

The Command to Obedience

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[0:00] Well, good afternoon once again, or good evening, once again in our study in the book of Malachi.

! We are in the process of getting close to the end, and even possibly next session will be our last session in Malachi. We'll see how that goes. But after we're finished with Malachi, Lee Roberts will be doing the Wednesday night Bible study.

And I checked with him, and he said he's going to be doing the study through the book of Habakkuk. And so be looking forward to that when that time comes. And Lee always does an excellent job of going through the scriptures.

And so be looking forward to that time as well. So we'll make mention to you also, I had been thinking about the study notes that we always made available on Wednesday evenings.

I have been keeping up with those. And so once we get the opportunity of being back together here for the Wednesday night studies, I'll have those for you if you would care to have any of those notes.

[1:19] And so just keep that in mind, if you will. Last week, when we were in Malachi chapter 3, we came to the portion of God's contention with the nation of Israel that dealt with the fact that they were robbing God.

He asked the question in verse number 8, I believe it was, Can a man or will a man rob God? And their, of course, response was, How in have we robbed you?

And his response to that was, You have robbed me with tithes and offerings. In other words, their failure to be obedient to the law in the giving of their tithes and their offerings.

So we began to look at that closely and looked at the idea that of the origination of the tithe, when that word is first mentioned in the scripture.

And we found that to be in Genesis chapter 28. That was the event, you recall, where Jacob was running from Esau. As a result of that, he had to leave mother and father and family home and go to the land that parents have told him to go to.

[2:31] And in that sojourn, then, we see that God encountered Jacob, made some tremendous promises to him, identified himself as the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and that also then made promises that dealt with, in reality, the confirmation or the giving to him, if you will, the covenant promises that were giving to Abram.

And so at the end of that, Jacob responded by saying, God, if you do all these things you promise to do on my behalf, then you will have proved yourself to be my God.

And then he said, I will give a tenth to thee. Of all the spoils that I have, I will give a tenth unto thee. So that's actually, remember, the first occurrence of the word in Scripture of the tenth, as it pertains to the giving of offerings unto the Lord.

And then, of course, we see that that really, even in the Garden of Eden, offerings given by Cain and Abel, that, not in the Garden of Eden, but Cain and Abel, you recall, gave offerings of the fruit of their work and their labor, or that, no doubt, was more of a picture of a thanksgiving offering to the Lord.

So we kind of get that principle here of even under the law God gave Israel, the giving of that tenth, of that tithe, was to be an expression of thanksgiving to the Lord.

[4:07] And we'll see in just a minute as well, a thanksgiving offering of our love for God, for the things that he has done, and more so just in the fact of who he is.

And so we saw as well that giving of the tenth prior to the law being given, when Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek, in acknowledgement of the fact that Melchizedek then was a priest of the Most High God.

And so it was to be a labor of love, a labor of sacrifice to bring those tithes to the temple, even under the law.

Under the law in Leviticus 27, verse 30, God said to his people Israel, And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's.

It is holy unto the Lord. So there's the picture that we saw. Now, last week, as we closed out, we said that this week, we would be looking at the idea or the principle, if you will, that God gives us of giving under the New Testament day of grace, that that he gives to the church.

[5:31] And so if you will, turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 through 9, and there we see really a principle given here of our giving to the Lord.

He says in verse number 6, But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to him in every good work.

As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness remaineth forever. Ever. Now, the context in that, of course, is the idea of the people of God giving a freewill offering for the benefit of those poor saints in the city of Jerusalem.

[6:41] They had some dire needs there. And so the Apostle Paul, as well as others, were taking an offering to provide for those needs there in Jerusalem.

So that's the context of the setting there. But yet, the principle still remains the same for us in our giving. As every man purposes in his heart, so let him give.

He's purposed. That is the idea of choosing beforehand, that we have determined beforehand that we are going to give. That's the way it was with the offering to the saints in Jerusalem.

Each believer in the church determined, here's how I'm going to give. Here's the amount I'm going to give. So likewise, under the New Testament day of grace, that principle remains for us in all of our giving, as we've purposed in our heart.

Then, not to give it grudgingly or out of necessity. Grudgingly, literally, is out of sorrow. Necessity under compulsion.

[7:47] So they both refer to the attitudes of grief and regret upon doing something that we really don't want to do. And of being forced, either by an inward moral conviction, or by outer pressure from other people to do that same thing.

