

May 13, 2007 by Steve Brandon



# Don't Forget His Faithfulness

## Malachi 3:6-12

- 1. He is Faithful to His Covenant (verse 6)**
- 2. He is Faithful to Repenters (verse 7)**
- 3. He is Faithful to Givers (verses 8-12)**

I was recently at a gathering of pastors where several were from the same church. As they had the opportunity, they told me about some of the difficulties that they had experienced in their church in recent days. In the midst of their discussion, I heard a certain phrase repeated over and over and over again by each of these men. They said, "The Lord is faithful. The Lord is faithful. The Lord is faithful."

I believe that these often repeated words served several functions. First of all, these men were finding great comfort with these words. They confessed to mistakes that they had made. They had confessed to some foolishness that they had exhibited. But, through it all, the LORD stood by them and sustained them in their days of distress. Second, these men were speaking of God's faithfulness as an opportunity to give glory to God for sustaining them through their trials. They were telling all of us present that He is worthy of being trusted.

Down through the ages, the LORD's people have always found these things to be true of God's faithfulness. There is great comfort in experiencing His faithfulness. There is great reason to give Him glory for His faithfulness.

When I think about the faithfulness of God, one passage comes to my mind: Lamentations 3:22-23, "The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Jeremiah wrote these words when Judah was experiencing a very difficult time in their history. They were in the midst of being conquered by Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon. Many of them were being carried away as captives into Babylon (Lam. 1:6). Those who were left in Jerusalem were facing famine (Lam. 1:11), destruction (Lam. 2:2), violence (Lam. 2:6), and abandonment (Lam. 2:7). Yet, in the midst of the terrors they experienced, Jeremiah was able to say: "The LORD's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness." These words came as a comfort to him. They came as an opportunity to give glory to God.

This morning, as we turn our attention (once again) to the book of Malachi, we will see the faithfulness of God taking center stage. My message is entitled, "Don't Forget His Faithfulness." To put our entire passage in mind, let's look at our text for this morning: Malachi 3:6-12.

Malachi 3:6-12

"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. 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?' Will a man 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 whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts. "All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

In these verses, we find three demonstrations of the LORD's faithfulness. The first comes in verse 6.

### **1. He is Faithful to His Covenant (verse 6)**

Some Bible translations connect verse 6 with the previous section (like the NASB). Some Bible translations connect verse 6 with the following section (like the ESV).

The confusion comes about because these words form a transition from our previous section to our section. On the one hand, it sums up the previous section. On the other hand, it anticipates the theme of the next section.

Last week, I spoke about the justice of God. One of the implications of God's justice is that He will judge the evil doers. This is clear in verse 5, "'Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,' says the LORD of hosts."

Though Israel may have doubted the justice of God (2:17), And though Israel may have thought that the LORD looks favorably upon those who do evil (2:17), God says that He will judge the evildoers, because, in fact, He doesn't change. Oh, His justice may come a bit slower than

you and I might think that it ought to come. But, it will come!

This morning, I have a great illustration of this fact for you. I have brought here some balloons that I have had lying around my home for some time. They are from my surprise 40th birthday party, which took place a little over a month ago. I'm not exactly sure why I haven't yet thrown these balloons away. But, as all of you know, balloons are destined for the trash can, especially these evil balloons that mocked my getting so old. One balloon says, "Oh no! The Big 4-0!" That's obviously evil! So, they are destined for judgment (i.e. the trash can). It is only my mercy that has allowed these balloons to escape judgment until this point. But, today, they will find themselves in the trash can (as I finally judge them).

In the same way, The LORD's judgment will come upon those who sin and rebel against Him. It will come precisely because "I, the LORD, do not change" (verse 6). With these words, God is saying, "I am a God of justice. Therefore, the wicked will be punished. I've not changed! I've not changed my ways. I'm still the same. The wicked will be punished!"

In this sense, these words belong to the previous section of Scripture, where Malachi was clearly laying out the coming judgment of God, which would put His justice on display for all to see. And yet, the way the verse ends gives us reason to look forward to Malachi's next section, which speaks about the faithfulness of God.

