

## “Basic Biblical Beliefs Series: “Should I Tithe?”

2017: The Reflection Year Series

**Scripture:** Malachi 3:6-12 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup>“I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. <sup>7</sup>Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’” <sup>8</sup>“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup>You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

<sup>10</sup>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 there will not be room enough to store it. <sup>11</sup>I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>12</sup>“Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.

**Luke 11:42**

(Jesus Speaking) “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your **mint**, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

**Subject Question:** What three lessons does the writer of Malachi teach us as modern day people of God concerning the privilege of Tithing?

**Compliment answer:** Our Giving is TO God. (Vs.6-9), Our Giving is FOR God. (Vs.10a), and Our Giving is really For YOU and ME. (Vs.10b-12; Lk.42).

**Big Idea:** The three lessons the writer of Malachi teaches us concerning the privilege of Tithing are: Our Giving is TO God. (Vs.6-9), Our Giving is FOR God. (Vs.10a), and Our Giving is really For YOU and ME. (Vs.10b-12; Lk.42).

## **Homiletical Idea:** “I see God’s Promise”

**Purpose:** I want the congregation to understand the privilege and challenge the Lord grants to us as His people concerning our finances.

**Introduction:** There are few measurements that speak more clearly of our true reliance upon and true love for, the Lord that we have come to know and cherish in our lives, than the area of our finances. With that said, I honestly believe that most Christians, at least most I know, desire to and honestly strive to love the Lord their God with all of their hearts with all of their minds, with all of their souls, and with all of their strength... it’s an admirable, holy characteristic, a Divinely noble trait, of those who have come to cherish the message of the Cross of Christ and God’s incredible offer of salvation to all in our world. “For God so loved...the world... that He gave...” And here is the crux of the issue: He gave. He gave because He so loved. In other words, God proved His love and continues to prove His love with action... not just mere words. Sometimes words are meaningless without some kind of action. Just as James reminds us, that faith without action is always dead. With that that in mind, God our Beloved Father calls you and me and challenges you and me, as His dear children, to be grateful, gracious, God-like, and God –emulating Givers in our own lives as well. He would have you and I to be “provers” of OUR Love, by our actions not just our words. Thus, the area of finances becomes a unique, yet meaningful, if not the most meaningful way that we are challenged to prove our love with our actions. In the Old Testament, God said, prove your love for me with the tithe, the first 10% of your income. Prove it, don’t just talk about it. Don’t philosophize about it. Don’t complain about it. Just be obedient about it. Prove it. Give to me and I will give to you. That’s the deal. Love me, prove your love for me and I will love you, and will prove my love for you. Take care of my house, and I will take care of your family. Give to me, and I will give to you. Provide for me and I will provide for you. It’s just as plain and simple as that.

In the New Testament, guess what has changed? Not much. O now we don’t have to be legalistic in our giving; making sure that we have met our 10% tithe obligation. Aren’t you glad? Now God says, huh, you don’t have to give that 10%, I wouldn’t think about holding you my beloved to such a requirement. No

way! That old legalistic figure for my converted child who loves me is nothing more than... a good starting point. Notice what Jesus said, *“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter (Justice and Love) without leaving the former undone (10<sup>th</sup> given to God).* Did you catch it? 10% is the least amount. It’s the expected amount! But no longer are we held to that figure. “To whom much is given, much is required...” Let talk for a while about this call, this invitation, to be liberal, extravagant, over the top... not merely liberal not legal givers.

## Ground Work:

### MacLaren's Expositions

#### **THE UNCHANGING LORD**

The scriptural revelations of the divine Name are always the basis of intensely practical admonition. The Bible does not think it worthwhile to proclaim the Name of God without building on the proclamation promises or commandments. There is no ‘mere theology’ in Scripture; and it does not speak of ‘attributes,’ nor give dry abstractions of infinitude, eternity, omniscience, unchangeableness, but lays stress on the personality of God, which is so apt to escape us in these abstract conceptions, and thus teaches us to think of this personal God our Father, as infinite, eternal, knowing all things, and never changing. There is all the difference in our attitude towards the very same truth if we think of the unchangeableness of God, or if we think that our Father God is unchangeable. In our text the thought of Him as unchanging comes into view as the foundation of the continuance of the unfaithful sons of Jacob in their privileges and in their very lives. ‘I am the Lord,’ Jehovah, the Self-existent, the Eternal whose being is not under the limitations of succession and time. ‘Because I am Jehovah, I change not’; and because Jehovah changes not, therefore our finite and mortal selves abide, and our infinite and sinful selves are still the objects of His steadfast love.

