Rebuke The Devourer

Malachi 3:6-12
6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 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.

12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

The Devourer

• The account of the Hebrews
  o throughout the Old Testament
  o is a continual litany of backsliding
    o and turning away from the blessings of God.

• Inevitably, in the good times,
  o in times of plenty and times of blessing
    o the people of God would grow apathetic
      ▪ about the things of God.

• Secure in their prosperity
  o and secure in their economic well being,
    ▪ they would relax in their service
    ▪ and submission to God.

• Slowly, and without any intent to do so,
  o they would drift away from God and his laws.

• I don’t believe they ever intended to backslide,
  o I don’t believe they ever intended to drift away
    ▪ from the blessings of God
but over and over again their hearts would grow cold and resistant to the gentle nudging of the spirit of God.

- And time after time
  - they would remove themselves
  - from the blessings of the covenant of God.

- When that happened,
  - the bible is very plain about the results.
- The gradual process of spiritual decay
  - would lead them from
    - the prosperity of God’s blessings
    - to the poverty of God’s rejection.

- Again and again the people of Israel
  - found themselves living
  - under the judgments of God
    - rather than his blessings.

- In an effort to turn their heart back to him,
  - God would loose upon them the devourer.

- The devourer would lay waste
  - to all blessings that they had enjoyed
  - in the years of faithful service to God.

- The good times may have filled their storehouses,
  - but the devourer would drain them dry.

- The times of plenty may have made them wealthy
  - but the devourer would leave them penniless.

- They may have experienced health and well being
  - under the provision of God’s blessings,
    - but the devourer would make them weak and anemic.

- Like a foolish child,
  - the heart that was drifting away from God
    - would refuse to respond to the rebuke of heaven
      - but, instead would turn further and further from God.
  - And the devourer would scour their lives
    - leaving them destitute, barren, broken and empty.

- The word devourer, in our text, refers to the desert locust.
  - The desert locust is related to the common grasshopper
    - and it is a creature that normally prefers
c      - to live and function alone.

- However, when local conditions,
  - such as a scarcity of food,
    - force them to crowd together,
  - the four-inch-long insects
    - undergo dramatic transformations
      - in both appearance and behavior.
• Swapping their usual tan and green colors
  o for a gaudy black and yellow,
    ▪ juvenile locusts suddenly become
    ▪ more aggressive,
    ▪ seeking out the company of other desert locusts.
• Instead of trying to keep a low profile,
  o they become destructive
    ▪ and begin to swarm.
• That’s a problem
  o because an adult desert locust
    ▪ can consume its weight in vegetation
    ▪ every day.
• A normal swarm of locusts
  o can eat as much in a single day
    ▪ as a community of 2,500 people can eat.
• A large swarm of locusts
  o can strip a farmer’s field bare in minutes.
• When those large swarms
  o begin to move through the land
    ▪ they leave nothing but utter destruction behind them.
  o Entire regions are left with nothing to eat.
• That was the case in 2004
  o when one of the worst locust swarms in recent history
    ▪ began to gather in Northwest Africa.
• That massive swarm of locusts
  o destroyed everything in its path
  o as it moved all the way across Northern Africa
  o from west to east,
  o eventually cutting a swath through Egypt
  o then across the Middle East to Israel
  o then, in pursuit of more food, turned north
  o and wreaked havoc as far north as Portugal
    ▪ before the cold winter weather
    ▪ arrested the destruction.
• At one point that swarm covered a swath of land
  o that was 142 miles wide
    ▪ and contained 69 billion locusts.
    ▪ The destruction was unimaginable
    ▪ It was a disaster of biblical proportions
• That’s the kind of destruction
  o that the bible is talking about
    ▪ when it refers to the devourer.
• Joel described the devourer this way:
  o Joel 1:4 (ESV)
• **4 What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.** What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

- When the devourer gets done,
  - there isn’t anything left.
- When the devourer has his way in your life
  - all of your effort is in vain.
- It doesn’t matter how much money you make,
  - it will never be enough.
- It doesn’t matter how much prosperity you obtain,
  - it will never outlast the devourer.
- It doesn’t matter how much you do to insure your security and well being,
  - the devourer will not stop until he has consumed everything.

- **I want you to know this evening that there is a devourer.**
  - And when the devourer is loosed in your life,
    - every thing you do becomes futile and empty.

