

Malachi 3:13-18 ESV

Do You Fear the LORD?

Services: Sunday, Nov. 20 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, Nov. 21 at 7 PM

Church Year: Last Sunday of the Church Year – 2016

Introduction: Dear friends: Do you **fear heights or spiders?** Such fears are common! Do you **fear the LORD** (thus, *God the Father*)? That fear is **uncommon**. ***But isn't that foolish?*** Think about this: The LORD who **is** almighty, **provides** all of our needs, and **can save us or condemn us**, is NOT feared, while heights and spiders are feared. *That is NOT good!*

Before we go any further, let's understand that **fear can be defined in two ways:** (1) to have a reverential [*respectful*] awe [*admiration*] of God **or** (2) to be afraid.¹ Our focus today is on the *first* definition; we will discover from Malachi chapter 3 that *all who belong to the LORD also fear the LORD*.

Just before today's text, the LORD told the people that they were robbing from Him. The Bible teaches that the tithe, *the first 10%*, belongs to the LORD [[Lev. 27:30](#)]; so those who held *part of it* back were robbers. Then the LORD called the people to repent *and promised to richly bless those who did repent*. What happened? Those who feared the LORD *began to tithe*, while those who **did not fear Him did not change**.

Now we pick up with Malachi 3:13; the LORD was speaking to the people in Israel – *the descendants of those who returned from Babylon to rebuild the temple*. Some of them feared the LORD, *but others did not*; **today, let us learn the importance of fearing Him**; then, *if necessary*, LET US REPENT!

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fear>

1. **Some Spoke Hard Against the LORD:** ¹³ **“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ //** These upcoming words, in vv. 14-15, **“are the complaints of the sceptics. The faithful [those who fear the LORD] refuse to be moved by these arguments...”²**
- a. ¹⁴ **You [skeptics] have said, ‘It is vain [empty] to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge [thus, of doing what He wants] or of walking as in mourning [thus, in repentance] before the LORD of hosts? //** The LORD is talking to people who **tried** to earn His favor by **♦serving Him** and **♦avoiding sin; they did such things with the expectation that the LORD would reward them**. So, *when the reward did not come*, they said that such things were worthless☹️. **But such thinking is flawed!** This, *instead*, is true: God calls us to **♦see our sins, ♦be sorry, and ♦receive Jesus**; then, **in response**, we desire to **serve Him** and **live according to His Word!** We don’t serve to earn, *but we serve out of gratitude!*
- b. ¹⁵ **And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.” //** Even though **unbelievers think** the arrogant and evil will succeed, *they will finally be overcome!*
2. **Some Fear the LORD:**
- a. ^{16a} **Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. //** Maybe they also read **Psalm 73**; here are some selections: **...my feet had almost**

² New Bible Commentary, Third Edition (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 809.

stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. ³ For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... ⁵ They are not in trouble as others are... ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace... ⁸ They scoff and speak with malice... ⁹ They set their mouths against the heavens... ¹² Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. ¹³ All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴ For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.... ¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, ¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end. ¹⁸ Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. ¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment... (ESV) The wicked *seem* to prosper now, **but**, without repentance, *they will end up in eternal torment!*

- b. ^{16b} **The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed** [*respected, honored*] **his name.** // In ancient times, kings had books which included the names of their subjects; *about 1,000 years before Malachi*, Moses said to the LORD – *in connection with the golden calf incident*, “please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written” (Ex. 32:32 NIV). The Bible also identifies who will enter *the new Jerusalem*: “...only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27 ESV). Here in

Malachi, *only those who feared the LORD were included in the book!*

- c. ¹⁷ **“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. // So “the day” refers to Jesus’ return; **right now, the wicked seem to be winners and the righteous seem to be losers, but Jesus’ return will reveal the truth.** Regarding the wicked, Jesus will say: “...these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46 NAS).**
- d. ¹⁸ **Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked [lawless], between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.” // Now the distinction is blurred, but clarification is coming! **For all who are repentant, they are saved!** Then, *from today’s sermon, we learned some of what characterizes such people:* They **✦**fear the LORD, **✦**give the LORD what belongs to Him, and **✦**serve the LORD *with no expectation of reward!* **Dr. Kretzmann** wrote this warning, **“The time of grace is still at hand [that is good news], but [unbelievers] and scoffers will do well not to delay repentance” (OT2:724).****

Conclusion: Let us pray: Dear Father, for all who know Jesus, *may that show in our lives;* and for all others, *please lead them to true repentance!* And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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