

Malachi on Repentance and Faithfulness

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for repentance and faithfulness among God's people as illustrated in the book of Malachi.

Duration: 1:12:24

Scripture: Malachi 2:11-13, Malachi 3:14, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:30-31, Revelation 22:20

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, Brother Stephen Kahn begins by praying for the congregation to be filled with God's love and to be able to hear His voice. He emphasizes the importance of serving God without a bargaining spirit, like Jacob and Peter had. He reminds the listeners that the purpose of the Old Testament is to lead us to Christ and to see Him. He encourages the congregation to serve God not for profit, but out of love for Him.

Transcript

This is Monday evening, March 4th, 1974, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry is given through Brother Stephen Kahn. We love thee with all of our hearts.

Lord, we love thee because thou hast first loved us. We pray that even now thy love will once again constrain us, that we truly may run after thee. O Lord, we do desire to declare with the Psalms, Whom do we have in heaven but thee? And whom do we desire on earth except thyself? O Lord, fill us once again with thy love, that we may be able to hear thy voice.

We pray that our whole being may be quickened by thy Spirit, that our whole being may cooperate with thee. We just commit this time into thy hand and ask thee to bless it unto thy praise and thy glory. We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Will you please turn to Malachi chapter 2, the last book of the Old Testament.

Malachi chapter 2. We'll read from verse 11. Chapter 2, verse 11. Judah had dealt unfaithfully, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.

For Judah hath profaned the sanctuary of Jehovah, which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange God. Jehovah will cut off from the tent of Jacob the man that doeth this, him that calleth and him that answereth, and him that offereth an oblation unto Jehovah of hosts. And further he doeth this, ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping and with sighing, insomuch that ye regardeth not the

oblation any more, nor receiveth it with satisfaction at your hand.

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been a witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt unfaithfully. Yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant, and did not one make them? And the remnant of the Spirit was his? And wherefore the one? He sought a seed of God. Take ye then to your spirit, and that none deal unfaithfully against the wife of his youth.

For I hate putting away, said Jehovah the God of Israel. And he covered with violence his garment, said Jehovah of hosts. Take ye then to your spirit, that ye deal not unfaithfully.

Ye have wearied Jehovah with your word, and ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah. And he delighted in them. Or where is the God of judgment? Chapter 3, verse 1. Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.

And the Lord whom ye seek will suddenly come to his temple, and the angel of the covenant whom ye delight in. Behold, he cometh, said Jehovah of hosts. But who shall endure the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he will be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's lamp.

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. And he will purify the children of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver. And they shall offer unto Jehovah an oblation in righteousness.

Then shall the oblation of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment. And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the highest servants in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, said Jehovah of hosts.

For I, Jehovah, changeth not, and ye sons of Jacob are not conceived. Since the days of your father have ye departed from my statue, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, said Jehovah of hosts.

But ye say, Where is he? Shall we return? We mentioned this morning that the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi was just one word. And that word was God was calling his people. A people who were called by his name.

A people who were supposed to be fully committed to him. A people who were to be that vessel of his testimony on this earth. And yet, the burden of the Lord to this people was God's people need to repent.

Not only the people of this world need to repent, but God's people need to repent. The closer you are to God, the more the need to repent. So brothers and sisters, do not think that we are beyond repentance.

If we see the Lord, if we hear him, there is much in us that we need to abhor and to repent in God. Oftentimes, we do not feel the need to repent. It is because we do not see him.

We do not hear him. The more you see the Lord, just like the prophet Isaiah. He was a prophet.

And how he prophesied. How strong was his prophecies. And yet, when he entered into the temple of the Lord at the death of Isaiah, he saw the Lord and how he repented before the Lord.

He acknowledged that he was of unclean lips, dwelling among a people of unclean lips. And thank God, there is forgiveness. There is clemency.

So brothers and sisters, the last message of the Old Testament was the message of repentance. Just as the first message in the New Covenant is the message of repentance. Because John the Baptist was sent before our Lord to preach repentance.

Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. Now dear brothers and sisters, we are living towards the closing of this dispensation of grace. And I do believe that the word of the Lord to his church is also.

