

The Body of Christ  
"Faces Down"  
11/19/17

-Parent/Child Dedication

-Why?

- Hanah, in the Old Testament, asked God for a son and vowed to give him back to the Lord.
- We as parents, do not own our children.
  - As in all things, they are on loan from the Lord.
- Because of that, we gladly dedicate them and offer them to the Lord.
- When we do that, we are also offering ourselves to the Lord as

well.

-What?

- Certificate to mark this day
- Bible
- Parenting book that will help you
- Letter to be opened on the day your child accepts the salvation of God through Jesus.

-Who?

- Chris Cahill, our children's pastor, will read the names of those who are coming today.

-Wham!

- Charge to parents and congregation.

-Pray:

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-Announcements:

- Stuff the Stocking
- Bridge Global Christmas Catalog
- CC/OFF/GIFT

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-Intro:

- As we are talking about "The Body of Christ," the local church, what should be the unique distinction that separates the local church from every other entity and organization?

-The Pleasure and Presence of God

-Other places can have gifted musicians and talented speakers

- But, God has promised His Spirit to His Bride, the local church.

-**Matthew 18:20** (NLT) For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."

- That's why no other place in the world should be like the local church as the submitted Saints of God gather in His Name.

-God gave me a great love of the local church when I was very little.

-What I loved most about my church is that you could tangibly feel the presence of God.

- They prayed.
- The Word of God was upheld and obeyed
- They were genuine and real and had an earnest desire for holiness.
- They longed for the presence of God.

-Pastors from all over would stop in to our services and pray, "Lord, make my church like this church."

- It wasn't anything that we could take credit for.
- There was just a hunger to know Jesus at any cost.

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-You know when you are in the presence of the Lord.

- When the invisible Christ becomes visible.
- Tears begin to flow.
- Sense of being undone (because you are in the presence of Deity).
- Confession of sin.

-What I call it: FACE DOWN

- Do you know what's lacking in many churches today?
- The presence of God that puts you FACE DOWN before Him.

-We have churches that are polished and programmed and going through the motions.  
-What they lack is the power of God and the Presence of the Living God.

-I don't want to go on in the Christian life unless I can continue FACE DOWN

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-Passage that captures what God wants done in His people and in His body.

-**Malachi 3:1-4** (NLT) 1 "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

2 "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes.

3 He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.

4 Then once more the LORD will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.

-Notice what it says in vs 1: "Then the Lord you are seeking, will suddenly come to his Temple.

(1) **Preparation**

-Every time the Lord wanted to appear to His people, He told them to prepare.

-**Exodus 19:9-11** (NLT) Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will come to you in a thick cloud, Moses, so the people themselves can hear me when I speak with you. Then they will always trust you." Moses told the LORD what the people had said.

10 Then the LORD told Moses, "Go down and prepare the people for my arrival. Consecrate them today and tomorrow, and have them wash their clothing.

11 Be sure they are ready on the third day, for on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai as all the people watch.

-What is involved in preparation?

(1) **Inward**

-You begin to agree with God about sin.

-You begin to say that you are living for the Lordship of Jesus and nothing else.

(2) **Outward**

-Relationships getting right

-Forgiveness being extended.

(3) **Upward**

-vs 1: "Then the Lord you are seeking..."

-There is hungering for God, not what He can provide or the gifts that He gives but for Him.

-Not for His hands but for His heart.

-There has to be preparation before there is appearing.

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(2) **Purification**

-**Malachi 3:2-3** (NLT) "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes.

3 He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.

-"Who will be able to stand and face Him?"

-No one.

-Encounters with the holiness of God in the Bible

-**Revelation 1:17** (NLT) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last.

-**Daniel 10:9** (NLT) Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

-**Ezekiel 3:23** (NLT) So I got up and went, and there I saw the glory of the LORD, just as I had seen in my first vision by the Kebar River. And I fell face down on the ground.

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-Notice further how God is described:

He is described as a “blazing fire,” “a strong soap,” a “refiner” “burning away the dross”

-What is He referring to?

-God purifying His people.

-Listen, God always deals with our sin.

-He will deal with nothing else until He deals with our sin.

-God’s presence always leads to that end and it’s magnified.

-Not just one little area here or there but the total area.

-Notice with whom He starts with in this purification process:

**-Malachi 3:3** (NLT) He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.

-Who were the Levites?

-Priests—the leaders of God’s people (pastors, elders, those in authority over God’s people).

-God always deals with this group first

-Notice who is next:

**-Malachi 3:4** (NLT) Then once more the LORD will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.

-After the leaders, God visits the rest of the people in the church

-Notice who is last to be dealt with:

**-Malachi 3:5** (NLT) “At that time I will put you on trial. I am eager to witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

-It’s the wicked people around them.

-It’s the people that we think should be dealt with first

-Crooked politicians, violent and gross sinners.

-These are the last people on God’s list...He deals with His people first.

**\*The country will never be right until the church is right.**

-Notice where preparation and purification lead.

**-Malachi 3:3** (NLT) He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD.

-So that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord.

-It is not to consume them and destroy them but to purify them and give them life so that God can visit them in power.

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-Can I tell you something?

-God longs to do that for His people.

-**Malachi 3:6-7a** (NLT) “I am the LORD, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed.

7a Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

-God says, “Return to Me, and I will return to you.”

-That’s what God wants for His church.

-Return to Me

-Make Me your first love

-Set your sights to make Me #1, make me Lord of all.

-May He hear us say: **I WILL RETURN TO YOU!**

-No matter where the 4 walls of our church are, This is what I want, the tangible presence of the Living God.

-For God’s face to be in the direction toward us.

-Oh how the churches in this nation need the presence of God.

-**He longs to bring us to a FACE DOWN position.**

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-Notice how the generation in Malachi’s day responded to this offer:

-**Malachi 3:7a** (NLT) “But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’

-“God, I’m good.” “I don’t need anything from You.” “Nothing’s wrong”

-So many people are content to live their lives without the presence and power of God.

-So many churches do the same.

-May that never be us.

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-Conclusion

-Are you preparing?

-Inward? Outward? Upward?

-Are you pure?

-Acceptable offering from a pure and holy bride.

-Return to Me and I will return to you.

-Do you say, “Yes, Lord, I’m coming?”

-or “How can I return when I’ve never gone away?”

-Bridge Group Questions:

(1) What stood out to you most about this week’s message?

(2) Did you have a good experience with your local church growing up? Did the presence of God mark your church?

(3) Have you encountered the presence of God? What did you feel?

(4) When was the last time you were facedown before Him?

(5) When God says to you, "Return to Me," what part of your heart needs to return to Him? What are you holding on to that you are not allowing Him to have?