

Are You Robbing God? Malachi 3:6-15 12.1.2021

Turn in your Bible tonight to Malachi Chapter 3 and we will be looking at verses 6 to 15. What we will be looking at tonight is the continuing downward spiral of a nation who neglects and rejects God's Word, who does not trust God's character and because of their continued expression of hatred towards God they sink deeper, and deeper into the abyss of darkness because of their sin.

Now, Tim was supposed to teach tonight but has become ill, and so I have stepped in to teach this passage. But Tim had already spent a lot of time studying this passage, so I am going to use some of his notes as an introduction to this passage to set the stage to show that man, nation has not changed in the course of time because of sin. Sin causes man to continue to become more deviant and as man individually falls into this deviancy, then it can cause nations to do the same. So, for the next 3 minutes, I will be reading from Tim's notes"

Change is everywhere. There's a hymn that says, "Change and decay in all around I see." Science tells us that the world is getting worse as time progresses. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is wasted. The Second Law also states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state. What does that mean? It means that, even at a molecular level, the world does not improve over time. Waste and disorder are the inevitable outcomes of natural processes. What scientists can't tell you is that this law of science is built into the warp and woof of this universe because Adam sinned. Only those who receive the inspired revelation of God in the book of Genesis have an explanation for this law.

The same law also applies to history. The story of every civilization has been a story of a movement from some form of order and structure to a more disordered and chaotic state, until the civilization eventually collapses. Rome, which stands at the center of history as the pinnacle of human government, was supposed to be unshakeable. It was like the Titanic of human civilizations, yet it fell to the Goths—to a violent horde of barbarians—because the culture had so degenerated into revelry and conceit. They thought too highly of themselves, which led to their downfall.

The story of our nation is eerily tracking along the same lines. A nation founded upon a Judeo-Christian ethic is now sinking fast into a moral muddle because individual liberty has been divorced from the Judeo-Christian ethic that must be its foundation. Now the culture is championing immorality on account of individual liberty. After all, we hear, individuals must be free to choose that which is right for them, right? A woman should have the right to choose an abortion, a man should have the right to choose to be a woman, people should have the right to have sex with anybody and everybody they choose. Sadly, our founding fathers foresaw this very danger. They warned that our constitution, our form of government, would collapse when virtue was lost.

John Adams said, "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." --- John Adams

Sadly, we are on the same downward trajectory of every civilization that came before us. Our leaders, rather than seeking to promote virtue, rather than confronting the moral confusion wreaking havoc on our society,

are only compounding the problem by appeasing our corrupted public conscience. They are truly saying, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. Tim Miller

That brings us to Malachi Chapter 3 verses 6 through 15.

Two weeks ago, when I taught, I showed you 8 questions that the Israelite nation posed towards God as their sin was being pointed out to them. The first being when God said, "I love you!" and the Israelites said, "How have you loved us?" And the question we studied two weeks ago, when in verse 17 of chapter 2 God said this:

Malachi 2:17

17 "You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?"

What they have failed to do was once again rely, trust, on God's character. They failed to recognize God was being patient so that many would come to a point of repentance of their sin and return back to him: By loving him with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Worship him in spirit and in truth, and bring those sacrifices that is deserving of, worthy of the King that God is, the one and only God of all creation.

Malachi then prophesied of two messengers. The first messenger, who we learned was John the Baptist, who would prepare the way of the second messenger with a message of, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" The second messenger we learned would be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, with the same message of, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Through John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus, God's mercy would be shown to those who would repent of their sin and God's justice to those who would not.

But through Jesus, through his sacrifice on the cross, through his blood shed for the forgiveness of sin a new covenant would be brought forward for all those that would repent. Let's read verses 6 and 7 of Chapter 3.

Malachi 3:6-7

6 "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. 7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts. But you say, "How shall we return?"

We must remember that God is a God of covenants. In Genesis 15 God made a covenant with Abram, "Whose name would be changed to what?" Abraham! In Genesis 12 God made a promise, a covenant with Abram that he would a father of a great nation, they would live in a land God would show them, and they would have God's blessings. 3 promises!

In Genesis 15, God once again tells Abram your reward will be great. But Abram is a little concerned. He still does not have a son to be his heir. So, Abram asks God, "How is this going to be?" God brought Abram outside his tent and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars." Another reoccurring smallness night!! So shall your offspring be. Now God is going to ratify this covenant and show Abram that this covenant is all on him.

Turn to Genesis 15:

What God is doing here with Abram is what was used when two parties would make a covenant between each other. If it was a very serious matter, they would sacrifice an animal and cut it in half, and then each party making the covenant would walk between the animals to show how serious their intentions were.

Then they would burn the carcasses to show they are both agreeing to the covenant. But if one were to break the covenant then they would pay with their life just as the animal had just done.