Consider again what verse 6 says. But, look especially as to how the verse ends. "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

The logic of this verse hardly seems to make any sense at all, does it? Think about it. In the verse 5, the LORD had just declared how he would judge the evildoers. He will judge the sorcerers, the adulterers, those who swear falsely, those who oppress the widow and the orphan, those who turn aside the alien, and those who do not fear the LORD.

Now, throughout the book of Malachi, we have seen many of these sins being committed by the people of Israel. There were many in the land who were **adulterers**. They were breaking the bond of matrimony (2:13). They were dealing treacherously with their wives, by divorcing them (2:14). There were many in the land who **swore falsely**. People in the congregation of Israel had vowed to present their unblemished male in his flock, and yet, when they came for the sacrifice, they had a blemished animal instead (1:14). There were many in the land who didn't **fear the LORD**. They were despising the name of the LORD(1:6). They were bringing sacrifices to the LORD that they wouldn't feel right giving to their governor (1:8). The only way that you can do this sort of thing is by fearing the face of man more than you fear the face of God!

And so, this list of sins that God would judge didn't fall on deaf ears in Malachi's day (3:5). They were the very sins that the people. Malachi had detailed several of the sins explicitly in his oracle. I would guess that those he didn't describe as taking place (like sorcery or oppression of the weak) were also rampant in the days of Malachi as well. I believe that verse 5 came with a weight about it, because Malachi was indicting the very sins that the people of Judah were committing. The LORD will judge those who commit these sins.

But that's not quite what verse 6 seems to say, "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." How do you explain this verse? You would expect to hear, "For I the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, will be judged as well?" How do you explain the fact that Malachi wrote of how God will judge those engaged in wickedness, and there were those in Israel at that time, who were committing these very sins, and the LORD affirms His unchanging character in these regards, but concludes, with "Therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed?"

It's because something bigger is going on here. It's because God is faithful to His covenant.

Oh, to be sure, those in Israel who were guilty of these sins would certainly receive the just recompense of their transgressions. But, equally sure was the truth that God had made a covenant with these people. God wasn't going to let His judgment get in the way of his covenantal faithfulness. Such things are demonstrated throughout the book of Malachi.

The book of Malachi began with a declaration of God's love for Israel. "I have loved you" says the LORD (Mal. 1:2). He goes on to say how He demonstrated that love by destroying Esau, and yet, preserving Israel. Israel was not consumed, because of God's faithful love to them. In chapter 2, verse 10, Malachi mentions this covenant that God had made with their fathers. In chapter 3, verse 1, Malachi mentions the ultimate "messenger of the covenant" who will come and fully establish it with the people.

So strong is God's covenantal bond with His people, that He will not consume them, even when their sins deserve it! We had a preview of this in chapter 2, when talking about the priests. They had sinned badly by allowing these faulty sacrifices to be offered to the LORD. In chapter 2, verse 3, the LORD told (in the most graphic of terms) how He was going to shame the priests and ultimately "take them away" with the sewage. And yet, God promised that He wouldn't "consume" them, as He mentions in the next verse that His "covenant [will] continue with Levi" (2:4).

I believe that the same thing is going on here in our text this morning. Yes, those sinning will bear their judgment. But, the LORD was going to be faithful to His covenant. Israel was not going to be consumed!

There are other instances of a similar things taking place in the Bible. In Psalm 106:7-8, we read, "Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, that He might make His power known." Those in Israel during the days of the Exodus saw the great power of God, but refused to believe. Instead, they rebelled against Him. They deserved to die. Nevertheless, God still saved them, because of a greater principle. He wanted to demonstrated His faithfulness to His people. He wanted to put His power on display.

The days of the judges is much the same. As Israel went astray, there was no reason why God shouldn't have destroyed them all!

Generation after generation after generation, they forsook the LORD. "They served the Baals" (Judges 2:11). "They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers" (Judges 2:12). "They followed other gods" (Judges 2:12). "They provoked the LORD to anger" (Judges 2:12). Though the LORD severely distressed them (Judges 2:15), He never destroyed them. The reason comes in Judges 2:1, when the LORD said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.'"

All we can conclude is that the LORD is faithful to His covenant (verse 6).