- The prophet Haggai cried out to a people
  - who had forsaken the blessings of God
    - and were living under the devourer.
- This is what he said in Haggai 1:6:
  - You sow much but you reap little.
  - You eat but you never have enough.
  - You drink but you never get full.
  - You clothe yourself but you never get warm.
  - You work so hard to earn a living
    - but it’s like you are putting your money
      - in a bag with holes in it.
- Nothing you do is profitable.
  - You can’t get ahead for falling behind.
- That’s what it’s like living under the devourer.
  - It makes you want to throw your hands in the air
    - and cry out in despair.
    - What’s the use?
  - I work so hard
    - but I have nothing to show for it.
  - I have all of my material possessions
    - but they are hollow and empty.
  - I’ve wrapped myself up in the best that money can buy
    - but the cold wind still chills my barren soul.
- That’s what it is like living under the devourer.
  - All is in vain.
  - Everything is futile.
  - Your efforts are wasted.
  - Your very existence seems to be useless.
• That was the condition of the nation that Malachi prophesied to.
  o They were living under the curse of the devourer.

The Invitation
• Our text tonight, contains a plea from God
  o for his people to return to him.
    ▪ That’s the only way to escape the devourer.
• When we are living in the blessings of God,
  o the devourer is just a harmless grasshopper.
• Its only when we begin to neglect God
  o that something changes in that grasshopper
    ▪ and he begins to become the aggressive consumer
      • of everything in his path.
• So God issues an invitation:
  o Return to me!
• He starts his invitation by stressing the fact
  o that He hasn’t changed.
    ▪ For I am the Lord, I change not!
    ▪ There is still blessing in my presence.
    ▪ There is still prosperity in my house.
    ▪ Everything that you need can still be found in me.
  o I haven’t changed.
    ▪ I still bless those who walk with me.
    ▪ I still have mercy on those who turn to me.
  o I still fill their cups to overflowing
    ▪ and visit upon them the blessings
      • and mercy of their forefathers.
• He said, I haven’t forgotten the promise I made to Abraham.
  o That’s the only thing keeping you
    ▪ from being completely consumed.
• The devourer may be wreaking havoc in your life,
  o but if it wasn’t for the mercy of God even now,
    ▪ you would have been completely destroyed
      • a long time ago.
• God said, I haven’t changed.
  o Your situation has changed,
    ▪ your circumstance has changed,
      • but your God hasn’t changed.
• In your backslidden heart,
  o you’ve gone away from my ordinances
    ▪ and have not kept them.
  o You’ve neglected your faithful service to me.
• When everything was going well,
  o when the good times seemed like they would last forever,
you decided you could relax a little
• in your devotion and dedication to me.

• There's been a change in our relationship
  o but its all on you.
  • You've gone away from my house.
  • You've neglected my provision.
  • You've placed yourself
    • under the cruel dominion of the devourer.

• Return unto me, says the Lord, and I will return unto you!
  o What a promise.
• All it takes to restore the blessings,
  o all it takes to escape the devourer
    • is to return to God.
• All you have to do
  o is renew your faithfulness to God.
• All you have to do
  o is restore your commitment
    • and dedication to the ways of God.
• If you will return to my house,
  o if you will return to my covenant,
  o if you will come back to me –
    • I will not withhold my blessings.
    • I will not withhold my mercy!

• What a powerful statement.
  o One step in the right direction.
    • Turn towards me.
  o Begin the journey back.
    • And I will run to you!
• Because I have not changed.
  o My mercy is still real.
• I still have compassion
  o on those who turn to me in repentance.
• I am still faithful to my promises!

The Refusal
• You would think that this backslidden people
  o who are living under the dominion of the devourer
    • would hear this plea
    • and immediately respond.
• You would think that the offer of mercy
  o would be enough to compel them
    • to come running back to the house of God.
• You would think that the horror of a life lived
  o within the grasp of the devourer
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Principle

- A robbery can only take place
  - if we take something that is not ours to take.
- How can a man rob God?
  - How can you take from God what belongs to God?
- The answer comes from heaven:
  - God is robbed when we neglect our tithes and offerings.
- God is plainly declaring that the tithes belong to him.
  - It is an ageless principle of scripture.
    - The first fruits belong to God!
    - They are his.
  - Before we ever received them,
they were his.
  - Once they are trusted into our care,
    - they are still his!

- And, if the tithe belongs to him,
  - and we consume it for ourselves,
    - then we are robbing God!

- Essentially, God is telling them
  - that they are cursed with the curse of the devourer
    - because they are guilty
      - of consuming for themselves
      - what belongs to God!

