



Fresh Faith: "The Trust Factor"

(Malachi 3:6-12)

Pastor Derrick Shields

We continue our 4-week series in the book of Malachi to stir *afresh* our relationship with God. (Derrick challenged us to commit to reading Malachi 2x/week over these 4 weeks. It's a short book, just 55 verses.)

This remnant people of Judah, returned from exile, are held captive by their doubts: *Is Yahweh still with us? Does He still love us?* These doubts have given birth to complaining, complacency, and corruption. Through Malachi, God is addressing their faith-less responses: their doubt of his love and care; their bringing half-hearted, second-rate offerings to him; their unfaithfulness to their covenant relationships with each other (esp. in marriage), and now he addresses one more irreverent complacency - - **"Will a man (or woman) rob God?"** (vs 3:8)

True to the pattern of Malachi, he anticipates the challenging response of the people: "But you (*Hebrews*) ask, 'How do we rob You?'" God answers, "In tithes and offerings..."

- Backing up to vs 3:6-7: God is reminding the people that he does not change. He is ever true to his covenant with them, in spite of *their* unfaithfulness. "Return to me, and I will return to you, **says the Lord Almighty.**"
- This "Lord Almighty" phrase appears 21x in Malachi. It is an impactful expression from the Lord. Stated more fully it means: "God of the Angel Armies". In this passionate declaration, God is revealing/reminding them (and us) that these concerns he is addressing are not worldly constructs, but rather **spiritual, heavenly** matters.

Now, back to the "tithing" issue...

- * Tithing was a familiar practice in those ancient days, even before God gave Moses the covenant law. Yahweh simply pressed deeper meaning into this concept as an act of worship and trust.
- * A tithe was a “tenth” of one’s resources. (This “tenth” is simply the base-line starting point. Gratitude, honor, and worship propel us beyond a mere “tenth”.)
- * For the Hebrew people, tithes and offerings were grains and animals, but for us, tithing relates to our **money**.
- * God’s command to tithe & give is NOT because he needs our money/resources; he owns it all! He wants us to declare and experience our trust in Him.

1. Tithing is one of the single best indicators of whether (or not) we really trust God.

- * Tithing is really a “means of grace” FOR us . . . to grow our trust & faith and also our freedom (from the fearful bondage of money and possessions).
- * Tithing brings a blessing - - more to our souls than our bank accounts. “see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing” vs 3:10
- * God even says – “Test me in this!”

2. We all tithe to something. Our first 10% of income is going somewhere: (mortgage, bills, retirement, etc. . . . things of comfort and security.)

- * When we tithe FIRST to the Lord, we are declaring and celebrating that God is our comfort (joy) and security.
- * If you are not experiencing the blessing of tithing (giving intentionally, consistently, and joyfully), the invitation here is to *pray and consider* starting this pattern in your life.

Concluding this series:

- * In all these FRESH challenges:
 1. Believing in God’s deep love
 2. Bringing our best
 3. Honoring our covenant commitments to each other
 4. Tithing/giving God our first fruits

It’s not just a matter of gritting our teeth and trying harder.

* **Malachi 4:1-2** captures our hope – “[a day of refining fire is coming], but for you who *revere my name*, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall . . .”

* Repentance (turning from sin and complacency)

* Reverence (“revere my name” – worship and honor Him as loving Father)

* Refining (righteous fire “with healing in its wings” to bring . . .

* Restoration (“leaping like calves released from the stall”)

Are we willing and ready to let Jesus refine, cleanse, and restore us . . . to **Fresh Faith!**