

ROBBERS

Malachi 3:7-15

INTRODUCTION

James Montgomery Boice tells the story of a man who came up to him after Boice had preached on **Malachi 2** on **Divorce**. The man said he had been a Christian for decades and had never heard a sermon out of Malachi Chapter 2.

The late Dr. Boice said that is not surprising. This is the type of passage and exhortation people don't like to hear so it's not a shock to hear you have never heard a message out of Malachi Chapter 2.

But then the man got a twinkle in his eyes and said, I am a Baptist. So, I have heard multiple sermons out of Malachi 3 on **Giving**. 😊

In our passage this morning, God is not primarily interested in **giving/stewardship**. That is an example God provides in the text. God is interested primarily in the people's unfaithfulness cast against the backdrop of His faithfulness.

Stewardship, you see, is a matter of the **heart**. It is an expression of a heart which has been renewed by grace.

Failure in stewardship is a heart problem.
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→ If you are struggling and failing in stewardship, this is a mark that something is wrong spiritually.

You will remember two tremendous contrasts in **2:17-3:6**: God is coming in divine Grace and God is coming in divine judgment.

In a similar fashion, we see two radically different **hearts** in our text this morning.

Malachi's main point, God's main point, is not the **giving**.

It is not **stewardship**. God's main concern in the shining spotlight of our passage is the **heart**.

→ Stewardship/giving is a reflection of the heart.

We know there are two different kinds of hearts:

Ezek 36:26 – “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

The distinction is not between those who **give faithfully** and those who **do not give**. The distinction in our passage is between the **saved** and the **lost**.

→ One man said, if we miss the distinction between the **saved** and the **lost**, we miss everything the Bible has to offer.

Proposition: 2 Radically Different Hearts:

- I. A **Heart of Robbery**
- II. A **Heart of Giving**

So That: For our sweet, beloved, serving, and giving San Tan Bible Church, there are **rebukes** in the text that are perhaps not particularly needed. But ... there are **exhortations** in our text that are most certainly and sorely and always needed ... because they are certainly and sorely and always needed ... by every Christian ... and every church on this side of glory.

READ Mal 3:7-15

I. A Heart of Robbery Mal 3:7-9, 13-15

Point – **Deut 12:19** – “Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.”

Prov 3:9 – “Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce;”

Proof – “^{7a}**From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept *them*.**”

The people were neglecting their giving. You can find this same charge against the people in Amos 4, Ezra, Nehemiah, and in Chronicles' account of the reign of Hezekiah.

Malachi makes clear not all of "the good old days" were good.

“^{7b}Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.”

There is an immediate fulfillment and a far-off fulfillment of this:

1. The immediate is the **individual** Israelite...or the individual Christian.

2. The long-term fulfillment is when **the nation** as a whole repents and mourns for Jesus as for an only Son, then Christ will return and set up His kingdom.

This is the same long-term exhortation given to us as His New Testament church in ...**2 Pet 3:11b-12a** – “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ^{12a}looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,”

“^{7c}But you say, ‘How shall we return?’”

→ What we are looking at here in our text are the last 2 **disputes**, the **5th** and **6th** disputes.

This is NOT innocent ignorance.

This is refusing to acknowledge their sin.

This is a sluggish and hard-hearted response.

They are really saying – “We don’t need to return.”

“We’re not the ones who left.” “You left us God.”

→ I don’t need to repent. I don’t need to be saved.

Malachi moves from the general call to repent in v. 7 to a specific sin example...the one of giving.

There are two **doors of sin** in the **hallway of giving**: the doorway of self-righteousness and the doorway of self-indulgence.

Legalism is behind the first door and **greed** is behind the second door.

The people of Israel here have opened the second doorway and hurled headlong into it.

“^{8a}**Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!**”

When you read the word “rob” here, when you think of a robber, don’t think of a little guy in a black and white striped shirt wearing a little black eye mask.

This is not the “Hamburglar.”

“**rob**” – ‘plunder’, ‘mug’, ‘steal with the threat’ or use of violence

There is a difference between a **robber** and a **thief**.

If I go into your house and steal when you aren’t home → I’m a **thief**.

If I go into your house when you are home, forcibly tie you up, beat you or threaten to beat you, and steal → I’m a **robber**.

Only other appearance in Scripture

→ **Prov 22:23** – “For the LORD will plead their case, and take (literally “rob”) the life of those who rob them.”

