

NEHEMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Nehemiah chapter 9 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As you remember from our previous studies, Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem with a burden on his heart to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. And even with all the discouragement, the pressure, the threatening of the enemies, the walls of the city are rebuilt in only fifty-two days!

It is after the walls are rebuilt that the people gathered together to hear the Word of God read and taught to them. And I truly love what they did and it is what I try to do as I teach the Word of God. I read the Word of God to you and then I explain what was happening during that period of time, we try to make sense of it and then I try to make the application, how we can apply this to our lives today in our walk with the Lord!

Now as the Word of God was read to the people, as they were taught the things of God all day long, the people began to weep over their sinful condition. And the Levites told them that this day is a day of rejoicing in the Lord, which they did do.

Now, as we get into Nehemiah chapter 9 this evening we will see once again what God's Word does to our hearts, what it needs to do when we have gone astray, when we have departed from what His Word has said. Again, this is lacking in the church today because we want people to be happy and thus, to talk about sin, about judgment is negative and does not make us feel good. It is not suppose to make us feel good, it is suppose to make us fall to our knees and get right with God.

Let me give you just one example of where the church is going from a very popular, a very positive preacher, Joel Osteen. Just listen to what he is saying and you tell me if this is what God's Word has to say to us or not!

First of all, in regards to health, wealth and prosperity doctrines besides other things, listen to what he has to say. Listen to how he puts a positive twist on the Scriptures. Joel Osteen tells us, "If you develop an image of victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace, and happiness, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from you." So no longer is our life in the hands of God but we control our life and if we can visualize this success we will get it! Do you see how distorted that is, and yet, that is not where I am going with this as you will see in minute, as wrong as that is!

Again, Joel Osteen is once again showing us that he is the positive preacher and he keeps telling us that God wants our lives to be filled with happiness. He said, "Before we were ever formed, He programmed us to live abundant lives, to be happy, healthy, and whole. But when our thinking becomes contaminated it is no longer in line with God's Word." Now think about this for a minute. If you are sick it is because you are not positive enough because God does not want you to be sick. How many of you are feeling good about that? None of you because we all have issues in our lives and God will use them to help us grow in Him! And again, it sounds like we are the ones in control, we are controlling God but as far as I can tell, you will not find that in the Scriptures. Also, you will not find in the Scriptures that God wants us to be happy but He wants us to be holy and by living that kind of a life there is joy, abundant joy! But again, that is not where I am going with this; it is just another point showing how far off Joel Osteen is.

Yes, Joel Osteen is the positive pastor and yet, just listen to what he says regarding his message that he brings to people, and yes, it is positive. He tells us, “I focus on the positive. Sin and punishment and all that isn’t my message. I want to help people and don’t want to beat them down all the time.” Now think about that. How can a person know that he needs a Savior if he does not know he is a sinner? He can’t! You see, why would you need a Savior if you were a good person? You wouldn’t!

Believe it or not I give a positive message. I am positive that you will go to Hell apart from Christ because you are dead in your trespasses and sins! I guess that is positive! And here’s the thing. As you give the whole counsel of God you will cover these things and the Holy Spirit will speak to your heart and convict you of sin if that is where you are at. But if you negate that part of the message of the Gospel, you end up making people feel good about going to Hell!

As we will see in our study tonight, it was the Word of God that was given to the people that brought them to repentance, not for their destruction, but restoration with God! With that said, let’s begin reading in Nehemiah chapter 9, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

NEHEMIAH 9**VERSES 1-3**

1. You see, this repentance, the confession of their sin is a result of hearing the Word of God and then acknowledging that they have sinned. They want every area of their life to be given over to God, to conform to the Word of God. Conviction draws us to God. On the other hand, when man condemns, it is ugly and it drives us away from God.

