

**Why Kind of Saving Are You Looking for?**  
**What's the Benefit In "Fearing" The Lord?"**  
**[Malachi 3:13-4:3]**

Good morning saints!

We are now almost wrapping up our study in the **Book of Malachi**. Next week will be the last sermon before we make the transition to the book of Luke. But before we begin, as we always do, *let me remind you that we gather here in this building for one reason and one alone! Which reason? To see you need and then run to the one who can meet that need. Yes **To see a lifted-up savior, to see and rest in a beautiful savior.** If you are coming here for any other reason than being reminded of your need and this offer of a beautiful savior who meets that need, then you will be highly disappointed. We have nothing else to offer.*

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**Recap**

We have seen that there is a clear **theme that is central** to the whole book of Malachi. Listen carefully = **When the FULL Law of God is tampered with**, [What do we mean by "tampered with" = changed, adjusted, altered, ignored, revised, improved, reformed, improved, twerked, evolved... name it...]**... When the FULL Law of God is tampered with, within the people of God, God is absolutely offended and the spiritually of the people is totally restructured and affected. Simply, the people of God fall apart.** Friends listen, when the Full Law of God is lost, reverence to God is also lost. The Law is a True reflection of the Law Giver, hence tampering with this Law is the same as what... Exactly. In the first sermon, Anthony helped us put more words to this central theme with a simplified cycle. Remember = *we hear **THE LAW** → we see our **GUILT** → through our guilt, we see what we **DESERVE** → in seeing what we deserve, we see the **MERCY** God provides → and in seeing His mercy we understand **GOD'S LOVE FOR US.***

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**Foreword**

Ok. We all gathered in this place this morning with needs. Yes, needs we all long either in part or if possible in full to be met and no longer carry them around. And I want to call you this morning to consider these needs that you long saving from. I would further ask you to consider what is your chief need, by that I mean, I need something that stands at the root of all the other needs . If it were met today then it would either make the other needs light or possibly clear the other ones out. Are we together? What is it? And it is my earnest desire this morning that as we wrap up this book, the Lord would graciously **stir** within us a reverence, an appropriate fear and love for **His Full Law**, which friends would automatically lead us to cross to be show mercy and showered with Love and only then friends can we once again marvel at the beauty of this one we love and cherish. Please listen, this is a special time that Christ wants to serve you mercy, and grace upon grace... this is for you dear one, to hear the Full law, see your guilt, understand what you truly deserved and flee for mercy at the cross, and friends listen at

that old rugged cross the promise is sure = ***Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*** Alright, now let's turn to our text, read it together and then ask the Lord to come and help us understand the truths he wants to proclaim this morning. We are in Malachi chapter 3 and we will be reading from verse 13 all the way to chapter 4 verse 3

### **Malachi 3:13-4:3**

**3:13** *"Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, 'How have we spoken against you?' 14 You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?' 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. **Evildoers** not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape."*

**16** *Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 17 "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.*

**4:1** *"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all **evildoers** will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.*

### **Lets Pray**

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### **Inception**

Alright, are we all ready to engage our minds and think through this text with the help of the Holy Spirit! Now, listen, please try your best not to switch off your mind here because I am going to lay down an accusation against all of us in this room, then go back to the text and flesh out that very accusation. So an accusation, against who? You, yes. Listen, I am going to read you something that we tend to do and you will not believe me but stay with me. Here is something that would tempt you in a heartbeat.

***"When God laid out the plan for your life, He carefully studied it. He thought about what you would need and what it would take to get you there. Then, He matched you with your world. He gave you the talent you need, the creativity, the strength. You're the right size, you have the right personality, you come from the right family. You didn't get shortchanged. You're not at a deficit. You are good enough, you are talented enough, you are smart enough, you are attractive enough. You have been fearfully and wonderfully made. Friends, God will not give you more than you can handle. If you face a big challenge, you have a big destiny. God doesn't make any mistakes. When He created you, He wasn't having a bad day. He***

***didn't accidentally leave something out and now you're at a disadvantage. God calls you a masterpiece. You have royal blood flowing through your veins. He's crowned you with His favor. You're not lacking; you're not at a disadvantage. You have everything you need to fulfill your destiny."***

Friends, this is something that would tempt you, you don't think about it but I assure it would tempt you. Friends, we all in various forms and degrees believe that, leave alone a deep desire that it might just be true for you one day! And I know immediately your so-called reformed minds are tempted to quickly dismiss that as "prosperity gospel" which is true yet friends, you know yourself, deep down, you wish this will and can be true for you even today. Friends, that quote from Joel Osteen unfortunately rings true to all of us in this building even though you would not say those words or amen those words in public. Friends, given a chance that those words were to become true tomorrow or in the near future would overjoy your heart like nothing else. Friends, if there was even a 0.999% of those words fulfilled you would be beside yourself. Friends, here is my accusation this morning, you all believe in the prosperity gospel, you all love the prosperity gospel. Friends, don't forget how we started, we are all gathered in this building with needs we long to be fulfilled and I am suggesting this morning that your chief needs are well touched and represented by that very quote. In our text this morning the jews are acting like people who believe in the prosperity gospel. And unfortunately friends, the same can be said about yourself, you ofcourse theologically deny the prosperity gospel, but you live and act, and still battle with desires that lean deeply towards a prosperity gospel. Now let's go back to our text and I will show you that.

