

**Emmanuel Baptist Church**  
**July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**  
**Malachi 3:13-4:6 – “The Blessing of the Covenant”**

**I. Introduction**

Good morning, as always it is a great honor and privilege to be able to have this opportunity to worship with you and to be entrusted with the preaching of the Word of God.

Well, this morning, we come to the close of our brief study through the book of Malachi, and consequently we come to the last words that God will give to His covenant people before the long-awaited Christ will appear as that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

But before we read our text this morning, I think it would be profitable for us to be reminded of the primary theme of this book and to see how that theme has been unfolded for us in the text of Malachi over the past 3 weeks.

Now one of the points that I have been trying to make in this series is to remind you that the controlling factor or the interpretative key in all of our study of the Scripture is simply to understand what the primary theme of the whole of the Scripture is.

It is similar to the process we use when putting a puzzle together. When you work on a puzzle do you take the lid off the box and throw it away? No, you keep it and prop it up so that you can look at what the puzzle when complete is supposed to look like. Well, that is something of the way that we are to read and study and understand the Scriptures.

The whole Bible tells one glorious message. It paints for us one beautiful and majestic picture. That message is what Paul calls the “the Good Deposit” ... Jude refers to it simply as “the Faith.” At its heart the message of Scripture is this: It is God’s Self-Revelation. It is God revealing Himself in a special way.

It is a message declaring the Redemptive and Covenantal Love of God for His people in Christ. This message magnifies the very Being of God before our eyes for in this message God reveals Himself to us in such a way that his creatures, both angels and men, are enabled to see in vivid detail the attributes or perfections of God.

You see in Creation, God displays something of Himself to His creatures: He displays His Power and His Wisdom and His Sovereignty but it is in God’s work of Redemption that we most clearly see His Holiness, His Justice, His Love, and His Grace, and His Power, and His Wisdom, and His Sovereignty.

Thomas Watson, a 17<sup>th</sup> century puritan has written an excellent little booklet entitled “How We May Read Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit.” In that work, Watson writes: “It is not enough, however, that we should read the Word of God, but it should be our endeavor to get some spiritual profit from it, that our souls may be nourished and strengthened in the words of faith.”

Dear ones, that has been at the back of my mind the entire time I've been going through this series. My desire as one of your pastors is to equip you and to model for you how to read the Scriptures in a way that is most profitable for your souls.

Now, if God, as we have said, reveals Himself most clearly in His work of Redemption and this work of Redemption is only revealed to us in the Scriptures, then that would necessitate that we read the Scriptures looking for this message of Redemption. 2 Timothy 3:15 makes it clear that the Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation. But how do the scriptures make you wise unto salvation, that is unto Redemption? ... Only in so far as they reveal the Person and Work of the Redeemer which is none other than Christ Himself... And it's interesting to note that if the Scripture as a whole is God's special self-revelation, and the work of Redemption is where God most clearly reveals Himself, then we should expect that the Redeemer Himself would be the clearest Revelation of God. And wouldn't you know it... Isn't that what the Scriptures declare? Jesus, says: If you have seen me, the Redeemer, you've seen the Father... Colossians 1:15 will say that "Christ is the image of the Invisible God." Hebrews 1:3 will say that "Christ is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature."

Dear ones, If you would read the Scriptures in a way that would profit your soul you must have one great aim and that is to find Christ, the Redeemer, in the text.

But that begs another question: How is it that the Redeemer redeems? Well, when you begin to dive into that question to see how the Scripture reveals the way in which the Redeemer redeems, you begin to understand from the Scripture's own testimony, that the way in which God deals with humanity is through the way of Covenants.

Now, I'm not going to take time at this juncture to try to unpack all that there is to know about the biblical theme of covenant in Scripture. But by way of summary, I will say this: The way that the Triune God redeems, the way that He saves, is through the Person and the Work of the Redeemer, which is Christ, who in His Person and Work fulfills the Office and Function of a Federal Head, which is just another way of saying Covenant Head.

