

Psalm 119 v 162

"I rejoice in Your promises just as someone who has found a great bounty."

1 John 5 v 14 - 15

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him."

Matthew 28 v 20

"Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Revelations 3 v 20

"Here I am, standing at the door and knocking. If anyone hears My voice , and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me."

Revelations 22 v 12

"Look out, for I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me; and I will give to everyone according to what they have done."

Revelations 3 v 5

"So, anyone who overcomes will be clothed in white raiment, and their name will never be blotted out from the Book of Life, but will be recognised by My heavenly Father."

Matthew 11 v 28 - 30

"Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest...for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Who was Malachi (the Messenger or the Killjoy)?

Nehemiah 1 v 3 – 1 v 9 "...if My people repent, obey My commands, and turn again to Me ...I will gather them."

Malachi chatting with his friends:-

- Business is going well
- Just married a beautiful Persian girl
- Plenty of time to do my own things at the weekends
- Can use all my money to invest in myself and my affairs
- Don't need to waste any of my cattle on sacrifices
- I don't even have to believe in God

Malachi is saddened. He challenges them:-

"But you are tenants in someone else's land. This is not God's Covenant to you. He didn't Promise you Persia. Nehemiah told us that we were furnishing our own homes while the house of God was in disrepair."

It's as though they were satisfied with their lot and didn't want what God had promised.

"I hear that Nehemiah is asking King Artaxerxes if he can take some men to go and rebuild the City walls of Jerusalem." **Nehemiah 2 v 1- 5**

In **v 4**, Nehemiah prayed for forgiveness for God's people for turning away from God, with weeping and repentance. Against all odds, Nehemiah succeeded.

In 433bc the Children of Israel returned from exile and were re-building their nation. Malachi was with them.

It was a time of personal prosperity and well-being after the years of struggle. But the people had short memories; they were more concerned with building their own lives:-

- They were ignoring God's laws of worship and sacrifice;
- They were ignoring the keeping of the Sabbath;
- They were ignoring the purity of God's chosen people;
- They were ignoring the "titheing" back to God from their new-found prosperity.

Nehemiah 13 v 7 – 31: The prophet was regretting ever leading God's people back to their City.

Parallels with the Church today: God's Covenant with His people.

You are now dwelling in the land God has promised to you and your fore-fathers.

Redemption – The Promised Land was lost, but now reclaimed, REDEEMED

So why would God's people still turn away from such a loving God?

The Warnings of the Prophet, Malachi

You call yourself God's chosen, but you haven't really got the idea of putting God first and foremost in your attitudes.

That perennial "School Report" comment – *"Could do better!"*

A Sacrifice in Giving

Chapter 1 – *Are your offerings to God really such a great sacrifice to you?*

v 10 "The offerings from your hands bring Me no pleasure, nor will I accept such offerings."

Genesis 4 v 1 – 5 The offerings of Cain & Abel

Cain offered SOME of the fruits of his labour (v 3)

Abel offered THE BEST of the firstborn of his flock (v 4)

A Faithfulness in Giving

Chapter 2 – *What faith is it that is so weak that not only you stumble along, but you bring others down with you?*

v 8 "You have turned aside from My way, and, by corrupting My laws, you have caused many to stumble."

1 Thessalonians 5 v 18 "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus."

A Blessing in Giving

Chapter 3 – *By setting aside a token amount for God, have we somehow presumed that everything else is ours?*

v 10 "Bring all your offerings to me, and test Me, then you will discover that I will pour out My blessings."

Acts 20 v 35 "For the Lord Jesus, Himself, said, 'It is more blessed to give, than to receive'."

A Joy in Giving

Chapter 4 – *So, if we repent and purify our hearts before God, will we therefore receive the rewards of His healing and reconciliation?*

v 2 "Fear my name, and receive the healing of righteousness, and you shall leap for joy."

Matthew 5 v 6 & 8 "Happy are they who would hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled...Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God."

God Has No Favourites!

Malachi 1 v 1 – 5

An introduction to the theme of the Book of Malachi.
God is warning all of us – leaders and followers alike.

The wise words of my school Physics teacher:-

"I don't have any favourites – but I do favour those who give favour to my teaching, and study my lessons."

