: ours is a cold, cold world spiritually.
 - 1. The Prince of the power of the air is gearing up for his final assault upon the dominion of God.
 - 2. Satan is setting up the world to willingly follow the next great charismatic cult leader.
 - 3. He has his Anti-Christ waiting in the wings, and there is a blizzard of cold, blinding confusion swirling around him.
 - 4. We have an air inversion of wicked governments, deadly viruses, rampant vices, and a sad, sad society.
- C. It may not have been as bad in Malachi's day as it is today, but God's saints at that time may have thought so.
 - 1. The priests were corrupt and the people, generally speaking, had lost their spiritual edge.
 - 2. The politics of the day was in sad shape as was the economy.
 - 3. And the hope which the refugees had when they left Persia had all but evaporated.
 - 4. The Messiah had not yet arrived and they were beginning to doubt what they had been taught.
 - 5. But there were still a few stalwarts of the faith huddled around the prophet of God.
 - 6. And the God of that prophet knew their hearts and their names.
- D. There are dozens of ways to examine the two verses before us this evening, but we must pick one.
 - 1. We could also separate and study in detail the constituent parts of these verses, & we might do that later.
 - 2. But tonight, let's just make an overview.
 - 3. How can we stay spiritually warm in a cold, spiritless world?
 - 4. Let's fuel the fear, converse of Christ, think the theology, remember the relationship & hold forth the hope.

II. Our text suggests that we begin by **FUELING** the **FEAR**.

- A. I don't know about you, but I am staggered by the fear which I have seen in the unbelievers I've met recently.
 - 1. But what is really sad is that those fears are for the most part in the wrong things.
 - 2. Rather than fearing their increasingly dictatorial governments, they fear what the government is telling them about this and that.
 - 3. Rather than fearing the Great White Throne of God, they fear an almost infinitesimal virus.
- B. But it's not these fears, or any other kind of secular fear, to which I refer.
 - 1. Malachi mentions *"the fear of the LORD."*
 - 2. Even God's saints need to stoke the fires of the fear of the LORD.
 - 3. We live so close to the gutters and outhouses of this world that it is hard not to be overcome by the stench.
 - 4. And for that reason we need to purpose and strive to look toward Heaven, remembering it is only from there that we can find help and peace in this world.
 - 5. Why does Paul tell us in **Colossians** to set our affection on things above and not on things of the earth?
 - 6. Isn't it because the things of the earth constantly pull our eyes, minds and hearts downward?
- C. I remind you that the *"fear of the LORD"* speaks of reverence, awe, love and the worship of Jehovah.
 - 1. For the child of God, there is no longer any terror of God; only respect and service.
 - 2. But as we all know, our relationship with the Lord can become too familiar, too mechanical, too common.

3. As I say the *“fear of the LORD”* is all about reverence, awe and love, and such things don’t come naturally to our corrupted minds and flesh.
4. If we want to live above the world, then we need to deliberately work at it, regularly focusing on the Lord.

III. And more specifically, we need to regularly **CONVERSE** of **CHRIST**.

A. *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another.”*

1. Is this saying that the faithful souls in Jerusalem, forsook not the assembling of themselves together?
2. How extremely important this is to the child of God.
3. Look at poor Elijah, hiding by the Brook Cherith all alone with no other human being to talk with.
4. Does his spirit rise up to heaven as he is alone in his fellowship with God?
5. We could argue that he should have been at his spiritual best with nothing except his growling stomach to distract him, but that was not the case.
6. And despite our arguments to the contrary, I imagine we’d follow him right down if we were in his sandals.
7. We **need** to fellowship with other like-minded believers to maintain our spiritual vitality.

B. Of what do you suppose those saints of God spoke?

1. It wasn’t which team was going to make it through the playoffs or when the weather would break.
2. It wasn’t about who they would next vote into the governor’s palace.
3. I am going to say that they spoke of the LORD whom they feared.
4. When they talked about current events, like inflation or the plague, it was in the context of divine promises.
5. Knowing how prone we are to discouragement and depression, we should assume that the hearts of others can fail as easily as our own.
6. And with that in mind, we should strive to lift our neighbors with talk of the things of God.