And the Covenant of which Christ is Head is the Covenant of Grace. Therefore, the proper way to read the Scripture is to see the Covenant of Grace, that is the way of redemption, being revealed to you in Scripture and to understand that the blessing of that covenant is being offered to you by way of believing in Christ. The whole message of the Scripture is a gracious invitation to sinners to come to Christ and live.

The Scripture declares the way of salvation, and it says that way of salvation is through Christ and Christ alone, and this Christ saves through the Covenant of which He Mediates. In other words, the way of salvation is through union with Christ by faith in the context of the covenant of grace. That's the message of Scripture.

So that leads us to the primary theme of Malachi, and what I want you to see is how the book of Malachi relates and contributes to this overall message of Scripture, and consequently how that overall message of Scripture informs our minds and our hearts as we seek to understand what God is saying to us in the text of Malachi.

You should have in bold on your handout Malachi's theme stated for you:

**The primary theme of the book of Malachi is to highlight God's Redemptive and Covenantal Love by showing that God's Covenant of Grace originates in the Love of the Father and that the conditions attached to His gracious covenant are not dependent on the weakness of fallen men but rather on the Covenant Keeping Christ resulting in the everlasting blessing of all who are united to the Christ by faith.**

Now, the way in which I have sought to unpack that theme is to simply follow the very structure and content of the book of Malachi itself. In fact, if I were to do anything else I might be preaching Redemption and Covenant Theology but I wouldn't be preaching Malachi. And so, my goal is to show from the book of Malachi, by expositing the text itself to show that this thematic statement is the true meaning of the text.

### **I. God's Electing Love**

So, let's look back at chapter 1 and what I want to do is to quickly show how this theme of God's redemptive and covenantal love of God is being unfolded throughout the book of Malachi.

Notice how the book opens in chapter 1 verse 2.

"I have loved you" says the Lord.

And so, at the very beginning of this book we see that God's gracious covenantal relationship with His people is founded upon His Love. This great plan of God to bind Himself covenantally to a people before the foundation of the earth and then in time to redeem that people through the work of His Son... this great plan, finds its very origin in the Love of God.

And why is that important? Because the people who would in time benefit from this gracious covenant, number 1 did not love God, and number 2 they were not worthy of God's Love. And so, what that teaches us is this: It teaches us that the Love of God which is the very foundation of this gracious covenant through which His people are redeemed is not dependent upon man. But rather this love flows from the very Being or Essence of God, and therefore it is independent of men, and thus this redeeming Love is freely bestowed upon us. God is not coerced. God does not owe this special redeeming Love to sinners but yet he gives it and gives it freely.

What we saw in chapter 1 was that God's special covenantal love for Israel was a result of God's unconditional election. Dear ones, if you are saved this morning it wasn't because you were good, or lovable, or better than your neighbor. It was because God freely chose to have mercy on you and to make you a recipient of His saving love. And thus, the only response that is appropriate to that kind of love, is gratitude, worship, and obedience. But what we saw in chapter 1 was that by and large Israel as a nation was not grateful, they were not giving to God acceptable worship, and they were not rendering obedience to His Law.

But then as we move forward in the chapter, we begin to see that God's love is truly beyond our comprehension. We see that although God severely rebukes Israel for their sin, He begins to give glimpses into his plan to expand His covenantal love beyond the borders of Israel.

God makes that point most clearly in verse 11 of chapter 1 which states: “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place, incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.”

This statement by God does so many things. 1<sup>st</sup>, It is a reminder that God is the Lord of hosts. That he is the Lord of Lords, and King of kings and that although Israel is under Persian rule at this time, God is still King... and His name will be great beyond the borders of Israel... So, on the one hand it is God reminding Israel that He is not just the God of Israel but that He is the God of all, and thus the covenant people of God should not be discouraged because of their outward circumstances but remember that their God is the one true God who is King over all, and thus He will exercise His sovereign rule over the enemies of His people.