Today, after the cross, it is much the same as well. God is faithful to His saving promises! Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." 1 Peter 5:10, "After you have suffered or a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." Jesus made the promise, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).

We have a faithful God who has promised, "I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). It's not that we as a church are so good and faithful to the LORD, that we merit His faithfulness to us. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13)

In our weakness, God doesn't crush us. Why? because He is faithful to His covenant. Aren't you glad? He is faithful to His Covenant (verse 6). Never forget that. Let's look at my next point this morning.

## **2. He is Faithful to Repenters (verse 7)**

This comes in verse 7, where we read, "'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."

This is really the promise of all the Scriptures! God always stands ready to receive all those who repent of their sins! "Return to Me, and I will return to you!" The message of repentance is the message that God has always proclaimed.

When Cain was angry with the LORD for not accepting his sacrifice, his countenance fell. God warned him, "Why has your countenance fallen? sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 3:6-7). Though the word, "repentance" is not used in this context, the concept is present. Cain was being called to return to the LORD, not succumbing to the strong pull of the flesh.

As the people of Israel grumbled and complained throughout their wanderings in the wilderness, their problem was that they had turned away from the living God. Their solution was to "come back." This was a call to repentance.

In the Proverbs, we see Wisdom calling in the street, "Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you" (Prov. 1:23). This is

The Prophets, we see several of them proclaiming repentance. Jeremiah called out to Israel, "'Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD; 'I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,' declares the LORD; I will not be angry forever" (Jer. 3:12). Ezekiel preached, "'As I live!' declares the LORD God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from our evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ez. 33:11). Isaiah's call to repentance was vast and large and sweeping and all-encompassing. "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22).

Such a call to repentance carries right on through the New Testament. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their ministries proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). Peter preached repentance, both to Jews (Acts 2:38; 3:18) and Gentiles alike (Acts 10:43; 11:18). Paul preached repentance to all who would listen (Acts 26:18).

Perhaps one of the most sweeping calls to repentance that Paul made comes at the end of Paul's message to those at the Areopagus in Athens. He said, "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:30). In other words, there had been many sins committed over the years by people. But, in His patience, God had decided to overlook those sins and not bring His justice quite yet. This day is a day of mercy. And God is calling "all everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

The amazing truth of the gospel is that God will receive all who repent and believe in the gospel! "Return to Me and I will return to you!" is the promise. This is the message of our age! When Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, Jesus gave him orders to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in [Jesus]" (Acts 26:18).

Have you ever thought it to be remarkable that God would receive all who repent of their sins? Isn't it difficult to receive someone who has sinned against you, even if they have asked for forgiveness. But, the LORD will receive all who come to him in repentance. This is amazing indeed. I mean, it hardly seems fair that a man can live his entire life in rebellion against the LORD, pursuing his own lusts and pleasures, spewing blasphemies from his mouth, failing to give any thought to his fellow man, living only for this world, and finally, at 85 years old, find himself in a place of repentance. And God will forgive all his sins? And God would restore Him into perfect fellowship? What an amazing thing it is that God will receive! And yet, this is our God.

In fact, it gets better! Not only does God receive all who repent, He is especially thrilled when the worst of sinners reach an end of themselves and cry out to Him for help!

I trust that you all remember the story of the prodigal son. This son takes his inheritance, travels to a far land and spends it all on sinful living. At long last, he repents and returns. The father gladly receives him, bringing out the best robe, placing a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and ordering the fattened calf to be killed so that they might eat and celebrate! (Luke 15:22-23).

God is thrilled to receive the repentance of the worst of sinners who repent! The point of the story of the prodigal son is that "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

There is rejoicing in heaven when any sinner repents. But, in a very real way, the LORD especially loves to forgive the worst of sinners! He loved it when the city of Nineveh, a city of 120,000 people, repented! But Jonah didn't. He loved it when Manasseh repented! He loved it when Nebuchadnezzar repented! He loves it when Paul repented!

This is the situation of Israel in Malachi's day. Look again at verse 7, which gives a bit of background into the lives of these people. It isn't good. "From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them."