Something we don't want to do. I think it's interesting that even under moral obligation or moral inclination, we can still fight against that in our heart and our mind.

So there again, the idea of giving has to be from the heart. So we see in that particular series of verses, the principle of giving in verse number six, the motive of our giving in verse number seven, and then the provision for that in verse eight.

And that is that God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound at every good work.

That includes in the idea of our giving to the Lord. I know there are a lot of people that say, well, I just don't have the income and my income is so tight, I can't give to the Lord.

[8:57] But we fail to recognize sometimes that God has said, I'll make it possible for you to be able to do that. And so for us to go before the Lord and say, God, I want dearly out of my heart to be able to give to you an offering that God, would you please supply that need, supply that ability for me to be able to give unto you knowing that you will take care of the needs that I have.

And I believe God will honor that request from any believer that has that within their heart. Now, remember the tithes and offerings that were given under the law in the Old Testament days were given so that the priests could survive so they could live.

Their portion was a tenth of that that was brought to the temple for offerings. They had no earthly inheritance among the people of Israel.

Every other tribe had an inheritance of land. But the Levites, the tribe of Levi, had nothing. They were to be, they were to live off of their service to the Lord in the temple.

And so that was the idea there. Now, in the New Testament day of grace, once again, in Paul's letter, this time his first letter to the church at Corinth in chapter number 9, read with me beginning in verse number 7 and we'll see what God has to say here.

[10:31] Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Or who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Say I these things as a man? Or say not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn?

Doth God take care of oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt that this is written that he that ploweth should plow in hope and he that thresheth shall thresh in hope and he should be partaker of his hope.

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if ye shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you or whether or not we rather, nevertheless we have not used this power but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Do you not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

[11:49] Even so, hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. That's the principle that God set forth to the believers of the New Testament era.

The reason the apostle Paul did not partake of that is so that he would not be accused of becoming rich, if you will, from preaching the gospel.

He wanted his life to be pure in that. So likewise, it's necessary for pastors and ministers that are provided for through the tithes of his people, God's people, to use that in the wisdom, in the way that God's wisdom has determined it is to be used to help support him in his necessities.

Now, the Jews in the temple had two chests for alms. The one was of what was necessary, in other words, those that were required by the law, and the other was for that of a free will offering and to escape their belief of perdition.

Some would grudgingly give what necessity obligated them to give. Others would give cheerfully for the love they have for God and as well through their pity of the poor.

[13:14] For God loveth a cheerful giver, Paul says. That word in the Greek is, that word cheerful in the Greek is the word from which we get our word hilarious.

Wouldn't it be wonderful, I'd love to see somebody when the offering plates passed around in our worship times, to hear somebody bust out with a hilarious laugh and joy, just at the idea of joyously giving to the Lord because we love God as much as we can because of who he is said and in light of the things he's done on our behalf in that particular way.

Wouldn't that be tremendous if we could see that? Now don't do that in the flesh, only if God inclines your heart to do that and fills you with that joy. And then again, verse 8, God is able to make all grace abound towards you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may be able to abound to every good work.

Now back in verse 10 herewith, the word herewith is literally through this, through your giving to God what they are under obligation to give him, they are then to prove God.

Even out of that obligation, they are to prove God, to put him to the test. And the test is this, whether the attitude towards God, attitude of God toward the people of Israel is still there as the holy and righteous God.

[14:45] So, proving, putting to the test. That idea of proving is the idea of examining to determine the essential qualities, especially that of integrity.

So, in essence, God is saying, you go ahead, check it out and see if I've changed. See if my integrity has changed, my faithfulness to you, my love for you. Do that by giving unto me that I really are due.

are due from the people of God that love me and who I have chosen to be mine. Now, open you up the windows of heaven. He said, I'll open up the windows of heaven, see if I won't do that, and pour you out a blessing.

Literally, empty out to you to give them fully, holding back nothing. So, it's the most copious supply of blessing is what God's saying here.

You wait and see. Of course, remember now, these are people that we're looking for and asking, where's the judgment of God? Where's the holiness of God that's supposed to be manifest? God said, give to me, and so see if I won't prove myself to you as to who I am and the relationship that we have one toward another.

[16:03] See if I won't pour out fully in copious measure, a great supply of blessing, holding back nothing from you. Now, that same expression, to put it in perspective here, that same expression

occurs only in one time, and that is in the history of the flood in Genesis chapter 7.