***We gather in this building with needs that we long to be satisfied. And whatever that need is, you seek saving from it. And so I want us to consider what kind of saving are you seeking after? What need do you seek saving from?***

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### **Text**

In this text, the jews have a need which will be exposed. Now let's go back to our text. In verse 13 God starts with a definitive accusation. We read from the **ESV**= "***Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD.*** What does that mean, what does that word 'hard' mean? The **NASB** reads = "Your words have been **arrogant** against Me," says the Lord." They replace the word 'hard' with 'arrogant'. The **NET** reads = "***You have criticized me sharply,***" says the Lord and my wife's favorite translation the **NLT** reads = "***You have said terrible things about me,***" says the Lord."

You get the point, the Lord's accusation against the jews is that they have piled up accusations against him arrogantly and He is not pleased with that. Simply, the people on several occasions have spoken ill of who God is and what He does. They are foundationally questioning His authority. Now, Pause, if the Lord brought such an

accusation against you this morning = | **“Your words have been arrogant against Me | “You have said terrible things about me |** What would be your response? Hold on to that response we will get back to it later on. So the Lord brings forth this accusation and how do the people respond? **But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’** So again as we have seen throughout the book this cycle of the Lord bringing forth accusations and then immediately the people have a shocking response towards the Lord. The Jews in the light of the accusation respond with = *‘What do you mean? What have we said against you?’* They are shocked by such an accusation. They seem to be caught off guard or athletes they are probably assuming such an accusation is being directed towards the wrong crowd. It's a case of mistaken identity. The Jews would never lay such an accusation against Yahweh for sure. And friends, you realize that response alone is making a claim against God, what claim = God is either lying or confused to whom He is addressing! So in the next verses, although its pretty clear the Lord doesn't need to explain Himself further, He graciously does further make his accusation clear. Verse 14 and 15 = **14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’”**

So we now get to understand these arrogant accusations the Jews have been bringing forth against the Lord. And before we take a close look at the accusation they are bringing forth and charging the Lord with, allow me to remind you who they are and where they have been... is that okay! This was a pagan and non-existing nation that by the sheer grace and mercy of the Lord, God in his own pleasure chose a moon worshiper called Abraham and made an unconditional covenant with him, this one chosen was far from being righteous in fact, he committed many transgressions including twice lying about his relationship to his wife Sarah, yet the Lord preserved his lineage to one Jacob, yes Jacob the one who stole his brother Esau's inheritance and as his name suggests was a swindler, and then we fast forward to the nation under Slavery in Egypt where again God graciously raises up Moses who delivers the nation and renews his covenant with them, and the story keeps repeating itself, the nation fails, they cry out to the Lord and he redeems them as we will be looking at on Wednesday Bible study through the book of Judges. And as we have mentioned before, as this book is being written the nation has been restored back to the land through the sheer grace and mercy of the Lord. **Deut 7:7-8 = It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers.** I just wanted to get that out of the way, this is a nation that exists due to God's sheer grace and mercy. And now, God brings forth an accusation against them, they absolutely deny it and are shocked by such an accusation. So what's the accusation? Verse 14 and 15 once more = **“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 Host 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.’”**

Simply, the Jews have a need, they do all they believe is commanded as a means to have that need met and unfortunately they seem not to receive any saving or relief from their perceived need. You see friends, the Jews are struggling with what we have seen over

and over in Malachi = **Does it pay to serve God if the evil prospers?**

Friends, you understand the assumption behind these arrogant complaints is that there is a guaranteed form of some sort of good and prosperity that must and should follow those who surely serve the Lord, right? And therefore if such prosperity is rather happening to the outsiders, the evildoers, then there is a problem. You see friends, as we mentioned before, the nation is acting as ones who indeed subscribe and believe in the prosperity gospel. To be clear, the complaints they bring forth are pretty clear that they have and continue to serve the Lord, obey his commands, and showcase their sorrow for their sins ONLY because such acts have an attached promise of prosperity. And now since that prosperity doesn't seem to be happening to them rather looks like the ones who should be crushed by the Lord are receiving this prosperity then = it's useless to serve the Lord! And friends, they are shocked when God brings forth this accusation which obviously means that they have long held to that formula of doing, and getting rewarded. They trace back in their history where their fathers failed, repented, and received forgiveness, and they have come to assume that this so-called formula works. But does it? Is this how the Lord has always related to the nation? Friends, is it true that the evildoers put God to test and escape? Is this the formula we surely need to teach and practice today to God what we deeply desire from God? I mean friends, isn't this the foundation of the prosperity Gospel? For the Jews the Abrahamic covenant has become the means to material entitlement and prosperity that must happen to the nation!

