

Malachi 3:13-18

Serving God

Image Church // Exposing the Heart: wk. 4

Introduction

If you have your bibles, grab them and turn to the book of Malachi... We're going to be in **chapter 3**... *Celebrate coffee and Conversations!*

If you're new with us we're walking through the book of **Malachi**, it is the last book of the **OT**... It's God's last recorded words to the people of Israel... Then there would be about 400 years and then Jesus would come...

God would set them apart by giving them a specific way of living in light of who He is... A way of living that puts on display the Holiness of God and man's desperate need for God's promised deliverer....

- *And then ultimately, the way that God would reveal Himself is through Jesus that would come through the line of Israel...*

But Israel over and over again turns their backs on God...

And what we see **through Israel** is that they expose the reality of **our own hearts**- they are a picture of us in so many ways...

And yet in the midst of that is **God's faithful love toward wicked and rebellious people**...

Summary:

- I have loved you
- Leftovers...
- Drifted...
- Giving...

God's been exposing their hearts, that's what He's after...

This morning we're going to see how their hearts are exposed yet again when it comes to their **service and surrender to God**...

Here's what we're going to see: **It is the compassion of God that compels us to serve God and surrender to God.**

Let me ask you this question: How many of you have gotten tired of serving the Lord... How many of you have felt like at times it's even pointless, that you don't really see anything come from it?!?

- *I'm doing all this for you, where are you at God??*

This is where the people of Israel are...

Let's look at it, here's what God says:

Malachi 3:13-18

13 "Your words against me are harsh," says the Lord.

There's more to this that comes to light in the original language...

This is an **idiomatic statement** (*ex: it's raining cats and dogs*)...

When you unpack this idiomatic statement based on other references in the OT, **what God is saying is that have overruled me**...

IOW: they were holding their thoughts and opinions over God's direction and guidance that He had clearly laid out...

Yet you ask, "What have we spoken against you?"

Their response is one of **surprise**: They're saying: *What have we said that you would have taken offense at?*¹

And what God's about to do is give a summation of what they are thinking and saying...

¹ Douglas Stuart, "Malachi," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey, 1375.

But let me stop here and say this based on what we see here...

I think so often for many of us ***I don't think we realize the gravity of what we think and say when it comes to the things of God...***

That to negate the things of God verbally, or to negate them physically is an act of ***overruling God...***

- My ways over your ways God...
- What I think over what you say God...
- Or what I feel over what you've said...
- It's putting yourself on the throne of your life...

Listen, we live in a culture that says to follow your heart... Do what's best for you...

- Where truth is subjective to you...

The problem is that we're broken and our hearts are jacked up so following our hearts isn't the answer...

Example: Kids... Think they know what's best... Candy for breakfast... Finger in the outlet... Frustrated when they get told *no...*

We don't really know what's best for us... But ***our creator does*** and He lays it out in His Word...

- And it's not subjective or you to pick and choose from or to follow when you want to... Or based on what feels right...

When you decide what you will and will not do based on what you think or feel then you're ***overruling God...***

This is what Israel's been doing... They've been calling their own shots... And it's not going well for them...

We got to see the gravity of this... If God is God, and if His Word is true, it's not up for negotiation...

- We've been saved from something to something...
- Citizen of a heavenly Kingdom... You are a royal priesthood...
- God's the one who dictates your life...

And here's the thing I want you to see, ***that's not a bad thing, it's an incredibly good thing...***

- God is a good daddy who you can trust... And everything He calls you to is for your good and His glory.

I know some of you didn't have this so it's hard to understand but I want you to know that God is a father like no other...

- He loves unconditionally...
- He sees you and all of your mess and says *I still love you...*
- He says *I will never leave you or forsake you...*
- He doesn't say perform for me, He says I've performed everything for you...

See, the way that God is able to view you and love you the way that He does ***is because of what God would do for you...***

- Jesus- God in the flesh, would do what you never could in His life, and take on what you owed in His death... He would raise us from the dead to give us new life in Him...
- So God doesn't love you based on you- He loves you based on Him...
- Through Jesus when God looks at you He sees a perfect son or daughter because He sees you through the blood of Jesus...

God is not a tyrant, He's not a dictator, He's a loving Father...

I think the reason why we so often ***overrule*** Him is that we're missing that...

We see this in Israel... They were missing who God was and they were missing His love...

***Some of you this morning need to see God as a good daddy...**

The degree to which you see Him as a good daddy will be the degree to which you submit to what He's called you to...

- Don't see Him as a good daddy, won't submit...

Israel was missing who God was, they were missing His love so they **overruled** Him holding their thoughts and opinions over God's direction and guidance...

Look at **verse 14... Here's God's summation of what Israel is thinking and saying... IE:** this is where their hearts are when it comes to God...

14 You have said, "It is useless to **serve** God. What have we gained by keeping his requirements and walking mournfully before the Lord of Armies? **15** So now we consider the arrogant to be fortunate. Not only do those who commit wickedness prosper, they even test God and escape."

Futility is the theme of **verse 14...** This idea of pointless or useless...

They say: It's useless to serve you... What benefit is there if we obey you, and walk around mournfully...

- **Walk around mournfully:** the morning process was multifaceted, it was an active prayer, fasting, calling on God, and surrendering to Him, it involved deep faith... In essence, it was an act of **worship...**

They're saying God doesn't matter in their life... If they don't obey nothing happens, if they do the right thing *morning/worship* nothing happens...