In verse 11, the scripture says, in the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month, the 17th day of the month, the same day where all the fountains of the deep broken up, now notice, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Same words, same phrase, same idea here. You know how fully that rain poured down from the heavens to flood the earth. God said, that's the way I will bless you if you are obedient to me in the matter of giving.

And then in verse 11 of Malachi 3, and I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

Remember, God had said you are under a curse. Their crops were not coming out like they should. God said, you obey me, come back into obedience to me, in particular in the matter of giving, and I will then change all of that.

[17 : 33] I will rebuke that that devours those things on your behalf. Everything that could injure the fruits of the land, God's going to take care of. He's going to rebuke.

That is the idea to avert the intention of that, to devour or the devourer. That was the idea of the locusts that would come and eat the crops, that would cast their fruit before their time.

It's the idea of a miscarriage. The fruit may come up, the blossoms come, bloom, fruit then begin to appear, but those grapes would fall off the vine before they become ripe.

And so God said, I'll change all that. I'll remove that curse from you if you'll simply be obedient unto me. And then in verse 12, all the nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

So, in consequence of the blessings that God will pour out, all the nations of the earth are going to call Israel blessed, because it will be a land that is the object of pleasure to everyone.

[18 : 43] Now the prophet Zechariah spoke of that in chapter 8 of his prophecy, in verses 20 through 23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, it shall yet come to pass that there shall come people and the inhabitants of many cities, and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord and seek the Lord of hosts.

I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

What a tremendous testimony that will be in that time that is still yet to come. Now God has another contention with the people of Israel.

that unjust murmuring against God is now brought to light. It brings to us a distinction between the wicked and those that truly fear God.

In verse number 13 we begin to see that. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Now the word stout is to be strong over someone.

[20 : 17] It doesn't mean just to be harsh or burdensome, but it means to do violence to a person, to overpower him. That's what God is saying that the people of Israel attempted to do to him.

You've been stout against me. The direction that their conversations took with one another is this, that it is useless to serve God because the righteous have no advantage over sinners.

That was their contention. In verses 14 and 15 then God said, Ye have said it is vain to serve God. And what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?

Catch that picture, walking mournfully before God. We'll see that in a second. And now we call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up.

Yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Now, again, we've walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts. That idea is to go about dirty or black, either with their faces and clothes, unwashed, or simply wrapped in the black mourning clothes that was customary of the day.

[21 : 35] And that then as a sign of mourning. Here, the mourning that comes with fasting, just like the mourning over sin. And they do that before the Lord of hosts, from awe then of Jehovah.

So, the idea here is this, they bring into prominence their fasting as a special significance or sign of their piety toward God.

An act of penitence as well, through which they are set right, they set right certain sins against God. So, it was an outward show of piety that he's speaking of here.

So, it was a voluntary fasting that was regarded as a special sign of piety, not the fasting required on the day of atonement.

So, the worst aspect of their state of mind here is this, it was the delusion that their merely outward worship is genuine worship, and it's the worship that God must then acknowledge and reward, in spite of how corrupt it was.

[22:45] Same thing in Isaiah's day, or the same thing that Isaiah writes in Isaiah 58, verses 1 through 5, cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God. They ask of me the ordinance of justice, and they take delight in approaching to God.

Wherefore have we fasted, say thee, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. Ye shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

[24:00] Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day of the Lord? So, their outward piety was not something that God really looked upon.

It was a matter of the absence of the heart toward God that Jehovah really saw. Now, verse 15 of Malachi 3, Now we consider the proud and arrogant to be happy and favored.

Evildoers are exalted and prosper, yes, and when they test God, they escape unpunished. That's out of the Amplified Translation. Since we're not prosperous, who serve God, in other words, and the proud pagan flourish in their prosperity, we must pronounce them, the pagans, in God's favor. They that tempt God to prove or to put the test, put God to the test, to call out his judgment through their wickedness. Now, the speech of the ungodly causes the righteous to speak of God's attitude toward them.

Verse 16, Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.

[25:22] They strengthened themselves, the righteous did, in their faith in Jehovah, and that's how it ought to be. as the holy God and just judge in Israel, God would then in due time repay both the wicked and the righteous according to their deeds.

They saw that, they understood that, and they knew that. So a great contrast to the majority with their blasphemous speech was seen here.

The description of the conduct of the ungodly is an indirect admonition to the people of the nation, and that admonition is to what their attitude toward God ought to be, that it should be taken as a model by the whole nation which God has called to himself.

