



## Sermon Study Guide

*The Danger of a Dead Faith: Will You Give?*  
*Malachi 3:6-12*  
*Sunday, January 27, 13*

### Introduction

- Why is the topic of financial giving such a touchy subject for so many?
- Which of the following statements best describes you?
  - I am frustrated with how the church spends money.
  - I feel guilty because I don't give as much as I'd like to the church.
  - I resent others who seem to hold back when I give as much as I can.
- Read Malachi 3:6-12.

### Israel's Problem

- The problem is clearly stated in verse 8. They have been robbing God by withholding their "tithes and contributions."
- Every Israelite gave approximately 25% of his income to God each year.
  - The first tithe went to support the priests (see Lev. 27, Num. 18, Neh. 10).
  - The second tithe went to support the yearly festivals (see Deut. 14).
  - The third tithe was given every third year and it went to support the needy (see Deut. 14).
- According to Malachi 3:10, what do you think was the heart of Israel's problem? In other words, why did they withhold their financial giving? (Hint: in this case, testing is equivalent to trusting God)

### God's Solution

- God wanted Israel to trust Him, completely. (See Psa. 20:7-8) Therefore, they were to obey His command to tithe perfectly. God wants Israel to understand that faithful and sacrificial giving to God is evidence of genuine love for God.
- God does more than make commands; He makes promises. What promise does He have for Israel in verses 7 and 10?
- How could this passage be easily misinterpreted? (Hint: think "prosperity Gospel")
- To avoid misinterpreting this passage, remember:
  - First, we don't live in ancient Israel. Therefore, the promises of material prosperity due to tithing do not apply to believers today.
  - Second, Israel's refusal to tithe is evidence they needed a savior. This is why Christ came, to save sinners who don't trust God.
  - Third, now, instead of looking for material prosperity in the land, we come to Jesus for rest. (See Matt. 11:28)

## Application Focusing on Financial Giving

- UNDERSTAND this enduring principle at work: *faithful and sacrificial giving to God is evidence of genuine love for God*. Four truths to unpack this point:
  - First, every human being is a temporary steward of God's stuff.
    - See Gen. 1:28-30 – to be human is to have temporary dominion over God's creation
    - See Job 1:21 – everything belongs to God
  - Second, Christian stewardship requires giving generously for the building of the church.
    - Believers no longer support maintenance of the Temple but the building of the church (don't think bricks & mortar!)
    - See Matt. 16:18 – the church built by Jesus will not fail
    - See 1 Tim. 5:18 and 1 Cor. 16 for a biblical basis of local church support
    - What, then, are we supporting when we support the local church? The going of the saints – sending believers out to share the gospel. The gathering of the saints – equipping believers to grow in the gospel
  - Third, greed will curb or even kill our generosity
    - Heed Jesus' warning of Matt. 16:13
    - Be aware of the "grip of greed." If you compare yourself to your neighbors you will almost always feel poor. There is always someone with more.
    - How are you tempted to forget that you are relatively wealthy?
  - Fourth, only the Gospel will free us to experience God-glorifying giving
    - See 2 Cor. 8 – Paul commends the generosity of Macedonian churches
    - How does Paul encourage the Corinthians to give generously? (See 2 Cor. 8:8)
    - Where can we get the kind of love that produces generosity? (See 2 Cor. 8:9) Only Gospel-grace can fuel the love that leads to generosity.
- EMBRACE this enduring principle at work: *faithful and sacrificial giving to God is evidence of genuine love for God*.
  - First, get to know the missions budget of MVBC. Do you know the staff of MVBC so well you *want* to support them financially? Do you know the missions of MVBC so well you *want* to support them financially?
  - Second, get to know your personal budget. Where is your money going? Would careful accounting of the money God has given you free you up to be more generous?
  - Third, support the church budget. Will you make a commitment to give generously to the local church?

## Conclusion

- The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy asked the question, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" His answer: "Six feet from his head to his heels."
- How much do you need? How does the answer to that question affect how much you give?