Let us consider, first, the unchangeable God, and second, the unchanging God as the foundation of our changeful lives

#### **THE UNCHANGEABLE GOD.**

In the great covenant-name Jehovah there is revealed an existence which reverses all that we know of finite and progressive being, or finite and mortal being, or finite and variable nature. With us there are mutations arising

from physical nature. The material must needs be subject to laws of growth and decadence. Our spiritual nature is subject to changes arising from the advancement in knowledge. Our moral nature is subject to fluctuations; circumstances play upon us, and 'nothing continueth in one stay.' Change is the condition of life. It means growth and happiness; it belongs to the perfection of creatures. But the unchangeableness of God is the negation of all imperfection, it is the negation of all dependence on circumstances, it is the negation of all possibility of decay or exhaustion, it is the negation of all caprice. It is the assurance that His is an underived, self-dependent being, and that with Him is the fountain of light; it is the assurance that, raised above the limits of time and the succession of events, He is in the eternal present, where all things that were and are, and are to come, stand naked and open. It is the assurance that the calm might of His eternal will acts, not in spasms of successive volitions preceded by a period of indecision and equilibrium between contending motives, but is one continuous uniform energy, never beginning, never bending, never ending; that the purpose of His will is 'the eternal purpose which He hath purposed in Himself.' It is the assurance that the clear vision of His infinite knowledge, from the heat of which nothing is hid, has no stages of advancement, and no events lying nebulous in a dim horizon by reason of distance, or growing in clearness as they draw nearer, but which pierces the mists of futurity and the veils of the past and the infinities of the present, and 'from the beginning to the end knoweth all things.' It is the assurance that the mighty stream of love from the heart of God is not contingent on the variations of our character and the fluctuations of our poor hearts, but rises from His deep well, and flows on for ever, 'the river of God' which 'is full of water.' It is the assurance that round all the majesty and the mercy which He has revealed for our adoration and our trust there is the consecration of permanence, that we might have a rock on which to build and never be confounded. Is there anywhere in the past an act of His power, a word of His lip, a revelation of His heart which has been a strength or a joy or a light to any man? It is valid for me, and is intended for my use. 'He fainteth not, nor is weary.' The bush burns and is not consumed. 'I will not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips.' 'By two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation.'

## **THE UNCHANGING GOD AS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CHANGEFUL LIVES.**

In the most literal sense our text is true. Because He lives we live also. He is the same forever, therefore we are not consumed. The foundation of our being lies beyond and beneath all the mutable things from which we are tempted to believe that we draw our lives, and is in God. The true lesson to be drawn from the mutable phenomena of earth is-heaven. The many links in the chain must have a staple. Reason requires that behind all the fleeting shall be the permanent. There must be a basis which does not partake of change. The lesson from all the mutable creation is the immutable God.

Since God changes not, the life of our spirits is not at the mercy of changing events. We look back on a lifetime of changing scenes through which we have passed, and forward to a similar succession, and this mutability is sad to many of us, and in some aspects sad to all, so powerless we are to fix and arrest any of our blessings. Which we shall keep we know not; we only know that, as certainly as buds and blossoms of spring drop, and the fervid summer darkens to November fogs and December frosts, so certainly we shall have to part with much in our passage through life. But if we let God speak to us, the necessary changes that come to us will not be harmful but blessed, for the lesson that the mutability of the mutual is meant to impress upon us is, the permanency of the divine, and our dependence, not on them, but on Him. We may look upon all the world of time and chance and think that He who Himself is unchanging changeth all. The eye of the tempest is a point of rest. The point, in the heavens towards which, according to some astronomers, the whole of the solar system is drifting, is a fixed point. If we depend on Him, then change is not all sad; it cannot take God away, but it may bring us nearer to Him. We cannot be desolate as long as we have Him. We know not what shall be on the morrow. Be it so; it will be God's to-morrow. When the leaves drop we can see the rock on which the trees grow; and when changes strip the world for us of some of its waving beauty and leafy shade, we may discern more clearly the firm foundation on which our hopes rest. All else changes. Be it so; that will not kill us, nor leave us utterly forlorn as long as we hear the voice which says, 'I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye are not consumed.'

