

GOD'S INCREDIBLE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Malachi 3: 16 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Do you have a daily experience of walking with God? Do you have anyone to share it with? Do you share your walk with God? Our walk with the Lord must be shared or it dies. Our text states, “Those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another. C. S. Lewis once said, “Nothing is really ours until we share it.” We must share our faith with others. Sharing our faith should be as natural as a baby’s cry at birth. Sharing Christ and our experience with Him with others is not something we can take or leave. Rather it is something, which, if we don’t take or experience with God to others, we will easily lose the vibrancy of our faith. Our expression of our faith is the essence of our faith. I pray for us, beloved, as a church that we would be like the converts in the church in Philippi. From the moment they came to know Jesus, they wanted to share Him and to support the apostle Paul who shared Christ with them. Philippi was the only church that Paul preached in, that from the moment they were saved, they took on the financial support of the apostle Paul. They began to express their thanks to God. He writes, in Philippians 4: 15, “And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.” It is a law of our spiritual lives that that which is not expressed soon dies. G. Campbell Morgan once said, “There are two ways to kill our ministries for Jesus; one is to kill our experience with God and the other is to kill our expression of God.” We are no Dead Sea. We must have both intake and outflow.

I love the translation of Phillips in II Corinthians 9: 7-15. Just listen as I read it to you these 8 verses, for they show and illustrate that our walk and experience with God demands expression in sharing with others. Our walk demands intake and outflow. Paul writes, Let everyone give as his heart tells him, neither grudgingly nor under compulsion, for God loves the man who gives cheerfully. After all, God can give you everything that you need, so that you may always have sufficient both for yourselves and for giving away to other people. As the scripture says, “He who scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor; His righteousness abideth forever.” He who gives the seed to the sower and turns that seed into bread to eat will give you the seed of generosity to sow and, for harvest, the satisfying bread of good deeds done. The more you are enriched by God, the more scope will there be for generous giving, and your gifts, administered through us, will mean that many will thank God. For your giving does not end in meeting the needs of

your fellow Christians. It also results in an overflowing tide of thanksgiving to God. Moreover, your very giving proves the reality of your faith and that means that men thank God that you practice the Gospel that you profess to believe in, as well as for the actual gifts you make to them and to others. And yet, further, men will pray for you and feel drawn to you because you have obviously received a generous measure of the grace of God. Thank God, then, for his indescribable generosity to you!

What kind of people lived in the days of Malachi in 400 BC? Malachi is the final prophet in the Old Testament. His message in his book is authoritative because it is the Word of the living God. Malachi 1: 1 declares, “The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. Malachi writes the urgent burden of the Lord. His prophecy is sometimes condemnatory dealing with the grievous conduct of God’s people. It is brief, but very incisive, cutting, sharp, biting and expressive in some of the most trenchant and powerful words of God in the Bible. Malachi’s prophecy reveals the love and patience of God as well as the faithfulness of God’s prophet, and the indifference and apathy of God’s people. The majority of the people had no experience with God and thus they had no expression of sharing anything with others. Beloved, our Sunday nights are times our church opens the door to the expression of our faith, in testimony.

The conditions presented in this four chapter minor prophecy characterize the period just before the first coming of our Lord. The conditions in this book bear a striking resemblance to the conditions of today, just prior to the second coming of Christ. Those conditions were ten fold: Please write these down. We need the same issues today addressed with repentance and revival. ***First (1) There was a questioning of God’s love—1:2—***“But you say, “How hast Thou loved us?” Secondly, ***(2) There was corrupt sloppy worship and a lackadaisical walk with God—1: 7 —***“You are presenting defiled food upon My altar...you say the table of the Lord is to be despised.” Lackadaisical is not the same as lazy. Lazy implies the deliberate avoidance of work in order to spare oneself effort. Lackadaisical implies lack of purpose. The lazy person has a purpose. The lackadaisical person is content to let things happen. They just went through the empty routine of worship. ***Thirdly, (3) They profaned the Name of the Lord--1:11, 12—***“My Name will be great among the nations, saith the Lord of hosts. But you are profaning it.”

Fourthly, (4) They were busy divorcing their spouses and grieving God with their treachery with the wife of their youth from whom God desired a godly offspring. It is not enough for you, mothers to bear the children God desires. You must remain with your husband so that your children may have a godly father whom God draws to Himself. It is not enough for you, husbands to father a godly seed. You must stay with the wife of your covenant, the wife of your youth. See 2: 14-16—“You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand... The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion you’re your wife by covenant... while He, the Lord was seeking a godly offspring. Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel.”