The people of Israel had a history of spurning the LORD. It was no different with this generation. They had "turned aside" from the LORD as well. Over recent weeks in our exposition of this text, we have seen this. They had failed to honor the LORD in their worship (1:6-2:9). They had failed to remain faithful to the LORD (2:10). They had failed to remain faithful in their marriages (2:11-16). They had complained against the LORD (2:17-3:5).

And now, God says, "Though you have turned away from Me, if you will repent and return to Me, I will be good on my promise and will return to you. I have been patient with you. I have not destroyed you as your sins deserved. Do you see my kindness and patience toward you? Are you convinced of my love for you? This ought to lead you to repentance (i.e. Rom. 2:4). So, what will you do? Will you return? I'm ready. Are you willing?"

This passage here in Malachi is similar to Peter's words in 2 Peter 3. Unbelievers were mocking the judgment of the LORD. They said, "Where is the promise of His coming! All continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Peter said, "No, that's not true. God destroyed the world once with water (2 Peter 3:6). And he will destroy it again with fire (2 Peter 3:7).

But, I'll tell you why He doesn't judge it right now. He's being patient, delaying His judgment, to give people time to repent (2 Peter 3:9)." And then, Peter writes those famous words, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

This is exactly what's taking place in Malachi. God could have brought His judgment, swift and terrible upon the house of Israel. But, He didn't. Rather, He was patient, waiting for repentance. Now, the sad reality is that there are those in this life, who will never repent. God gives them every opportunity in the world to repent, and they don't.

Some that come to my mind are those in Revelation 16, who will experience the terrible bowl judgments of the wrath of God. God gave seven bowls of His wrath to seven angels. Here is what takes place when the fourth bowl is poured out, in Revelation 16:8-9, "The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory."

God puts forth His power and awesome majesty to these people. He scorches them with fire and fierce heat. What a mercy! He makes them feel a foretaste of the punishment their sins deserve, and still gives them an opportunity to repent. However, rather than repenting, they blaspheme his name, and refuse to repent.

With the fifth bowl, something similar takes place, "Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds" (Rev. 16:10-11). Again, something similar takes place. The bowl of judgment comes and begins to show them of the torments of hell that they will experience. Rather than repenting, they blaspheme God and refuse to repent!

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is very similar. Jesus told this story of how the rich man enjoyed the pleasant things in this life, while Lazarus was in distress. But, after they died, things were reversed. Lazarus was in a state of bliss, while the rich man was in torment, longing for even the slightest relief. The rich man pleaded with Abraham to send someone to warn them of the coming punishment that awaited if they didn't repent. But, Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). When the rich man pleaded to send someone from the dead, for surely they would believe if someone rose from the dead to call them, Abraham answered again, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

The idea here lifts the role of Scripture in terms of its power in persuading people to repent. It's not as if the Scripture is second-best. No. If you have the Scripture and yet fail to believe, there is nothing else that will persuade you! And this is the case with many. Many have heard God's call to repent, but have refused the call. The great truth for us this morning is that God is faithful to repenters. Have you experienced His faithfulness?

### **3. He is Faithful to Givers (verses 8-12)**

When the LORD established the manner of His worship in the days of the Old Testament, He was very clear as to how the tabernacle was to be built, how it was to be furnished, how it was to function, how it was to be funded.

The tabernacle was to be surrounded by a court, 150 feet long and 75 feet wide (Ex. 27:18). The tabernacle itself was to be 45 feet long and 15 feet wide. It would have two rooms, the holy place and the holy of holies. The holy place was to be furnished with the table of showbread, the golden lampstand and the altar of incense, each made in accordance to exact specifications. The holy of holies was to be furnished with the ark of the covenant. The Levites were to function as the priests. God gave explicit directions as to how these priests were to be consecrated to the ministry. God also when and how sacrifices were to be offered.

God also gave directions as to how this project was to be funded. The people of Israel were required to give of their finances to support this project. Every year, those in Israel were required to give a tenth of their income to support the livelihood of the Levites, who performed the duty of the sanctuary (Numbers 18:21-32). Every year, those in Israel were required to give another tenth of their income to the Levites for use during the three major festivals, which were to be celebrated in Jerusalem each year (Deut. 14:22-27). Every third year, the people of Israel were required to give a tenth of their income for the needy (the Levite, the alien, the orphan, and the widow) (Deut. 14:28-29).

