# If You Love Me, Receive My Blessing

Malachi 3:6-12

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*Return to God’s Love (Malachi)*

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Wednesday, February 22, 2017, 7pm at Living Hope Church of Roselle, IL

**livinghopechurch.net**

**Introduction**: Open your Bible to Malachi 3. We are continuing in a series in Malachi called “I Still Love You.” Tonight’s study is entitled: “If You Love Me, Receive My Blessing.”

God’s nature is first loving and generous and kind. He is just, of course, but he takes no pleasure “in the death of the wicked” but wishes the wicked would “turn and live” and receive the blessing of the Lord. He was all of us, but promises to give us “every spiritual blessing” in Christ (Eph 1:3). God has a prerequisite for blessing us. He wants total surrender. Listen to C.S. Lewis, author of the Chronicles of Narnia, in his last sermon he ever gave when he preached on January 29, 1956.

“God claims all, because He is love and must bless. He cannot bless us unless He has us. When we try to keep within us an area that is our own, we try to keep an area of death. Therefore, in love, He claims all. There’s no bargaining with Him.” **~ C.S. Lewis[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Our God is a God who loves to bless his people. Even though the people in Malachi’s day were blind to his love and generosity, God promises to infinitely bless these very undeserving people.

We are probably more undeserving today than the people of Malachi’s day. They didn’t know as much as we do – they were waiting for Messiah – we live after his coming. How blessed we are.

Do you know how blessed you are at this moment? The people of Malachi’s day were blind to it. They were blind to his tender mercies.

We see four blessings God wants to give us:

* God’s Blessing of Relentless Pursuit (Mal 3:6)
* God’s Blessing of Returning to Us (Mal 3:7)
* God’s Blessing of Heaven Rending (Mal 3:8-11)
* God’s Blessing of Testimony Raising (Mal 3:12)

1. God’s Blessing of **Relentless Pursuit**, (Mal 3:6).

**Malachi 3:6**, “For **I the Lord do not change**; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.”

Change is a fact of life for every person on earth. We grow better or worse, but we never stay the same. God is perfect. He cannot grow better or worse. He is the standard of all that is good. Because God’s goodness is unchangeable, we don’t have to worry about God changing his mind about his love for us.

If he has fixed his love upon, then it has always been this way. He has loved you with an everlasting love. That’s why we are not consumed. Certainly he is speaking at least physically. The Jewish race would have been devoured by her neighbors if it wasn’t for the sovereign intervention of God. Every one from Pharaoh to Sennacherib to Nebuchadnezzar could have wiped Israel off the map, were it not for God – were it not for grace.

And were it not for grace we would be consumed physically and spiritually. He could have allowed our hearts to harden. But God has always graciously sent us prophets. Today we have God’s completed, sufficient Word. He gives us teachers and preachers of clay. Despite their many imperfections, he uses them, inspite of them. All grace. All God’s glorious grace. That’s why we are not consumed. We deserve to die physically. We deserve to die spiritually in hell. Yet God was not willing that you should perish. He Son perished in your place.

Aren’t you glad that our gracious God never changes? He never wavers in his love for you. There will never be a day when you sin and God says: I change my mind. How did I ever set my love upon you? I give up on you. That will never happen. Why? God’s faithful, covenant love never changes. He chose you “to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1:7).

1. God’s Blessing of **Returning to us**, (Mal 3:7-10).

**Malachi 3:7**, “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?’”

**God’s Desire**

God’s desire for his people is total reconciliation. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Rev 21:1-5).

Don’t you long for that day to come? Until then, God is calling his people to a life of repentance.

**Our Hearts are Deceitful**

Our record is clear. Like the people in Malachi’s day, we have turned aside from God’s statutes in many ways. There is a part of us that will “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18). We lie to ourselves that we are not that bad. But we are worse than we imagine. We cannot judge ourselves rightly (Jer 17:9). We are commanded not to “lean to our own understanding” (Prov 3:5) when it comes to our heart. Don’t trust your heart. Trust God instead.

