



**It's Not About the Money
It's About Obedience
Malachi 3:6-15**

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Today, we will be looking at one of the most misused texts in the Old Testament. I personally have heard these verses yanked out of context and used and misused by many over the years.

Yes, we will be talking about tithing. The context, the major purpose this is here, is to call the people of Judah to repentance. They are seriously discouraged people who thought the Kingdom would be in operation when they returned from Babylon. That didn't happen and instead, they became discouraged. It is reflected in everything they do to include their giving.



As we have pointed out several times here in Malachi, God has not changed His mind about anything in the Torah. Obedience to Torah is what He requires of His people the Jews at that time. That was reemphasized as one of the reasons why they, as a people, have not been zapped out of existence.

Malachi 3:6

“For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, the sons of Jacob, have not come to an end.” (NASB 2020)

But that thought also applies to exhibition of faithlessness going on as they people neglect all aspects of the Torah.

The fact that the Jews were withholding the tithes was an indication of a greater disobedience of the nation. The main purpose of this section is a call to repentance, which Malachi then applies to the specific problem of tithing. In spite of people’s sins, God loved them and patiently waited for them to return. (Köstenberger and Croteau 2006, 68)

Malachi 3:7–12

““From the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of armies. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ “Would anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this,” says the LORD of armies, “if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor will the vine in the field prove fruitless to you,” says the LORD of armies. “All the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the LORD of armies.” (NASB 2020)

Yes, the word tithes is plural. What would obedience look like for a Jew living in Malachi’s time.

Tithing was a common practice in the surrounding nations. “We find it with numerous neighboring nations, such as the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arabs, Carthaginians, and Lydians, as well as with the Greeks and Romans. In the OT the first occurrence of this custom is found in connection with the history of Abraham (Gen. 14:20) and Jacob (Gen. 28:22), and in both cases it is presented as a common practice.” (Verhoef 1987, 303)

For those in Judah, they have been told in the Torah (Leviticus 25:23) that God owned all the land. It, as well as everything produced from it, was His.

For the Jewish nation, the Torah did not mandate just one tithe, but three and there was also one for the Levites as well. First though, there are the offerings. They were to go to the Levites and were called the first fruits. The issue here is not financial generosity. It was showing up as a very visible indication of a more serious problem, that of the obedience of the Levites and the nation to the Lord.

This problem has already been addressed in the first two chapters. We already know that when the people did give, it was substandard and faulty. The priests were okay with that so why wouldn’t God wink and be okay with that too?

The thought with the people was, “What was the least I could do and say I gave something to the Lord.” No different than what some followers of Jesus Christ say today. About offerings.



Deuteronomy 18:4

“You are to give him the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and fresh oil, and the first sheared wool of your flock.” (CSB)

Dr Feinberg outlines this process from the Torah for us. There are offerings and there are tithes.

The offerings in Israel were the firstfruits, not less than one-sixtieth of the corn, wine, and oil (Deuteronomy 18: 4). There were several kinds of tithes: (1) the tenth of the remainder after the firstfruits were taken, this amount going to the Levites for their livelihood (Leviticus 27: 30-33); (2) the tenth paid by the Levites to the priests (Numbers 18: 26-28); (3) the second tenth paid by the congregation for the needs of the Levites and their own families at the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 12: 18); and (4) another tithe every third year for the poor (Deuteronomy 14: 28-29). (Feinberg 1990, 263)

Yes, we heard correctly. At the beginning of the harvest year, right after Passover is the Feast of Firstfruits, the first of the harvest was to be presented to the Levites as an offering.

Then there would be a tithe of 10% of all produce right off the top to be given to the Levites. This was for their support. From that tithe, the Levites were to give 10% to the Priests. So, the Levites are giving a tithe of the tithe that they received.

Then there was another tithe, and this was to be more of a celebration.

Deuteronomy 14:22–27

““Each year you are to set aside a tenth of all the produce grown in your fields. You are to eat a tenth of your grain, new wine, and fresh oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, in the presence of the LORD your God at the place where he chooses to have his name dwell, so that you will always learn to fear the LORD your God. But if the distance is too great for you to carry it, since the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his name is too far away from you and since the LORD your God has blessed you, then exchange it for silver, take the silver in your hand, and go to the place the LORD your God chooses. You may spend the silver on anything you want: cattle, sheep, goats, wine, beer, or anything you desire. You are to feast there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice with your family. Do not neglect the Levite within your city gates, since he has no portion or inheritance among you.” (CSB)

This second tithe was intended to be one of celebration for what the Lord had done during the year. It was to be shared with the family and enjoyed in the presence of the Lord. Yes, potluck at the Temple was a thing.

