

The Answer to Despair
Malachi 3:13-4:6

Review:

1. We can pray about our worst problems, confident that God listens to us because He loves us.
2. We should not despair because Christ is coming to set all things right and to make all things new
3. We should not despair because Christ has already come to be with us in the midst of our worst problems.

Reflect:

1. What situations in your life tend to discourage you? Are any of them a match for the power of Christ? Name each source of your despair and entrust it to God.
2. How does the presence of Christ comfort you in the midst of your worst problems? How does the certainty of His coming put the reasons for your discouragement into perspective?

Go further: Read I Corinthians 6:1-11

1. To what sort of court does Paul say that his readers should not take their cases? What does he say they should do instead?
2. In verse 2, who does Paul say that the saints will judge? Given this reality, what sort of courts does he say they should be able to constitute?
3. In verse 3, who does Paul say the saints will judge? Given this, what other kinds of judgment should Christians be able to render today?
4. In verse 4, why does Paul say that Christians should not look to secular courts of law?
5. In verse 5, who does Paul say that Christians should trust to settle their differences?
6. How does verse 6 describe the way the Corinthians were actually trying to settle their disputes?
7. What does verse 7 say is a defeat for Christians? What does Paul say that Christians should be willing to have happen to them instead?
8. What does Paul accuse the Corinthian Christians of doing in verse 8?
9. Who does Paul insist will not inherit the kingdom of God? In what ten ways does Paul describe these people?
10. In verse 11, how does Paul describe the way that his readers used to live?
11. What three things does Paul insist has happened to his readers to change their lives?
12. To whom does Paul give the credit for the change in his readers' lives?

Summary and Application:

1. Paul encourages us to look to wise fellow Christians to help us settle our disputes. In the Presbyterian tradition, we elect ruling elders to perform this duty. Would you be willing to allow your elders to serve you in this way? Why or why not?
2. Knowing that you will participate in Christ's work of judgment on the day He comes again, how does that reality change your perspective on your current disagreements and disputes?
3. Think about the changes that Jesus has brought into your life. How does remembering the way you used to live challenge you to be more like Jesus? How do your former ways of living give you greater patience with those who still live in those sinful ways?