**Malachi 3:7a**, “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them.”

Malachi says, this is nothing new. This has been going on for generations. Malachi is far from idealizing past generations. A hundred years earlier Ezra and Zechariah said the same thing (cf. Ezra 9:7; Zech. 1:2).[[2]](#footnote-2)

**God’s Invitation**

But God gives us a sweet invitation – an invitation to return! “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal 3:7). No matter where you’ve strayed, God will return to you. You simply need to take one step of repentance toward him. Our God is a pardoning God!

**James 4:8-10** calls us as New Covenant saints to return in the same way: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”

The term "draw near” in James 4:8 originally referred to the priests who were to “draw near” and offer sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. This points not only to forgiveness of sin, but of reconciliation. God has released us from his wrath. Now we can return to him in shalom – well-being.

Now God has opened the way for you to be restored—He’s granted you access through Jesus’ blood. He invites you to draw close to Him. These are words of *fellowship* and *communion*.

Remember what David said in Psalm 24. You and I would do well to come to God like this every day. Look at **Psalm 24:3-5**, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD”

***Dirty Fingernails Illustration***

Ladies, you don’t go to your wedding day with dirty fingernails. And you don’t go to the Lord with dirty sin in your heart and in your life!

The heart touched by God hungers for righteousness and for clean hands.  You hate what you see about yourself, your sin, the heinousness of it is repulsive.

**Return to Me: A Call to Repentance**

What is God inviting us to do? “Return to me” (Mal 3:7) is an invitation to repent. He calls us to forsake all others and be joined to Him. We know what this means. Men, when you saw your wife for the first time, nobody had to tell you to draw near to her. There’s an abandonment in this word.

We are called to forsake anything that has come between our soul and the Savior. Drawing near to God means my heart's desire is for intimacy with the living God.

**A Good Question**

The Israelites now ask, “But you say, ‘How shall we return?” (Mal 3:7b). That’s a good question. The answer from God is: Give up your greed and materialism and I will show you my generosity.

Sadly, it seems the people were not asking sincerely. They were saying, “What more can we do to return to you? We are right before you.” They were not right, but only self-righteous.

In spite of the hypocrisy and self-righteousness that we suffer from, God is a God of blessing. God gives the people a simple test: tithe to me and I will open the windows of heaven to you.

1. God’s Blessing of **Heaven Rending**, (Mal 3:8-10).

**Malachi 3:8-10**, “Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. 10 Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if **I will** not **open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need**.”

**Where is Your Treasure?**

The people ask, “How shall we return?” Malachi answers in the same way Jesus did. Where ever your money is, that’s what you love. Your checkbook tells us where your heart is. Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (**Mt 6:21**).

Malachi indirectly gives us an example from the life of Jacob.

**A Reference to Jacob’s Tithe at Paddan Aram**

Malachi may have cited the example of Jacob to highlight the people’s sin. Jacob went to Paddan Aram to seek a wife. He was there 14 years before he married Rachel (Gen 28:28) and 20 years in total serving “Uncle Laban.” It was a kind of “exile” for Jacob. After Jacob’s exile in Paddan Aram, when he ‘returned’ both to the promised land and to the Lord, he built an altar at Bethel, and he offered a tithe to the Lord according to his vow in Genesis 28:20–22 (*cf.* also Gen 35:1–7).

Jacob’s promise is found in **Genesis 28:20-28**, “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.” He seems to fulfill the vow in Genesis 35.

When Jacob’s descendants in Malachi’s time similarly returned from their exile, they rebuilt the altar at Jerusalem, but they were grossly negligent in offering their tithes (*cf.* Neh 13:10–13). Nehemiah rebuked them and “Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses” (Neh 13:12).

This negligence may have seemed justified because of crop failure, drought and pestilence (Mal 3:10–11), which would have been more than enough to deter such complacent worshippers. The Lord reveals, however, that these natural disasters were the result, and not the cause, of the nation’s disobedience (Mal 3:8; *cf.* Hag 1:6, 9–11; 2:16–19).[[3]](#footnote-3)

**What is the Curse?**

God says to the whole nation: “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you” (Mal 3:9). For Israel, “the curse probably took the form of drought, poor crops and economic depression. Yet even while the curse was in progress and in evidence the people were continuing to rob God.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

For the Christian, our curse has been removed in Christ. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Gal 3:13).

**The Full Tithe**

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” (Mal 3:10a).

John MacArthur explains what the full Old Testament tithe was:

“Two kinds of giving are taught consistently throughout Scripture: giving to the government (always compulsory), and giving to God (always voluntary).

The issue has been greatly confused, however, by some who misunderstand the nature of the Old Testament tithes. Tithes were not primarily gifts to God, but taxes for funding the national budget in Israel.

Because Israel was a theocracy, the Levitical priests acted as the civil government. So the Levite's tithe (Lev 27:30-33) was a precursor to today's income tax, as was a second annual tithe required by God to fund a national festival (Deut 14:22-29). Smaller taxes were also imposed on the people by the law (Lev 19:9-10; Exo 23:10-11). So the total giving required of the Israelites was not 10 percent, but well over 20 percent. All that money was used to operate the nation.

New Testament believers are never commanded to tithe. Matthew 22:15-22 and Romans 13:1-7 tell us about the only required giving in the church age, which is the paying of taxes to the government. Interestingly enough, we in America presently pay between 20 and 30 percent of our income to the government – a figure very similar to the requirement under the theocracy of Israel.

The guideline for our giving to God and his work is found in **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**: ‘Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.’”[[5]](#footnote-5)

**The Standard of Giving for the NT Believer**

The standard for the law of faith or the law of the Spirit is higher than Moses’ law. If they saw the truth in a dark, fuzzy mirror, we who see clearly should be known not by mere law keeping, but true generosity that goes beyond the Old Testament standard.

We should be personally involved in the finances of the local church as well as missions, and many other areas of benevolence outside the church. We can give of our time and our treasure.

People have asked me: Should I tithe to God? My answer is yes! But be careful not to let your generosity be hinged to an Old Testament concept. A tithe is a good place for a New Covenant believer to start, but we should not be content there. We should be known as those who give to the storehouse of God’s people cheerfully and not under obligation.

“The end of this matter is that not merely our money or time, but our whole selves—body, soul, and spirit—are God’s, and therefore we are to honor God wholly with all we are.” [[6]](#footnote-6)

Paul wrote, “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (**1 Cor 6:19–20**). He said, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (**Rom 12:1**).

**Not My Money**

If you follow the resources in your life, I will tell you where your heart is. One of the ways we show love is through generosity and provision and care. As we said already, Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (**Mt 6:21**). Money is the chief indicator of where your priorities are.

We as believers are all stewards. The biblical teaching of stewardship is that I’m a manager of things I do not own. Ultimately things don’t belong to me; ultimately everything belongs to God. God has given me possessions, income, a home, a place to sleep. And He’s given those things to us that we might manage them in such a way that it glorifies God.

**How Much of God’s Money Should I Keep?**

I’ve heard people say “Why should I give God any of my money.” As Christians, we can never ask that question, because the premise is false. It’s not my money. What we ask as stewards and managers of God is: “How much of God’s money should I keep?”

It would be nice on our paycheck where it had your name if it would be written out to the Lord Jesus Christ. You could be named as the manager. Or how about that Debit card or bank account. All your accounts are in the Lord’s name, and you are an authorized manager. Every time you go to spend money you ought to have the mentality that it is the Lord’s money, and you say, “Ok, Lord, I’m going to spend some of your money right now.”

**Blessings from Heaven**

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if **I will** not **open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need**” (Mal 3:10).

God is a good God. They ask, “How shall we return?” God answers “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse” [the temple treasury].

Today we are to give to the ministries of the local church so that Christ might build his church, “and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

God says put me to the test! God’s blessing comes by the believer obeying God. All spiritual relationships with God start with obedience.

What are the blessings God is talking about?

1. **The blessing of God’s presence.** “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence” (Isa 64:1).

2. **The blessing of God’s provision**. “I will… pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need” (Mal 3:10). “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Phil 4:19-20).