Nothing makes a difference- God doesn't listen or do anything...

2 gaps here:

1. *God responds to you based on your behavior...*

- Big misconception...
- You don't dictate God's actions with yours...
- This is the bondage of religion...

2. *God not answering according to your expectations means that He's absent or doesn't care...*

- God's silence doesn't equate to God's absence...
- God doesn't operate according to our expectations...

God is very much on the move- God very much is pushing His plan forward, God is very much being faithful to His covenant...

- In fact, God not doing something here is actually God doing something...
- He's withholding what they should get, to be faithful to what He would give through His covenant...

Then they make 3 assertions about God here in verse 15:

- The arrogant are fortunate...
- The wicked are rewarded...
- You can test God (*purposefully doing something to provoke a reaction from God*) and get away with it...

Here's the point in this section: They're saying that **servicing** God had no effect, and **sinning against God** had no effect, either way God's absent and unresponsive...

Be honest... how many of you have been here?!? We all have- again this is what Israel is such a great picture of our hearts!

Here's the issue... In **verse 14: What have we gained...**

- *What's in it for us?!?*
- They had an expectation of God based on what they do or don't do...

Example: Freshman year of college in my dorm... I've done these things for you... Where are you showing up for me...

- Barter system... Big miss...

For some of you, this characterizes the Christian life for you...

Press into this...

- When it comes to our worship... time in the Word, prayer...
- Obedience in other areas...
- We do it to get from God...

Or we **want** continued peace and smooth sailing, and we don't want God to "stir the pot", so we do things so that we can stay off His radar... We don't want Him to allow us to fail, we don't want Him to allow us to suffer, we don't want Him to teach us a lesson...

- Such an unhealthy view of God and not how He works... Good daddy remember...

All of these things are a **what's in it for me mentality...**

Here's what it boils down to, **we want something from God, but we don't actually want God for who He is...**

- *That's an oppressive way of thinking... Keeps you bound and robs you of joy, makes serving God drudgery...*

If we really see Him for who He is, we would see that He's better than what we want, we would see that He's all that we need and that serving Him isn't pointless or useless, it's rightfully responding to who God is and what He's done!

The people of Isreal missed God for who He is... But watch this, look at **verse 16:**

16 At that time those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. The Lord took notice and listened. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those **who feared the Lord and had high regard for his name.** **17** "They will be mine," says the Lord of Armies, "my own possession on the day I am preparing. I will have **compassion** on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him. **18** So you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who **serves** God and one who does not **serve** him.

So what we have here is a group of people that **feared the Lord...** They saw God for who He was and revered Him...

- *God had their hearts, they were centered on God...*

They get together and they write a **memorial scroll...** Where they put their names down in the form of a written covenant where they're committing together to trust and obey God in the midst of all of the rebellion of the rest of Isreal...

And the Lord took notice and listened to them... And He says

- They will be mine...
- My own possession...
- I will have compassion on them
- I will spare them as a family member...

But this is **not** so for the wicked... The ones who choose not to **serve and surrender to God...**

Now watch this... I want you to see the **irony** here...

Remember the people were calling God out for not doing anything, for not responding to them...

What we see is that God **does** in fact respond... And He responds to both of the categories that Israel was complaining to God about...

- God threatens the wicked but He gives a promise to those who've surrendered to Him...
- *Neither will be left unaddressed...*

Listen, I know that it can be hard to faithfully serve God, I know that it can seem like it doesn't matter that you're serving God when you look at the rest of the world or when you look at other people...

But listen, God will be faithful to His promises... God says I see you, I hear you...

- You will are mine...
- You are my own possession...
- He will have compassion on you
- He will spare them as a family member...

Man, I don't know about you but it's good to hear that because so often we can feel like He doesn't care, or He's not responding...

- *Where are you God?!? I'm right here... I've got you, I've always had you because I'm faithful to my covenant, I'm faithful to my Word...*

This is what compelled this remnant of Isreal to **continue in faithful service**... This is the thing that will continue to compel you to faithful service...

You can say it like this: **Faithful service to the Lord- living in the ways He's called you to live, starts by having a fear of the Lord by seeing Him for who he is and what He's done...**

So hold on in faith... Hold on when it's hard... Hold on when you're tired... Hold on when you're frustrated, Hold on in the midst of your doubts, hold on in the midst of your skepticism...

***Allow the anchor of your faith to be the faithfulness of God that's been revealed to you through Jesus...**

- *Allow His faithfulness through the cross to be the thing that gives you hope for His faithfulness in the future...*
- *You may not see it in this life, but you will see it in the one to come...*

The Christian life is all about future hope!!

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.

Conclusion [Vamp]

So here's the question, Christian:

Where are the gaps in your life?

- *Are you seeing God for who He is and what He's done?*
- *Does your life reflect that?*
- *Where does your life not reflect that?*
- *Maybe you're not serving the Lor by living how He's called you to live in His Word??*
- *Maybe service is drudgery??*
- *Maybe you're doing things for God to get something from God??*
- *Maybe you feel discouraged and need to remember the hope you have...*

Would you see the faithfulness of God this morning.... Would you see His compassion and would it compel you to serve and surrender to Him...

Appeal to non-Christian... Receive the compassion of God for the first time...

For all of us: **Malachi 3:10 offering**

- Call to come forward to the **Malachi 3:10** envelopes...