But make no mistake about it, as a person hears the Word of God the Holy Spirit will convict them of sin. Let me give you a few examples from the Psalms to show you the power of God's Word upon our lives. In Psalm 119:9-11 David tells us, "**How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**"

Then, in Psalm 119:50 David goes on to say, "**This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.**" And in Psalm 119:67 we are told, "**Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.**" You see, affliction causes us to draw close to God, to examine our life to see if there is some sin that is causing this. It is God's Word, as we treasure it in our lives, as we apply it to our lives that we will clearly know what sin is and what is not sin and may we walk accordingly!

It is as Redpath wrote, “How often the discovery of something new in the loveliness of the Lord Jesus has brought with it the discovery of some new corruption in our own hearts. . . . God will never plant the seed of His life upon the soil of a hard, unbroken spirit. He will only plant that seed where the conviction of His Spirit has brought brokenness, where the soil has been watered with the tears of repentance as well as the tears of joy.” God wants to draw close to us, may we have that same desire to draw close to Him and give to Him those things that are hindering our walk with Him!

2. Now it says that they read the Word of God for “**one-fourth of the day.**” What does that mean? I don’t believe it is speaking of six hours but of the daylight hours and one-fourth would be 3 hours, which was a long time. And so, for 3 hours they read the Word of God and for 3 hours they confessed their sins and worshipped God. Some will tell you today that this generation has to be entertained, that they won’t listen to sermons for longer than just a few minutes, so they give their people sermonettes for Christianettes. I disagree with that. Those who love God, those who love His Word will have such a hunger for it; they just can’t get enough of it. And the result is that they cut themselves off from the foreigners or what we would say, the unsaved. They did not follow the practices these pagans were involved in worshiping their false god’s! Separation is important, a separation from this world. We are in this world but the world should not be in us! We should be with people of this world but they should not be our closest friends, ones we confide in, ones we ask counsel from. We need that separation!

3. And what we see here is a brokenness of heart and this brokenness led them to come humbly before the Lord and hear His Word. People want revival but they don't realize that the first step of revival is this brokenness of heart, your own heart!

VERSES 4-5a

1. We have seen a beautiful prayer back in Ezra chapter 9. Here in Nehemiah chapter 9 we see another beautiful prayer looking back on God, who He is and what He has done in their lives. It is the longest prayer in the Bible, some 34 verses and takes about 6 minutes to go through. You see, prayers don't need to be long and drawn out, they just need to be spoken. And then in Daniel chapter 9 we see another great prayer by Daniel. And to kind of put this into perspective, the Feast of Tabernacles ended on the 22nd of the month, and here, on the 24th of the month they again are gathered together before God. Only two days later, but again, they loved the Lord and their hearts wanted to draw close to Him!

2. Now I want you to listen to what Jon Courson had to say regarding these verses here in Nehemiah. He wrote,

The passage before us is the longest prayer in the Bible. It is primarily a prayer of reflection, for after acknowledging that the Lord alone is God, His people reflect upon what He has done.

Why is this prayer recorded? I believe it is to teach us the necessity of remembering our own personal history. How long has it been since you've carved out a chunk of time to reflect with the Lord about the things He's done in you, with you, and for you? I am convinced we get shot down, depressed, discouraged, and defeated because we're always looking ahead to the next day or week or month, failing to look back and see what the Lord has already done in our lives.

When the Israelis bought American F-16 fighter jets in the 1980s, they made a simple modification that saved them countless lives: they added a rearview mirror. This allowed them to see their enemies coming. I'm convinced that many of us who should be flying high are shot down because we don't have a rear view mirror on our spiritual plane. We don't see what's behind us. We don't reflect with the Lord upon how He's blessed us, answered our prayers, seen us through over the years. If you want to get blessed and guard yourself against being shot down, spend a couple of hours with the Lord. Look back and see what the Lord has done.

- Jon Courson, Application Commentary,
Old Testament Volume 1, p. 1258

What a great lesson for us to learn and we will see that as we go through this prayer here in Nehemiah chapter 9.

VERSES 5b-6

1. Notice where this prayer starts out, by establishing that God is the creator of heaven and earth, He is Almighty God! He has made all things. If you miss out on this point, then you are in trouble. We are told,

The French Mathematician, Lecompte de Nouy, examined the laws of probability for a single molecule of high dissymmetry to be formed by the action of chance. De Nouy found that, on an average, the time needed to form one such molecule of our terrestrial globe would be about 10 to the 253 power billions of years.