Fifthly, (5) they refused and rejected the begging and entreaties of God—3: 7—“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.” But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ **Sixthly, (6) God’s people were robbing God in tithes and offerings. They were robbing His treasury—**3: 8 —“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!” But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ God’s answer was—“in tithes and offerings.” **Seventhly, (7) They were denying God’s sovereignty and speaking arrogantly against God saying it was vain to serve the Lord—**3: 12, 14—All the nations will call you blessed, yet you have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts.’ **Eighthly (8) They ignored the coming of Messiah—**3: 1,2 and 4: 2—“The messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold He is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming and who can stand when he appears? ... The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.” **Ninthly (9) They had forgotten the law of Moses, God’s servant—**4: 4—“Remember the law of Moses, my servant.” **Tenthly (10) There was a breach in hearts of the fathers with their children and of the children with their fathers.** God was promising to restore fathers to their children and children to their fathers by sending Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of the Lord—4:6—“And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” These kinds of people God will not write about in His incredible Book of remembrance.

In the middle of this lackluster commitment to God around 400 BC, as well as its counterpart in America today. God still has a remnant. God recorded and still is recording an incredible book of remembrance as He does for every faithful remnant in every generation. God's faithful remnant always fear Him, always fellowship with each other, speaking often to each other about the Lord, and always favorably think upon and esteem His Name. I want us to examine the wealth of these three holy characteristics of God's saints. What are they?

GOD'S FAITHFUL REMNANT ALWAYS FEAR HIM AND HIS NAME. (I.) Notice--this book of remembrance is written before the Lord. "A book of remembrance was written before Him." Older than the chronicles of the Persia's kings is God's Book of Remembrance. Do you remember what King Ahasuerus did during the night when he could not sleep?" Esther 6: 1-4. Tell the rest of story. A record was kept of Mordecai's faithful fearing of God. Remember, he was the Jew that would not bow down before Haman the prince; he would only bow to God. Beloved, God keeps the books. Never was any good word spoken of God or for God by a believing heart, but it is registered by God that it will be fully recompensed in the resurrection of the just. Our faithful fearing of God will never go unrewarded.

What kind of a fear is this fear of God mentioned twice in Malachi 3: 16? Twice the translation is fear but the Hebrew word is **yare**. This word means to revere, to tremble before, and to stand in awe. We sing, "And I stand, I stand in awe of You, I stand, I stand in awe of You, Holy God, to whom all praise is due, I stand in awe of You." I read in Malachi 3: 16, "Then those who feared the Lord, who revered, trembled and stood in awe of Him, spoke often (repeatedly) to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord, revere, tremble before Him, and stand in awe of Him and who esteem His name."

Notice the times in verse 14 as the people said, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the Lord of hosts?" Verse 13 shows God's response. He said, "Your words have been arrogant against Me." Literally, "Your words have caused Me to gasp."

The majority group of these folk saw God's Word as too exacting and they had no desire for the Word. These folk saw their walk with God as too narrow so they had no delight. These folk saw God's work as too difficult so they had no dedication. But God still had a fearing remnant who revered, trembled and stood in awe of Him. God always has a God-fearing remnant. In Elijah's day, 7000 had not bowed the knee to Baal. God counted them in His book of remembrance. Don't minimize this first holy characteristic of God's saints. Psa. 25: 14 tells us—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Psa. 34: 9 states, "Those who fear the God lack no good thing. Prov. 14: 26 states, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence." Prov. 14: 27 states, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." Secondly,

GOD'S FAITHFUL REMNANT ALWAYS FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER AND SPEAK WITH EACH OTHER ABOUT HIS NAME. (II.)

We read, "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name." Matthew 18: 20 declares "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." God evidences His pleasure by showing up and being in our midst, listening in, and making a record for our future remembrance. What greater meditation together could we share than thinking and talking to each other about our Lord Jesus? We sang that old hymn today written by Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century. "Jesus, the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills my heart."