3. **The blessing of God’s protection & prosperity**. “I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3:11).

For the OT believer, this meant God would prosper Israel as a nation. That has all now been fulfilled in Christ. These land promises are now fulfilled in Jesus and his church. “Every spiritual blessing” is ours in Christ (Eph 1:3).

“The promise to Abraham and his offspring” was “that he would be heir of the world” (Rom 4:13).

**What does “Rebuke the Devourer” Mean?**

For Israel in Malachi’s day, it meant God would protect them from pests and droughts that would kill their crops. For the Christian today the promises are both earthly and eternal. God promises to care for our needs (Phil 4:19). It could sometimes means that if you lack in generosity as a Christian, the Lord may at times allow you to suffer loss in your life.

A dear accountant friend, Gary Johnson, used to say to me, “I can live far better on 90% than on 100%.”

**The Point of the Matter**

The whole point of the matter is that God is a generous God. For those who are generous and selfless, yet wise, he will give more to manage.

God says: “Put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if **I will** not **open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need**” (Mal 3:10).

God is a generous God. He lacks nothing. He seeks generous saints who will be good stewards of sharing his wealth.

Consider NT words on wealth: “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be **generous and ready to share**, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (**1 Tim 6:17-19**). The rich were made rich so they would as believers “be generous and ready to share.”

Our God wants to open up the floodgates of heaven! His nature and desire is to bless you so you can bless others.

1. God’s Blessing of **Testimony Raising**, (Mal 3:12).

**Malachi 3:12**, “Then **all nations will call you blessed**, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.”

**The Blessing of Influence**

One of the greatest blessings is one of influence. God’s people were ruining their testimony before the other nations.

“Israel’s neighbors knew that she was a nation like no other and that the God with whom she was in covenant was a God like no other. They were, therefore, always mindful of what was going on in Israel and always drawing conclusions about Israel and her God. Sadly, Israel often gave the impression that the Lord was not real and that she was not unique. When she did so, God would bring judgement upon her to prove those very things. At this time, the nation was again giving her neighbours the wrong ideas. But if she were to return, those very neighbours would consider her to be both ‘blessed’ and ‘a delightful land’.

Surely, we are driven to ask ourselves a very disturbing question. Can outsiders see God’s hand of blessing on us? Does this not explain why our evangelistic efforts have such little impact? If God’s hand of blessing were obvious in our lives, unbelievers would be beating a path to our door. But God does not bless disobedience, and disobedience is rampant among Christians. Failure to contribute financially is one act of disobedience that deprives us of God’s good hand of blessing with all its evangelistic potential… If we look at our bank accounts, we might very well find reasons not to give. But if we look (as we should) at the cross of Christ, we cannot help but give.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Closing Thoughts**

Two verses really guide our thinking in understanding the generosity of God. He’s looking for people to give his influence to.

**Luke 16:10** (NASB) sums it up well, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.”

**Matthew 13:12** is true for truth, resources, revelation – all the things God gives us. It’s not just restricted to money in this passage but includes truth. “For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

1. C.S. Lewis, “A Slip of the Tongue,” in The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses (New York: Simon & Schuster, Touchstone, 1996), 137ff. *This was Lewis’ last sermon and was delivered January 29, 1956.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Baldwin, J. G. (1972). *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Vol. 28, p. 268). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hugenberger, G. P. (1994). Malachi. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 888). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Smith, J. E. (1994). *The Minor Prophets* (Mal 3:9). Joplin, MO: College Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John MacArthur. Grace to You online. “*Does God require me to give a tithe of all I earn?*” QA144. Accessed 22 Feb 2007: https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA144. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Boice, J. M. (2002). [*The Minor Prophets: an expositional commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/boicecm33mic;ref=Bible.Mal3.6-12;off=15304) (p. 604). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ellsworth, R. (2007). [*Opening up Malachi*](https://ref.ly/logosres/openup39mal;ref=Bible.Mal3.12;off=34;ctx=f_influence_(v._12)$0A~Israel$E2$80$99s_neighbours_) (pp. 74–75). Leominster: Day One Publications. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)