Each of these required payments were called, "tithes." When you add them up (10% for the Levites, 10% for the festivals, and about 3% for the needy), you find out that every Israelite was required to pay approximately 23% of their income each year to the work of the tabernacle.

Here in verse 8, we find out that they were failing in their financial responsibilities toward the temple and its operational expenses. And the LORD says, "You are robbing Me!" "I have demanded from all of you that You support the work of the temple, but you have failed in your obligation."

And the LORD was not happy about being robbed! (I've never been mugged before at gunpoint where I was forced to hand over my money, but I can't imagine that it feels very good.) As a result of being robbed, the LORD would curse those in Israel. This is what He said in verse 9, "You are cursed with a curse." We don't know the exact content of what this curse was, but we can be guaranteed that it wasn't good. If it's anything like the curse that came upon the priests in chapter 2, verse 3, where the LORD said that He would smear sewage sludge in their faces, you know that it's bad.

But, right along side the curse comes a potential blessing, which is unbelievable! Look at verse 10, "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows.'" In other words, God was telling those in Israel, "Give all 23% of your income to the Levites (as I have commanded you), and then, just watch the blessing that I will bring upon you because of your obedience to Me!"

And the picture that God gives of this blessing is that of abundant provision that keeps coming, like a bubbling brook that continues to overflow its bank. It just keeps coming like the widow's oil flask. The resources will continue to come. You use them up and there will always be a replacement. What a promise!

Now, why wouldn't they bring the whole tithe into the storehouse? It comes down to why you and I don't give our money away. Some of us want to spend it on our own desires. Some of us lack faith that God will provide for us. Some of us are in debt and think that we can't afford to give to others. Some of us don't understand that all we have is the LORD's anyway. Some of us don't understand the benefit that giving is for us.

I love the way in which God then challenges the Israelites in these things. He says, "test Me now in this!" To use our vernacular, God was saying, "C'mon, I dare ya! You just pay Me what you owe Me, I'll see too it that you won't lack anything. I'll provide all of your needs. You give to me first, and I'll see to it that you will have enough to make your payments on your debt. You will lack nothing! You will be blessed!"

Now, the question that often comes from people is this: "Are we required to pay the tithe today?"

In answering that question, you need to realize that the full tithe spoken about here in Malachi is really more of a tax than a tithe. These tithes would support the work of the temple, which was the center of the governmental activities of the nations. And yet, a tenth of this money was specifically given to help support the spiritual leaders of the community. And so, there is a parallel in giving to the church today.

When you come to the New Testament, you will search in vain for any sort of commandment for us to give any sort of a percentage of our income to the LORD, much less the tithe. You just don't see it. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see this. This fact has led some to conclude, "Today, we can give whatever we want to give. After all, we are no longer under the law! We are under grace! We are not under the tithe!"

I have read and listened those who believe this. They talk about "Grace giving," which is derived mostly from 2 Corinthians 8-9. On the one hand, I agree with these things. And yet, on the other hand, there is something about the conclusions that some people draw from these things which lead them terribly astray!

When people hear, "We aren't under law, we are under grace!" they hear, "The standards have been relaxed! I don't have to give as much as they did!" When it actually works out in the lives of people, it ends up that they give *less* than the tithe required of the Israelites, and become very content in so doing. Those who come to this conclusion don't understand grace. They are like those who draw the conclusion, "Let us sin that grace might abound!" (Rev. 6:1)

Consider, for a moment, what it means that we are no longer under law, but under grace! Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus addressed this question? "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit murder,' but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty" (Matt. 5:21-22). "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44).

This is what it means to be under grace! It means that we go far beyond the law! We aren't bound by external rules and regulations, as if all is well by meeting some standard!. We are motivated by our love for God to exceed way beyond mere external duties!

And so, I ask you what this means about giving. It means that the tithe is an excellent place to start, like not mugging people. It means that we take the Old Testament legal requirement as the guide that we are called to exceed! Are we bound to the law? No, we are not bound to the tithe. Rather, we ought to desire to go way beyond what the law ever required of the Israelites.