Because in chapter 2 and chapter 3 of the book of Revelation you'll find the Lord's word to the seven churches. And you may count in these seven letters I think the word repent is used eight times. To the five of the seven churches the word of the Lord to them was to repent.

So dear brothers and sisters, may we really humble ourselves before the Lord. May we see the need of repentance. That we may be fully recovered, restored to what the Lord wants us to be.

We mentioned that the first issue of the Lord with the Jewish remnants at that time was the issue over love. The Lord said I have loved you. I have loved you since the day that I have chosen Jacob.

I love Jacob and hated himself. I love you all the time. Look at the history of Jacob.

How God loved him. In spite of what a person Jacob was. Until God was able to transform him from Jacob to Israel.

Now that was love. Look at the history of the children of Israel. How they were slaves in Egypt.

And God sent Moses to deliver them out of the fiery furnace. And look at the history of the children of Israel in the wilderness. How God was true.

They proved God ten times. God was in their midst. How God protected them.

How God provided for them. And yet their heart was hot, even so. Under Joshua with the new generation God led the children of Israel into the promised land.

And then you look into the book of Judges. And what do you find there? But God prepared a king, David. And through David the kingdom was established before God.

And yet you read 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles and what a history you find. And you find how because of their unfaithfulness to God they were taken captive into Babylon. But still after 70 years of captivity God allowed them to come.

Only a remnant came back. And even with the history of the remnant over 100 years of time. How they fluctuated.

How they were up and down. And at the time of Malachi you'll find this remnant how they even questioned the love of God. God said I have loved you.

And they said where is he? When a person began to ask such a question it is evident that he has no love for God. If we do not appreciate his love how can we love him? So the first issue between God and this remnant was the issue of love. And brothers and sisters certainly this is something that we need to be

before the Lord all the time.

Have we left our first love? Things may go on as usual. And yet if we have left our first love God said I am against you. How are we going to restore as it were our first love? You cannot restore it by yourself.

Love comes from God. The only way to have our love restored is to see the love of God. Let the love of Christ constrain us that we may love him.

Now that was the first issue. And then this morning we enter into the second issue between God and the remnant. And it was an issue over the matter of honor.

A son honored his father. A servant feared his master. And God said if I be your father where is my honor? If I be your master where is your fear? How do you despise my name? And yet they retorted and said where have we despised thy name? They offered polluted bread.

Brothers and sisters if God cannot deal with us on the level of love then the lower level of dealing will be on the level of honor, of duty. Do we do our duty? Do we really honor him? Do we respect his name? And by respecting his name it simply means do we do his will? Or do we just give him lip service? The children of Israel at that time they still offer sacrifice. But they offer the lame.

They offer the blind. They offer the imperfect sacrifices. They say the table of the Lord is contemptible.

As long as you do something for the Lord it should be enough for him. But we know all these sacrifices were type of Christ. God could not accept anything other than Christ and his protection.

So brothers and sisters do we serve the Lord from our heart? Or do we just give the Lord a lip service? Do we think that as long as we are giving him something he should be satisfied? How do we despise him? Are we doing his will? And that is to honor his name. So the Lord said if you do not honor me one day all the nations will honor me. And will present to me pure oblation.

And of course that is a prophecy. In other words one day the grace of God will come to the nations. Out of every nation, every tribe, every clan, and every people God will gather unto himself a people that will offer to God that spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God in Christ Jesus.

So this was the second issue. Now tonight we would like to go on a little bit further. We do not know how far we can go but we will go as far as we can tonight.

There was the third controversy between God and Judah and the children of Israel at that time. And it was this matter of unfaithfulness. They profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which he loved.

You know in the history of the children of Israel when the red men came back they came back with a pure desire to rebuild the temple of God. They were a separated people. They were a holy people until a holy God.

But not long after you will find the red men who began to marry the daughters of the land and began to give their sons to the daughters of the land. There was a mixture. So when Ezra came back after 70 years that was the one problem with the red men at that time.

And you remember if you read the book of Ezra when Ezra learned that the children of Israel who came back had married the daughters of the land and gave their sons to the daughters of the land how Ezra

reacted against this abomination in the sight of God. According to the law of God this people was to be a separated people. God separated them from all the nations.

