



“The Distinction Between The Righteous and The Wicked” (Malachi 3)

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2:17 These people were ignorant and argumentative with the Lord regarding their sin. The issue here they ignore is one that even the greatest of saints at times struggled with: Why is God allowing bad things to happen to His people and at the same time letting the wicked prosper?

- Job and friends struggled with this question (and why wouldn't they, Job was an “upright and blameless” saint).
- Jeremiah (Jer.12:1-3a)
- Habakkuk (Hab.1:13, regarding the Babylonians)
- Asaph (Psalm 73:1-4, 12, 13-14, 16, 17; read verses 21-27)
- John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-3)

3:1-2a These people failed to realize how dreadful a day “the day of the Lord” would be, especially in light of the sin they had yet to repent of. See Amos 5:18-20ff. Remember I Peter 4:17. The place the Lord will begin His purging in the last days is with His own people. See Zech.13:8-9.

3:2b-5 Remember at the beginning and end of Jesus' public ministry during His first coming he drove the moneychangers out of the temple. Before His second coming the cleansing will be pervasive and enduring!

3:6 What a reminder! His mercies are new every morning!

3:7a He is speaking to those who need to repent before it is too late. And what a deal the Lord offers – “Return to me, and I will return to you.”

3:7b Here they go again, ignorant and argumentative

3:8-12 I'm so encouraged from the message this past weekend on tithing. The general offering was over \$95,000! Some people made some good decisions to honor the Lord with their finances.

3:13-15 Notice carefully what is happening here. They still are not willing to hear what God is saying to them about their sin. They claim to have carried out the Lord's requirements, and they

have even cried before the Lord regarding the hard and perplexing times they have faced, yet they have not truly repented. They continue to look at others who are prosperous and blessed, and they take issue with God as to why they are not blessed in the same way. But their focus is skewed in that not only have they ignored sin that they need to repent of, but they are not looking to the world they live in light of eternity.

Peter's question to the Lord (see Matthew 19:27-29).

3:16 Did you know that God has more books than the 66 that comprise the Bible?

- Num.21:14...the book of the Wards of the Lord...
- See Rev.20:11-15; 21:27
- Psalm 56:8 Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record?

These people who talked with each other were different, but please understand the difference is not that they did not struggle with life or with the Lord. No, they are like Job, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Asaph, John the Baptist, and me. I struggled to understand why the Lord let Viv Laird suffer so much before taking him home to heaven. You know where the Lord took me today with this issue? See Philippians 3:10.

In their struggle they found encouragement that renewed their faith and enabled them to persevere. And how did this encouragement come about? They talked with each other. I have a question: What did they say?

- Lamentations 3:22 -23 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
- Deut.29:29 The secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever...
- I Cor.13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
- Rom.8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us.
- II Cor.4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed... 16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- I Cor.15:16-22, 51-54 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only in this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be more pitied than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead...For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive...we will not all sleep, but we will be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”
- Rev.21:3-5 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain., for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, because these words are trustworthy and true.”

Invite people one at a time to read loudly brief sections of Scripture.

3:17 What a thought, that we are the Lord’s treasured possession! And in the end, at the judgment, we will be spared. I prayed this for my family this morning (see Luke 21:36, context).

3:18 What is the distinction between the righteous and the wicked?

- Righteous by faith
- Repentant
- Rise again (Prov.24:16)
- Rescued from eternal judgment (Luke 21:36)
- Reward beyond this present world