

## PUTTING GOD FIRST

### Malachi 3-4

(Malachi 3:1-4) “Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like **a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes**. He will sit **like a refiner of silver**, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD. Then once more the LORD will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.”

✓ **God’s plan is to make you better than you are now.**

✓ **What is God working on in my life right now?**

(Malachi 3:5) “At that time I will put you on trial. I am **eager to witness against** all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who **cheat employees of their wages**, who oppress **widows** and **orphans**, or who deprive the **foreigners** living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

✓ **If I oppress those less fortunate than me, I can expect God to oppose me.**

✓ **Who are the oppressed people in your life that you should be standing up for?**

(Malachi 3:6-7) “I am the LORD, and **I do not change**. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now **return to me**, and **I will return to you**,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

✓ **God hasn’t left you, and he’s not going to.**

(Malachi 3:8b-12) “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out **a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in!** Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “**Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight**,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

✓ **Tithing is about exchanging something we hold dear for something better.**

(Malachi 3:14-15) “You have said, ‘**What’s the use of serving God?** What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the LORD of Heaven’s Armies that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them suffer no harm.’”

✓ **Don’t imagine that your present reality is God’s finished plan.**

(Malachi 3:17) “They will be my people,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “On the day when I act in judgment, **they will be my own special treasure**. I will spare them as a father spares an obedient child. **Then** you will again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”

✓ **You are God’s special treasure.**

(Malachi 4:2-3) “But for you who fear my name, the **Sun of Righteousness** will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

✓ **Don’t give up in the middle of God’s story for your life.**