God has not only took the notice of those conversations, but notice what it said. It said he had written them in a book of remembrance to reward them in due time.

In Psalm 59, verses 8 and 9, the psalmist says, excuse me, Psalm 56, verses 8 and 9, the writer says, Thou tellest my wanderings, put thou my tears into thy bottle, are they not in thy book?

[26:44] When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back, this I know, for God is for me. What a tremendous, really, joy, and encouragement that should be to us, that no matter what we're going through, the thing God sees is how we respond through that, how we see that, in continuing to trust him, continuing to know that he is in awareness of our situation, and that we can just love him through no matter what the circumstances are, because God sees that, God knows that, and according to this, he keeps a record of that before him, to be, if you will, in our vernacular, to serve as a reminder to him.

This book was written before Jehovah, not necessarily in his presence, but in order that it might lie before Jehovah, and remind him of the righteous deeds of the righteous, and those that thought upon his name, more, the idea is to consider or value the name of the Lord.

Now, that writing was done because the Lord would then make them his own on the day of his coming, and show them mercy.

The day which Jehovah makes is the day of judgment, which attends his coming. Isaiah 10, verse 3, says, And what will you do in the day of visitation?

And in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your glory? That's what Isaiah speaks of.

[28 : 28] Now, verse 17 of Malachi 3, They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Oh, they'll be my possession in that day that I create, that day of judgment and reward as well.

They'll be a valued possession to me.

Now, Exodus 19, verse 5, says, Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for the earth is mine.

The righteous will then be a possession for Jehovah, because on that day the glory of the children of God will first be revealed, and the Israel of God then will reach the mark of its heavenly calling.

Verse 18, Now, Then shall you return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

[29 : 36] So Malachi bids the mourners to consider what has been said concerning the righteous, Jesus. And that should tell them that they will then see the difference between the righteous who serve God and the wicked who do not serve him.

In other words, they'll learn that it's always rewarding to serve God, if you will. Then shall you return and discern, he says. And the new American standard says, so you will again distinguish.

And the idea there is that there purposes, that differences, there is a difference between those who fear God and those that are the ungodly. That will be recognized, that will be seen between those who serve God, those that don't serve him.

And the idea was that that was seen then before as well. Won't be the first time. The Lord had already made it manifest by the former judgments that he has brought.

And that was the case when God delivered Israel out of Egypt as well. Exodus chapter 11 verse 7.

But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast, that ye may know how the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

[30 : 54] That of course was the day when death came and invaded Egypt and the firstborn of all the Egyptians had died. God had put a difference and wanted people to be able to see there is a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Tremendous picture that God gives us here, of course, the culmination of which will come after Jesus comes and then mostly at the end of the tribulation. Now, what about God's provisions for us?

Call your attention to Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through 4. The Apostle Paul writes to us, If then you be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Kind of the same thing and same idea that God had given Israel back in Malachi's day. Now, verse 3, For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Literally, you have died. You have died to the old man and put on the new man. You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.

[32 : 08] When Christ, now notice the phrase, who is our life shall appear, then you shall also appear with him in glory. Seek the things that are above.

Be constantly seeking them is the idea. And that's in contrast to the earthy things that the unsaved are seeking after. Should be a difference there.

Set your affection, that is, to direct one's mind to a particular thing. We must not only seek heaven, but we must think heaven as well.

That ought to be the thinking, the motive, and the thinking, and the focus of our mind throughout the day. When Christ, then, who is our life. It's not just the idea that we share life with Christ, but since we died with him, we rose with him as well.

Christ, then, himself, is the essence of our Christian life. And that truth is going to be manifest when he comes, because he says when he appears, we will come with him in glory.

[33 : 16] Tremendous picture that he gives us, that even we, as Gentile believers, have a great thing to look forward to as the people of God. Well, we'll pray and we'll get finished there.

We're finished there. Chapter four next week is where we'll open up. We may get through that and finish up. We'll see. Let's pray together. Father, thank you again for your loving kindness. Thank you, Father, for your goodness to us and for the tremendous blessings and benefits you've provided for us.

Though it may seem difficult at times in our lives, in reality, it's a simple matter of simply being obedient to you, loving you because of the fact that you've loved us first and gave your son to die for us, to bring us in relationship to you.

And so, Father, we thank you for that and enable us to focus our heart and mind's attention on that in the days that we have ahead. And we'll thank you and praise you for it now in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.