God kept them as a pure seed because out of that nation should come forth the Messiah, the Christ. And yet this people who came back they were soon become mixed. And Ezra when he heard about that you remember he rang his garments.

He plucked his beard. He plucked his hair. And he prostrated himself before the Lord.

He fasted. He wept before the Lord and he confessed. And while he was doing that those who feared the Lord they gathered together with him and there was weeping before the Lord until the word of the Lord came and said there is yet hope.

Let us put away these foreign blights. There is yet hope. And you remember how the children of Israel were purified under.

That happened. But Ezra. And then after Ezra, 13 years after Ezra, Nehemiah came back.

And of course the main work of Nehemiah was the rebuilding of the wall. And during that time the children of Israel seemed to be well established before God. And Nehemiah was there for 12 years.

Then he went back to the Persian court for a certain time but when he came back you know what happened. When he came back he noticed that once again these people under Ezra they were purified of the abomination of marrying the daughters of the land once again. They committed the same within a short period, within a generation.

Could you believe that? Within a generation this thing should have happened for the second time. And the Bible said they were unfaithful to God. They profaned the sanctuary of the Lord.

Why? Because the Lord dwells in their midst. The Lord is holy therefore they must be holy. And you know the opposite of holy is common.

The opposite of holy is mixture. They were separated from the world unto God. And they maintained their separation in order that they might be a holy vessel for God.

But they committed this abomination. And as a matter of fact what they did were two things. More than one thing.

Number one they divorced their wives of their youth. In the beginning when God created man he created male and female. He created Adam and out of Adam he formed Eve so that the two might be one flesh.

Why? Because God sought for a holy seed. During the time of Moses Moses permitted them to divorce their wives by giving them a letter. But when the Pharisees came to the Lord and said can we divorce for any reason just by giving them a letter.

You remember what the Lord answered them in Matthew chapter 19? The Lord said in the beginning God created man and woman and the two shall be joined into one flesh whom God has united. Let not man separate. The reason why Moses allowed you to divorce your wife is because of the hardness of your heart.

In other words God allowed and yet God never approved. Never approved. So the Lord said it was not so in the beginning.

There is only one reason. Giving in the scripture for divorce and that is fornication or adultery. And aside from that it is God's will that the man and the woman whom he has united together should not be separated.

So here you'll find with the children of Israel that was the first problem. They just gave their wives a divorce letter and that's it. But that was not all.

After their divorce they married another woman and worse they married a strange woman. The woman of the land. So that the tears of the divorced wives feel the altar of God.

And yet while they were doing that they still went to offer oblation to God. And no wonder God did not accept them. And yet they say why do you not accept our oblation? Brothers and sisters you remember one day our Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees and the scribes.

Woe to you Pharisees and scribes. Why? Because you offer up the Amish the Kumi and these things, the mink but you do not do the weightier things of the Lord. Judgement and mercy and praise.

In other words here you'll find a people. On the one hand they were doing abomination. They profaned the sanctuary of the Lord.

They divorced their wives because of their lust. And they married strange women against the law of God. They were doing all these abominable things and yet they turn around and they offer oblation to God and they expected God to accept them.

They did the outward small things but they forgot the weightier matters of the Lord. They entered into a kind of formalism. They kept the form of religion but they violated the very spirit.

Brothers and sisters what has that to do with us? Of course the message to us today is spiritual. In other words Paul says he was jealous with the jealousy of God for the believers at Corinth. Why? Because he had presented them, he had exposed them to Christ, to one man Christ as chaste virgin and he was fearful lest they were enticed away from the thought of the simplicity of Christ.

Now we have to change the metaphor a little bit because here you'll find the husband they were unfaithful but of course when you come to our relationship with the Lord he is the husband and we are the wife. So in other words we who are the Lord, we were, we are espoused to Christ and how we need to be faithful unto Him and yet how easily we are tempted away from the simplicity that is in Christ. We get involved with the world and you remember what James said a dutorousness.

Do you not know that to be friend of the world is to be enemy of God? If you desire to befriend the world then you become an enemy of God. And you remember the apostle John says love not the world because if you love the world the love of a father is not in you. Brothers and sisters what is it to us today? It is unfaithfulness.