And yet at the same time, this statement of God in verse 11, is a prophecy that God is not just the Redeemer of ethnic Israel, but that He will redeem a people from every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue. It is a reminder that one of the ways that God exercises His sovereign rule over His enemies is by saving them.

Dear ones, you should read chapter 1 of Malachi and see your very salvation promised in this chapter, for you were once an enemy of God, but His redeeming grace reconciled you to Himself. Our only response to this should be that of gratitude, holy worship, and diligent obedience.

## II. Jesus, the Covenant Keeper

Then as we move forward into Malachi 2 we see the primary theme that we started with worked out for us in two very particular ways.

1. The Blessings of the Covenant are Not dependent on the weakness of fallen men
2. The Blessings of the Covenant are Dependent on the Covenant Keeping Christ

What we saw in chapter 2 being taught to us very clearly through the historical account that Malachi gives, is that salvation is not achieved through our own works.

The failures of the priesthood to keep the covenant of Levi and the men of Israel to keep the marriage covenant recorded for us in Malachi 2 are examples of covenant unfaithfulness which point us to the reality that in our fallen state that we are weak and powerless to keep the covenant and thus our salvation must come from without. And so, in chapter 2 we are turned from looking to ourselves for salvation to looking to another. And the one that it points us to is Christ the Redeemer. And it reminds us that the way in which Christ accomplishes our salvation is by acting on our behalf. By being a Covenant Head. And so, where national Israel failed, the true Israel, which is Christ Himself, succeeded. He was not a covenant breaker but rather He is the covenant Keeper. And because He is our Representative if we believe in Him, then His Covenant Keeping Righteousness is credited to us and thus we are treated by God as if we kept covenant. The result of this being that we receive the covenant blessings of life and peace, the very blessing that Christ earned on our behalf.

And so, in conclusion, Malachi 2 teaches us that our redemption is not dependent upon us but upon Christ... He is our Faithful, Covenant Keeping Savior.

### III. God's Covenant Faithfulness

And that leads us to chapter 3 and the classic verse of that chapter is verse 6, which says: "For I the Lord do not change, therefore you, O children of Jacob are not consumed."

What we saw in this chapter is that once God enters into a gracious covenant with His people... He will remain faithful to that covenant. And this Covenant Faithfulness of God is founded upon the very nature of God Himself. God can never act in a way that is contrary to His nature. God cannot deny Himself. And what we learned in chapter 3 is that God is Immutable, which means He cannot change. And because God does not change this becomes a message of unspeakable comfort to those who submit to the terms of God's covenant of grace. And conversely the Immutable nature of God becomes a message of unspeakable terror to those who reject God's covenant of grace.

In particular, what we saw in chapter 3 is that if you are in a covenant of grace with God then you will be the recipient of God's pardoning or justifying grace, but not only that you will also be the recipient of God's purifying or sanctifying grace. God must deal with sin because He is Holy and Just and Good... and that means if you are in the covenant of grace with God then He deals with your sin as a Refining Fire, and thus conforms you into the very image of His Son.

But if you are not in the covenant of grace with God we saw that God will deal with your sin as a consuming fire, and thus you will perish under the very wrath of God.

And so, in conclusion, from Malachi 3 we saw that God's gracious covenant is founded upon His Unchanging Essence and thus if you are in Christ, which is just another way of saying in the covenant of grace, then you will never never never experience God as a consuming fire, but you will only experience Him as a Refining fire that is not designed to hurt you but only to purify you and to prepare you for glory.

### II. The Blessing of the Covenant

Well, this leads us to the conclusion of the book of Malachi and to our text this morning. The text for today will be Malachi 3:13-4:6. And as we unpack our text the primary message that I want you to see is the "Blessing of this Covenant" which we have seen so far this morning is so foundational to the message of the book of Malachi.

