

**GIVING TO GOD WHAT IS HIS
(Give and it will be given to you)**

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Malachi 3:7-18 (Words of God in red)

"Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the Lord of hosts; "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts. "Your words have been harsh against Me," says the Lord, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.' " Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him."

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In our Scripture for today is the much used passage of Scripture that pastors have relied upon and read just prior to passing around the offering plate. But before we hit on that specific passage we'll be looking at it in context and in really what God was saying to His people through the prophet Malachi. We will look at how despite God's people of Israel and Judah had totally turned their back on God, God kept pleading with His people to turn back to Him, after all He alone is God, He alone is their Creator, He alone is their Salvation, and then He alone is worthy to be praised and honored and worshipped. It is then a message to each of us. God has not changed and He is still calling for His people to come back to Him, that we might find all of the many blessings that He wants to give His children and that He alone is worthy to be praised and honored and worshipped.

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament for a good reason. He was one of the last of the prophets before the Intertestamental Period which was the period between the end of the Old Testament, which was at the end of Malachi's prophetic ministry and the beginning of the New Testament, which began with the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist. The intertestamental period then, which was around 400 years, was the period where there was no prophet for Judah or Israel, or at least any that was recorded.

It's a strange thing when we read from the Bible in certain situations, in certain stories, that the gravity of the situation, or the realness of what was going on escapes our notice. Like when Israel went into captivity in Egypt after the death of Joseph and a new ruler reigned who did not know Joseph or respect the situation with the Jewish people. We think, oh well, Moses will be sent to deliver the Israelites out of bondage, not thinking that generation after generation after generation after generation, for 430 years they were slaves to the Egyptians. From the comfort of our reading nook we think, "oh that's a shame, oh well God has a plan for their deliverance. Also, look at the people of Israel in the times of the kings, from the kings of Israel there was not one righteous king in the bunch after Israel split into the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. The prophet Ezekiel testified to the people of his time, while they were in captivity in Babylon, as to how many years God had put up with the rebellious nation of Israel when God had him lay on one side for 390 days, to where each day signified a year, meaning God put up with Israel's idol-worshipping and rebellion for 390 years up to that point, from the time of the decline of King Solomon until the present time. From one evil king to the next, generation after generation. You would think that the people of Israel at some point would get together and say, 'hey you know, this worshipping of Baal hasn't really got us anywhere, let's try something else.' Then someone replies, 'you know, there are ancient texts from our ancestors that speak of a time where the people of God were led out of captivity from Egypt and God led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and then when they became established in the promised land that God inhabited the temple and then He was their God, their Provider, their Deliverer, their Help in time of need. Maybe we should return to that God, who IS THE GOD, THE CREATOR, AND THE SALVATION to His people.' At least Judah had a couple of those moments, most notably with King Hezekiah and later with King Josiah, his great-grandson. Maybe the point of saying all that is that God will allow His people to live in rebellion and sin, from one generation to the next.

Another interesting thing to note is that there were undoubtedly some who were righteous in all the period of evil kings and idol-worshipping people. Just think about what they had to endure through all that. But most especially, think about what God had to endure

through the generations of people who wanted nothing to do with God, sought after other gods, or just plain rebelled against God because of their own evil desires.

Time after time God's message to His people has been what starts for our passage of Scripture today. "Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts.

From the time of Moses, and reiterated through Jesus, and to this present time God has been saying to His people, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40) This is the beginning of seeing how God's Word ties it all together. God has always been the provision for salvation and deliverance to His people. Yet time and time again, God's people turn their backs on Him and say (at least in their actions) that they'd rather have the temporal pleasures of the world instead of the good things and promises of God. That is complete madness if you have eyes to see. God gives His Word to us, with scores and scores of examples of what to do and what not to do. God continues to say how much He loves us and has great things in store for His children if they will just trust Him, follow Him, and obey Him. The greatest promise of all is what Jesus spoke in **John 3:16-17**, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Jesus explained that we must be born-again, born of the Spirit. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8) Jesus continued later in **John 5:21**, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. This is where the Scripture in **Romans 10:13** certainly applies that says, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." **SAVE ME LORD JESUS!** For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. "Most assuredly, I say to you, [that means, listen up people] he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." Later, in speaking to the Jewish leader's who claimed that God was their Father, Jesus said, "If God were your Father, you would love

Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me." (John 8:42) In John 14:15-16 Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—" The Holy Spirit leads us to believe on Jesus as being the son of God, that God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself so that we can be reconciled to God, to have fellowship with God. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, conquering death, so that we too can overcome death and have eternal life in Christ Jesus. "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—" So then after we believe, the Holy Spirit leads us to repent of our sins to where it is in our heart to live for God, to follow His commandments, to where we want to honor God and to honor Jesus, His Son. Then, as the Apostle Peter said in Acts 5:32, "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." Henceforth, you are born-again. As the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." The Holy Spirit reveals to us to believe on Jesus, to have a heart of repentance, and to then obey God to where He "places His Spirit in us as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 1:22) What is to come? God is our Father, our Savior, our Deliverer, and our God. How's that for a promise? But wait, there's more! We are promised eternal life to where we will be joint-heirs with Jesus (Romans 8:17) and we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12).

It is important to say all that because that IS how one is saved. But it is also the beginning of of our living in "the newness of life" that Paul mentions in Romans 6:4. From there the Holy Spirit begins "work[ing] in us to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13) How then can we love God to want to believe on Jesus and want to follow His commandments? Well it truly is God who does all the work in us, as mentioned, from beginning to end. "But of Him [that is God through His Holy Spirit] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification [that is, setting us apart from the ways of the world, in God's holiness] and redemption— that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:4-10**)

Here's where it all ties together to form the whole gospel message of Jesus Christ, the good news, or should I say the great news of Jesus Christ. God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, reveals to us that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, to all then who will believe. 'Great' you may be saying. 'I'll just wait for God to change me, meanwhile I'll just do what I want to do, fulfilling my desires (no matter how wretched or depraved or evil they may be)'. Many will not choose to believe since Jesus also said, "**He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."**"

The problem for the people of God in the times of the prophets, the kings, and in the time of Malachi wasn't because they didn't believe in God or that they didn't know what God wanted. They didn't want God and they didn't want to obey Him. They didn't want to come to the light, they didn't want to love God because that meant letting go of their evil ways as it says in **1 John 2:15-17**. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but **he who does the will of God abides forever.**"

We are commanded to love God, to love Jesus and to follow His commandments, and to be led by His Spirit. When we walk in His ways and follow the leading of His Spirit "out of the darkness into His marvelous light" we become transformed to where Jesus said, "If you **abide in My word**, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the **truth shall make you free.**" They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore **if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**" (**John 8:31-34**) Continuing in sin is contrary to what God wants us to do and will only lead us into the same predicament that the Israelites were in, time after time after time. Yes, God does the work in us spiritually, but it is up to us to obey Him and follow Him and His Word and His commandments.

Yes, we are being called by God to surrender our earthly desires for what is the will of God. We were created by God for His purpose for His pleasure. He is building His eternal kingdom, right now, finding out who does love Him and will obey Him. And God says to us in many different ways that our sacrifice in doing His will by obeying Him and following His commandments will be greatly rewarded.

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the Lord of hosts; "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.

This is not intended to be a message on tithing. The Lord knows, most of you don't even have much to offer God financially. But God knows of what we do have. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." With all of our soul. Are we honoring God in worship, in living a life that is pleasing to Him. Our soul. Are we allowing Him to work in us His Righteousness and Sanctification, that is Him setting us apart, from the ways of the world, in His holiness. With our mind. Are we spending time in His Word and in prayer, getting to know God and His Ways or are we just trudging along in life from one temporal moment to the next, like a zombie, just dragging along our carcass to what pleases the flesh.

"Your words have been harsh against Me," says the Lord, "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is useless to serve God; What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts? So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up; They even tempt God and go free.' " Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels."" Yes, it seems most of the time, that evil is rewarded on this earth and the meek are destined to grief and sorrow. Jesus fully knew that, and He still pressed on to do the will of God. Thank You Jesus! "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses[most notably Jesus our Lord and Savior] , let us lay aside every weight,

and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

And then in Christ Jesus, we WILL overcome and one day be joint-heirs with Jesus and we will reign with Him for all of eternity.

The last thing I want to mention is that when you do obey God and walk in His ways, He will fill you with the fruit of the Spirit, the "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control." What a great blessing it is to be in Christ Jesus! Praise the Lord God Almighty who is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise! Amen.