



13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? 14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. 16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. (Mal 3:13-18)

There is great consolation in the two verses immediately preceding today's text in which God assures us of blessings if we will be prove Him by His promises: "*And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts.*" (Mal 3:11-12) We need only trust God - and DISTRUST ourselves and other men - to discover that God is faithful and true to perform all that He has promised. "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*" (Heb 10:22) There is an old gospel song by R. Kelso Carter (1886) which declares the faith of the believer in God's power (and willingness) to prove true His every promise:

*Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.*

There is no surer foundation than the Word of God upon which to stand, and no more uncertain a foundation than that based upon trust in man. "*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*" (Psalms 118:8) Here is another quote for those who prefer to obey a wicked government law to the detriment of faith: "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" (Acts 5:29) You already know who you are!

Just like the lawyer, seeking to justify himself, asked the Lord, "And who is my neighbor?" so do we rationalize away our lack of faith and obedience with vain words.

**13 "Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?"** We began as children uttering lies from a chocolate smeared face: "No, mommy, I did not eat the cookies!" and we have gotten even better and more sophisticated with our lies - so much so that we even are able to lie to our own deceitful hearts. If we cannot even trust our own hearts (which we cannot) how can we trust even ministers without proving all things by Holy Scripture?

**14 "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?"** Do you believe God has ever forsaken His own. He has not done so, nor will He ever. Though Christ prayed the prayer from the Cross, "***My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?***" the cry was out of the calamity of sin that He bore for us. It was a question and not an answer. God received the soul of His dear Son at the moment of His surrender of the Spirit. Has it ever been vain to serve God?

The professed Church of God during the days of Malachi seems to have experienced declension and compromise. The faith they profess seems at variance with the lack of faith their lives exhibit. There was a 'professed' piety, but not an inner piety that is based on heart knowledge. Real piety that is practical and expressed in our outward lives is a reflection of the piety which lies concealed within the heart and which flows outward from the abundant Fountain of Grace which God provides each blessed soul in Christ. Real piety serves God, not man, mammon, or the devil. It does not simply seek to obey God's Law, but it actually loves and embraces that Law. It diligently seeks out the will of God and attempts, at its fullest, to make God's Will its own. Real piety also seeks to keep the ordinances and sacraments of God. Our duty to God, and each other, is to be faithful in assembling ourselves together in Common Prayer and Worship. We observe those two critically important sacraments which Christ taught us, and requires of us - Baptism and Holy Communion. True piety not only attempts to avoid sin, but actually HATES sin just as God hates sin.

What of those of whom true piety is not valued or edifying? If we love great art, we will certainly become knowledgeable of DaVinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Tolstoi, Shakespeare, and Longfellow. If we are not inclined to good taste, we shall avoid familiarity with the arts and we shall remain blind and in the dark concerning it. The same is true of religion. If we are not inclined to love God's Holy Word, and find it a matter of little concern, we will remain forever in the dark of those things which can light our way and lead us into the Kingdom of God. The Christian cannot be double-minded! He cannot dance with world at night and pray in the House of the Lord by day. If you are a Sunday-only Christian, you will be spending the other six days in preparation for a burning hell.

You will note the misappropriation of titles that the worldly Christian associates with those things that are sin. **15 "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."** How would the modern church classify 'adultery' for example - perhaps as an alternate lifestyle. And what of the abominable sin of homosexuality? Well, the world will call that being 'GAY!' What a horrendous misnomer that is! The average life expectancy of a practicing homosexual, based on statistics of the previous decade, is age 43. Either that is a most joyful 43 years, or a most miserable one. I opt for the latter since those who practice this sin are so constantly angry and confused. The murder of the most innocent of innocents is termed 'CHOICE.' The world views the arrogant and proud as the happiest people ever. The politicians with the most vicious and deceitful mind is revered and honored while the honest citizen cannot get a voice. Those whose lives are the most violently

opposed to God are held up as role models in today's society.

**16 "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."** Please note the gems of divine truth in this verse. Those people who are Godly:

- 1) Fear the Lord. They are deeply concerned that they not bring shame and dishonor to His Holy Name;
- 2) They do not fail to speak often of the Lord one to another; they do not fail to assemble together in His Name;
- 3) They do not only dwell mentally upon the Name of the Lord, but also speak out of it.

When Godly people are so inclined to honor Him, how does the Lord respond? 1) He notices and hears the praises and pleasant worship of the people; and, 2) He causes a Book of Remembrance to be written for those who have a reverence and fear of Him. God will not fail to remember every random act of kindness, every drink of water given to a little child, every widow whose journey was made easier - by His elect people. He will make vessels of honor of his elect, and vessels of dishonor of those who abuse their souls in sin.

Are you a jewel in the Box of the Lord? If you have received and followed Christ as Lord and Savior, you certainly are a precious stone and gem to Him. **17 "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."** Those faithful shall be highly treasured by the Lord in the Day of Wrath and Judgment. Not a hair shall fall from their heads, and not a flame shall touch their bodies. The Holy Angels will separate all of those fishes caught in the dragnet (church) and the good fishes shall be kept apart, and the bad cast into boiling pots. God will be quite careful to cuddle His people as a favored child, and not harm shall befall. But this treatment is only reserved for those who have faithfully served Him according to their abilities.

**18 "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."** Just as the Rich Man in Hell saw the bliss of poor Lazarus the Righteous in the bosom of Abraham, so shall the wicked see the bliss of the righteous in the last day and will pine for the joy of the righteous while they suffer below. The wicked are perfectly suited for the company of Hell for they neither served God in life, nor will they be privileged to serve Him in the eternity of death they will suffer through.

The next devotion will cover the last chapter of Malachi - it contains some of the most beautiful of metaphors, and it points to the coming Christ without apology. You might do your homework and read ahead.