

Giving Unto God

Malachi 3:8-12

3/ 28/ 04

Intro

Malachi was a prophet during the same time as Zechariah and Haggai. This was after Israel had returned from 70 years of exile in Babylon. They were sent home with the instructions to rebuild the temple.

The people became discouraged, however, due to troubles and challenges that stood in their way. Life was hard.

The problem was that **their faith was also suffering** a setback. Malachi was calling them to renew their faith, to trust in God, and to give Him the honor which He was due.

In the verses we are studying today, Malachi is challenging them to consider their hearts in regards to the money.

Jesus also taught on the importance of having a right heart in regards to money. He said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also."

These, then, are the principles of giving unto the Lord.

I. It's About the Giver

A. Don't focus on the gift

- This is what is wrong with the prosperity gospel, **the focus has become money.**
- The focus of the church is not supposed to be money, but rather **it is to be Jesus.**

Matthew 22:37-40, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

- We have made a commitment here that money will never become the focus of the church.
- We will never use manipulation in the church.

Illus – A group of families visited from another church, and knowing that church I was concerned. I visited with the couple I knew to be the leader of the group and mentioned my concern about a certain televangelist. To my surprise, that pastor's TV crew had just been at their home!

B. Don't give for show

- Jesus had much to say about the sincerity of the heart and giving was included.

Matthew 6:2-4, "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not

let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Illus – I know a pastor who has those that are giving a full 10% come forward as they give. This is not good!

C. Give as a response to God

- We should give unto God as a response of God's blessings to us.
- Many people give with the intention of trying to get God to respond to them.
- But He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

Ephesians 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...'

Illus – Israel was to bring to God the “first fruits” of their harvest. In other words, because God blessed them with the harvest, then they gave out of that harvest as an expression of gratitude to the Lord.

James 1:16-18, “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.”

II. Giving Unto God is Worship

Illus – When Abraham returned from defeating the five kings and rescuing his nephew Lot, he then gave 10% of all the spoils to God by giving them to the priest Melchizedek.

A. God loves joy in the giving

- It's important to understand that God wants us to give as a **response of love**, not as though we give under a heavy burden.

II Corinthians 9:7-9, “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;”

- The Holy Spirit moves on hearts in revival and out of the love for God comes a desire to give unto God as an act of worship.

Illus – You will never see a thermometer on the wall because we believe that if people fall in love with Jesus, there will also be a desire to give to Him as an act of worship and devotion.

B. Give God your best

- This was one of the issues that Malachi was dealing with; they were bringing the blemished things as an offering to the Lord.

➤ **Malachi 1:8-9**

- The same is true in worship; give Him the best of your heart and devotion.

Illus – this is why some people like to wear their best clothes to church, as a demonstration of honoring God. There is nothing wrong with that, but be sure it is a true reflection of your heart. To dress up for church, but not give God your heart is inconsistent.

C. It's about sincerity in the heart

- Throughout the scriptures this is a theme of great importance to God.
- **God simply desires to see our hearts authentic and sincere.**

Matthew 23:23-24, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

III. Give with a Heart of Faith

A. Trust God and Believe His Word

- This is the only place in scripture where God says that we should test God.
- **In every other place we are told not to put God to the test.**

- **Faith in God says that we believe that God will do more with our 90% than we can do with 100%.**

Isaiah 55:10-11, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

B. God directs both in withholding and in giving

- We know that where God guides he provides, but we also need to understand that God sometimes withholds from us in order to direct our lives.
- **Sometimes, the having of plenty is not good for the soul.**

Deuteronomy 8:3, "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."

Conclusion

"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."