Every three years there was to be an additional tithe for the poor and the foreigner. So, the reality for those living in Judah was, per the Torah, giving of around 23.33% of total production every year. Offerings and sacrifices were on top of that.

God was to be first on a list of one for the people and it was His plan that those who ministered in the Temple would be provided for through these tithes and offerings.

These tithes were not being properly given by the people in the days of Nehemiah and Malachi (Neh 13: 10), so the people are rightly accused of robbing God. In seeking to rob God they robbed themselves, for they had failure of the harvest and famine, judgments corresponding to their sin. Thus were they cursed with the curse, for they were still defrauding (the participle is used) God. And the evil was being perpetrated by the whole nation. (Feinberg 1990, 263)

God’s love for them has been demonstrated time and time again. This should drive the people to obedience in all they do. The expectation from YAHWEH is that His people, as part of the relationship



with Him, would give from an overflowing heart. Yes, the law specified minimums, but remember, God owns everything. For the people, giving is the most observable place to go to. Should is the operative word here.

Those of us who are New Testament believers, have the benefit of being able to read and consider all of God's word. We live under grace, not the law. We too know about His dealings with His people and then add on top of that, all the examples we see in the text of the New Testament. We know, from personal experience just how real the Savior is, but before we condemn the Jewish nation about their faithfulness, how well are we doing on that topic.

Let's look at one commandment that Jesus made to NT believers.

John 13:34–35

"I give you a new commandment—to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another." (NET 2nd ed.)

And you thought I was going to talk about giving. This is about being faithful here in Malachi. At face value, we would probably say that for the most part, done. We would all say that yes, we are faithful in this. But let me unpack it a bit.

You see, we tend to short cut things just like the Jews did around the giving topic at the Temple.

Here in John, we are being told that we must love like Jesus. As an example, for us, there is His relationship with the Father. The love relationship that exists with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is to be replicated in those and by those who follow Jesus. We are part of the family and as believers, we are expected to act like others in the family.

We are to be like Jesus and the love that bound Him to the Father is to be replicated in us as believers as the major observable to the world the binds us to each other.
No problem, right?

This was a "new commandment" because it was grounded in two things: God's love for Jesus and Jesus' love for them. This new level of love flows out of the Triune Godhead and forms the heart of the new covenant Christ has established for this new era. (Osborne 2018, 331)

John writes a commentary for us on this, 1 John, and more fully develops what is unique about this new way of living.

1 John 4:15–21

"All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And **as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.** So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because **we live like Jesus here in this world.** Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first. If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers." (NLT)

Easy to do? Not in the flesh, it is impossible to do this except with the Holy Spirit filling and enabling us to do so. Does that mean we will never have conflict in the church? Hardly. As long as fallen people get



together, we will have conflict. For some strange reason, not everyone is in the Spirit all the time. There is a reason why revival is called for in today's culture. There are way too many in the church who have decided that loving one another is a negotiable point. It isn't.

The expectation Jesus has is obedience. This is the same expectation God has of the nation regarding Torah.

The people in Malachi's day had decided, despite the clear language in the Torah, that giving, offerings, tithing and sacrifices, were all negotiable. In fact, we already know that for the priests, it was all a bit tiresome.

In the church today, this kind of love Jesus is commanding us to exhibit is negotiable, right? No, it isn't and that is one of the reasons why the church has such a bad reputation.

This new world, this new covenant relationship where we are His children and part of the family, also means we now live differently as well. I love how John phrased it, "**as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.**" In other words, we can't get there without the Holy Spirit empowering and enabling us to do this and it doesn't happen overnight either. It is the result of us becoming more like Christ, we call that term sanctification. Every single day we get to decide how we want to live. Do we live to the flesh and do what we want, or do we live in the Spirit and do what He wants.

When we come to Christ, we become part of a new family. Some of the things we used to do simply will not do in this family, not at all. Then there are some new things we must learn, because we love Jesus and He wants us to be like Him. So, we watch Him in order to do that. The Holy Spirit helps us to do that. Love is part of the this.

In this new family with Jesus, the primary characteristic that the world can see and know that something has happened in our hearts and life is this, we love each other.

The Greek word used here in the text is agape. Jesus loves us and we are to love Him. Our problem getting to the meaning of that though is the English language. Unlike the Greek, we have a single word to refer to love. I love my wife; I love football, I love my kids and I love Tex Mex food. But if you understood each term to literally mean the same in terms of degree, you would consider me to be crazy.