What is our unfaithfulness towards our God with whom we have a covenant relationship? Our unfaithfulness to God is this matter of turning to them as if our Lord is not sufficient for us. We need to go into this world to try to find satisfaction. Brothers and sisters this is considered a spiritual unfaithfulness.

Do not think that you are beyond that. It is true. At one time you have left the world behind you to follow the Lord.

Thank God for that. But there is no guarantee that you do not return. There is no guarantee where your love towards the Lord begins to grow cold then probably you will begin to cast long and that is considered before the Lord as unfaithfulness.

You may still continue on outwardly. You may still be religious. You may still continue to attend meetings.

You may still do something small things. And yet the Lord says where is the weightiness? Where is that purity? Where is that faithfulness? And brothers and sisters if we have returned to the world become worldly began to have a longing for the world this is the time that we should repent because we are called to be a separated people unto God. The fourth issue verse 17 of chapter 2 He hath wearied Jehovah with your words and ye say wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah and he delighted in them all where is the God.

They wearied the Lord with their words. Now brothers and sisters have you ever such have such an experience? You are wearied by the words of someone. You are tired.

What did they say? Listen. Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah and he delighted in them all where is the God of judgment. Can you believe your ears? This people who were supposed to be God's people and what did they say? They said he that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah.

In other words they were taking the position all the unbelievers. Oh and they say God delights in evil. Where is the God of judgment? He doesn't care.

What is it? I wonder if this is the beginning of what later on in the time of Christ you find a sect in Judaism called Sadducees. Those Sadducees. Now who were those Sadducees in the time of Christ? They were a religious sect.

A sect of Judaism like the Pharisees. Who were they? They were the agnostics of Judaism. In other words they were the intellectuals.

They did not believe in anything supernatural. Even though they professed to believe in God. Now how can you believe in God and do not believe in supernatural? And yet they thought they were the most rational people of all the world.

They would reason out everything in the scripture. Anything that they could not reason out they rejected. They could only believe what they could reason out.

They did not believe in angels because they didn't see them. They did not believe in resurrection. They thought there was no resurrection.

They didn't believe in anything supernatural and yet they were a sect of Judaism. A sect you see. I wonder if this was the beginning of that spirit.

They were supposed to be God's people and yet they would reason. They'd look around and they began to reason. Well he that doeth evil is good in the sight of God.

God delights in evil. Why? Because God does not judge. If God hates evil, why doesn't he judge? They were so sarcastic.

You may think this cannot happen with believers. But listen. Paul in writing the first letter to the Corinthian believers what did he say? These Corinthian believers they did not believe in resurrection.

They were believers and yet they did not believe in resurrection. So Paul argued with them and said now if you don't believe in resurrection that Christ who had died had not resurrected. Now if that was the case then we were the most miserable people of this world.

Our whole hope is based on resurrection. They were proud of themselves as being very intellectual. Intellectually.

They lived in the realm of the mind. They do not live in the realm and brothers and sisters probably because their ways were so evil. So it was their wishful thinking that there would be no resurrection.

Or some people may be so self-righteous they say well where is the God of judgment? God should notice how righteous I am and how evil the other person is and yet God does not judge. Therefore God loves evil. He delights in it.

What a warning to us brothers and sisters if our relationship with the Lord is in the realm of the mind. The intellect. I do not say God does not want us to be intelligent.

If he doesn't want us to be intelligent he wouldn't give us a mind. He wants us to have the mind of Christ but certainly we are not to live just in the realm. We have to live in the spirit.

God is a spirit and he who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth that is in reality. Only when you are led by the spirit of God you are the son. In spiritual things you have to be ruled and governed by the spirit.

And when you live in the realm of your soul, in the realm of your intellect, you begin to try to figure out to reason out everything. Very soon you will fall into seducism. And how many today in Christianity have fallen.

They profess that they believe in God and yet they cannot accept anything supernatural. They do not believe in resurrection. They do not even believe in new birth.

Now if you take that position what will be the result? The result will be let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die. That will be the result the consequence of that. But dear brothers and sisters oh how we need to live in the spirit.

How we need to be led by the spirit of God. It is only in the spirit that we can understand spiritually. Then we will not fall into the snare of the seducer.