Again, the Jews are struggling with what all of you struggle with and often get questioned on by the world= **Does it pay to serve God?** We can even extend it further = **Does it pay to serve God if the evil prospers?** And why are they considering these questions? Because they gather with needs and are seeking saving from these needs. They are in dire need of harvesting the benefits of serving the Lord, and they have in their own eyes planted and watered this garden and they seem not to be seeing any fruits. So perhaps a better question should be = ***What need are they seeking to be saved from? What kind of saving are they looking for? What is this profit they are complaining of not receiving?***

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## **Law**

Friends, please don't disengage your mind, consider with me this morning, ***Does it pay for you to serve the Lord!*** Stop. Let me rephrase this in a different way. ***What Kind of savior are you looking for? What kind of saving do you need?*** It is pretty clear in our text that the Jews were looking for one who could redeem them from their present suffering, and one who would bless them with earthly goods. And from the text it seems like God was not doing that, so why bother? They mumble to themselves. So friend, what kind of savings are you seeking after?

Listen, over and over in this pulpit we have repeatedly asked this question = what is your greatest need? I started with it. So what is it? What need are you seeking to be satisfied? Please, think about it. Stop wasting your time, because friends a salvation that you don't see a need of is useless and boring, it's not salvation at all. What sort of benefit are you expecting from your good works of service to the Lord? What is that deep desire are you in search of through Christ? Friends, what accusations at heart are you laying at the Lord this morning? What has the Lord not yet delivered for you despite your earnest working, sorrow for your sins, and obedience to His law? I mean, why do you think we

ask that question over and over again, what is your greatest need? Please I beg you to consider it.

You see friends, some of us might even have grown bitter and on the verge of despair because like the Jews, despite your best efforts to serve the Lord, repenting of your sins, and best efforts of obedience you seem not to be making progress in getting your deepest needs met, and you look around yourself, and the unbelieving world seem to be making efficient progress in meeting those needs, they seem to be doing better than you by far yet they are mockers of God, and maybe you have got to a point of despair and wonder is this even worth it? Am I wasting my time? You see friends, the problem is deeper and wider than you think! Friends, the problem is that you not only understand our greatest need because we actually **need help to see our greatest need**. Friends, you are blind and unable to fully understand our chief need. You are so consumed with other needs and temporary needs and other kinds of salvation which we deeply desire to see satisfied and so far cut off from our true need. No wonder the nation is shocked by the accusation brought forth by the Lord. Friends, they don't see their need and hence they don't understand what kind of saving they need. Friends, listen you don't understand your need then you don't need saving. If you flip that again, and let's put it this way, if the savior you are trusting in is bringing a salvation you are not looking for, surely that is disappointing. No wonder you react the way you do when the kind of saving you are not looking for is presented to you in the Gospel! Friends, the Gospel is proclaimed in this pulpit and all you feel in your heart is apathy! Nothing moved in your heart, why? This is not the kind of saving you are looking for? You see friends, you are bought up in one story and on alone, the story of your glory. So desirous about your glory story that you would even christianize that story and still keep yourself in the middle of it. You still don't believe it. Consider with me this morning, what if each Sunday someone stood in this pulpit and presented let's say 3 sure ways to double your bank account from a christian perspective? Would that excite and perhaps move you to pay attention? What about 5 ways to improve your marriage? 4 ways to be a prosperous reformed christian? Mhhh.... I wonder if these faces would be apathetic and unmoved as they seem to look this morning! And you know what my guess is that those Sundays would be the best Sundays of your stay in this local body. Listen, Friends, ***What kind of saving are they looking for?***

I mean is it not heartbreaking that your soul is warmed up by discussion about other salvation? Warmed up about other needs, yes temporary needs met. And then here comes the giver of all things presents himself to you and promises to do you good, and you are apathetic and bored to say the least towards him? You sit there, here the Gospel and all you can think about is what's for lunch, what plans do you have after the gathering? What! Friends, your apathy towards your true need is sickening, its like a patient with terminal cancer who wins a huge sum of money and he has two options, either use some of the money to pay this one doctor who can bring cure or purchase first row tickets to an upcoming event of his favorite musical artists. The patient of course pays for the front row seat to see the concert and even halfway through the concert despise his constant nagging pain and discomfort from the terminal cancer and several attempted calls by the doctor who can help, he still stands up and dances through the whole concert to the point of death in those front row seats. This is your condition, friends. And this is exactly what the jews are doing, they have done all that needs to be done and they are not getting what they think they deserve, rather they see what they

deserve being given to others who are unworthy! Why bother serving him, why bother with repentance, studying his word... name it, if He will not satisfy your perceived deepest needs.