“^{8b}**But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ In tithes and offerings.**”

Old Testament – fixed % 23 1/3 %

2 Annual **tithes** (10%) and 1 **tithe** every 3 years

We understand that there is a difference between Old Testament tithing and New Testament giving

Remember, at this time, Israel is poor. They were in exile in Babylon. They returned to a land with no infrastructure.

Their economy is depressed.

They are poor and so the temptation to cut corners in their tithes and offering and shortchange God is great.

In **1:6-14**, the issue was the quality of the offering. Here the issue is the quantity of the offering.

Proof – “**Bring the whole tithe**” in v. 10

In this environment, God charges them,

“^{9a}**You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me,**”

“**a curse**” – Deut 28:20; Deut 27:15-26

→ Failure of the crops of the nation here in Malachi.

Grammar → “**you are robbing Me**” – continual pattern

“**Me**” is emphatic → literally – “Me! ... you are robbing!”

God sees their thieving stewardship as a failure of loyalty,
a failure of trust, a failure of the heart.

Illustration – Which came first, the **chicken** or the **egg**? The chicken of course.

Application – Which came first, the robbery of tithes and offering or the failure of the crops?

→ In the same way, the robbery of tithes and offering came before the failure of the crops.

God intensifies and personalizes His accusation ...

“^{9b}**the whole nation of you!**” – the whole *goyim* of you!

→ Point – you have become a bunch of pagans.

Illustration – I had an executive business lunch with one of my customers on Thursday. I received a call later that evening. The call itself was not uncommon – I often get business calls from him. He began the conversation, “I have some theological questions.”

Spent a blessed two and a half hours on the phone ☺ You name it, we discussed it: creation, age of the earth, election, baptism, covenantalism, ...

But there was one key part of my friend's question/concern was → how he sees professing Christians behave in church.

Part of the difficulty and damage he is experiencing is that he finds himself in the midst of honorable pagans in the workplace all week and then is being around dishonorable "Christians" at church. → Same point as **Mal 1:8!**

We remember Abraham in Gen 12 when he told the half-truth which was really a lie and was rebuked by the pagan pharaoh. That is not how things ought to be.

Illustration – Sam Houston, larger than life early 18th century Governor of Texas. He was known as "The Big Drunk."

Houston was saved later in life at the testimony and witness of his third wife and baptized at the age of 61.

He gave generously after his conversion.

Someone asked him why we would give so much. Sam Houston replied, "When I was baptized, my pocket was baptized with me."

The 6th and last **dispute** in **vv. 13-15, Malachi** zooms out in scope....

"¹³Your words have been arrogant against Me, says the LORD. Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against Thee?'"

"arrogant" – your words are strong, stout, hard

→ bold and blasphemous accusations against God

"¹⁴ You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?'"

"kept His charge" – literally translates – "kept His keep"

They are calling God a scam artist, a snake oil salesman

→ **Gen 18:19!** – “I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice”

Their vision is myopic. They can only see the here and now, not heavenly minded. They want immediate gratification.

“¹⁵**So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up, but they also test God and escape.**”

More advanced stage of spiritual depravity than **2:17**

Rom 1:32 – “not only do they do these acts of wickedness but they applaud those that are doing the same.”

We certainly see that today as it was back then.

Application – The best antidote to greed is to give generously.

Illustration – Consider the lyrics of the great hymn Take My Life and Let It Be:

*“Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee...
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.”*

II. A Heart of Giving Mal 3:10-12

→ Transformation of the heart!

- from a heart of robbery to a heart of giving

Proof – “^{10a}**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house**”

Point – Solution is **simple**. Stop robbing God. Stop bringing worthless worship. Stop bringing partial offerings.

Illustration – My favorite counseling verse is **Eph 4:28** – “Let him who steals steal no longer.” Just stop it! We don’t need more than that. Now, in counseling there is wisdom, there is

relationship, there is exhortation, and at the same time there is simplicity God gives us.

“**the whole tithe**” – they were partial in their offerings and they were half-hearted worshippers

Application– 1 Cor 10:31 – “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” For us, it isn’t just about giving. All aspects of the blessings of the local body of Christ, our ministries in the workplace, schools, in our families, falls under the umbrella of the entire tithe.

Set up. Tear down. If you have ministry responsibilities and you can’t make it, you find your substitute. Don’t be a flakey snowflake when it comes to the Men’s study. Give your best.