**Let's read our text: (Read the text)**

Prayer: Let's Pray- "Holy Father, as we come to your last words before the sending of your Son, may we give due consideration to the seriousness of these words. Lord your Word is plain: the way of the wicked ends in destruction, and the way of the righteous ends in everlasting blessing. Lord, grant us the grace of repentance and faith, that we may on that great day be numbered among the righteous. Father, bless your Word this morning to the hearts of your people, and to the glory of your Son, in whose name we pray, Amen!"

### III. Vs 3:13-18

#### 1. Vs 13-15

Let's begin by considering verses 13-15 of chapter 3. **"Your words have been hard against me, says the Lord. But you say, "How have we spoken against you? You have said, "It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape."**

What we have in these verses as we noted last week is that you have people who have lost faith in the God of justice. You will recall, that these verses are very similar to what we have in verse 17 of chapter 2... where the people of Israel ask that very question: "Where is the God of justice?"

These verses remind us of the state of the nation of Israel at the time that the prophet Malachi wrote. If you remember, was Israel a free nation at this time? No, they were under Persian Rule. Even though they were back in the promised land, and had rebuilt the temple, and had resumed at least externally the worship that God has prescribed, they were still a people who were under the heavy hand of an oppressive empire.

This is kind of hard for us to understand, but if we could imagine for a moment, that America was defeated by a Foreign Nation, Let's just say, China. And let's just say they allowed us to stay in our land, and even to practice many of our own customs... I highly doubt that you'd be too happy about that. Because you would understand that at any moment the enemy that was now your ruler could cause you great harm... in short you weren't really free.

That's what's going in the nation of Israel at this time. And so, you have Israelites who are looking at what's going on... and they've heard God promises that He will bless His people, and yet with their eyes what they see is a Pagan nation that is prospering. And this led a great many of the people Israel to speak hard against God... Basically to grumble and complain and to exhibit a bitterness and we could even say a hatred towards God.

They see these Pagan, wicked, unbelievers, openly breaking the Law of God, and yet it seems that even though they put God to the test they escape His wrath... Where is God's justice in all of this...

You see in their eyes, even though they should be bowing before the God of grace in contrition and repentance begging for his mercy and His forgiveness... they view themselves as the good guys and yet they are losing, and so they reason in their hearts, what profit is it to serve God?

(Could we if we are not careful fall into that same trap? Could we be guilty of the same sin? Well look at us, we do things the right way. We're conservative. We vote the right way. We use the right bathrooms. We say yes sir and yes ma'am. And look at all of these liberal nuts, and look how many of them seem to be prospering and look at how many seem to have positions of power in our culture.... And we may be tempted to ask- Is there any profit in serving God?)

## 2. Vs 16-18

Well, as we move forward to verses 16-18, we are reminded... Yes, indeed there is much profit in serving the Lord and being faithful unto Him.

Let's read these verses: **“Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.” 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. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.”**

This is one of the most encouraging passages in all the scriptures to me. “Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another.” You know many of our forefathers in the faith were quite fond of using this terminology to describe the people of God. God fearers. Today we typically use words like, believers, or Christians, or even God's people to describe those who love the Lord.

But one of the marks of true belief is a true reverential fear of God. Are we a people at EBC that fear the Lord. And is that evidenced by the way that we live both in public and in private. Lord have mercy on us, that we would fear Him more.

But it says, that these God fearers spoke to one another. What does this mean?

Do you think in this context that it means that the God fearers gathered together to bemoan the state of the nation and to complain about how hard things were and how the wicked seemed to be prospering?

I'm not going to say they never bemoaned the state of things... but I suspect that the majority of their conversation, of their speaking to one another, was to encourage and remind one another concerning the covenant faithfulness of God. Dear ones, does that dominate our conversations?

Yes, we live in a messed-up country, in the midst of a Fallen world... but is complaining and griping the dominating theme of our speaking to one another? ... or are we a people that with increasing joy, and faith, and zeal encourage one another to trust in God believing and knowing that God will accomplish His redemptive purposes.