To think upon the love and providence and guidance and protection, and the promises of God—to do just that Joshua assembled all Israel in Joshua 24. This verse isn't talking about drinking coffee and having donuts, as much as we all enjoy that between church and Sunday School. Fellowship is talking with each other with real joy, esteem, and heartfelt passion about the glory of Jesus' Name. It is our expression of our experience with God to boast in the Lord, but never, never, never boast in the flesh. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some people legalistically speak of Jesus' Name. Some carnal believers mention His name. Only the God-fearing remnant laud and praise and magnify the Name of Jesus and are motivated and controlled by that Name which we cannot quit talking about. In decadent days, the remnant is few in number, but God has always had a remnant and He keeps the book of remembering our fellowship when we boast to each other in the Lord. Is there among us in this

21st century—is this present crop of believers among us made of the same stuff as in the remnant’s case in Malachi’s day?

Franklin Logsdon in his commentary on Malachi, wrote in 1961 a story I treasure. He wrote, on page 82,83, “One day while visiting our old homestead, my aged mother, summoned me to an upstairs bedroom, and produced from an old trunk several rolls of age-worn papers. Removing the ribbon by which they had been held together, the papers were placed in my hand. They proved to be class papers from early school days, papers which contained my perfect grades. With some surprise, I asked her the purpose of preserving these products of childhood, long since forgotten. Mother replied, “When, as a boy , you rushed home from school excitedly to share the news of a perfect paper, it brought great joy to your mother. Knowing these occasions would be forgotten by you in passing years, I have kept these papers for this special moment to remind you, as an adult and parent, of former days when you brought pleasure to an appreciative mother’s heart.” Beloved, in some such manner, there awaits for God-fearing and God’s Name-fellowshipping saints, a divine reminder in heaven. When we and others have forgotten and never thought for eons about our faithfulness to God, He will bring out His book of remembrance remembering our devotion. He noticed and appreciated it in Glory, and He won’t forget or let us forget.

In every age, there are an anointed few who keep the light of their Christian testimony glowing, they keep the witness of God’s truth moving and they keep the spiritual heritage of those who have faithfully gone before us alive. Beloved, schools of theological thought multiply and schisms work havoc in the church. Fears flourish. Strife abounds, but the stable minority, shine on—keeping close to Jesus, fearing Him, and His Name, fellowshiping in His Name, enjoying the simplicity in Christ, and witnessing a good confession, as we wait patiently for Christ’s soon return. In Sodom, when Abraham prayed, there were not 10 in the godly remnant. In Jeremiah’s day in Jeremiah 5: 1, God told him, “Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and look now, and take note. And seek in her open squares, if you can find a man. If there is one does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her.” Dear Lord, don’t let it be that way with us in our church.” Thirdly and lastly,

GOD’S FAITHFUL REMNANT ALWAYS FAVORABLY THINK UPON AND ESTEEM HIS NAME. (III.) Notice – “Who fear the Lord

and think upon and esteem His name.” The alternate heart beats of the believer are our experience of Jesus and our expression to others of Him. If these two are not in operation, the Christian heart is spiritually clogged in its arteries. Finally, it ceases to beat. Then what happens is that we settle down into dead forms, dead attitudes and dead prayers. The furnace blower is on, but the fire is out. This matter of sharing comes from the word translated think or thought upon or esteem. The Hebrew word is **chashab**. This word means to plait, to braid, to fold, to interweave the Name of the Lord into every fabric of our lives. This includes far more than evangelism. If God has shown you something in the Word, it is imperative that you share it with another believer—and make it transferable. So find someone. Those of you who are alone—this is harder but find someone to share with.

Nothing is really ours until we share it. Our expression will deepen the impression God gave us. To stay spiritually fresh, we must discipline ourselves to share appropriate insights in a non-boasting way with Christian and non-Christian friends alike. Don't be disciplined in the Word and prayer and fail to be disciplined to share God's blessing. A Christian is someone who says by word and deed, “Let me commend my Savior to you. When someone shares our experience of Christ, then our faith and theirs becomes more real. I read of a pastor who visited another pastor in a large church. He told him, “Christianity is catching. If people are not catching it, it may be that they don't have a real case of it. He asked, “Has anyone been saved around here lately?” The pastor was dumb struck and hurriedly rushed him out. I also read of a cartoon picture showing a woman putting a garment around the shivering body of a little girl. Behind the woman, the Lord Jesus stood. He was throwing His cloak around her shoulders. The title of the picture was “a proven assembly line.” One final question, I bring to you. If we are braiding God into all our speech, at the end of the day, what part of our talking and thinking and working could be entered into God's book of remembrance? What and when will God stand behind us and write us down in His incredible Book of remembrance?