“Are we required to pay the tithe today?” No, we aren’t “required.” But, we ought to have a desire that far exceeds the giving of the tithe. Some may be able to do that financially and some may not. Some may be able, but through a lack of faith, they won’t.

If anything might encourage you on, may it be the promises which Malachi give in our text this morning. We have seen the abundance of blessings already in verse 10. Consider what it says in verse 11, “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts.” In other words, the LORD says, “I’ll bring a cool summer, that won’t scorch your crops with the blazing heat of the sun. I’ll keep the locusts away from eating your crops. I’ll provide an abundance of rain for you.”

And I do believe that such promises come today to those who give of their resources to others. You may say, “But, I can’t afford to tithe.” It may just be that if you step out and prioritize your giving to the LORD, He will protect you financially. Perhaps that car, which you expect to break down any day now, may keep running far beyond its capabilities. Perhaps you may just land a few extra sales, which boost your bottom line this year. Perhaps the LORD may move in the heart of your boss to give you a raise. Perhaps the LORD gives your family excellent health for the next few years, which eliminates your medical bills. Perhaps the plumbing in your house doesn’t go out. Perhaps the tree doesn’t fall on your house. Perhaps the you are protected from the accident.

The LORD is able to prosper you financially, in ways that you will never expect. The LORD is able to bring disasters upon you as well. You can throw your back out. You can have an electrical fire in your garage. You can lose your job. You can get into a car accident and total your car.

For instance, my family owns a photocopier. We purchased it about 10 years ago or so. And this photocopier has kept working for a long time. Being involved in ministry, we have run tens of thousands of copies on this copier (for bulletins, teaching handouts, and a plethora of other things that come with the territory). It still continues to work just fine.

About five years ago, my parents were looking to purchase a photocopier as well. My father asked about ours. When I told him how well ours works, I recommended a similar brand and model. Recently, my father has come to me asking about the copier, because it hasn’t been working so well in recent days. It will copy only one sheet at a time and then jam. They haven’t over-used their copier. They haven’t abused it or anything. The LORD has simply kept our copier working.

This is the way that hand of the LORD may work with your possessions. He can protect them and keep them running. All of these things are held in the providential hand of the LORD. He will do as He sees fit. How it happens, we don’t know. But, that’s the way God works. It’s what Proverbs 11:24 says, “There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.”

Solomon was observing something that didn’t make sense. There is one person who simply gives and gives, but never seems to be in want. There is another who holds everything back, thinking that they might need it in the future. But, this one seems always to be in need. It’s not humanly possible to explain how it works. But, it is the way that the LORD has set up the universe. Somehow, somehow, the LORD blesses those who give. Or, as I have put it in our third point, He is faithful to givers (verses 8-12)

His faithfulness will be evident for all to see. Should the people of Israel stop robbing God and give the full tithe, the blessing that God would give to them would be known far and wide. This is what verse 12 says, “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.”

Edom would take notice of God’s blessing upon Israel. Persia would take notice of God’s blessing upon Israel. Babylon would take notice of God’s blessing upon Israel.

I’m sure that this would be true of our nation as well. Randy Alcorn made the staggering statement: After noting that the average church member gives about 2½ percent of his income to charities, he said, “If Western Christians all practiced tithing, the task of world evangelism and feeding the hungry would be within reach. Because many Christians, once they begin to tithe, also give freewill offerings beyond the tithe, the work of God could be multiplied in every corner of the world.” [\[1\]](#)

I firmly believe that Alcorn is exactly right. If Western Christians would give 10% of their income. The number of churches in America could be quadrupled. We could have four times as many pastors. We could support four times as many missionaries. The world would be a better place and God’s hand of blessing would be upon our nation in great ways. The world would see the blessing that would come upon us and call us “a delightful land.”

He will bless individuals who give of their resources to others. He will bless nations whose people are givers. May Rock Valley Bible Church be filled with givers.

God is faithful. He is faithful to His covenant, He is faithful to repenters, and He is faithful to givers. May we never forget these things.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 13, 2007 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (p. 186).