“But,” continued de Nouy ironically, “let us admit that no matter how small the chance it could happen, one molecule could be created by such astronomical odds of chance. However, one molecule is of no use. Hundreds of millions of identical ones are necessary. Thus we either admit the miracle or doubt the absolute truth of science.”

- Quoted in: “Is Science Moving Toward Belief in God?”
Paul A. Fisher, The Wander, (Nov 7, 1985)

And not only has God created all things, but God preserves things or He holds them together. Paul makes that very point in Colossians 1:16-17 where he said, “**For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**”

You see, Jesus holds all things together and when He lets go, look out! Protons, in the center of the atom, have like charges and should repel from each other, and yet something is holding them together. Scientists say it is “atomic glue” that is holding them together, I say it is Christ.

Imagine this, if you were able to place together 1 tablespoon full of protons and place one spoonful on the North Pole and another on the South Pole, some 8,000 miles away from each other, it would take 3,000 tons of force to hold them together because, even at that distance, they would try to repel each other.

Now, keep in mind that the atomic bomb is set off when a chain reaction of nuclear fission as there is this neutron bombardment in the atoms of a charge of plutonium or uranium isotope. When that happens you see a tremendous destructive force like that which took place in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan in 1945. From what I understand, the fissionable materials in those bombs were about the size of a dime and yet look at the destruction it caused. Can you imagine what will happen when God lets go!

Well, we don't have to guess because Peter tells us in II Peter 3:10, **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”** You see, the Big Bang hasn't happened yet, but it is coming and I believe very soon. It is after this that God will create a new heaven and new earth for us to dwell in with Him, the eternal state. But again, have a correct perspective of who God is and everything else will be a piece of cake, you can rest in Him, the creator of heaven and earth!

VERSES 7-8

1. Notice what is going on here. They are looking back at Abraham and the promise that God made to him and how that promise has come to pass. They are in the Promise Land just as God said! What we can glean from this is that we should never doubt the faithfulness of God. What He has promised us He will bring to pass! And I think it is a good idea to keep reminding yourself of the faithfulness of God because as we look back on the past and see what God has done, it gives to us comfort, hope in what God is doing today!

2. Let me share with you just a few verses on the faithfulness of God because I think it is important for us to understand this. In Psalm 89:1 we are told, **“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.”** In Psalm 119:90 we are told, **“Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.”** And lastly, in Lamentations 3:21-24 we are told, **“This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’”** May we never forget the faithfulness of our God!

VERSES 9-12

1. Once again we see the faithfulness of God as He brought the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. Not only that, but He parted the Red Sea to allow the children of Israel to cross through on dry ground and when the Egyptian army came after them, they were all drowned as the waters came crashing down upon them.

2. Not only did God deliver them but He also guided them in where they should go by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, the Shekinah glory! People today desire to be led by God but, because there is no pillar of fire or cloud to guide them, they feel lost. That is foolish. We are not guided by a pillar of fire or a cloud but by the Word of God and many don't know where they are going because they are not being directed by God's Word and His Spirit that speaks to our hearts. It is as Psalm 119:105 tells us, "**Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**" May we not forget that!

VERSES 13-15

1. What I want you to notice in these verses is the love of God and the provisions of God for His people. Now when you hear about the Law of God you probably don't think of the love of God, but that truly is the reality. You see, God loved them so much that He gave them the Law to help protect them and yes, to point them to the coming Messiah. But when you look at the Law of God, it is there for our safety and not to hurt us or deprive us. That is the love that God has for us.