IV. Even more specifically, those brethren were **THINKING** and speaking **THEOLOGICALLY**.

A. *“Then they that feared the LORD ... and that thought upon his name... spake often one to another...”*

1. *“They thought upon the name of God.”*
2. Here is a lesson about the importance of regular attendance upon the preaching of God’s word.
3. To the man who has just walked in off the street, *“thinking upon God’s name,”* probably refers to somehow analyzing the theological differences between *“El”* and *“Elohim,”* or studying out all the *“Jehovah-Jireh”* and *“Jehovah-Tsidkenu”* of the Word of God.
4. But I hope you all remember that the *“name of God”* speaks about of more than God’s name or appellation.

B. Thinking upon the LORD’S name refers to contemplations about theology – the study of God Himself.

1. It is the consideration of everything about the Lord from His character and attributes to His promises and prophecies.
2. To think properly about God’s name is to meditate and visualize God seated upon His judgment throne in the future and contemplating what took place at the time of creation.
3. There is no greater and exhausting subject than the Lord, and we should be studying Him.

V. And perhaps taking that a step higher, we need to remember our **RELATIONSHIP** to this omnipotent God.

A. *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: & the LORD hearkened, & heard it, & a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.”*

1. When the Lord earlier said to the wicked, *“Your words have been stout against me,”* they replied pleading ignorance.
2. But the fact is: the omniscient God hears every conversation, every muttered curse, and even the unspoken conversation of the heart.
3. And the Lord’s intel is not just confined to the wicked.
4. *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: & the LORD hearkened, & heard it.”*

- B. The Lord is listening to His saints.
1. We pray because we know the Lord hears our prayers.
 2. But He also hears our wordless moan, and He knows the language of our tears.
 3. He hears the joy in your voice as you talk with other Christians about what God has promised.
 4. He may enjoy doctrinal discussions even more than the theologians, especially when they come from the non-theologians.
 5. If I might say so, He loves to hear you defend creation and what the Bible says about the flood.
 6. And when you read David's love letters to God your heart warms, the Lord knows.
 7. When God's Word is declared and when people discuss it later, the Lord hearkens.
- C. And He has commissioned His seraphs to record and save what we say and do.
1. Well, I don't know that it's seraphs who do the scribing, but anthropomorphically, *a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*"
 2. As you know, *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad."*
 3. **II Corinthians 5:10** suggests that the Lord is aware of how we have spent our lives in this dark and cold world.
 4. There is no reason for us to be filled with gloom and doom.

VI. And in that regard **HOLD ON** to the **HOPE** which the Lord has given you.

- A. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*
1. Some day soon, the Lord of hosts will make up His jewels, separating them from the black coal and hard granite.
 2. *"And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."*
- B. Do you remember what was on the shoulders of Israel's High Priest?
1. **Exodus 28:9:** *"And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: a. Six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. b. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. c. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial."*
 2. Metaphorically speaking, our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, our Saviour, has graven the names of all His people on some eternal material.
 3. Then He has set them in ouches of gold, placing them on his broad shoulders and into the breastplate over His heart.
 4. And one of these days, very soon, He will take all those jewels into the most precious place in His heavenly palace.
 5. Those of you know the Saviour, can rest and rejoice in that blessed and guaranteed hope.
 6. It is not a wish; it is a Biblical hope.
 7. *"And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."*
 8. *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."*

VII. Conclusion

- A. Again, what can God's people do during these last days to cheer our hearts and keep us moving forward?
1. We can fuel the fear of the Lord.
 2. We can deliberately converse of Christ, meditating on Him.
 3. And we can rejoice in our relationship to Him, lifting high the hope He has given to us.