



***‘Acceptance...
is a simple recognition
of the truth that this is
the way things are
in this moment.’***

John Kirkwood

Acceptance, Malachi 3:16-17

Acceptance

- C.G. Jung, “The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely.”
- Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, “Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.”

Pool of Bethesda

- **John 5:2-6 NLT**, 2 Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. 3 Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. 5 One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”
 - Greek - “Do you want to be made whole?”

Pool of Bethesda

- Isn't that a funny question to ask someone like this?
 - It's like asking a starving person if they want bread
 - Or an addict if they want delivered from their addiction
 - Notice, Jesus is asking this person permission to heal him

Pool of Bethesda

- We walk around a mere shell of who God intends us to be because we refuse to come to the One who can bind up our brokenness - Why?
 - We grow comfortable in our mess
 - In some shape, form, or fashion we form an identity around our pain, victimhood, or bitterness

Pool of Bethesda

- This identity settles into the cracks, and we see ourselves through the lenses of our brokenness:
 - I'm rejected, I'm an addict, I'm not loved, I'm unwanted, I'm abused, I'm a victim
 - I'm here because of what was done to me, but I stay here because of me

Pool of Bethesda

- The first step toward wholeness for this man was ACCEPTANCE
 - This is who I now am and no longer wish to be
- The second step is MOVEMENT away from where you are at, toward Jesus Christ

God is asking the Nation of Israel through Malachi, “Do you want to be made whole?”

- They do not see themselves as needing to make any changes
 - It’s like an addict comfortable with their addiction thinking they have it under control
- **Malachi 1:6 NLT**, “You have shown contempt for my name!”

God is asking the Nation of Israel through Malachi, “Do you want to be made whole?”

- **Malachi 2:8 NLT**, “8 But you priests have left God’s paths. Your instructions have caused many to stumble into sin. You have corrupted the covenant I made with the Levites,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.
- **Malachi 2:17 NLT**, 17 You have wearied the Lord with your words. “How have we wearied him?” you ask.

God is asking the Nation of Israel through Malachi, “Do you want to be made whole?”

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

God is asking the Nation of Israel through Malachi, “Do you want to be made whole?”

- **Malachi 3:13-15 NLT**, “13 “You have said terrible things about me,” says the Lord. “But you say, ‘What do you mean? What have we said against you?’ 14 “You have said, ‘What’s the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord of Heaven’s Armies that we are sorry for our sins? 15 From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them suffer no harm.’”

God is asking the Nation of Israel through Malachi, “Do you want to be made whole?”

- **Malachi 2:17c NLT**, “Where is the God of justice?”
- But there were a few who heard God’s Word through His Prophet and desired to return to wholeness

Scripture

- **Malachi 3:16-17 NLT**, 16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other, and the Lord listened to what they said. In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.

Scripture

- **Malachi 3:16-17 NLT**, 17 “They will be my people,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, they will be my own special treasure. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. 18 Then you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

Acceptance

- I would like to be able to say God will wave His miracle working hands over you and complete wholeness is immediate, but you know it does not work that way
- Spiritual wholeness is instant upon receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior
- Physical and Mental wholeness is a process we must choose to walk through allowing God to unravel the strands of brokenness

Acceptance

- Marion Jordan Ellis, “I first trusted Christ in my mid-twenties. The grace of God overwhelmed my soul. Although I was born again, inside me there was a hurting little girl who desperately needed healing. Let me repeat this: **You can be born again, Jesus-loving, Spirit-filled, Bible quoting, church serving, and a hand-raising worshipper, yet still be deeply dysfunctional and desperately need Jesus to bind up your wounds!**”
- We see the beginning of this process in the actions of these Jewish believers

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- **Malachi 3:16a NLT**, “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other”
- Most of the time wholeness is never done in isolation
- We need the truthful input and influence of those likeminded believers
- We need the presence of likeminded believers to walk through brokenness with us providing encouragement and strength

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- **Malachi 3:16a NLT**, “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with each other”
- We see in this verse there were some in Israel that still had a spark of awe for the Lord
- We must remember, God will always have a remnant of His people on this earth

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- Elijah thought he was the last person who following God
 - It can feel that way can't it
- **1st Kings 19:13-14, 18 NLT**, 13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- **1st Kings 19:13-14, 18 NLT**, 14 He replied again, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.” 18 Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!”