2. On the other end of the spectrum, there are many who would have you believe that the Law was imperfect, that the Law was wrong. Obviously that is not correct! The Law is good, the Law is perfect, that is not the problem! The problem was not the Law, but our flesh, for we could not keep it. Remember what Paul said in Romans 7:12, “**Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.**” And what that does for us, in knowing we could never keep it 100% of the time, is it draws us to Jesus, our Savior. We can’t keep the Law, we fall far short, our sin separates us from God but Jesus is the bridge builder, He is the one who opens the door for us to come to the Father by His shed blood. Does that mean we don’t need to keep the Law any longer? Not at all, you see, we don’t keep the Law for salvation, no one has and no one will ever succeed in doing that. We keep the Law out of love and not out of constraint, we know that God loves us and our desire is to obey Him!

3. Not only the love of God but look at how God provided for them during their wilderness wanderings. He gave them bread from heaven, He gave them water out of the rock, He gave to them the Promise Land! It truly is as Paul said in Philippians 4:19, “**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**” Our God is still meeting our needs!

VERSES 16-21

1. After all that God had done for them they were stubborn towards Him and would not obey His Words! Now what do you think the God of the Old Testament would do to a people who responded to Him like this? The same way He responds to people in the New Testament and today! He is always ready to pardon because He is gracious, He is merciful, He is slow to anger, He is kind and He will not forsake them or us!

2. Now let me say this. I think we are always amazed at how patient, how longsuffering God is towards sinners. We look at this nation and think we should be toast because of our sin and rebellion against God, but we are not. But think about this. Isn't God's patience towards His people, you and me, even greater? You bet because we have received so much more from Him and yet, how often we act like the children of Israel acted! It is as Redpath said, "God's mercy with a sinner is only equaled and perhaps outmatched by His patience with the saints, with you and me." Thank God for His love, grace, mercy, kindness and-so-on that He not only extends to the sinner, but to His saints you and me!

VERSES 22-25

1. He we see how much God blessed them and that is great. But what often happens after a time of blessing is apathy sets in and people move away from God. God gave to them nations, land, He multiplied them as the stars of heaven and we are going to see what happens with all those blessings.

VERSES 26-27

1. Once again we see the Psalmist re-capping the history of the nation of Israel and we are up to the time of the Judges. This was a dark period of time for the nation as they fell into this cyclical pattern of sin, servitude, supplication, salvation by a deliver that God raised up, and then silence before God as once again this cycle begins. Again, what a lesson for us to learn! That we need to stay on course, we need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and not go astray, especially during times of prosperity in our lives, be it monetary or spiritual prosperity!

VERSES 28-31

1. Again their cry is not for justice, they knew they had sinned before God. They sought His grace and mercy. Whoever would call for God's justice upon their life is a fool, because we all deserve death. But because of His great love for us He has given us grace and mercy through His Son Jesus Christ. We should all be consumed in the fires of His judgment because of our sin, our rebellion and yet, our God is gracious and merciful and has provided a way for our sins to be paid in full, and it is found in Jesus! It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**"

VERSES 32-37

1. Here we see a renewal of the covenant they made with God and they recognize that because of their sin, they were servants in the land that God had given to them. In other words, they had to pay taxes to the king of Persia! And once again they recognized that they are at fault, that God is just in all that He has done to them and yet, He did not destroy them even though they deserved it! They saw that God was right and they were wrong, they were in agreement with God now and that truly is what confession, what repentance is all about. It is turning away from the sin and back to God, agreeing that this was a sin and that is not always easy for us to do because of our pride. We like to justify our sin before God but He will see right through it!

It is as Redpath wrote, “It is a tremendous moment in a Christians’ life when he can honestly look up into the face of God and say, ‘Yes, Lord, You are right and I am wrong,’ when he stops arguing with God, and drops his controversy. He says, ‘Lord, yes. I’ve got what I deserved in this situation. You are right; I am wrong.’ That is the thing for which God has been working in your life and mine from the very moment of our conversion.”

VERSE 38

1. The end result of all of this is the people want to renew the covenant that God made with them. They want to get right with God. That should be the result of spirit filled teaching, a desire to get right with God. But what happens many times is that we have to be so broken before we look up and repent of our sins.