And here you find they are the beginning of that time of spirit. But does God judge? What was God answer to them? They questioned God and said you don't judge. Where is the God of judgment? You don't care at all.

Bothering blasphemy. And you know what was God answer to them? God answer to them was in chapter 3. God said behold I send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom he

seek will suddenly come to his temple and the angel of the covenant whom he delighting.

Behold he cometh said Jehovah of hope. But who shall endure the day of coming and who shall stand? Well the Lord said behold do not say do not say where is the God of judgment? Even though you may not see judgment today. Why? Because there is mercy with God.

God said behold I'm sending a messenger before. And then the angel of the covenant will suddenly come and of course brothers and sisters we know this point to John the Baptist as the messenger that God sent before Christ. And the angel of the covenant we know that.

But of course with the Old Testament prophets as we mentioned a number of times. With the Old Testament prophets they do not know the difference between the first coming and the second coming of the Lord. To them the coming of the Messiah is just one event.

That's all. They do not know that at the first coming of the Lord he came in humiliation. He came as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of this world.

They did not know that his first coming is to give grace to man. They didn't know that. They didn't know that in his second coming he shall come in glory as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

That he will come to judge the nation. Now with the Old Testament prophets they didn't know. They didn't know the two comings of the Lord.

Why? Because in between these two comings is the age of the church. And you know the church is a mystery. Hidden for the ages in God.

To be revealed later on by the Spirit through the apostles and the prophets. So brothers and sisters, the Old Testament prophets, they do not know. They did not know that there will be two comings of the Lord.

So when they prophesied they prophesied the coming of the Lord as one event. That the Lord will come and will judge. But here you'll find even so.

Before the coming of the angel of the covenant God first sent a messenger. And what was the message of that messenger 400 years later? 400 years later the message of that messenger in the person of John the Baptist was repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. You are looking for the kingdom of God.

You are saying where is the God of judgment? You really want God to come and judge you? Are you ready for it? You think you're so righteous. You expect Him to come to judge the evil not knowing that when He shall come He will first judge you. And that's the reason why God will first send a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord.

How gracious. How merciful. And then the angel of the covenant shall suddenly arrive in heaven.

Brothers and sisters of course we know this happened about 2000 years ago. The messenger arrived but his message was rejected by the Jews at the nation. Those who accepted his message they were baptized.

But the sinners and the publicans were baptized. The Pharisees, the scribes, the rulers they refused to accept the baptism of God. And not only that even when the angel of the covenant that is our Lord Jesus came to them they crucified Him on the cross.

Away with Him. Away with Him. The blood is upon them.

For the centuries. But one day when Christ shall come back again Elijah will first come to return the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children. In other words God is so patient, so merciful.

Brothers and sisters you know sometimes especially when your faith is weak. When your faith is weak you will begin to question God. You will begin to question His way.

You will begin to feel uneasy. Why is it God does not judge? Look around and see all the evil and yet God does not judge. Well does He really delight in evil? And look at me when your faith is weak this is the time that you think you're better.

And you will say well why does not God judge these people? And don't you know that when before the Lord, when the Lord shall come He shall first judge the judgment shall come to the house of God first and then Israel and then the nations. Are you ready? Are you ready? Who shall endure the day of His coming? Are we looking for His coming? Thank God for the renewed interest in prophecy. Thank God many people are interested in the coming of the Lord.

Thank God for that. But brothers and sisters to be interested is one thing. To be ready and prepared is another.

Who can endure the day of His coming? Do you know what it will mean to you? Who shall stand when He appears? Oh brothers and sisters when you read 2 Corinthians chapter 5 you'll find Paul mention two things there. He said the love of Christ constrains me. Knowing that one who died for all then we must live for Him.

The love of Christ constrains me that I cannot live for myself. I have to live for Him. Thank God for that.

But immediately follow that. He said the terror of the Lord. These two things go together.

The love of Christ and the terror of the Lord. On the one hand the love of Christ constrains you. On the other hand the terror of the Lord pushes you along.

When the Lord shall return Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 we shall all stand before the judgment seat. A fire will appear to test our work. If our work is gold, silver and precious stone they shall stand to test it.

And we shall be rewarded. But if our work is wood, grass and stubble they will be consumed. We shall suffer loss though we shall be saved but barely.