Malachi is laying out God's rules for what He expects of us:

- Our giving should be done SACRIFICIALLY
- Our giving should be done FAITHFULLY
- Our giving should be done to receive God's BLESSINGS
- Our giving should be done JOYFULLY

Genesis 27: Between the two brothers, Jacob and Esau, Jacob wasn't God's favourite, but he was favoured by God for his offerings, and so he received Isaac's blessing.

Bananarama's hit song in the '80s

"It's not what you do, it's the way that you do it, that's what gets results!"

The Book of Malachi should come with a Warning Note –

The following may contain language which you might find offensive!

Malachi does not hold any punches, and he does not soft-coat the mind of God.

Too often, we try to "dumb-down" the Word of God, to suit our lives.

"God loved Jacob" v 2 "God hated Esau" v 3

God's love for Jacob (Israel) was not based on favouritism, but on the Blessing of Isaac which favoured **Jacob**.

God's favour – ***Abraham *Joseph *David *Job *Ruth *Daniel *Mary**

We must examine ourselves, our personal offerings to God.

2 Corinthians 8 v 7 "...So, just as you aim to excel in everything else – in faith, in testimony, in scriptural knowledge, in complete honesty and in your love for one another – see that you also excel in this **grace of giving.**"

"...for if the willingness is there, then the gift is acceptable, according to what one has, and not according to what one does not have." v 12

The First Warning of the Prophet, Malachi: *A Sacrifice in Giving*

Chapter 1 – *Are your offerings to God really such a great sacrifice to you?*

Penitence of Sacrifice: *Give God the honour which is *due* to Him.

v 6 "A son honours his father, and a servant honours his master. So, if I am your father, where is the honour that is due to Me? And if I am your master, where is the respect due to Me?", *says the Lord Almighty*. "It is you leaders who are showing Me contempt and disrespect. And yet you still ask, 'How have we shown contempt for Your name?'".

As we gather in God's presence, do we:-

- *recognise that He deserves our sacrifice of praise?*

Piety of heart to Sacrifice: *Pray that God would be *gracious* towards us.

v 9 "Implore God to be gracious to us. After all, with such pitiful offerings as your hands have brought, do you presume that He will accept you? *says the Lord Almighty*."

As we gather in God's presence, do we:-

- *seek His gracious mercy from humble hearts?*

Purity and Perfection of Sacrifice: *Pure offerings are the *only* acceptable sacrifice.

v 8 & 11 "Try offering these defiled sacrifices to your governor! Would he find them acceptable? And would he be pleased with you?" *says the Lord Almighty*... "But I expect pure offerings to be brought to My name, for My name will be great among the nations, from the rising until the setting of the sun", *says the Lord Almighty*."

As we gather in God's presence, do we:-

- *offer ourselves as living sacrifices, wholly acceptable to Him?*

Pleasing God with our Sacrifice: *Don't expect God to be pleased with second-rate offerings.

v 10 & 14 "The offerings from your hands bring Me no pleasure, nor will I accept such offerings", *says the Lord Almighty*... "for of a truth, My name is to be feared among the nations", *says the Lord Almighty*."

As we gather in God's presence, do we:-

- *give the best we can give, in praise, prayer, worship and service?*

Hebrews 4 v 14 – 5 v 3 "Therefore, we can approach His throne with full confidence, and receive His mercy, for, unlike the High Priests of old, Christ has offered the perfect and complete sacrifice for all our sins.

So, **it shouldn't be too much to ask** that we should offer ourselves as **living sacrifices** to Him."

He is Worthy of our Offerings

Does God deserve our sacrifice of praise?

Malachi 1 v 11 – 13

- **v 11** The Lord's name is great among the nations
 all day long
 everywhere
 and requires pure offerings

What attitude does God expect of us?

Psalms 29 v 1 & 2 –

Give praise and glory to His name.
Give Him the honour due to Him.
As we worship, recognise His holiness

How do we please God with our sacrifice?

Hebrews 13 v 15

- Offer our sacrifice of praise through Jesus Christ
 continually
 with our lips and our actions
 together

“for with such sacrifice, God is pleased”

God desires a **sacrifice** of our TIME and our TALENTS,
our BELONGINGS and our LIVES - not just a tenth!

The Second Warning of the Prophet, Malachi:

A Faithfulness in Giving

Chapter 2 – *What kind of faith is it that is so weak that not only you yourself stumble along, but you also bring others down with you?*

v 8 “You have turned aside from My way, and, by corrupting My laws, you have caused many to stumble.”

Why does everything keep going wrong?