- It is not my intention tonight
  - to preach about your finances.

- I’m not up here to teach a lesson tithes and offerings
  - but I must tell you that there is divine principle here
    - that you cannot afford to ignore.

- No matter how blessed you think you are,
  - or no matter how destitute you may think you are –
    - some things belong to God
    - and when you rob God of what belongs to him,
      - you turn loose the curse
      - of the devourer into your life!

- Your finances belonged first to God.
  - Every good gift comes from him.
    - You wouldn’t have a thing,
    - if it didn’t first come from God.

- And God has always been adamant.
  - The tithe is the first 10% of your increase.
    - That belongs to God.

- If you don’t give it back to him,
  - you are cursed with a curse
    - because you have robbed God.

- There are other ways to rob God.
  - We give our whole life to God,
    - When we answer his call,
  - we surrender ourselves to him
    - but, over time sometimes,
    - we grow cold in our spirit
    - and we begin to drift away from God
      - and little by little
      - we take back what we had
      - previously given to God.

- Let me tell you something sir,
The Pentecostals of Lake City

Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

Rebuke The Devourer

- Let me tell you something ma’am,
  - your life belongs to God.
- You were bought with a price,
  - your soul was redeemed from sin.
- When you neglect the ramifications
  - of such a merciful salvation,
    - when you begin to neglect your commitment
    - and devotion to God,
      - you turn loose the devourer in your life.
- When you give your affection and praises
  - to something other than God,
    - you’ve robbed him of what belongs to him.
- When you waste your life
  - on the fruitless pursuits of a sinful lifestyle,
    - you’ve robbed from God.
- You may reply with the same insolence
  - that the Hebrews did,
    - you may say this is my life
      - and I’ll do with it what I want to do with it.
- But nothing could be further from the truth.
  - You surrendered yourself to him.
    - You were once sold out, the whole route.
  - And now, nothing less than devotion to him
    - will ever satisfy your soul.
- Some of you are living under the devourer
  - and you don’t even realize it.
- You think this is just the way life is.
  - You think this is just the way you have to live.
- Let me tell you something, my friend,
  - Proverbs 13:15 says “the way of the transgressor is hard!”
- Trouble will always be with us.
  - Every man will walk through hard valleys.
  - Life is gonna be hard sometimes.
- But some of you are enduring some things
  - That you don’t have to put up with.
- Some of you are living under the curse of the devourer
  - simply because you’ve refused to give to God
    - that which is rightfully his!
- Some of you are walking in the way of the transgressor
  - and God is calling you to return to him,
    - to return to his blessing,
    - to return to his goodness.

The Solution
- God’s answer was simple:

Rebuke The Devourer
The whole tithe.

- Give back to God **everything** that belongs to him.

- The emphasis there, in the original language,
  - is on the word all.
  - The whole tithe.

- Some of us are guilty of a halfhearted effort.
  - Some of us are guilty of giving God part of what belongs to him.
  - As if, somehow,
    - we can mitigate the impact of the devourer
      - by placating God.

- But God said there’s only one way to rebuke the devourer.
  - There is only one way to turn away the destroyer in your life.

- There is only one way to stanch
  - the ferocious appetite that is consuming all of your living.

- And that is by giving to God
  - everything that belongs to Him!
    - Bring all the tithes.

- Sometimes we want to honor God with part of our finances.
  - Sometimes we want to give God a small portion of our life.

- That doesn’t do anything but soothe our conscience.
  - The only way to rebuke the devourer
    - is to give to God everything that belongs to him.

- That means you need find an altar
  - and give the whole of your finances back to God.

- That means you need to find an altar
  - and give the whole of your life back to God.

- That means its time to surrender you dreams,
  - your hopes,
  - your aspirations,
  - your plans for the future,
    - everything about your life belongs to him!

- Its high time that you gave back to Him
  - what already belongs to him!

**The Blessing**

- In typical fashion,
  - God doesn’t just demand renewed obedience to him.

- He promises a renewed blessing.
  - Try me and see, the Lord says.
    - Prove me!
  - Go ahead and turn your heart back home
    - and see if I will not open you the windows of heaven,
    - and pour you out a blessing, that you cannot contain!