Think of that. Are you looking for His return? You know what He means? Suppose He comes suddenly tonight. Suppose suddenly we are taken up to appear at His judgment seat.

Oh to know that He is a refiner. He is a fuller life. In other words our Lord Jesus is like a refiner's fire.

He is refining us. He is burning away all the dross. All the impurities of our life.

He is like a fuller fire, fuller soap. He is cleansing us. Taking away the dirt from us.

He is like a refiner that sits there to refine the silver. You know somebody tells us one day it is in a book in a book of Miss Carmichael and Miss Carmichael when she first went to India you know he saw on the road

in India you may be able to see on the road a man will be sitting there on the floor, a refiner. And there will be a crucible and there will be fire under the crucible and that man was refining the silver.

Refining the silver. And Miss Carmichael noticed this and asked this man and said now how long will you be doing this? You are refining the silver, burning it. Take away the dross, the impurities from it and when do you think your work is done? He said I will continue to refine it until my faith is reflected.

Then the work is done. Brothers and sisters, isn't it what the Lord is doing with us today? You may be thinking that why does not God judge the world? Why does not God judge the evil? Oh you see evil all around and somehow you feel you are righteous and yet God does not judge these evil and you say where is the God of judgment? But do you know that God is like a refiner? He is sitting there very patiently beside you and He is refining you day by day. You wonder why the world has such an easy time and you have such a hard time.

Where is the God of judgment? This is the God of judgment. He is preparing you for that day. As the Bible says if we judge ourselves then we allow Him to purify us today until His image is reflected in us.

Then brothers and sisters what a glorious day when He shall enter and we shall see. We will not be ashamed and He will not be ashamed of us. How important that is.

He is working He is working day by day in order to bring an oblation in righteousness. Yes He is coming. For when He shall come He will begin to judge the house of God to judge this nation we live in and to judge the nation and at that time it is too late to repent.

You will regret but it is too late to repent. This is the day that we can repent before God. So brothers and sisters thank God He is refining us.

If there is something in our lives that needs to be repented of do it today. If it is under the blood it will not appear at the judgment seat of Christ. But anything that is not under the blood one day everything will appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

It is a terror. Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade. Unfortunately they said where in shall we return? The Lord said you return to me and I will return to you and yet they said where we shall we return? There was no think of that.

The children of God do not repent. Just to conclude I will go hurriedly the fifth God said will a man rob God? But he robbed me. And he said where in do we rob thee? One of the ten commandments is do not steal.

Do not rob. And here you find these people. God said why do you rob me? Can a man rob God? Yes you can.

How? And in a case where the children of Israel is in tithe and in offering. He offers. You know one of the things that Nehemiah observed when he came back in the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah he came back and he found one thing.

And that was because the children of Israel they did not bring the tithe to the house of God. Therefore the Levites and the sinners they all fled to their own fields. They had no means to be supported.

You know God commanded the children of Israel to bring tithe to the house of God. To bring their heap offerings to God's house. And these tithe and heap offerings were to support the Levites who served God.

And the Levites were to bring tithe to support the priests. Now this was God's way. But here you find they forsook the house of God.

The Levites fled to their own fields to kill because the tithe were not brought in. They couldn't be supported. So they had to go to their fields to support themselves.

And the house of God was forsaken. Now that was what Nehemiah found. It wasn't that strange.

These people came back to build the house of God. These people came back to serve God in the house. And yet these very people who built the temple and who were supposed to serve God in the temple, they neglected the house of God.

And God said, You robbed me. You robbed me of my tithe. You robbed me of my heap offerings.

Tithe is the one-tenth of all their income. Heap offerings are their gift to God as an expression of their gratitude, voluntary vows to God. And they were neglected.

They were neglected. Not that they didn't bring anything to the house. They probably brought something.

But not the whole tithe. So here you'll find God's word to them is bring the whole tithe. If they didn't bring anything, probably their conscience will bother them.

But because they brought something, so their conscience goes right. Brothers and sisters, when their love for God grew cold, no wonder they did not care too much about God. And probably they had a reason.

They said because we didn't produce enough. We hardly had enough to support ourselves. So we could only give God the surplus, that's all.