God admonishes us –

“because you don’t **listen** to what I tell you” **v1**

“because you have failed to **learn** from My teaching” **v8**

“because your faith to **lean** on Me has become weak” **v14**

Jesus said –

“**Come unto Me** all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and **learn from Me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will **find rest for your souls**. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” **Matthew 11 v 28-29**

Listen – “come unto Me”

– When we pray, we commune with God. Prayer is conversation.

1 John 5 v 14 – 1 “This is the confidence we have in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him.”

Learn – “learn from Me”

– When we read God’s Word, the Bible, we discover God.

1 Timothy 4 v 13 & 16 “Devote yourselves to the public reading of the Scriptures; both to preaching it and teaching it...watching your *lifestyle* and *doctrine* closely. Persevere in them that you may save both yourself and others.”

Lean – “find rest in (lean on) Me”

– When we put our trust in God, we grow stronger in our faith.

Proverbs 3 v 5 – 6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

The Third Warning of the Prophet, Malachi: *A Blessing in Giving*

Chapter 3 – *By setting aside a token amount for God, have we somehow presumed that everything else is ours?*

v 10 “Bring all your offerings to me, and test Me, and then you will discover that *I will pour out My blessings.*”

Acts 20 v 35 “For the Lord Jesus, Himself, said, ‘It is more *blessed to give,* than to receive’.”

Why does God want all my stuff?

Matthew 25 v 14 – 30 Jesus told the Parable of the Talents

3 servants received various amounts from their master before he went away for a while: 5, 2 and 1 according to their abilities.

NB. Before he gave them this, they had nothing. All that they had was given by the Master.

The first two doubled what they had received. The latter buried it and waited in fear for the return of the master.

The former two were rewarded for their faithfulness. The latter was punished.

- i) the Master **ASSESSED** the worthiness of the servants;
- ii) the Master **AUDITED** the faithfulness of the servants;
- iii) the Master **ARBITRATED** the rewards/punishments of the servants.

“Where is the God of justice?” ch 2 v 17

God is the **Great Assessor** of our worthiness.

God gives us talents according to our faithfulness.

The talents are the foundation of our worthiness – not the reward.

We are assessed on the results – not on His gifts.

“How do we rob You?” v 8

God is the **Great Auditor** of our worthiness.

God expects an increase from what He gives us.

Whether we start with much or with little, He audits our faithfulness.

By failing to bring an increase, we are robbing God.

“What have we said against You?”

God is the **Great Arbitrator** of our worthiness.

We tell God He doesn’t deserve an increase from us.

Our thoughts of God are of unfairness.

God says we are unworthy of any of His gifts if we will not
bring increase.

The Fourth Warning of the Prophet, Malachi: *A Joy in Giving*

Chapter 4 – So, if we repent and purify our hearts before God, will we therefore receive the rewards of His healing and reconciliation?

v 2 “Fear my name, and receive the healing of righteousness, and you shall leap for joy.”

Matthew 5 v 6 & 8 “Happy are they who would hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled...Happy are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Ch.1 – *Is your sacrifice really such a great sacrifice?*

Be sacrificial in your offerings to the Lord.

Ch.2 – *Why does everything keep going wrong?*

Make your offerings a sacrifice of praise to God.

Ch.3 – *Why does God want all my stuff?*

Acknowledge that everything belongs to God, not to us.

Do as you're told, and the Lord God will bless you!

Ch. 4 – John 17 v 6 – 11 - Jesus prays to the Father for His disciples.

v 1 The day of the Lord is coming

Time is running out for us to repent and change.

Be **CHANGED**: **John 17 v 1** “Father, the time has come...”

v 2 When He comes, He will come with healing

God's forgiveness and mercy will save us.

Be **CURED**: **John 17 v 6a** “I have revealed God's healing to those You have called out of the world”

v 4 When He comes, He will fulfil the law

The Word of God and prophecies will come to pass.

Be **COMMITTED**: **John 17 v 6b** “You gave them to Me, and they have obeyed My Word”

v 6 When He comes, He will reconcile our hearts

Reconciliation starts with me reaching out to others.

Be **COMPLETE**: **John 17 v 11** “I pray that, just as We are, so they also might be bound together as one”

Philippians 2 v 1, 2 & 5 “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Holy Spirit, if any compassion, then make this joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose...your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus...”

Or else – God's curse! v 6b