- God said, if you will return to me,
• I will rebuke the devourer.
  • Some of you have been praying to heaven for relief
    o and God has sent me to this pulpit
      ▪ to tell you that there is provision
      ▪ that you haven’t ever even considered,
        ▪ there is blessing beyond what you can understand,
        ▪ if only you will return to the Lord!
  • You’ve been living under the curse of the devourer
    o but if you will turn your heart back to me,
      ▪ if you will give to me everything that belongs to me,
        ▪ I will rebuke the devourer.
  • All of a sudden some things are going to change in your life.
    o All of a sudden you are going to sow
      ▪ and fields that used to be barren
      ▪ are going to bring forth a bountiful harvest.
  • You are going to sit at my table
    o and your soul is finally going to find satisfaction.
      ▪ Your cup is going to be filled to overflowing.
  • Where there was never enough before,
    o when you find yourself living in the blessing of God
      ▪ there will be more than enough!
  • There will be warmth for your soul
    o against the harsh cold wind
  • and all of a sudden the financial bleeding in your life
    o is going to come under control.
  • It doesn’t make sense.
    o It doesn’t work out on paper.
  • But if you honor God in your giving,
    o he will multiply what you have left
      ▪ to go further than what you had before.
  • The same is true in every area of your life.
    o If you will quit saying I don’t have time to pray
      ▪ and make the time to put God first,
    o you’re going to find that you had much more time
      ▪ than you ever imagined!

The Revival
  • Israel’s neighbors knew that she was a nation like no other
    o and that the God with whom she was in covenant
    o was a God like no other.
  • The heathen nations were always mindful
    o of what was going on in Israel
    o and always drawing conclusions about God
    o from the status of Israel.
  • Sadly, Israel often gave the impression
that the Lord was not real
and that she was not unique.

- When she did so, God would loose the devourer upon her.
  - And those heathen nations would feel vindicated in their own sins
  - because they could see the judgments of God upon the Hebrews.

- So God issues one final promise of blessing.
  - If they will return to God, he will cause all the nations to see that they are blessed.
  - All the people of the earth will know that there is a God in Israel because of his blessings on his people!

- You want to know where revival starts?
  - It starts with a return to God.
  - It starts when the people of God cast off the dominion of the devourer!
  - It starts when you give everything that belongs to God back to him!
  - It starts when you hold nothing back!

CLOSE

- Harley Sheffield gained celebrity status through an unusual mishap.
  - He was part of the 15,000-mile relay
    - that carried the Olympic torch
    - to the one hundredth gathering
    - of the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

- His section of the relay went over
  - the Tacoma Narrows Bridge
  - in Washington on May 7, 1996.

- While carrying the flame in a special stand on his bicycle,
  - the rear tire blew out,
  - Sheffield lost control of his bike,
  - and the Olympic flame was extinguished.

- People gasped in disbelief,
  - but the attenders of the torch
    - knew exactly what to do.

- They went back to the van
  - that accompanied the traveling torch,
    - and pulled out a new torch
      - and lit from the "mother flame"
      - which always stays in the van.
  - The procession continued
    - and Sheffield had his 10 minutes of notoriety
      - for failing to protect the flame.

- What happened on that Washington bridge
  - happens to the best of us from time to time.

- We start our race with fervency and passion
  - but then some unexpected mishap occurs
• and we lose our way along the way.
  • No one ever intends to drift away from the Lord.
    o No one ever intends to grow cold in their spirit.
    o But everyone stumbles from time to time.
  • And sometimes when we stumble
    o we find ourselves in the dreadful condition
        of having allowed the fire to burn out in our lives.
  • All of a sudden we wake up one day
    o and realize that we are living
    o under the curse of the devourer.
  • Everything seems futile.
    o There doesn't seem to be any hope.
    o Nothing in our life is profitable.
  • It is a terrible thing
    o to walk the way of the transgressor.
  • Sometimes we don’t even realize
    o that is where we are walking.
  • Sometimes we don’t even stop to consider
    o just how much of what belongs to God
      o that we have been keeping for ourselves.
  • But God, in his grace,
    o is faithful to send a messenger of mercy into our lives.
  • The presence of God is in this house tonight
    o and he is calling you to return!
  • Return to me, he says,
    o and I will return to you.
  • Return to my blessing
    o and I will rebuke the devourer in your life.
  • I want you to know
    o there is mercy in this house tonight!
    o There is an escape from the devourer.
    o You don’t have to live this way!

  • The fire is still burning at the altar of the Lord
    o and the torch in your life can be reignited
      o if you will only turn your heart towards heaven.
  • I’m calling you to this altar.
    o I’m calling you to return to the Lord.
    o I’m calling your to escape the dominion of the devourer!
      o Come!
      o Return!