2. What kind of commitment have we made with the Lord? Are we serious about our relationship with Him? I think it is good to take a good look at your life, to examine it, to give it to the Lord. We are living in dark days and it is not time for us to cover our light or hide our light or blend our light, but to shine for Him and that will only happen as we give our life totally over to Him. Alan Redpath gives to us some interesting questions as we examine our life to show us where we stand. And again, I think it is good to examine your life and see where you stand, not for condemnation, but for sanctification! Alan Redpath wrote,

What about my relationship with men?

Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am a better man than I really am? Is there the least suspicion of hypocrisy in my life? Am I honest in all my words and acts? Do I exaggerate?

Am I reliable? Can I be trusted? Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence? Do I grumble and complain in the church?

Am I jealous, impure, irritable, touchy, distrustful? Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying? Am I proud? Do I thank God I am not as other people? Is there anyone I fear, or dislike, or criticize, or resent? If so, what am I doing about it?

What about my devotion to God?

Does the Bible live to me? Do I give it time to speak to me? Do I go to bed in time and do I get up in time?

Am I enjoying my prayer life today? Did I enjoy it this morning? When I am involved in a problem in life, do I talk about it or pray about it?

Am I disobeying God in anything, or insisting upon doing something about which my conscience is very uneasy?

When did I last speak to someone else with the object of trying to win him for Christ?

Am I a slave to books, dress, friends, work, or what others think? How do I spend my spare time?

- Alan Redpath

It truly is something all of us should think about; we should take a good look at our life and see where we stand with God, what we are doing for Him!

NEHEMIAH 10

VERSES 1-27

1. Those that said that they would obey this covenant they made with God were now going to sign on the dotted line you might say, showing that they are sincere in following through with this. These were not just empty words. In verses 1-8 we see the priests who signed this covenant and then in verses 9-13 we see the Levites who signed this covenant and lastly, in verses 14-27 we see the civic leaders who signed this covenant!

VERSES 28-31

1. Those that did not sign this covenant also wanted to join in, they wanted to separate themselves unto God and so they are making this covenant with God. Here we see them say that if they did not follow the Word's of God, that they would be cursed. And it is very possible that they are just repeating what God had stated in Deuteronomy chapter 28, verses 15-68. That is the cursing that would come upon the children of Israel for their disobedience to the Word of God.

2. As I read through these verses I see 3 important and practical ideas that the children of Israel applied to their life. First, in verse 28, they separated themselves from the rest of the world. That does not mean that they were living in isolation, but that they had insulated themselves from being tainted by the world. This is something that we need to understand today. I do realize that we as people like to be liked and thus, we try to get the world to like us. Please understand that the world does not like us because we are standing up for the Lord and thus, to get the world to like us, accept us we must compromise what we believe, water it down and that is what we see happening today in the church! John put it like this in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”** You see, the world is at war with God and if we want to be like the world, guess what? We are at war with God also!

Secondly, in verse 29, they had unity with the brethren which enabled them to accomplish the work that God had sent them to do. Paul makes that point of the strength, the blessings that unity with believers has in our lives in I Corinthians 15:58 where he tells us, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** You see, God has made the body of Christ as a unit to work together and not to separate ourselves.

And the third thing is also found in verse 29; they followed the Law of God. As Paul said in I Thessalonians 1:6-10, **“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”** Yes, it is the Word of God that guides us in this life and apart from it we are being blown to and fro with the various ideas that this world is putting forth!

So three simple things we see here in this covenant. They separated themselves from the world. They united themselves with other believers. And they were guided by the Word of God!

3. Now verse 31 is interesting because it tells us that they were not to buy or sell on the Sabbath day, it was a day of rest, a day given over to the Lord. “But Lord, you know we can make more money if we sold our things seven days a week instead of only six!” Let me say this, don’t you think God will supply all that you need if you are obedient to His Word? Absolutely He will and if you disobey the Lord, you will end up with less than when you started! I am not saying that we need to keep the Sabbath but I do think we should have one day a week that is unto the Lord where we spend time with Him and our family. I think that is a great principle to follow.