We needed everything. And God said, don't you know, the reason why you didn't have enough because you were under a curse. If you bring the whole tithe to God, God said, you try me, you prove me, I will open the windows of heaven and will bless you abundantly.

You will not be in debt. How different. How different.

Of course, brothers and sisters, in the New Testament time, there is no law concerning these things. In the New Testament time, God loves a cheerful giver. We must give cheerfully to the Lord.

As an expression of our love to Him, everything belongs to Him. God loves a cheerful giver. And before we give, we need to give ourselves to the Lord, and then our faith.

And like the Macedonians, they gave beyond their ability, because they love God. In other words, with us today, it is a lack of love. But, we must remember, we too can rob.

We may rob God of our time. We may rob God of our service. We may rob God of our life.

Our life belongs to Him. But how we rob Him, how we use our own life, instead of a life completely devoted. Let Him use our life.

We rob God. We may rob of our time. Our time belongs to God.

But what time do we give to Him? The leftover. We may rob God of His service. We do not serve Him as we should.

We may rob God of His glory. We may do something, and we receive the glory ourselves, instead of giving all the glory to God. We can rob God, you know.

We can rob Him. Brothers and sisters, I believe here is a matter of priority. What is first in your life? In your concern? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

If we seek for our interest first, we will be in lack. And you will find there is not enough to give to God. You can only give to God what is left.

But if we seek God first, if our priority is settled, all these things shall be added unto you. It's a matter of priority. Are we a people who are supposed to live for God? Supposed to serve God? But look at our people.

Does He have the priority in our lives? Is that true? Is that real? Now that is the issue. We need to repent in this respect. And then finally in chapter 3 verse 14 Your words have been stout against me, saith Jehovah.

But ye say, What have we been speaking against thee? Ye say, It is vain to serve God. And what profit is it that we take this charge, and that we walk mournfully before Jehovah of hosts? And now we hold the proud for happy. Yea, they that were wickedness are built up.

Yea, they tempt God, and they escape. How stout were their words to God? They say, It is vain to serve God. What profit do we get? Look at other people.

They do evil, and they escape. And here we are. We serve God.

And what do we have? What do we get? Very, very much like their fathers, Jacob. You know Jacob always had a bargaining spirit. Jacob said, Now Lord, if you bless me this and that, then I will do something for you.

He was always bargaining. A mercenary spirit. A bargaining spirit with God.

But thank God, God changed him to Israel, a prince of God. And you remember even Peter one day. He told the Lord, Lord, we have left everything to follow you, and what will we get? Profit.

What will we get? The Lord said, You will get it. Oh, you will get a hundredfold and persecution. But the Lord said, The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

How easy for us to develop a bargaining spirit with God. Yes, we are serving Him. What will we get? It is vain to serve because we get nothing.

We are not profiting. So why? Why serve? But while the remnant were saying these almost blasphemous words, thank God, there were still a few who fear God. And they encouraged each other.

They talked to each other of God. And you know, the Lord said, I observed. I heard.

I recorded in the book of my memory, of my remembrance. Brothers and sisters, we are approaching the last day. And even people who are serving the Lord are serving for profit.

What do we get? What do we get? We want to get profit out of the Lord, the everything. But do we love Him and serve Him with a pure heart? Let's encourage one another. Not for profit, but for the Lord Himself.

How we need to encourage one another. And you know, everything is recorded in the book of remembrance. When the Lord shall come back, all these things will be ended by His grace.

We shall shine. But if we are wicked in our thoughts, then when He shall return, we cannot enter into the joy of the Lord. So brothers and sisters, here you'll find the Old Testament is concluded with the last word.

And the last words are, Behold Moses and Elijah. That's the Old Testament. The law and the prophet.

But the law and the prophet lead us and that is the conclusion of the Old Testament. So that we may see Christ. That is God.

Lord, speak to us. Deliver us from all that cannot meet Thy eyes. Give us a spirit of repentance that we may be restored and recovered.

O Lord, may Thy sufficient grace restore us and maintain us in the place where we may be appraised to Thy name. O Lord, we do praise and thank Thee for Thy patience. We praise and thank Thee for Thy working.

Teach us how to cooperate, to submit, to learn. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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