Genesis 15:7-10

⁷ And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." ⁸ But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

But now look at verse 17 of Genesis 15

Genesis 15:17

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

What did the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch represent? God! God revealed himself in the fiery bush before Moses, pillar of fire before the Israelites at night as they left Egypt. But did it say anywhere that Abram walked between the sacrifices? No! By God walking alone between the blood sacrifices, he was saying all this is on me!

So once again we see the necessity of blood for the covenant. In the Mosaic Covenant, the blood of the animal sacrifices sprinkled on the altar, on the ark of the covenant. For the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

The Old Covenant just a shadow, a copy, of the New Covenant and the blood that Jesus Christ would shed for the forgiveness of sin. The blood of bulls, goats, lambs, not sufficient enough but the blood of Jesus brought in the more perfect way for salvation. Hebrews 9:11-14

Hebrews 9:11-14

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant there was still the requirement of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins. God was going to fulfill the promises he gave to Israel and the promise of salvation to all who repent, believe, and live in submission to his call to holiness.

The Lord does not change. Yes, God's justice and judgment does come upon sin, but he is merciful and patient as God said in verse 6. You are not consumed because I do not change. I made the promises to your fathers and even though they, and you turn aside I call you to repentance.

Look at verse 7 again.

Malachi 3:7

⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts. But you say, “How shall we return?”

God had not moved from his promises to Israel. From the time they were in Egypt God made this promise.

Exodus 6:7

⁷ I will take you to be my people and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

From the time God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God kept the promise of making Israel a great nation. Doing miracle after miracle in front of their eyes! Staying faithful to them as they kept his word and worshiped God by bringing sacrifices of praise according to the law. But Israel kept this incessant disobedience.

Think about in the books of Kings and Chronicles. How you would have a king that would try to lead the people back to God, it was described as “**doing what was right in the sight of the Lord.**” Then the next king would take the throne and it would be described as, “**they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.**” Showing how the nation continued to fall back into sin.

In verse 7 God gives once again this humble gracious call to repentance. **Turn to me, and I will return to you!** Look at their response. “How shall we return?” Now on face value we may read this and think they are saying, “Show us and we will return!” But in context we must look at what has been going on through this whole book. When a sin has been shown to them, they have rebutted the question with an arrogant response. Here again they do the same.

This is like what I spoke to on Sunday about, “Are you saved?” Some may say, what do I need to be saved from? I’m a good person. Why do we need to return? What have we done wrong? In Matthew 15:1-9 Jesus had conversation with the Pharisees as they were questioning why the disciples break the tradition of the elders. Why don’t they wash their hands when they eat? We all would agree that it is probably a good thing to wash our hands before we eat, correct? But does that have anything to do with our salvation? Does that have anything to do with our worship of the Lord?

Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 15 verse 3 through 9:

Matthew 15:3-9

³ He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” ⁶ he need not honor his father.’ So, for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. ⁷ You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ⁸ “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

As Jesus accused the Pharisees of false worship, that is exactly what is going on at this time in Israel. We have learned they are bringing sacrifices, but was it the right sacrifice, they say they are repenting but really are they repenting! They were going through the motions, so they were honoring God with their lips, but their heart is far from me. What have we done wrong?

The greatest command in the law was to, *Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might (Deuteronomy 6:5).* Really that holds true for us also!

In the evidence of our salvation, it is demonstrated through a new relationship with God and a new relationship with his Word. In our sinful state we are rebels against Holy God! We reject his love, we reject his mercy, we are showing hate towards God in our sin! We do not bring the appropriate sacrifices of praise and worship to the Lord! We do not show any love for God in our disobedience to his Word. In so doing, we are robbing God of the worship due him! So, God asks another question in verse 8 and Israel questions God right back.

Malachi 3:8-9

⁸ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.

Israel had been committing numerous sins. But not everyone was involved in every sin. In verse 9 it tells us the whole nation was committing the sin of not bringing the appropriate tithes and contributions so the Temple could be taken care of, and the building would not come into disarray. Also, the Levites, who took care of the temple, would get a portion because they were not given an inheritance of land. They would take their portion allotted by God to provide for their family.

The tithe, which is a tenth, 10%, in the Old Testament consisted of wheat, animals, fruit, oil, and in some cases money. There was a tithe to provide for the poor when needs arose. The tithe was considered Holy before the Lord and really all they were doing was giving back to God what was already his to begin with. But it showed faithfulness, trust, and worship to the Lord.

But they were not obeying God. They were either not bringing what they were supposed to be bringing or they were not bringing anything at all. In verse 9 God said you are cursed with a curse for you are robbing me. Throughout the Old Testament God warned the Israelites that if they follow his commands they would be blessed, but if they don't then they will be cursed. God cannot bless blatant disobedience. So, once again, God reminds them in verses 10 – 12 of his commands and his blessings if followed.

