

Faithful Tithing – Malachi 3:7-12
Rob Willey, Coram Deo Bible Church

Malachi 3. We're in the middle of a mini-series about the foundations of a solid church, because solid churches don't just happen. And they don't stay solid without some maintenance. We have to *remind* ourselves of the bedrock on which we're built, and recommit ourselves to it. Especially the foundation of faithful tithing.

Intro

And let me just say up front, our giving is extraordinary. I say "our" because Becky and I tithe as well. We're in this together. And by any standard, secular or religious, our church is near the top. God bless you for that.

But the fact remains, at least 60% of all those who attend, 60% of the households who call our church home, don't tithe. Which means we're not only missing out as a church, but they're missing out as individuals. And families.

So a foundation check is warranted. And though it's been two years since I last preached on this, some of you have heard it before and long ago decided it doesn't apply to you. Either because of your *lack* of money, or your abundance of it. If it's a lack, you've decided that people with *more* money can support the church. You "can't afford it."

If it's an abundance, you've decided it's just too much. Your tithe would be way too much to give. Way too much for you, or way too much for our church. Way too *much* to put all your eggs in one basket. So you too have arbitrarily decided it doesn't apply.

Others of you, praise God, are all about it. You've ordered your life around it, and God has used you to build our church on it; and grow our church; and bless our church. Bless *you*. Because it's made for a solid church.

And a few of you have never heard this. You've never heard a biblical basis for faithful tithing. And hopefully, you'll be wide open to it. Because it not only makes for a solid church, but solid lives. It not only provides the *money* for the work of ministry, but shapes *you* for the work of ministry.

So I hope and pray that God uses this to establish a foundation in some, and reinforce it in others. And thereby solidify our church all the more.

Outline

Malachi 3:7-12. God is speaking and says – *[7] From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes [my commands] and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'* *[8] [And God says] Will man rob God? [It's a rhetorical question to say, "Surely not. It's unthinkable."]* *Yet you are robbing me.* (ESV)

[8b] But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' [And God replies] *In your tithes and contributions [your tithes and offerings]. [9] You are cursed with a curse [as in, subject to discipline and consequences (Hebrews 12:5-11)], for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.*

[10] Bring the full tithe into the storehouse [the full tenth, because that's what tithe means, one tenth], that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.

[11] I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. [12] Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. God Almighty.

I've preached on this passage many times, from many different perspectives, and you can find a good overview on our website. Just go to **Current Issues / Resources / Tithing**.

But today, I want to focus on the primary *issues* of tithing. The core principles involved.

Starting with the fact that it's biblical.

1. It's a biblical issue

Faithful tithing isn't something that pastors made up along the way; just to pay salaries and bills. Nor is it church tradition with nothing in the Bible to support it.

It's a biblical issue through and through; part of God's inspired word. "Stop robbing me," he says, "and bring the full tithe into the storehouse." It's biblical.

And not just here, but throughout the Old Testament. Like it says in **Leviticus 27:30**; the Law. *"Every tithe of the land [every tenth], whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD. Set apart for the Lord. Biblical.*

Same for Genesis 14:20; 600 years *before* the Law. When *Abraham gave* [the high priest Melchizedek] *a tenth of everything*. It's biblical.

And don't miss the affirmation of Jesus in the New Testament. **Matthew 23:23** – *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin [tiny seeds and herbs], and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*" Without neglecting the tithe.

So the command to tithe is biblical. It's a biblical issue. Found throughout the Bible.

2. It's a Lordship issue

V7 – From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Return, implying that they had left him. Despite the fact that they still went to the temple. And sang the songs. And read the Torah.

Their forefathers didn't follow God, and neither did they. "You've turned aside," he said. "Instead of surrendering to me, you're ignoring me. Instead of submitting to me, you've left me. Even though you're going through the motions." The exact *opposite* of lordship.

And why? Why does he say such things? Because they weren't tithing. They weren't giving what he requires. In effect, robbing him of what he deserves.

Which makes tithing a Lordship issue. An indicator of whether you really *do* follow him. Whether you really *do* love him. Whether he really *is* your King.

Make sure your giving matches your confession. Your confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Lord of all. Even your bank account.

3. It's an obedience issue

In the first phrase of v10, God says – *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse*. As in, give 10% of your income to the church. *Your* church. 10%, because once again, that's what the word tithe means. A tenth.

And giving it to your local church is the idea of bringing it into the storehouse; God's house. The place where you're fed and discipled. The place where you worship and serve. Just like the *temple* storehouse in days of old.

All of which makes tithing an obedience issue. Are you going to do what he says, or ignore him? Are you going to obey, or rationalize it away? Be faithful, or flaky?

You say, "Wait a minute. That's part of the Law. Malachi 3 is part of the Old Testament Law, and therefore doesn't apply to us."

Except it does. Because it predates the Law as we just saw, and Jesus affirmed it long after the Law. Along with justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Plus, **Romans 15:4** says – *Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction*. Our information and application. Biblical instruction is not for information alone, but information for the purpose of application.

So it does apply. The command remains. Which makes tithing an obedience issue.

4. It's a priority issue

A priority for God and a priority for us. At least it should be.

[10] Bring the full tithe into the storehouse [God says], *that there may be food in my house*. That's the priority. Provision for the work of ministry. Which meant both *physical* food to sustain the priests and temple workers, and *spiritual* food to sustain the people. Bring the tithe, he says, because my house is a priority.

