

REBUKING THE DEVOURER

Text: Malachi 3:6-12

Key Word: Rebuking

Key Thought: God Rebukes the Devourer of a Faithful Stewart

Malachi prophesied about a century after Haggai and Zechariah. He spoke forth these final words of God around 433 B.C. as the last ones before the New Testament. Most of his messages were that of rebuke and condemnation. The nation had declined spiritually and morally. The foundation was being set for the establishment of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

There were three major issues that Malachi addressed (1) the defilement of the priesthood (2) foreign marriages after the divorce of their Israeli wives (3) neglecting their tithes and offerings.

Today I'm going to address the 3rd issue. In more than 29 years of preaching here I've seldom spoken on tithing. No one can accuse me of overdoing this area.

I don't believe there is one of us in here who does not want to receive the blessing of God. I also know that God wants to bless His people. A proper understanding and then a commitment to following God's unwavering principles will in turn bring His blessings.

There is a road which all of us must walk. We will either walk down the pathway of decline or the pathway of blessing.

I. PATHWAY OF DECLINE **II. PATHWAY OF BLESSING**

I. PATHWAY OF DECLINE

I am one that is very thankful that God does not change. What God expected in the O.T. He also emphasized in the N.T. on clearly unchangeable matters.

"I the LORD do not change . . . "

Malachi 3:6

The one who always changes is us. God is the Rock that cannot be moved. **God is unchangeable in His justice.** Since He must judge all people from the beginning of time to the end of it, He cannot change His righteous judgment. **What is truth today will be truth tomorrow in God's eyes.**

I. PATHWAY OF DECLINE (Contd.)

We however are as changeable as the waves of the sea. Our laws are constantly changing to accept the ungodly thinking and actions of our nation. The sad fact though is that in many areas of life the minority of people are determining the changes which are taking place.

Most people do not want **abortions** funded for each and every woman who chooses to terminate the life of her unborn child for whatever reason she decides or how many times she decides. Most people want limited and reasonable restrictions applied. The majority of our nation wants to reinstate the **death penalty** for those who have been proven without a doubt to have committed a premeditated murder and have little possibility of reforming.

Most citizens of Canada want stiffer penalties for **repeated offenders**. Why did it have to take the beating and attempted murder in 1999 of then -15- year-old Jonathan Wambach in Newmarket, Ontario by a gang of teenagers to lead to the introduction of the **Youth Criminal Justice Act** to replace the **Young Offenders Act**. It's without doubt that we should expect everyone to do their share in **paying taxes**. The continual decline in United Church of Canada membership proves that there is a strong opposition to ordaining **homosexuals**.

Why is it that the minority is ruling our country? I believe that any nation that gets away from God's law become trapped in their own web. They reach a point that the only way to get out is to return to God. The prodigal son is a fine example of this principle. People who are sick of being treated like a swine should return to the Father.

Answer to World's Tension: An Educated Heart (Knights Yellow Book p. 223)

*** "We have educated our **heads** and our **hands**. Now, the need seems to be for an educated **heart**. Never before have so many Americans possessed college degrees. Never have we had so much wealth per capita. Never have we been so physically comfortable.

Yet never have we lived under such tension. Never have so many of our people occupied hospital beds for the mentally ill. Never have we felt so insecure. Never have we felt so close to general failure of the human spirit; never so close to moral bankruptcy!

One does not need to be a theologian to know that the person who would keep sane, happy and balanced under extreme stress of modern living MUST enjoy an active partnership with a POWER that is higher than he!"

Dr. Kenneth McFarland
Educational Consultant for General Motors,
in the Chicago Daily Times

I. PATHWAY OF DECLINE (Contd.)

Only Forgotten Son!"

(Whites Yellow Book p. 225)

*** A chaplain, in a poorly lighted railway station, was endeavouring to show a soldier the way of eternal life in Christ. Opening his New Testament to John 3:16, the chaplain said, "Read this verse." Here's how the soldier rendered the verse, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only FORGOTTEN Son." How forgotten and neglected is He? ***

THE ROAD OF DECLINE IS LITTERED WITH FRAGMENTS OF A FORGOTTEN OR NEGLECTED GOD. Our only hope is to return to our unchangeable God. We have been reaping what our carnal natures have sown.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

8. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

9. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Galatians 6:7-9

It is very clear that we must get off the **PATHWAY OF DECLINE** in order to survive as a civilization.

"Return to me and I will return to you."

Malachi 3:7

II. PATHWAY OF BLESSING

One of the great steps our nation could take in returning on the pathway of blessing is to bring our offerings to the LORD. God said the nation of Israel had robbed Him.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings.

9. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing me."

Malachi 3:8,9

God could have rightly said the nation had robbed Him of honour, service, attendance, etc but He choose the very touchy area of financial accountability.

I've heard people incorrectly say that they will begin to tithe when God does this or that. The Word of God makes it clear that God tests us in this area. He expects us to be obedient in giving BEFORE He abundantly blesses. People who are disobedient in giving what belongs to God reap the multiple problems that disobedience brings.

God blesses us with good health, peace in our family and nation, food to eat, a home to live in, a good job etc. Some people have told me they tried giving but it didn't work. I'm not what they tried but I know it works! Perhaps they didn't give it enough time to grow and bring forth the harvest. Maybe they gave with a wrong heart or intent. No one who neglects giving will gain in the end. Believe me when I speak from God's Word.

There are no shortcuts on the pathway of blessing.

*"Bring the **whole tithe into the storehouse**, that there may be food in my house. **Test me in this**," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."*

Malachi 3:10

The first thing God tells us is that it must be the "whole tithe." This is based upon family income. Some with unsaved spouses often are unable to bring in the whole tithe. They therefore, only receive the blessing for their obedience. Their disobedient spouse will not receive the same blessing. This often creates family difficulties because of the lack of the **complete blessing**.

II. PATHWAY OF BLESSING (Contd.)

Another problem is that some do not bring their giving into the storehouse. **The treasury rooms were the storehouses and they were overseen by the priesthood in the O.T. and later by the pastors of the local churches.** Today we have problems of people sending much of their financial giving to radio and television ministries while attending a local church and giving nothing or little there. The scriptures tell us this is wrong. Offerings over and above our tithe can be sent to other needs but we are not to send our tithes to other ministries according to the Bible. It is the local church, not each individual that decides if other needs should be met (ie. - famine in Jerusalem).

I personally believe that we would not require social agencies if everyone attended a church and gave to their local church. Many church's hands are being tied in helping the needy because this principle is not followed.

Someone calculated a few years ago that if everyone attending our churches were consistently giving while living strictly off of welfare that the church's treasury would be overflowing.

We should never give in order to receive. We give in order to be obedient. Yet God will bless those who give out a pure heart.

*"I will prevent pests from devouring your crops (And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes - KJV), and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit, says the LORD Almighty.
12. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the LORD Almighty."*

Malachi 3:11,12

It is very clear that this is God speaking. **HE WILL REBUKE THE DEVOURER.** The word "*devourer*" means "*burn up*" or "*consume*." I believe that givers can expect their vehicles to run longer and with less repairs; their shoes to last longer; their clothes to not wear out quickly; their groceries to be consistently be on sale; their jobs to bring them more benefits.

The inflation and high taxes will not have a detrimental effect upon those who faithfully give. If you are a farmer your crops will not be devoured by pests and not destroyed by weather conditions. **When God is served our best He also serves His best.**

Illustration: 1. EOW Tornado in Edmonton. God protected the Christian family; 2. The cornfield in Avonmore

II. PATHWAY OF BLESSING (Contd.)

Often a person's lack of faith keeps them from giving to their local church. May God not have to say to our nation,

"Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me, declares the LORD."

Amos 4:9

The O.T. tithe was simply 10% of their firstfruits or best return for their hard work. Anyone who says it was brought in under the law do not know their Bible. Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek before the Mosaic Law was instituted.

The early church continued the **practice of giving** to the work of the LORD under the New Testament. Giving doesn't have a percentage. If we compare our standard of living to those living in the O.T. and even the early N.T. we can all see a vast difference. I learned years ago to start with 11%. This way I don't hindered in giving. I don't give a tithe. I give an offering. I don't wait to see how much is left after spending on things I don't need. God has given me and you 100%. Does 10% make sense in our day and age? I've got much more stored up in heaven than I have gained on earth.

If we want God to open His storehouse, we must first open ours that He has blessed us with. It is not that God needs our treasure, time or talent - He rather needs/demands our obedience & will.

In biblical terms, Charles Bugg defines stewardship in the Holman Bible Dictionary as "**Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation.**" It also has been defined as "**the responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving.**"

One of the last lonely frontiers of our lives that we give God is control of our finances. Trust Him today! **Allow Him to rebuke the devourer in your life.**

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Date: Oct 17/21

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Lord Reign in Me - G

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