God's purposes and promises change not, therefore our faith may rest on Him, notwithstanding our own sins and fluctuations. It is this aspect of the divine immutability which is the thought of our text. God does not turn from His love, nor cancel His promises, nor alter His purposes of mercy because of our sins. If

God could have changed, the godless forgetfulness of, and departure from, Him of 'the Sons of Jacob' would have driven Him to abandon His purposes; but they still live-living evidences of His long-suffering. And in that preservation of them God would have them see the basis of hope for the future. So this is the confidence with which we should cheer ourselves when we look upon the past, and when we anticipate the future. The sins that have been in our past have deserved that we should have been swept away, but we are here still. Why are we? Why do we yet live? Because we have to do with an unchanging love, with a faithfulness that never departs from its word, with a purpose of blessing that will not be turned aside. So let us look back with this thought and be thankful; let us look forward with it and be of good cheer. Trust yourself, weak and sinful as you are, to that unchanging love. The future will have in it faults and failures, sins and shortcomings, but rise from yourself to God. Look beyond the light and shade of your own characters, or of earthly events to the central light, where there is no glimmering twilight, no night, 'no variableness nor shadow of turning.' Let us live in God, and be strong in hope. Forward, not backward, let us look and strive; so our souls, fixed and steadied by faith in Him, will become in a manner partakers of His unchangeableness; and we too in our degree will be able to say, 'The Lord is at my side; I shall not be moved.'

### **Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary**

3:1-6 The first words of this chapter seem an answer to the scoffers of those days. Here is a prophecy of the appearing of John the Baptist. He is Christ's harbinger. He shall prepare the way before him, by calling men to repentance. The Messiah had been long called, He that should come, and now shortly he will come. He is the Messenger of the covenant. Those who seek Jesus, shall find pleasure in him, often when not looked for. The Lord Jesus, prepares the sinner's heart to be his temple, by the ministry of his word and the convictions of his Spirit, and he enters it as the Messenger of peace and consolation. No hypocrite or formalist can endure his doctrine, or stand before his tribunal. Christ came to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile. He shall sit as a Refiner. Christ, by his gospel, shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it, shall regenerate and cleanse souls. He will take away the dross found in them. He will separate their corruptions, which render their faculties worthless and useless. The believer needs not fear the fiery trial of afflictions and temptations, by which the Saviour refines his gold. He will

take care it is not more intense or longer than is needful for his good; and this trial will end far otherwise than that of the wicked. Christ will, by interceding for them, make them accepted. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. Evil pursues sinners. God is unchangeable. And though the sentence against evil works be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed; the Lord is as much an enemy to sin as ever. We may all apply this to ourselves. Because we have to do with a God that changes not, therefore it is that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not.

### **Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary**

42. mint ... rue, &c.—rounding on Le 27:30, which they interpreted rigidly. Our Lord purposely names the most trifling products of the earth, as examples of what they punctiliously exacted the tenth of.

judgment and the love of God—in Mt 23:25, "judgment, mercy, and faith." The reference is to Mic 6:6-8, whose third element of all acceptable religion, "walking humbly with God," comprehends both "love" and "faith." (See on [1642]Mr 12:29; [1643]Mr 12:32, 33). The same tendency to merge greater duties in less besets us still, but it is the characteristic of hypocrites.

these ought ye, &c.—There is no need for one set of duties to jostle out another; but of the greater, our Lord says, "Ye ought to have done" them; of the lesser, only "ye ought not to leave them undone."

### **Geneva Study Bible**

{11} But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye {g} tithe mint and rue and {h} all manner of herbs, and pass over {i} judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

(11) It is the characteristic of hypocrites to stand firmly for little trifles and to let greater matters pass.

(g) You decide by God's law that the tenth part is due to be paid.

(h) Of all types of herbs, some as Augustine expounds it in his Enchiridion to Laurence, chap. 99, where he shows in like manner how that place of Paul, (God will have all men to be saved), 1Ti 2:4, is to be expounded after the same manner.

That is to say, that which is right and reasonable to do, for this word judgment contains the commandments of the second table, and the other words, the love of God, contain the commandments of the first.

### **Bengel's Gnomes**

Luke 11:42. Ἄλλ' οὐαὶ) Ἄλλὰ, a particle of transition; 2 Corinthians 7:11.—τὴν κρίσιν, judgment) which is in the understanding. True judgment dictates the assertion, that the love of God is the greatest of the commandments. [Comp. ch. Luke 12:57.]—τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Θεοῦ, the love of God) which is in the will. [He saith, the love of GOD, and that of our neighbour for the sake of GOD.—V. g.] It is he who loves God, and he alone, that is endowed with a true judgment. See 1 Corinthians 8:3; 1 Corinthians 8:2. In Matthew [Luke 23:23, there is added to, “Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment”], mercy and faith. In fact, along with ‘love,’ is conjoined and implied that faith, of which Matthew makes mention. See 1 Timothy 1:5. Mercy [in the form of giving alms] is recommended in Luke 11:41.—[ταῦτα—κακείνα, these things—and those things) The former of less consequence—the latter of more importance.—V. g.]