Brothers and sisters, we should never walk away after having spoke to one another, stirred up with disappointment and discouragement about our current state of affairs, but rather we should walk away after speaking with one another stirred up to love and good works, stirred up with a holy contentment in believing that God is working all things together for the good of His people.

I love what it says in verse 17 – God says about those who fear him, that He will remember them and – “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.”

If that isn't as clear of a gospel proclamation as you've ever seen I don't know what is. It is saying that on that Great Day of Judgment, when we must all stand before God and give an account... that on that Day, if you are a God fearer, one who loves the Lord, that God will gather you along with all of his other people and you will be among His treasured possession. If you trust in Him now and serve Him now, He will not forget. On that great day He will remember. Remember how Jesus spoke in Matthew 25:34-40-

There He says, speaking of final judgment: “Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”

God remembers everything that you do. There is nothing that you do in service of Christ that will be forgotten. As C.T. Studd famously said: Only one life, twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

Further, not only will God remember you on that day... He will treat you as a treasured possession.

This is the same thing that is being said in Revelation 21:3 where it says: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

God will delight to be in our presence and he will gather us to Himself as a treasured possession.

And then notice in the text, the precious way that God will deal with us on that great day... It says He will spare us as a man spares his own son... I'm not a father yet, but I can imagine if I had a son that my heart toward him would be that of desiring to keep my son from harm... to spare him from harm... even if that meant that I had to undergo harm in order to spare my son...

On that great day, if you are in Christ, if you are in the covenant of grace with God, he will spare you as a man spares his son, for you truly are a son or daughter of God.

But isn't it amazing beyond what our minds can comprehend that what had to take place in order for God to treat us as his sons and daughters, is that He did not spare His own Son, the Son in whom He was well pleased. The scriptures tell us that it pleased the Lord to crush Him and the Son cried out... My God, My God why have you forsaken me!

What great love God has for his people. If God be for us who be against us? If God did not spare his own Son, will he not also with him graciously give us all things?



This is the hope that we as believers have. And so, in response to what the unbelieving Israelites said back in verse 14 – No, it is not vain to serve the Lord!

Then we look at verse 18, and there it says that on that Great Day of judgment, once and for all... we shall all see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

#### IV. Vs 4:1

Well, that leads us to chapter 4 verse 1 – where we see what the end for the wicked will be.

That verse reads: “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. That day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

Here we see one of the great and awful warnings contained in the Scriptures concerning that place of eternal punishment known as Hell.

Remember, when the unbelieving Israelites proclaimed that evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.

What we see here in verse 1 was that they were wrong. Evildoers will not put God to the test and escape. God on that great day of judgment will remember the deeds of lawless men and they will receive their just recompense. For the wages of sin is death, not just physical death, but eternal death.

But notice what this verse also adds: It says not only that evildoers will be stubble, but also the arrogant. I think this a direct warning to the religious yet unbelieving Israelites. They were arrogant in their sin. They were breakers of the covenant and yet they thought of themselves as better than the pagan evildoers that they saw prosper in their time.

Dear ones, this is a serious warning to us today as well. As I stated last week, you can be one who has learned how to talk right, how to dress right, and to outwardly act right, and yet all the while, be a whitewashed tomb, and be dead on the inside.

The only way that you can have any comfort that your lot on that Great Day will not be being consumed by the wrath of God which is coming like a Burning Oven, is to know you’ve been changed. That your old wicked heart has been removed by the God of Grace and replaced with a new heart that loves the Lord, and truly desires to worship, obey, and serve Him.

And so, this verse is meant to cause us to flee to Christ, understanding that we must be united to Him in His Gracious Covenant which alone can bring life and peace to a hell deserving sinner.

Further, this verse reminds us of the awful finality and completeness of this destruction. It says that this burning oven will set the arrogant and the evildoers ablaze, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

This imagery is meant to cause us to think of a tree that is being burned. It is saying that this fire, will completely consume the tree. From the branches to the roots, nothing will be left.

