# If You Love Me, Serve My Purpose

Malachi 3:13-4:3

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*Return to God’s Love (Malachi)*

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**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, Serve My Purpose.”

In the book of Malachi, the people’s greatest complaint is that looking at their present circumstances, it looks like God doesn’t love them and that they are serving God “in vain” (Mal 3:14). Remember this is a book with the theme of God’s love. God says, “I have loved you” (Mal 1:2). The people says, “How have you loved us?” And God basically says, “You’re still here. You are not obliterated like Esau.” And the argument of the rest of the book is “I still love you, but you don’t love me. But if you want to repent and love me…” and God gives the qualities of people with a heart of love for God. He’s said, if you love me, enjoy my worship, lead my people, love your spouse, trust my timing, receive my blessing, and in this passage (3:13-4:3) he says: serve my purpose.

What is your purpose? Your purpose is to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:30) by experiencing the love of Christ (Rom 5:5).

God’s purpose for believers, both OT and NT, is to be transformed and redeemed to the original image in which God first created us. We might say, that God wants to transform us into the image of Christ. R.C. Sproul explains how the transformation is ongoing throughout the life of a Christian:

…the instant that true justifying faith is present in the life of the believer, the person begins to change. That change will be evidenced in a life that moves to obedience. Good works necessarily flow out of true faith. The works do not justify us. It is the righteousness of Christ that justifies us. But if the works do not follow, it is proof positive that we do not have genuine faith and are therefore still unjustified people.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**~ R.C. Sproul**

God’s love is unearned. We often doubt God’s love because of our feelings, our circumstances, our bad behavior, the settled feeling that we do not measure up or we’ve sinned too much to be worthy of God’s love. Yet, if we look at the motive of most of our doubts, it’s likely self-doubt, self-righteousness, self-pity, and so on. We don’t experience God’s love because our eyes are on ourselves. What we are going to see in this chapter is that if we want to experience the love of God, we must fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:1-2). The answer to all the complaints in the book of Malachi is to intensely gaze upon Jesus on the cross, and let the love of God and the assurance of his deep love for you pour into your heart.

We cannot experience God’s love if we are wanting to be filled with something else. It could be good things or bad things. Some think that if they are filled with enough correct doctrine, they will experience the love of God. D. Martin Lloyd Jones said, “I spend half my time telling Christians to study doctrine and the other half telling them that doctrine is not enough.” We need correct doctrine but correct doctrine alone is not enough to experience the love of God. There must be something more.

Certainly the people of Malachi’s day had correct doctrine for the most part (though they were leaving it as they married pagan women). They were religious. They followed the Jewish ceremonies. They tried to follow bring sacrifices to God in the Temple. But they were so far from God. What was missing? They were not experiencing the love of God.

By missing the love of God, they were missing authentic worship. They saw their worship as a drudgery. Trying to worship God without experiencing his love is like trying to take a trip down the highway in your vehicle without any fuel. It’s impossible. You can’t go anywhere without fuel.

What are some times we doubt the love of God?

* My child goes astray, and I feel guilty, like I can do better as a parent (enablement, taking on the role of “savior” in my child’s life)
* I think my love is not enough or imperfect (self-pity)
* I try to do good works to feel worthy of God’s love (self-righteousness)
* I am self-condemning because of bad choices I’ve made

What’s the key word in the above scenarios? Self. Wherever self is there is pride. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less (C.S. Lewis). It’s looking at the cross and being so amazed at his love that you forget yourself.

God’s love is not based on my behavior. Look at the cross – my behavior put Christ there. My sin is all paid for. That should fill me with the love of God.

**Homesick for Heaven**

So often we think, “If I can get this resolved and that area of sin under control, and if I get this and that together in my life, then I’ll be happy.” This is an illusion. You and I will never have a completely fulfilled and happy life on earth. There will be times and seasons on earth. When will everything be resolved and my sinful heart healed completely? When Jesus comes again.

You are going to be so heart-sick every day, and you’re going to blame it on your marriage, blame it on your circumstances and a thousand other things. You’ll say, “If only I had this and that right in my life, then everything will be ok.” Not true. You can resolve everything you possibly can on this earth, but you will still have a heart that is homesick for Christ. You can get everything you think you need together, and you will still feel incomplete. Why? Because you as a child of God are homesick for heaven. You are longing for that day when you will no longer have a propensity to sin. You will be totally free. But until then, we are on an imperfect path to perfection. We will only be perfect when Jesus comes. In this passage of Malachi (3:13-15), God says, “If you love me, serve my purpose.”