Malachi 3:10-12

¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹ I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. ¹² Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.

We know in Deuteronomy 6 Israel is commanded not to put God to the test but here, God is saying, “Put me to the test!” Is this a contradiction? No! A different Hebrew word is being used in each instance. In Deuteronomy 6 the word is “nasa” which means to tempt. Used in this instance it is a blatant affront to God, God is met with mistrust, and even fear that he is not capable to do what he had promised. Where we the person, the sinner, is instigating the response.

Here in Malachi, it is the word, “bahan” which means, to prove. God is saying, “I have already made the promise. If you obey me, I will bless you. Just do what I have asked you to do! ***I, God, will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down a blessing until there is no more need!***

I will protect your flock; I will protect your fields. God will bless them!

But is it just for the sake of blessing them? No, so in turn they show their thankfulness and so they can show their love and obedience to the Lord. In so doing as the nations around them see what God is doing for them. So that Israel can be an example of the power of God and people will be drawn to God to repent of their sins of following false gods and surrender their life to the one and only true God.

Look at the first part of verse 10 again. God says or commands, ***“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.”*** God expects complete obedience! Not half the tithe, not some of the tithe but the full tithe was to be brought. God has given us his best; we should be giving him our best. Which brings me to us!

What is the possibility that we are robbing God? What about our tithes and offerings? Now, as we teach here, we are not under the Old Testament law of tithing 10%. But if it was a command in the Old Testament to keep the Temple from being in disarray and to provide the articles of worship, to meet physical needs. Bringing sacrifices that are without blemish for repentance in anticipation of the Messiah to come.

Now that Jesus has come how much more should we give that God has displayed his best for us through Jesus' death burial and resurrection. 10% should be the floor, not the ceiling of what we give. Think about it! What if we all decided not to give our offerings?

How would our buildings be holding up? Would there be mission trips, Soccer leagues, other events to reach out to our community with the Gospel. Think about what is ahead with Center 5:20 and the kickoff with that by using the building for Saturate USA. Would we even be able to do Saturate USA with how we are being led to do it with providing some unperishable foods along with the Gospel message?

I mentioned earlier that when we become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have a new relationship with God, and we have a new relationship with his Word. We also should have a new relationship with our wallet.

Giving our money is as much an act of worship as singing, and as much as what we are doing right now. Hearing the word of God proclaimed. We are worshiping right now!

When it comes to robbing God, it does go beyond just money?

Are we robbing God when we don't come together, and worship as commanded in Hebrews 10:25? We are to come together to fellowship, encourage, stir each other up for good works. Are we robbing God by not spending time in prayer or Bible study? Are we robbing God by not proclaiming the Gospel as we go? Are we robbing God by walking in fear of all the events in the world? Are we robbing God by not using our talents or misusing our talents for the glory of God? And there are a few more things I could think of, but I will stop right there!

Remember what God wants! You! Your heart! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength! Then all those things I just mentioned are an overflow of our love for the Lord Jesus and to know him and to make him known.

In our obedience God richly blesses us. We have a great opportunity through our lives to show how faithful God is. From proclaiming the Gospel to serving him in any way that God provides the opportunity for us to do so. God just showed the Israelites how much he would bless them if they would obey. But we end tonight talking about the complainers again.

13 “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ 14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test, and they escape.’”

This kind of goes back to what we discussed a couple of weeks ago. They had looked around and the wicked seemed to be getting away with their wickedness. There seems to be no judgment, no consequence. Also, what is being said is that we are serving you, we are obeying you, but we see no benefit. What's in it for us?

We should not be seeking any reward from God on this earth. God does bless us though, doesn't he? Amen! So, how are we robbing God? If we do anything out of selfish motives, we do get our reward here. A slap on the back, anatta boy! Recognition by man! God does not change, and he is faithful to keep his promises. I pray that we will say as Paul did in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

2 Timothy 4:6-8

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Also, I have been serving the Lord for 31 years now. Not perfectly, and I have grumbled along the way myself at times. But I have always found God to be faithful, to be true, to be merciful, and to be just. It is never in vain when you are being faithful to the Lord. I close with these words from a song that we always end the week with in the Philippines.

**We have labored in the vineyards of the Lord,
and it seems the world has stolen our reward.
But God has not forgotten
And when He call us home
We'll receive eternal treasures
And a place of honor near his throne.**

CHORUS:

**It's not in vain
It's not in vain
We serve a risen Savior
Jesus rules and reigns.
The heavens cheer us on
We do not walk alone.
Our labor, our witness, our faith, is not in vain.**