There is no part of man that will receive any mercy in Hell. You see in this life we can face terrible things, but even in the worst things in this life, its not all bad. Usually, there is a silver lining. Well, my leg got broke, well at least I didn't break my arm. There will be no such comforts in Hell. Every part and faculty of man, both body and soul will face the full, unrelenting, terrible, and never-ending wrath of God. And there's no coming back from it. You know how a tree can be cut down and from the stump sprouts new life. Not so in Hell, there is a complete and utter finality to this punishment. It will leave you neither root nor branch... all hope will be lost and consumed by that Burning Oven.

#### V. Vs 4:2

Well, this leads us to verse 2

**“But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.”**

This verse begins with that Divine Conjunction... But... Dear ones, this is the message of Scripture... yes there is a day coming like a Burning Oven that will burn up the arrogant and the evildoers, but that doesn't have to be your end. You see there is a Covenant of Grace that God offers to all men who would trust in Christ. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, so that whosoever should believe upon Him, should not perish, but (there's that divine conjunction again) but have everlasting life.

For all who fear the name of God, that is, for all who understand that their only hope is to come to God and submit themselves to the terms of His gracious Covenant, for all who do that, that Great Day of Judgment which will come upon the wicked like a terrible fire... will come upon believers like a beautiful life-giving sun rise.

We all know what it's like to see a sun rise that absolutely takes your breath away with its beauty. And there's something interesting about sun rises. Something about the sun rising on a new day that has a wonderful effect on our souls. I actually read a few articles this week, where science confirms what we all know by common sense... and that is that watching the sun rise has positive effects on both body and soul.

The last day is pictured as a day in which Christ will Rise as a Sun of Righteousness for His people for all Eternity.

For example- listen to what it says in Revelation 21:23: “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”

Dear ones, isn't it amazing that by virtue of the light of special revelation that we are enabled to see pictures of the gospel even in the realm of general revelation. I have said many times that a beautiful sunrise doesn't declare the Gospel... and it's true that a sun rise by itself does not proclaim the Gospel... but in light of what's been revealed to us in Scripture... the next time you as a believer look at a beautiful sunrise, you can be reminded that there is going to be a Sun Rise that is greater than all the sun rises put together that have ever taken place on this planet from the first day to the last day... and that is the Day that Christ will return with Healing in His Wings.

Now, it says that Christ will come with Healing in His Wings... what a beautiful promise. It reminds me of that line in the hymn that says "Earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal"

On that great and glorious day... He will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" – Revelation 21:4

Brothers and sisters... this is the blessing of the Covenant of Grace, this is the blessing that Christ has won for us... and this is the blessing that He freely gives to all who come to Him in faith.

And then the next line of that verse is one of my favorite lines in all the Scripture:

It says on that Great Day, when God makes up His Treasured Possession... that we who are believers "Shall go out leaping like calves from the stall."

Dear ones, this is a beautiful picture of the blessed joy of the Eternal State for believers.

Anyone who has been around cows, know what calves will do when they are young. Just out of the blue they will just take off leaping and skipping... and there doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason for why they do this... it appears that they do this just because they can, just out of sheer joy...

It's very similar to how children play... kids can get so wound up playing and having fun... and they aren't accomplishing anything... they are just having fun....

I know we've all seen little Ariella running around after church, and sometimes she'll just be running around the sanctuary and she'll make her own commentary, and say "I'm just running!"

Dear ones, that is a picture of the kind of joy that we will have on that great day. And here's the beauty of that... that joy will never be diminished... ever... we will experience a joy unspeakable for all eternity.... Well you might say, I can't be that joyful constantly, I'll get tired... not so in heaven... you will receive a glorified body and soul that is perfectly suited to experience perfect joy for all eternity.