An amazing unique statement from God:

“^{10b}**and test Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts,**”

Job 23:10 – “But He knows the way I take; *when* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” – it is a measurement of mettle

3:6 – Immutability of God.

God could talk about His Omniscience, His Omnipresence, His Omnipotence, His Holiness, His Sovereignty, His Aseity, His Eternity, Immanence, and Transcendence.

But that’s not what God is focusing on here.

God is focusing on His **Mercy** and His **Faithfulness**.

Point – What is God saying in our text? God is saying, “I am not asking for how much you can spare Me. I know you can’t spare anything. I am asking for how much you can trust Me.”

Point – **3 Gracious Promises of God:**

- A. The promise of **Abundant Prosperity**
- B. The promise of **Almighty Protection**
- C. The promise of **Authentic Profession**

→ to motivate us to be whole offerers and full-hearted worshippers

A. The **Promise of Abundant Prosperity**

Point – Blessing and Benediction

“^{10c}**if I will not open for you the windows of heaven**”

This is the same Hebrew phrase used in **Gen 7:11** – “the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.”

There it was **judgment**.

Here in Malachi it is **blessing!!!**

“**and pour out for you a blessing**” – literally means “empty out”

“**until it overflows**” – “until there is no more room for the blessing”

Turn to: Deut 28:1-12

Illustration – A young boy went to the local store with his mother. The shop owner was a kind man. He passed the boy a large jar of lollipops and invited him to help himself to a handful.

But the boy was uncharacteristically shy and held back. So, the shop owner pulled out a handful for him. When outside, the mother asked why he had suddenly been so shy and wouldn't take the handful of suckers? The boy replied, “Because his hand is much bigger than mine!” 😊

Application – Beloved, when you are generous with your resources, you never have to fear not having enough.

The more you give the more God gives in return. God will always out give you.

Deut 28:11 – the word “prosperity” – Let's redeem and recover even the terminology from the cults and heretics.

And for the believer, all giving is thanks-giving.

B. The Promise of Almighty Protection

Point – Matt 6: 19-34

Proof – “¹¹**Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*, says the LORD of hosts.**”

“**devourer**” – to eat or consume

Remember, this is an agricultural society

Joel 1:4 – “What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.”

→ God doesn't just remove the **curse** of v. 9. He rebukes it!

God says, what you give, you will gain. Why???

→ Because the curse of the devourer is rebuked.

Application – **Prov 11:24** – “There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but *it results* only in want.”

C. The Promise of Authentic Profession

Point – In the context of Israel, it was always the Lord's intention to extend His salvation blessings through Israel to the Gentiles → **Witness**

Proof – “¹²**And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land, says the LORD of hosts.**”

Let's have a little clarification up front – “**for you shall be a delightful land**”

Application– We should understand that for us as Christians, this is the Church, not America.

Remember, when we apply God’s promises in the Old Testament to the nation of Israel of healing their “land” and blessing their “land,” **do not apply these to America**.

→ We apply these to the Church of God, the people of God.

It is true that when the *shalom* of the church increases, it will increase the *shalom* of the **city** or the **land**, but the exhortations and promises of God apply to the **church**.

“all the nations will call you blessed” – In the early chapters of Acts, the people of God gathered in the church in Jerusalem. They were poor, but they cared for one another. They shared and they gave and what happened?

The pagans around them looked and saw the love of God and many were converted.

Thomas Moore, Irish poet, singer, songwriter – *“No one has ever lost anything by serving God with a **whole heart**. Nor has anyone ever gained anything by serving God with a **half heart**.”*

Application – We will be a city of lights upon the hill.

CONCLUSION

Illustration – When **Pompeii** was excavated, one of the many bodies embalmed by the ashes of **Vesuvius** was the body of a woman with her feet toward the city gate, but her face turned backward and her arms reaching back toward something just beyond her outstretched hands. The prize for which her frozen fingers were reaching was a **bag of pearls**.

Death was hard at her heels, and **life** was beckoning to her beyond the city gates, but she could not shake off the spell of

her earthly treasure. → She turned to pick them up, with death as her reward ... frozen forever in an attitude of greed.

Application – In the same way, Beloved, do you own your stuff? Or does your stuff own you?

The real question here is not, “Do you understand your gold and silver belong to God?” The real question here is, “Do you understand that you belong to God?”

Application – Do we really consider ourselves to be God’s? We are His by Creation. We did not make ourselves. We are His by Redemption. We did not save ourselves.
→ Do we really consider ourselves to be God’s?