What is our purpose? (to experience the love of God and be conformed to Christ’s image)

* God’s purpose is not earthly-focused (3:13-15)
* God’s purpose is only fully realized in heaven (3:16-18)
* God’s purpose leads to an eternal destination (4:1-3)

When we talk about having purpose in your life, we are not talking about gimmics (i.e. 40 Days of Purpose). When we talk about purpose, we are referring to what we are created for.

As the catechism says, “What is the chief end of man?” Answer: “To glorify God and to love him forever.” “Whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

1. God’s purpose is not focused on earth, (Mal 3:13-15).

**Malachi 3:13-15**, “Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ 14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’”

What’s the problem with these people? Where is their focus? Their focus is on earth. There is so much injustice on this earth. They are everywhere. People everywhere mock God and prosper. They put God to the test, and yet they seem to escape from his judgement.

So the say, “It’s vain to serve God. There is no profit in worshipping him.” Why do we serve God? Is our purpose merely focused on having as little pain as possible on earth? Is that our measure of God’s blessings?

The earthly minded look at the here and now. For them it is vain to serve God because they measure their service by earthly, and immediate results. They see evildoers prosper and attribute the blame to God. God tells their words are “hard.” They are wrong. They think God has forgotten about his people.

**A Wrong Focus**

They have a wrong focus! Do you hear what they say? “It is vain to serve God” (vs. 14) because there is no immediate profit. They want immediate gratification. They want an earthly satisfaction. Their focus is way off. We are called to “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Heb 12:1). “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee” (Isa 26:3, KJV).

**Turning the Charge Around: How to Measure the Profitability of Serving God**

Let’s turn this around. Is it only profitable to serve God when there are immediate earthly consequences? Consider Hebrews 11.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1).

Consider **Abel**. “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (11:3-4).

Others are mentioned: Enoch, Abraham and Sarah.

“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (11:13).

“And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:32-40).

**Well Done!**

Faith is often not rewarded on earth. It is rewarded in heaven. One day we will hear the Father say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master” (Mt 23:25).

**A Wrong Understanding of Justice**

God’s people complain: “Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’” (Mal 3:15). This is wrong on its face. Will anyone escape the justice of God? This question is answered in chapter 4:1. No one escapes Judgement Day.

1. Our purpose is fulfilled in **eternity**, (Mal 3:16-18).

**Malachi 3:16-18**, “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. 17 ‘They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.’”

God will never forget his people. He loves them. He remembers them. He has a book of remembrance for them.

**Those Who Feared the Lord**

Who are those who feared the Lord? *Those who feared the Lord* are not necessarily a different group from those who had been complaining, but they are those who have taken the rebuke, and they begin to encourage each other to renewed faith. It is this groping after faith that *the Lord heeded and heard*. The *book of remembrance* recorded not righteous deeds, as in a Persian king’s chronicles (Esth. 6:1, 2); but the names *of those who feared the Lord and thought on his name*. Like Abram they believed God (Gen. 15:6) and in so doing found themselves accounted righteous (verse 18).[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. One’s purpose leads to an **eternal destination**, (Mal 4:1-3).

**God Judges the Wicked** (4:1)

**Malachi 4:1**, “ ‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

God has not forgotten the wicked. There is a day coming in which God will judge the wicked.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:11-15).

God will “set them ablaze.” 1 Thess. 1:8, Jesus will come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**God Rewards the Righteous** (Mal 4:2-3).

**Malachi 4:2-3**, “ ‘But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.’”

There is also coming a day when God will judge the righteous. Throughout the Bible, we hear of the “wicked” and the “righteous.” This is not speaking of superior moral autonomy. No one is autonomously righteous. “There is none righteous, no not one” (Rom 3:11). The righteous are those on the pathway seeking the Lord. The wicked are those who go another pathway to a different destination.

The righteous are not autonomously righteous. They are certainly not perfect. They seek the Lord imperfectly, but they seek the Lord. And God rewards that. He gives us his mercy and grace, and then he rewards us for seeking him as a result of his work in our hearts. That’s grace upon grace!

1. R.C. Sproul. *Pleasing God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994), 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Baldwin, J. G. (1972). [*Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/totc37hagus;ref=Bible.Mal3.16;off=57;ctx=od_knows_and_cares._~Those_who_feared_the) (Vol. 28, p. 273). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)