Dear ones, we have a great God, who has made a Covenant that is more full of grace than we are able to comprehend and He has sent the Covenant Keeping Christ to do that which we could never do for ourselves, and through Him we will receive the full extent of the blessing that is promised in the Covenant of Grace.

## **VI. Vs 3**

Well, I almost want to stop the sermon there, but let's look at the last few verses.

Verse 3 states: "And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts."

This verse, reminds us as believers that although in this life we may be last, we may be persecuted, we may suffer from the hands of the wicked... but on that Great Day... the righteous shall sit in judgment over the wicked. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"

Brothers and sisters, remember what was happening in the time of Malachi. Israel was under the rule of the Persian Empire... What Malachi was reminding them of was this... that on that Great Day, God will bring recompense to those who cause harm to His people...

The practical point here is clear and is meant to be an encouragement for you to persevere in righteousness.

Jesus will say it like this in the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Persevere, brothers and sisters, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

## VII. Vs 4:4-6

Well, let us now consider the last three verses of the Old Testament:

**Verse 4 -"Remember the Law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel."**

In verse 4 we see that God tells Israel to remember His Law. Israel has a history of neglecting to keep the Law that God gave them when he formed them into a nation, and now we have God's last reminder in the Old Testament to keep that Law... This reminder will prove to be very necessary for during the next 400 years God will go silent. There will not be another prophet to come and point them back to the Law for several generations.

Dear ones, there is a lesson here for us as well. Although in the New Covenant the Law has been written on our hearts, we are still in need of being reminded and exhorted over and over again to keep the Law that God has given to us.

Remember, in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus says that on that Great Day of judgment there will be many religious people to whom He will say depart from me for I never knew you... What was it in that warning from Jesus that made it obvious that these people did not know the Lord? .... He says that they were workers of iniquity. In other words, on that Great Day of judgment the ones that Christ will reject are the ones who lived their lives as if God never gave them a law to obey.

May we remember the Law of God--- for Christ says If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

**And finally let's look at Vs. 5-6**

**"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."**

Last week we looked at the fact that Christ in the New Testament identifies this Elijah the prophet as John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the one that God will raise up to be the messenger who prepares the before the Christ.

How is it that John the Baptist will prepare the way? He came preaching, repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand... What we see in these verses of the Old Testament... is that the repentance that God graciously grants leads to change... true repentance turns the heart of fathers to their children and the heart of children to their fathers... in other words true repentance leads to a love for God and a love for neighbor.

Malachi prophesied that John would come preaching a message that proved that in this new and better covenant of which Christ is Head... there is no entrance without repentance... in order to receive the blessing of the Covenant you must turn from your sin and turn to Christ.

And the Immutable Spirit of God commands you today to submit to the terms of God's gracious covenant which requires you to repent of your sins, and trust in the Christ, with this great assurance that if you do so, you will surely receive the blessing of the Covenant.

And lastly, the very last word of the Old Testament is interesting. That word is "destruction".

I find that to be instructive for us as we understand the whole message of Scripture. You see if the Bible ended with the Old Testament there would be nothing but destruction. If the Christ did not come all would be lost. But as Isaiah 40 which I think is a picture of the opening of the New Testament says:

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins."

As we will see beginning next week, as we launch into the Gospel of Mark, that the Christ did indeed come, and in his First Advent, He came not to condemn the world, not to destroy the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

In conclusion, as we wrap up this series from the book of Malachi... we have seen that the primary theme of this book is that God reveals His Redemptive and Covenantal Love for His people in Christ, by showing that the Covenant of Grace is founded upon the Unchanging Love of the Father and that the blessing of the Covenant is not dependent on weak and fallen men, but rather it is dependent on the Covenant Keeping Christ, who in His Perfect Life, in His Sacrificial Death, and in His Glorious Resurrection has secured the Blessing of the Covenant for every single person who is united to Him by faith.

So, I close with this: Trust in Christ today and all the days of your life, and you will receive the Blessing of the Covenant.

Let's pray: