

Take It Home

Applying the Preached Word



Spiritual Reformation: Giving

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Text: Malachi 3:6-15

Main Point

There is a connection between how we're doing spiritually and the giving of our money.

Key Ideas

The spiritual decline of the people in Malachi's time was not because God had changed but because the people had changed. But because God never changes, and he keeps his promises, those who wander away can always return. Malachi offers two important truths regarding returning to God.

1. We return by giving (v. 7-10)

- In these 4 verses the words rob, robbing, or robbed are used 4 times. And every reference to the one being robbed is God himself. The verses don't say that the Temple for which some of the tithe was used to keep it serviced and supplied was being robbed. They don't say that the Levitical priests, for which some of the tithe was used to support them with were being robbed. The verses say that the withholding of tithes and contributions was an act of robbing God himself further illustrating the relational breakdown and the spiritual drift between God and His people.
- The tithe is not a debt to be paid but a repayment of what God already owns and generously gives to us.
- Does the tithe apply today? Are we still obligated to tithe (give 10%) under the new covenant? It's a complex question to answer. It is an area where we allow room for differing opinions at our church. But what we can all agree on is the continuity seen in the Old Testament through the New Testament is the principle of giving. The New Testament presents a picture of grace fueled giving that tells us our giving should be regular, generous, sacrificial, and joyful.
- Why is giving prescribed as a way to return to God? Returning includes giving because the giving of money can remind us of who ultimately owns our money. The giving of money requires faith that our unchanging God will provide all that we need. The New Testament warns us that the love of money causes some to wander away from the faith. If the love of money can cause us to wander, then the giving of money helps us to bind our wandering heart to the unchanging God of faith, hope, and love.

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2. We return to blessing

- When we return to God by giving generously and sacrificially, He returns to us with a disposition to bless. He does so by opening the windows of heaven and raining down upon us abundant blessing described in v.10 as overflowing to the point there is no more need. This picture of extravagant blessing captures the character and heart of God. The unchanging God whose disposition is always to bless his people remains poised to bless us when we give.
- Giving reminds us that money is temporal and we are simply sojourners headed to far greater blessing in Immanuel's Land. Giving untethers us from the small, momentary, pleasures this world offers and binds our hearts to God so that as we give generously and joyfully we delight in God in this life and anticipate even greater delight in the next.

Fellowship Starters

Treasure - Application to stir our love for Christ?

1. How does the truth in Mal. 3:6-7 that God doesn't change, even if we turn away, help you to see the Christmas season?
2. What difference will it make in our lives if we see giving not as paying a debt we owe to God, but simply releasing to God what he owns and is asking for?
3. What are some ultimate blessings in Emmanuel's land (Heaven) that you long for?
4. How do you define blessing from God? How did this message affect what you think about blessing?

Grow - Application to stir our obedience to Christ

5. Describe an experience where you knew that God was leading you to stretch your faith in giving? What was the battle you faced, and how did God meet you in it?
6. Is there any area of giving that you believe God has convicted you on through this message?

Proclaim - Application to stir our witness for Christ

7. How would this message help you respond to someone who says, 'All churches want from people is their money'?