The Greek language has four words for love. Well, actually, there are even more than four, but these are the ones that come up, and there is one of the four not even referred to in the scriptures at all.

A side note, all four of these types of love should be evident in the marriages of believers. There is also a self-test for how you're doing on loving others embedded for us in 1 Corinthians 13. First, what are those four words.

- Eros – this is romantic or sexual love and is not used in the New Testament.
- Storge – this is familial love. Like a mother for her child, or a brother for a sister. It also is not used in the New Testament except in the negative. In Greek, you make a word a negative by putting the letter alpha, alpha, in front of it. Astorgoi (unloving) is in the New Testament we see it Romans 1:31 as well as 2 Timothy 3:3.
- Phileo – This is friendship, comradeship. Philadelphia comes from this word. We do see this word used by Paul later in John 21:15-17. Jesus asks, "do you agape me," Paul will say "I phileo you."
- Agape – That is the word used here. This is the love God has for the world and which we are to emulate. A simple way to remember it is unconditional love no matter what. The definition is multilayered too.



To love God is to exist for Him as a slave for his lord (cf. Lk 17:7 ff.). It is to listen faithfully and obediently to His orders, to place oneself under His lordship, to value above all else the realisation of this lordship (cf. Mt 6:33). It also means, however, to base one's whole being on God, to cling to Him with unreserved confidence, to leave with Him all care or final responsibility, to live by His hand. It is to hate and despise all that does not serve God nor come from Him, to break with all other ties, to cut away all that hinders (Mt 5:29 f.), to snap all bonds except that which binds to God alone. (Quell and Stauffer 1964-, 45)

What Jesus did on the cross changed everything. His ultimate example of love for us, through His death on the cross, points the way for how we are now to live. His expectation is that we will be obedient to this new command. Just as God's expectation of the nation was to follow Torah.

This is New Testament stuff, and because it is, He tells us this is a commandment for each of us as New Testament believers. He says, "I am giving you a new commandment." His giving this to us implies the love He has for us. He desires His family to reflect the same love that He has enjoyed for all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

He knows the difference love makes, He did make us after all, and He desires us to reflect Him in this. We are imagers after all. In the Greek, it is also in the imperative, yes, it is a command, a non-negotiable.

This love is so different from what the world has seen or experienced, that He goes further to tell us that it is a primary observable for the world.

The world of unbelievers should see the difference, it is that stark of a difference. How do you know if we are Christians...by our love for each other.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He offers to forgive us of those sins if we accept His sacrifice and believe that He did that for us. Here is the thing, if He forgives us of all that sin, who are we not to forgive our brothers and sisters in the Lord when they blow it?

The Son brings the remission of sins to which man replies with grateful love and to which he should respond with an unconditional readiness to help and forgive his fellows. The Son calls for unreserved decision for God, and gathers around Him a band of "storm-troopers" (Mt 11:12) who leave everything, follow Him and love God with passionate devotion. He creates a new people of God which renounces all hatred and force and with an unconquerable resolve to love treads the way of sacrifice in face of all opposition. (Quell and Stauffer 1964-, 48)

Jesus commands us that we are to love, unconditionally, our brothers and sisters in Christ. When Jesus said this, it "was new in that it was as Jesus' loved. It was a love that revealed itself in washing each other's feet and giving itself in death. It is new in two ways. It first focuses on one's fellow believer rather than on one's neighbor. And second it is a love that is based on Jesus' love for his disciples. It was a self-sacrificial, self-giving, selfless kind of love (15:12-13)." (Trail 2018, 200)

Oh, and we still are to love our neighbor too. That did not get deleted.

I promised a self-test. Plug your name in where the word is love or implied as such.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (NET 2nd ed.)



Our knowledge of His word should drive us to obedience. Love should be the natural result of walking in the Spirit, yet even filled with the Holy Spirit, we struggle. Our culture, thanks to the internet, has enshrined anger, bitterness and getting even. I am so tired of seeing karma being used as a thing, it is even funny. By the way, there is not such thing as karma, that is from eastern religion. We have sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-8).

Those Malachi is writing to would also be expected to know the Torah and what YAHWEH would expect of them. But there is this problem.

Malachi 3:7

““From the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of armies. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’” (NASB 2020)

The call from the Lord is for revival. The call is to repent and return to the Lord.

