

## **Respect**

Mal. 1:6-9

### Introduction:

1. Respect. It is something that we all enjoy receiving.
2. When we are disrespected we feel diminished and of no value. It eats at the very core of our understanding of ourselves.
3. Disrespect someone and they become angry and may be willing to fight.
4. Disrespect God and it leads to judgment. Disrespect the government and there are consequences.
5. Disrespect destroys families, churches and communities.
6. What does the Bible say? How can I respect someone whose behavior is disrespectful? How should I respond when I feel disrespected? These are a few of the questions we will struggle with in this lesson.

### Discussion:

- I. In the text we have just read God acknowledges the disrespect that He has received from the priests of Israel.
  - A. He asks, "Where is My honor? Where is My respect" (Temor, in español. It is the fear associated with respect and reverence. See Mal. 1:14.).
  - B. This passage helps us define what respect is.
    1. It is the honor a son shows to his father.
    2. It is the respect shown to a Master.
    3. Disrespect in this case involved "despising God's name," as in presenting the blind and the lame and the sick for sacrifice.
  - C. The passage identifies various relationships where respect is appropriate.
    1. In a child's relationship to their parents. The ten commandments said, "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12).
    2. In one's relationship to the governor. Rom. 13:1ff defines government as a minister of God for good. 1 Pet. 2:13ff calls on Christians to submit to the king and governors as instruments of God and concludes that we should, "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king" (v. 17).
    3. And, of course, in one's relationship to God. It is this relationship that is the foundation of all the rest. Our respect for the Lord demands respect in all other relationships.
- II. The dictionary identifies two different uses of the word "respect."
  - A. "A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements."
    1. Examples of this kind of respect.
      - a. "I respect the artistic ability of Cesar Romero."
      - b. "I respect those who can speak both Spanish and English."
      - c. "I respect what the Lord has done in sacrificing Himself for me."

2. In each of these examples there is some outstanding ability or behavior that impresses me and so I admire or respect that.
  3. This kind of respect is earned.
- B. "Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights or traditions of others."
1. "Due regard" implies a respect that is inherently appropriate. This respect does not have to be earned. It is due, nevertheless!
  2. The Lord has done many good things for us and we should respect Him for that, but we should respect Him just because of who He is. He is our Creator. He deserves "due regard."
  3. We should respect and value other human beings because they are created in the image of God and are inherently valuable (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6). Thus, we should not commit homicide or diminish their value in any way (Matt. 5:21-26). Instead we should respect them with love and graciousness (Matt. 5:43-48).
  4. This is not a respect that must be earned. It is inherent in the value that God has placed upon us.
  5. Governors are to be respected. Elders are to be respected. Husbands are to be respected. Parents are to be respected. They are to be respected because of the roles that God has assigned them. They do not always act perfectly. It is nice when they act well and we can respect them because of their behavior. But God calls on us to give "due regard" because of the role assignment He has given them.

### III. These two different uses of the concept of respect are evident throughout Scripture.

- A. There are a variety of Hebrew and Greek terms translated with the word "respect" in the English (and similarly in the Spanish). (It is too complex for us to try to work through 3-4 languages to understand this. So I will try to summarize.)
1. The biblical languages use terms that mean, "to show reverence," "to fear, i.e., to be in awe of," "to have regard for."
  2. Biblical language acknowledges the same differences in the use of "respect" as our modern dictionaries.
    - a. For example, Lev. 19:32 says, "You shall rise up before the gray-headed and honor the aged." This respect is to be granted, not because they have earned it, but because of the inherent value that God places on them.
    - b. Earned respect is referred to in 1 Tim. 3:2 when it says that overseers are to be respectable. (In La Biblia de las Américas it is translated "de conducta decorosa," "of decent conduct.")
    - c. The wife of 1 Pet. 3:2 works to win her husband who is disobedient to the word by her "respectful behavior." In other words, she wins the husband's respect by being respectful, and so the husband is softened to the word of the Lord.
- B. The Scripture also recognizes that our tendency is to be disrespectful when we feel disrespected.
1. This is really hard for me. When I think I am being treated disrespectfully I want to act disrespectfully to the person who has disrespected me. Put me down and I want to put you down only worse!
  2. Jesus addressed this in His Sermon on the Mount. Note Matt. 5:38-48.
    - a. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21) was

designed to make the punishment fit the crime. It was not designed that we might take revenge on the person who disrespected us.

- b. Instead we are to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile. In other words when we are disrespected we should be gracious!!
  - c. Jesus continues, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven."
    - 1) Now that's hard.
    - 2) My enemy and my persecutor disrespects me and I am to respect him anyway? Exactly!
    - 3) Who is it that God has sacrificed His son for, but us who were disrespecting Him (Rom. 5:6-8)?
3. In three of the gospel accounts Jesus presents a parable of a landowner who had rented out his vineyard to vine-growers. When the landowner sent slaves to receive his produce the vine-growers beat one slave, killed another and stoned a third. Disrespectful would you not say? Disrespectful to the servants and the landowner! He thought, "They will respect my son." But when the son came they killed him in order to receive his inheritance. Who are we to be like? Certainly not like these disrespectful vine-growers who killed and destroyed. We are instead to be respectful like God, the owner of the vineyard.

IV. It is a hard lesson but Scripture teaches us to act respectfully even toward those who are being disrespectful to us.

- A. Servants are to be submission to their masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable (1 Pet. 2:18).
- B. Wives are to be submissive to their own husbands even when those husbands are disobedient to the word. The objective of winning the husband is enhanced by the chaste and respectful behavior of their wives (1 Pet. 3:1-2).
- C. This does not mean that God intends His people to be taken advantage of. He has instituted the governing authorities to protect the rights of the innocent.
  1. Not suggesting that abuse should be ignored, nor that anyone allow themselves to be abused.
  2. But grace is a powerful tool to change hearts.
  3. God's grace to us is what softened our hearts to Him.
  4. And so 1 Pet. 2:21ff reminds us that Christ left an example for us to follow. While reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.
  5. He reminds us to "be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for this very purpose" (1 Pet. 3:8-9).
- D. Even though we are treated disrespectfully, we do not have the right to be disrespectful. We may object . . .
  1. "I am not going to respect my parents because they were not good parents."
  2. "I can't respect the elders, because they made a poor judgment."
  3. "I don't respect my husband, because he is not a good spiritual leader."
  4. How are you going to change that? We were changed by God's gracious response to us.

He respected us when we didn't deserve respect. And now we have come to respect Him. Respecting others, even when it is undeserved changes their hearts. Not every time, but it a powerful tool toward change.

Conclusion:

1. Respect the Lord!
2. Respect the government, your leaders, your parents, your children.
3. Respect your husband; respect your wife (1 Pet. 3:7b).
4. Respect the person who disrespects you in the church and in the world and you will be children of your heavenly Father who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. There on the cross the respect He shows us, meets head-on the disrespect we have shown Him, and respect is victorious!