And think about this for a minute. We don’t start out in full blown sin usually. It starts out subtly. “Lord, just this Sunday” and before long it is every Sunday. Or say you are not being as honest as you should at work because by doing this you will look good or you will make more money or whatever. Where do you draw the line? You see, that line will be pushed farther and farther back until you will not believe how far down you have gone! We must be careful not to trust the way we live out our life more than we trust Almighty God who knows all things and only has what is best for us!

VERSES 32-34

1. As you look at these things, you can see they had the right motives; they were committing their entire lives to the Lord, including their wallets you might say! The Temple tax was to be 1/3 of a shekel, and it was needed to provide the materials used in the worship of God. So every year, all those over 20 years of age were required to pay this 1/3 of a shekel. There is nothing wrong with this if your heart is right with the Lord, but if it is not, then you will give grudgingly or out of compulsion.

That is why, I believe, when people say that Christians are to give 10% as their tithe, making it into a Law, it is wrong and not Scriptural. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 9:6-7, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”** You see, we give out of a cheerful heart, not because we have to give, but because we desire to give!

VERSES 35-37

1. Remember that the prophet Malachi was speaking during this time of Nehemiah. And he was telling the people that the firstfruits belonged to God. That is the first of their grain, and animals, and-so-on. They were to give to God the best, but instead, they were giving to God the lame, the diseased, and-so-on.

And Malachi said, starting in verse 6 of chapter 1, **“A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, “In what way have we despised Your name?” You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, “In what way have we defiled You?” By saying, “The table of the Lord is contemptible.” And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. ‘But now entreat God’s favor, That He may be gracious to us. While this is being done by your hands, Will He accept you favorably?’ Says the Lord of hosts. ‘Who is there even among you who would shut**

the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,' Says the Lord of hosts. 'But you profane it, In that you say, "The table of the Lord is defiled; And its fruit, its food, is contemptible." You also say, "Oh, what a weariness!" And you sneer at it,' Says the Lord of hosts. 'And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?' Says the Lord. 'But cursed be the deceiver Who has in his flock a male, And takes a vow, But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished - For I am a great King,' Says the Lord of hosts, And My name is to be feared among the nations.'" Malachi 1:6-14.

God deserves our best, not our seconds or thirds or those things that we would throw in the trash! May we not forget that as we serve Him!

VERSES 38-39

1. Once again we see that our giving to God needs to be out of the right heart. And for some reason, they were not giving to God, so Malachi told them in Malachi chapter 3 starting in verse 8, **“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this, Says the LORD of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.”** Malachi 3:8-10.

You see, Malachi is saying that if you want to be blessed by God, then give to God. It is not that God needs it, for it all belongs to Him anyway. But we have the privilege of giving to the work of God, to the King of kings, and in turn we are blessed by it. We are not to give with the idea of getting something back in return. You see, giving to God is not like playing the stock market. Also, your returns or blessings will not always be monetary, but they will be rewarding. Thus, give out of a cheerful heart and not out of constraint and God will bless! What you sow it is what you will reap!

2. Let me close with these thoughts. Remember that this all came about because of the Word of God spoken to the people. You see, the Word of God brought revival in the hearts of the people and it resulted in what they did, what they said. The Word of God affected their lives because God began the work on the inside and it overflowed into their outward actions! What was the result, what did they do? They avoided intermarriages with other nations, Deuteronomy 7:3-4. They kept the Sabbath, Exodus 20:8-11. They kept the Sabbatical year, Leviticus 25:2-7. They were supporting the Temple service, Exodus 30:11-16. The wood for the burnt offering was being provided, Leviticus 6:12-13. The firstfruits of the crops were being offered, Deuteronomy 26:1-3. The firstborn of their sons, whom they would redeem back and the firstborn of their animals, which they would sacrifice, were given to God, Numbers 18:15-17. And their annual tithe offerings were being given, Numbers 18:21-24.

This does not happen apart from the Word of God being proclaimed. Look back over the history in the Bible, look back over the history in the recent past and you will see that revival is always the result of the Word of God being proclaimed! May we have a love, a passion for the Word of God, not just for knowledge or information, but for application! That we would live what we say we believe! That revival would begin in our own hearts and spread outward!