For us today, it would be the same, to remember our first love, the sweet fellowship we had with the Lord when we were first saved and began to grow in Him, before we began to allow the world a voice.

The call YAHWEH is making is no different than the call Jesus made to the church in Ephesus. They were a great church, and they were so involved in doctrine and making sure they had it right, that they left their first love.

Revival begins, when we remember our first love, repent and come back to Him.

Revelation 2:4–5

“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.” (ESV)

This is the exact same thing God is saying to the people there in Jerusalem. “Return to me, and I will return to you.”

In its most basic sense, repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. It isn't so much required if we want to return to God; repentance describes what the very act of returning is. (Guzik 2001, Mal 3:6-7)

Satan will use sin to take us places we thought we would never go to. When we hear the Lord calling us to repent and return to Him, it may seem to be impossible. How could God possibly still love me after I failed Him again this time? I have heard this in counseling. Satan wants us in a hole and then convinces us we will never get out.

If that is you, you are not the first to go there and you will not be the last. When Jesus died on the cross for our sin, He did so for all our sin, past, present, and future. He loves you.

Psalms 103:10–14

“He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs. As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who honour him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us. As a father is kind to his children, so the LORD is kind to those who honour him. He knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust.” (GNB)

If you have given you life to Christ, you still belong to Him and He wants you to come home.



He is not the one who is condemning you right now, but Satan, he has no problem condemning any of us.

If you know Jesus, we have this promise.

Romans 8:1–4

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (NET 2nd ed.)

So, reestablish the relationship. Repent and return.

1 John 1:8–9

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (ESV)

This brings us back into relationship with Him.

And now we can go back to growing and becoming more like Jesus.

Romans 8:31–39

“What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, freely give us all things? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NET 2nd ed.)

We know how to return to Him. But the people of Israel either did not know or chose not to know.

Malachi 3:7

““From the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of armies. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’” (NASB 2020)

God is offering reconciliation to the people, their response here is no different than any other response so far, they are still disputing that there is a problem. To put it into terms we might hear today, “how can you say I need to repent and return when I never left in the first place?” The deception is strong with this one.

For the nation and for us, the primary path to blessing, is obedience. Their lack of love, reflected in their problems with following the Torah instructions on tithing and giving, are all symptoms of a deeper problem, they have fallen away from the Lord. If they love the Lord, then they will want to do what He says. Not only would the quality of sacrifices improve, but their giving would reflect what would be in their hearts. Love and thanksgiving for the Lord and all that He is doing for them. But that is not the case. Their discouragement has fully exhibited itself in unbelief. They are already experiencing the curse...again.



Malachi 3:8–9

“Would anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the entire nation of you!” (NASB 2020)

The priests are not training the people. We have already seen that here in Malachi. If they do not know what the law says, then there is a problem. It appears that they are not bringing in the entire amount. Because of that, impacts are beginning to be felt in the nation. Crop yields are headed the wrong way. The solution is simple.

Because the land belongs to the Lord as does all of the production, when the people withhold what God, in His law, has specified that they give to provide for the upkeep of His servants, the Levites, then they are robbing God. There is a covenant between the nation and YAHWEH. There is accountability for them. By withholding the entire amount, even though they gave a little, God calls it robbery.

It isn't because only the tithes and offerings belonged to God. In fact, everything we have belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). Yet God does not normally command us to give everything that belongs to Him; He allows us to keep some as managers on His behalf. But the tithes and offerings are different; they are not given to us to manage—they belong to what the LORD calls My house, the house of the LORD. (Guzik 2001, Mal 3:8-12)

As New Testament believers, if we choose to tithe, and there is nothing wrong with that as a good place to start, it does not mean the remaining 90% is ours to do with as we please. We are all managers taking care of the resources that the Lord has given us and using them for Him as He leads us. He still owns everything.

R.G. LeTourneau was a man who did that. He died in 1969 holding 200 patents for heavy mining and earth moving equipment. He also founded LeTourneau University and yes, they do indeed teach engineering to the glory of God.

Shortly before he died, LeTourneau wrote of having learned the “great harvest law” of the New Testament. That law is simple: we reap what we sow. If a man reaps little, he will sow little. If he reaps much, he will sow much. LeTourneau enjoyed explaining to people the principle that we must give money back to God if we expect to succeed financially. “It is not how much money I give to God that is important,” LeTourneau liked to say, “It is how much of God's money I keep for myself that's important.” (Jeremiah 2001, 80)

Malachi 3:10

““Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and put Me to the test now in this,” says the LORD of armies, “if I do not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”” (NASB 2020)

The Temple also included storehouses for grain, wine and other agricultural products that would be received as offerings and tithes. The encouragement is to bring the entire amount into the storehouse. They are beginning to suffer the impact of the curse so how do you reverse this. The Lord tells them, bring the whole tithe.