And still is. The people and place of God's presence today. The church. The temple of the Holy Spirit. The very thing Jesus said he would build. All of which makes us a precious priority for God.

And faithful tithing is the means by which he *provides* for us; provides for the work of ministry. Provides for the teaching and preaching. Provides for worship and discipleship. Food for the soul and sustenance for life. Which makes *tithing* a priority, just like the church is. A priority for him, and a priority for us.

At least it should be. Is it? Is our church a priority for you? And providing for our church? If not, you'll never tithe. You'll *never* set aside money every time you get paid. You'll *never* give of your firstfruits. And the *church* will not only miss out, but so will you.

Proverbs 11:24 says – *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want*. Financial want, spiritual want, emotional, relational; or all the above. Fail to tithe, fail to prioritize, and the *church* will not only miss out, near and dear to God's heart, but so will you. You'll miss out.

So *whatever* you do, make it priority. For your sake and God's.

5. It's a belief issue

Faithful tithing is a belief issue. If you truly believe what God says in these verses, if you trust that his word is true and certain, you'll do it. You'll tithe so faithfully and eagerly the bank could set their clocks by it.

If you truly believe that withholding your tithe is robbing God, you'll start writing checks yesterday. If you truly believe there are *consequences* for withholding, you'll avoid them like the plague. If you truly believe he *disciplines* those he loves, like it says in Hebrews 12, you'll toe the line.

On the other hand, if you believe he'll pour down blessings until all *need* is gone, blessings for the church and blessings for you, you'll tithe every chance you get. Instead of hoping to make more money for *yourself*, you'll start praying for more to tithe.

In fact, God says test me in this. *See if I'm not trustworthy. [10] Bring the full tithe into the storehouse . . . And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need*. Corporately and personally. Test me, he says. Believe me. Make my day.

And believe me when I say in v12 – *Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts*. A church admired. A church honored. A church firm and lasting. Full of joy unspeakable and the glory of God.

So no matter how you slice it, faithful tithing is a belief issue. With every check and every transfer, you're basically saying, "God, I believe you." And with every hesitation, every tithe you withhold, you're basically saying, "God, I don't."

May he fill us with faith upon faith to believe his every word, and receive his every blessing.

6. It's a dependence issue

After saying he will pour down a blessing and remove all need, God says in v11 – *I will rebuke the devourer for you* [tell it to cease and desist], *so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear*, *says the LORD of hosts*. In other words, I'll protect you and provide for you.

So by faithfully tithing, we not only believe God, but depend on him. Depend on him for protection and provision.

Protection from the things of this world that could destroy our livelihoods. Like devouring insects for the farmer. And evil people for the businessman. *I will rebuke the devourer for you* [literally and metaphorically], *so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil*. (11) The fruit of your labor. That's protection.

Does that mean *nothing* bad will ever happen to you if you tithe? No. It means you won't be destroyed. You won't be destitute. Which makes tithing an issue of dependence.

And don't miss the *spiritual* aspect of that. Especially when you read it from the perspective of **1 Peter 5:8** – *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* Same word. Coincidence? I think not.

In addition to *physical* protection, I think God is alluding to his *spiritual* protection when we tithe. *I will rebuke the devourer for you.* (11a) *The devourer.*

And second, we depend on God for **provision**. When you tithe, God says – *Your vine in the field [v11b] shall not fail to bear.* Your farm will not fail to produce. Your business will not fail to profit. Your work will not fail to pay. It's a promise to provide.

Not to get rich, but provide. And certainly not without hiccups. Or lean times. Or shortfalls. Rather, it's a promise to provide our *daily bread*. A promise to sustain us. A promise to meet our *needs*.

All of which makes faithful tithing a dependence issue. Is it? Do you take matters into your own hands, keeping every penny to provide for yourself? Protect yourself? Or do you tithe and depend on him? It's an issue.

And last . . .

7. It's a heart issue

Faithful tithing is a heart issue. An issue that *reveals* your heart, and an issue that *determines* your heart. Reveals it, because if show me your checkbook and I'll show you your heart. I'll show you what's important to you. I'll show you what's central to you. I'll show you whether it's a heart for God, or something else. Faithful tithing reveals your heart.

And, it determines your heart. Like Jesus said in **Matthew 6:19-21** – *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal [i.e. don't invest in temporal things, here today and gone tomorrow], [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal [in other words, invest in things of eternal value, things that last]. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Faithful tithing determines your heart.

So by all means, make sure your treasure is invested in the work of ministry. Make sure your treasure is in the church. Make sure your treasure advances the Gospel. Make sure your treasure is in the things of God.

Because where your treasure is, your heart is. And a heart centered on anything other than God, and God's people, is going to be a heart disappointed. A heart-ache.

So make sure. Tithe faithfully. Because it not only *reveals* your heart, but *determines* your heart.

7 issues, to inspect and *reinforce* your faithfulness to tithe, or encourage you to start. 7 issues, to order your life accordingly, and arrange your finances biblically. So that you too fully trust and fully obey, and fully enjoy the blessing of God's promise. Bedrock for a solid *church*, and bedrock for a solid life.

Prayer – Father, forgive us for failing in this. Forgive us for withholding what's yours in the first place. Give us the faith to do what's right. Give us wisdom to make changes. Give us discipline to stay the course. And give us eyes to see and ears to hear all the ways you bless. For your glory and our joy, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.

You Are Loved

Summary