Verse 14 = ***“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 Host 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.’”***

So friends, the Lord responds to these accusations in verse 1 of chapter 4 = *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all **evildoers** will be stubble (burn it down like straw). The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.*

Please understand, such ones who lay accusation to the Lord and mistake his patience for being slow and not acting are in fact deluded because He will ensure their total destruction. That is not even a question, it is indeed a sure fact. Chapter 3 verse 18 emphasizes = *Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.*

And friends listen, we are so blinded and can't see leaving alone understanding our deepest need. Infact, this continued to be the case for the jews that even 400 years later when Jesus came and presented Himself the promised messiah, they denied it and sought to kill him because the did not understand their need, they were looking for an earthly messiah and when they realized that He was not able to meet that need, on that fateful day we read = *Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him.”* then here comes the people = *But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”— a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”* A third time he said to them, *“Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”* But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.

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## **Gospel**

What hope is there for such one like you and me who have resisted the saving that we need because we are so lost in our temporal needs and seek all ways to find them satisfied and have fought, resisted and bored by the salvation that meets our deepest need. Friends there is hope. Now listen, Even in the midst of this accusation the Lord brings forth against his people, we read of a different group that will be spared. Starting in verse 16 = *Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 17 “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as*

*a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. And then jumping to 4:2 = But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.*

So essentially two groups, one that we have spent time talking about and this other group described as ones who “fear the Lord.” What’s the difference between them? I would love to note that although we describe them as a second group, they are not necessarily a different group from those who have been complaining and ones the Lord brings forth the accusation. They are all from the same lump of cry of complainers and God accusers but something happens to them and in them because we note unlike the other group, they don’t respond with = **What’s the use of fearing the Lord?**

Rather, in the most shocking way of all they respond with **a proper fear towards the Lord and a high esteem for his name.** The ones in this second group come in without a proper understanding of their need and walk away unlike the first group with a proper understanding of their need which leads them to where they can find rest and rescue. Does that make sense?

This second group is faced by the full weight of the law by God’s grace see their need which leads them to a proper fear of the Lord. These ones are the ones who see the true benefit of turning to God for saving, because they understand what **they really need saving from**, and that God alone is that Savior. In other words we can summarize it this way = **The chief difference between the wicked and the good?** It’s not that one group gets good things in this world and the other gets bad things, rather one group faced with the full law sees their proper need and runs to the one who can rescue them, while the other group does not. Sinners who needed grace, saw their guilt and understood what they deserved, and fled to mercy and love. Oh friends, consider the blessing promised for those who see their need and run to the one who meets that need once more = *Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 17 “They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.*

*But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.*

How is that possible? 3:17 once again = **“They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.** Friends, there is one son who although served his father perfectly, he was one without blemish, he was not spared = rather he was offered up for many (Rom 8:32). Listen, this one who served his father perfectly and loved him perfectly came down from his fathers right hand, lived a sinless perfect life yet... Isa 53 beginning in verse 3

*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him*



not.

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief.*

You see friends our God knew of our great need for a faithful Savior. He knows our deepest need and despite our feeble efforts to resist, He seeks to pursue us, expose our need and then point us to himself. Friends, He is indeed for us, friends even on that fateful day at the cross, as we all gathered and shouted crucify him, knowing what He was about to do and before breathing his last, he was sworn on extending this mercy and love to us = **And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, pone on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."** (Luke 23:33-34). Friends, all ye who weary and heavy laden, come and drink from this foundation. Come and drink and never be thirsty anymore.

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### **Doxology**

The gospel brings tidings, glad tidings indeed,  
To mourners in Zion, who want to be freed,  
From sin and Satan, and Mount Sinai's flame,  
Good news of salvation, through Jesus the Lamb.

What sweet invitations, the gospel contains,  
To men heavy laden, with bondage and chains;  
It welcomes the weary, to come and be blessed,  
With ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest.

For every poor mourner, who thirsts for the Lord,  
A fountain is opened, in Jesus the Word;  
Their poor parched conscience, to cool and to wash,  
From guilt and pollution, from dead works and dross.

A robe is provided, their shame now to hide,  
In which none are clothed, but Jesus' bride;  
Though it be costly, yet is the robe free,  
And all Zion's mourners, shall decked with it be.

**Lets Pray!**