To encourage obedience, God tells the people to test Him on this. See if His word is indeed valid and test Him in this current situation that they are experiencing. Crop yields are being impacted by not bringing the whole tithe, bring it and see what He will do in this current situation. They are already beginning to see aspects of the curse due to their faithlessness.

Paul would tell us this.



Romans 12:1–2

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern** what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” (CSB)

If we are not conformed to this age, then we are being conformed to Jesus. This is called sanctification.

That means we will take seriously what Jesus says to love. This is a fruit of the Spirit by the way.

Galatians 5:22–26

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (CSB)

Love has legs and we reflect that love by giving, by being faithful to gather together, by making disciples. Because we are no longer living to the flesh.

Let me remind you, we are under grace, not the law. What is being outlined here for the people by Malachi is under the law. But even under grace, God still does own everything, and He still has promises connected with faithful living.

Sowing and reaping is indeed something we need to be aware of.

2 Corinthians 9:6–12

“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.” (ESV)

The tithe is, for those who want to begin giving to the Lord, a good place to start. When I was doing benevolence counseling with those who said they were believers, I would always ask if they were giving to the Lord.

What I was told most of the time was no. “I don’t trust the church to use my money.” I helped many set up budgets so they could see where their money was really going. Cigarettes and beer can get expensive, so can Starbucks, cable television and eating out all the time too.

That is the problem, it isn’t our money. Everything still belongs to Him. How are we managing it on His behalf. Are we seeing Spiritual returns for the funds we have given to Him?

Are we investing and managing what He has given us and sending it on ahead. Where is our heart...really?



Matthew 6:19–21

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (ESV)

For the nation, the test they were challenged to was first laid out for them by Haggai. Being faithful sees a reversal, just as seen during the days of Zechariah.

Malachi 3:11–12

“Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor will the vine in the field prove fruitless to you,” says the LORD of armies. “All the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the LORD of armies.” (NASB 2020)

To reach what we see above, there were three things the nation must do. Remember, they are under the law.

- Be obedient – the starting point for spiritual growth.
- Test me – The Bible is filled with promises that we fail to take advantage of simply because we missed out on step one. God says to test Him on our obedience to Him. See if His promises are not true. His example is financial, something we take personally, and He simply says, “test me.”
- More promises-If we take Him up on the test, He promises blessing. Your crops will no longer fail. Your chariot’s tires may wind up lasting a little longer than you thought.
- All the nations will know you have been blessed – This is not a promise of riches, but it is a promise of being blessed and a blessing to others. It will be noticed by those around you.

We forget, as we go about serving the Lord, that we are always being watched by the world. When we operate as the church, it is noticed.

Are we bold enough to also step out as Malachi is challenging the nation to do? To be faithful and obedient. To be Spirit filled.

The nation was deeply challenged in this, and you would expect them to get it. They don’t.

Malachi 3:13–15

““Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’ You have said, ‘It is pointless to serve God; and what benefit is it for us that we have done what He required, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of armies? So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also put God to the test and escape punishment.’ ”” (NASB 2020)

Their questions have all had the same tone to them...pride. God calls it arrogance. They have been spoken against Him.

And as always, the response is again, in the negative. God has just promised them abundance if they would simply be faithful to the covenant. This was for a people living under the law, we are under grace today. But they weren’t, instead, they are busy denying that the questions they have asked God, are them blaming Him for their own problems and unbelief.

The people go as far as saying it is futile to serve the Lord. This is because they have not yet repented or even recognized their need to do so.



They presumed they had been faithful to God, carrying out His requirements. And they presumed they had repented of their misdeeds, going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty. They thought all that remained was for God to fulfill His part of His bargain and bless them. They were subtly suggesting that God was not keeping His promises. (Blaising 1985, 1586)

The Judeans, with hearts closed to the love of God, reject the blessing God wants to give them. Because they seek first themselves and not his Kingdom, they will lose all other things as well. (Achteimer 1986, 193)

This has been all about being faithful, the entire book up to this point, and the people who had an opportunity to get it right this time. The very same ones Haggai was optimistic about, well they are headed the same direction their relatives went to.

How are we doing on that faithfulness scale? Are we putting the Lord first, or last.

Matthew 6:31–33.

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (ESV)



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