### **Pulpit Commentary**

Verse 42. - *But woe unto you, Pharisees: for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* Probably the primitive Law of **Moses**, which directed that a tenth of every income in Israel should be given up to the service of the invisible King alone, referred to such important products as corn, and wine, and oil, and the like; but the present elaboration of the Law and the Pharisee schools had extended the primitive obligation to the smallest garden herbs, such as mint and rue. The Talmud even condescends to discuss whether, in tithing the seeds of these garden herbs, the very stalk too ought not to be tithed! The Master, ever tender and considerate, does not blame this exaggerated scrupulosity, if it were done to satisfy even a warped and distorted conscience; what he does find fault with, though, and in the bitterest terms language can formulate, is the substitution of and the clear preference for these infinitely lower duties for the higher.

(Giving: It's an act of faith... it's an act of love.)

- A. Our Giving is TO God. (Vs.6-9) <sup>6</sup>“I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. <sup>7</sup>Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you

*ask, 'How are we to return?'*<sup>8</sup> *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' 'In tithes and offerings. 'You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.*

- B. Eternal security is something that as Christians we glory in. To be in heaven someday with Jesus is something that we all cherish and long for. To be with those who have gone on before us, to be reunited with loved ones who have passed into glory is a grand hope and a glorious thought. Amen. We love that security! But be that as it is. We, as human beings still, strive for security while we are living on this earth. We build it in our youth and we cling to it as we grow older. We surround ourselves with lovely homes, nice vehicles, good insurance plans, and wonderful family. Its natural, it's nice, and it's quite fulfilling. To feel secure is to be content.
- C. And yet in the deepest recesses of our hearts, we know that the security that we cling to here is only temporal, only for a time, only for a season. Our beginning verse states: *<sup>6</sup>"I the LORD do not change.* And as child of His, we can periodically hear His sweet whisper, "I have claimed you not just for a season, but for eternity. I have called you to be mine not just in your youth, but in every age you are given to enjoy. I have cherished you every single day. I was serious when I reached out my hand and grabbed yours and said, walk with me. And I have not, nor will I ever stop wooing you to myself, to be life-long faithful partners, to have you come close to me and I to you... and to learn of me and to lean on me. For your sake, know that I will have no other Gods before me—for I am a jealous God. I am your God. For your sake, because you are mine I will not let you drift too far from me. Thus, our scripture continues: *Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?'*<sup>8</sup> *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. 'You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.*
- D. Isn't it interesting that God states that the way that we return to Him is in and through our giving then our tithing... I think He knows when He is Lord of not only our hearts but our pocketbooks we are in the right place for Him to continue to be close to us. When all that we are and all that we have are His, then, it isn't hard for us to say to God: yes, yes Lord, I

AM yours, I always will be. Yes, Lord, you have been so good to me, and I love you. Yes, Lord my greatest goal is to finish my race, to be counted as faithful. Yes Lord, I desire with all of my heart to be ever faithful even with the things that I now find security in. Yes, Precious Jesus, I choose to stay obedient, stay faithful, and stay yours. All that I have been, I have become, all that I ever will be I simply place in your mighty and strong hands. Our Giving is ultimately TO God; of our lives, the God who we belong to.

(Giving: It's an act of faith... it's an act of love.)

- A) Our Giving is FOR God. (Vs.10a). <sup>10</sup> *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.* Obviously, God has always been concerned about His “House.” But what or where is the House of God? We all know that God really doesn't dwell permanently in buildings or sanctuaries. He is the God of the universe. He created everything that surrounds us. God is omniscient—everywhere. That's true. But know this, because God is omniscient He CAN choose, to dwell anywhere He pleases. Think about it: In the Old Testament God chose to dwell at the feet of Abraham in the burning bush. He chose to dwell in among the nomadic clan of Israelites in the tent of meetings; He chose to dwell in the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, within the Temple at Jerusalem. He chose to dwell in the myriad of synagogues of the diaspora after the destruction of the temple. He has always chosen to dwell among and in the midst of His chosen people.
- B) Until finally, God chose to dwell in the person of His Son, Jesus the Christ. Now God chooses to dwell in every blood bought, born again believer. Scripture tells us that He chooses to dwell wherever two or three are gathered in His name. He chooses to dwell in your heart and mine. And He chooses to dwell among churches that are fulfilling His calling and His purpose. A church is only a church if God is in the midst. Thus, Before any church should ever ask you as Hid children to bring your tithe into their storehouse, the question needs to be asked, is God here? More... is that church fulfilling God's desire and purposes. Here are a few definitions that we can measure a church by:

1. (Website: Got Questions) In summary, the church is not a building or a denomination. According to the Bible, the church is the body of Christ—all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation ([John 3:16](#); [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). Local churches are gatherings of members of the universal church. The local church is where the members of the universal church can fully apply the “body” principles of 1 Corinthians chapter 12: encouraging, teaching, and building one another up in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. (We need to ask, Does our church have believers in Christ present, are we collectively striving to encourage one another, is there biblical teaching; is the gospel preached and taught, are we ever conscience of the fact that we need to be about building one another up, and are we examples of the knowledge and grace of Jesus?)
2. (Pax North Church) We need the Gospel to be the church. Not merely our opinion of the Gospel or a truth that you once affirmed by a sincere prayer- but a Gospel that is understood and functions from God’s perspective. **[What does God think of the Gospel?]** In a nut shell the gospel is the full story of God’s redemptive work in both our world and in the lives of His people. It includes the truth that God created all things to reflect HIS glory, which entails all of us. **The powerful truth is God WILL get glory from our lives.** The redemptive work of God is His receiving glory from our lives because we have been placed into a true relationship with Him. (Are We Gospel centered? In other words, are we convinced as a group of believers that God wants people who don’t know Him to hear and see the life changing power of the gospel when they come into this place... Is it our greatest collective desire that people come to know Jesus Christ as their own, personal Saviour? Are we on God’s page when it comes to God’s Gospel? )
3. (Cary Nieuwhof) First if you’re a Christian, church is not something you go to. It’s something you are. You can’t disassociate from church as a Christian any more than you can disassociate from humanity as a person. You don’t go to church. You *are* the church. (Are we the Church? I think we are!) If we are the church then and only then does God say:
  - C) **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house...** Obviously we get hung up on the statement, whole tithe. But think for a moment why we are to bring out tithe here: **that there may be food in My house...** Food is not just sustenance for the physical—that is not God’s greatest concern. Obviously, We should be concerned about feeding and caring for the poor, but in God’s House, “food” is something that is offered, as well, for the spiritual. We should ask ourselves, are we being fed... healthy doses of God’s Word? Are we a church that is

concerned for the healthy spiritual growth of its members? Do we understand the need we all share, to feed off of one another's faith; to truly be the church for one another? The real question is, are we as a church, hungry for God? Do we have a hankering for the things of God. Are our spiritual appetites being met?

- D) Good Fellowship, Vision, a Loving and accepting attitude, the presence of God, Christ centered teaching, a thirst for learning, encouraging, meeting one another's needs, inspiring music, lifting up Christ by our lives and our words, wanting people with all of our hearts to come to know Christ and to be saved, leading Christ-centered lives... these are the things that make up a church that is worthy of bringing a tithe to? How are we doing in the FOR God category? As the Pastor, I would say that we are a work in progress... but a good work in progress. My goal is to be a smorgasbord church: full of spiritual delicacies that satisfy the hungry heart. God may be the head chef—but He needs, we need—a plethora of God-ordained, God-gifted sous chefs. People who want to be in the feeding others business. Maybe that's you?

(Giving: It's an act of faith... it's an act of love.)

- A. Finally, Our Giving is really. For YOU and ME. (Vs.10b-12; Lk.42). *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 there will not be room enough to store it. "I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.*
- B. God's blessings, God's protection. God's Promise... All are found in the words... *Test me in this.* In all of the scriptures; from Genesis to Revelation, there is only one time that God says, test Him—God says challenge Me. And it's in the area of giving, being faithful in tithing.
- C. When you look at your finances and consider your giving, first, consider the church you are giving to. Next, For those of you who say I can't afford to tithe, the minimum of 10%...my response to you is test God—the truth of the matter is you can't really afford not to tithe. Are you struggling financially? Put God to the test. Let Him prove Himself.

D. For those of you who say, I am giving enough, my challenge would be ask yourself, can I give more... not just for God, but for myself. To those who are giving above and beyond, I pray that God will continue to bless you and protect you and be ever present in your lives—you are a blessing! . Tithing is To God, For God, but tithing in reality is for us. Let's be honest... Do I want God to be pleased with me? Do I want God to know that He is my ultimate security? Do I want God to be blessed so that He can and will bless others and even me, more?

(Giving: It's an act of faith... it's an act of love.)