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- They came together to listen to the words of Malachi and feel the movement of the Holy Spirit and carefully considered Malachi's words
- This was not rash or a lack of careful consideration
- They took Malachi's words and laid them beside God's Word and discovered they were true, and they had become broken

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- Look how close the Lord was with them, “and the Lord listened to what they said.”
- He was right there in the middle of their brokenness
- I have a sense He was guiding their discussion and thought processes
- He was providing truth and acceptance and allowing them to see a way back from their brokenness

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- **Psalms 34:17-18 NLT**, 17 The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. 18 The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- Can you hear these people say, “It is me not you Lord.”
 - I am the sinner, I am holding onto my brokenness out of fear or bitterness, it is me oh Lord and no one else
 - Yes, others have hurt me, but I’m the one holding onto it

The Jewish believers came together to carefully consider the words of Malachi

- The first word of wholeness this morning is **ACCEPTANCE**
- They were vulnerable before God and each other
- Hear Jesus say to you this morning, “Do you want to be made whole?”

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- **Malachi 3:16b NLT**, In his presence, a scroll of remembrance was written to record the names of those who feared him and always thought about the honor of his name.
- This meeting was probably held in the temple
- A place that was built to honor and respect God
- A place to find forgiveness and mercy for their rebellion
- A place of reconciliation

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- In essence, “God please be our witness”
- It was a vow to God and before God
- They “Put my name on the line”
 - To do something which causes you to risk losing something such as your reputation or your job
 - To associate you name, reputation, character, desires, goals...

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- This group was made up of those who had not ceased to honor and respect God
- It was made up of those who were wavering
- It was made up of those who rebelled but returned in repentance
- They wanted their name publicly on the line and witnessed by God

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- Jews would never do this without giving everything they had to fulfill this vow
- This was the second step in wholeness – MOVEMENT
- They would spend the rest of their life moving in the direction of God
- They would consistently and truthfully evaluate their lives to ensure they were still fulfilling this vow

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- This vow would define their days from this point going forward
- They would die with this vow on their lips
- This vow of wholeness is still available today for everyone who is broken and longs to be made whole
- But it comes through acceptance and movement

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- It really matters what list your name is under or what book your name is recorded in
- There are books mentioned in Revelation 20

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- **Revelation 20:11-15 MSG**, I saw a Great White Throne and the One Enthroned. Nothing could stand before or against the Presence, nothing in Heaven, nothing on earth. And then I saw all the dead, great and small, standing there—before the Throne! And books were opened.

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- **Revelation 20:11-15 MSG**, Then another book was opened: the Book of Life. The dead were judged by what was written in the books, by the way they had lived. Sea released its dead, Death and Hell turned in their dead. Each man and woman was judged by the way he or she had lived. Then Death and Hell were hurled into Lake Fire. This is the second death—Lake Fire. Anyone whose name was not found inscribed in the Book of Life was hurled into Lake Fire.

These Jewish Believers made a conscience decision to move toward wholeness

- Salvation is secured for all who are written in the book of life.
- The reason that being written in the book of life secures our salvation is that the book is called “the book of life of the Lamb who was slain”
- The names in this book are not saved on the basis of their deeds, but they are saved on the basis of Christ’s being slain

Did it make any difference to God?

- Here are the questions on the lips of those whose names were recorded?
 - Did God really hear us?
 - Did God really approve and accept our sincere vow to Him?
 - Will it really matter?

Did it make any difference to God?

- Look at how God responded in **Verse 17**
 - “They will be my people.”
 - “They will be my own special treasure.”
 - “I will spare them. (*I will walk them through.*)”
 - “You will see the difference.”

Did it make any difference to God?

- None of these promises happened immediately but were fulfilled over time as they were obedient to the vow they made to God
- But they knew in their hearts they were sure and true because God promised them

Did it make any difference to God?

- Jesus said it like this in **Matthew 11:28-30 NLT**, 28 Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Did it make any difference to God?

- Let me teach you
- You will find rest for your souls which will influence your physical and mental wholeness
- Compared to what you are carrying now, My yoke is easier to bear and lighter to carry
- Let me lead you to wholeness

Cheryle and I were canoeing one Saturday, and we found ourselves sideways in the tree branches near the bank

- This is a somewhat common occurrence for us
- We could have sat there and blamed each other for the place we found ourselves
- We had to accept that we were there because of our lack of canoeing experience or attentiveness
- It was us and not the river, canoe, paddles, other canoeist, or anything else

Cheryle and I was canoeing one Saturday, and we found ourselves sideways in the tree branches near the bank

- We would still be there if we had not decided to begin moving away from the event and out into the flow of the river
- If this was the answer in canoeing, then it is also the beginning answer in moving toward wholeness in your lives



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