

THE KEY TO HEAVEN'S WINDOWS

Mal. 3:7-10

Cal
Jan
Dec 3 - 75 A.M.
Preacher: Preached 45 min. on major prophets & now we come to the minor prophets & what shall we do with Mal. 7 - some thinkmen in and. stand & said I don't know what going do with Mal, but he can have my hat.

This is the last of the prophets - the times in which he lived about 400 years before Christ. We could contrast with any modern community. V. 13-14. There was a divine challenge -- "prove me now, herewith. If I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing - that you will not have room enough to receive it."

"What a promise this is. And what a challenge to our faith. Prove me, put me to the test, see if I will not do this for you. Don't let the great blessings stagger your faith. Remember the great promises of God are unchangeable."

They had run away from their master, they had quit their work in V. 7. And God gives them a gracious invitation to return.

In California a 31 year old woman, (Beverly Johnson), climbed El Capitan A 3600 foot, solid granite cliff, in Yosemite Park. She climbed it in 10 days with 100 pounds of gear. Crevice by crevice, peg by peg, she drove her way up the cliff. At night she slept in her hammock in all kinds of weather. She was the first woman to make it to the top by herself. In an interview about those 10 lonely, and frightening days and nights, a lot of things she said - especially one thought stayed with her. (The way to eat an elephant is a bite at a time.)

If we stop and think about that, no matter how big it is, if you just take a bite at a time and stay with it, you will eat it all one day. And that is the way she climbed the 3600 foot mountain.

And when we think about our Foreign Mission Program and our Lottie Moon Offering, we start out together.

Let me ask you two or three questions - what is the mountain in life that you are facing. What is your one goal in life. Maybe you have more than one mountain, where are you trying to go too or get too. What do you want to do with your life.

What is your priority in life, what is really important to you. What really counts in life. A judge once said, to his wife - we have to get our priorities straightened out. We have some things in our life - but I am not sure that we are putting everything in the first place. Getting them in the right order.

Third, what are your commitments in life - who do you belong too really? Everybody belongs to someone or to something. It may be to yourself. And say I belong to me. My life is my own - I will do with it as I please. I will be my own master. Jesus said that is a tragic commitment. When a man seeks to keep his own life. But he must get on a higher level.

Fourth, what are you getting out of life. Could you say there is joy and

inspiration as our choir does from week to week. Can you say with the Scripture - this is the Lord's Day. The Lord hath made it, we will rejoice in it, and be glad. Or that you are grateful to be alive. Or that you enjoy a beautiful sunrise.

God wants you to get the fullest and the richest, and the most abundant things out of life. Now with those things before you, let us think about these verses here in Mal. In which God specifies how a man can have fullness of blessings. He can literally unlock the windows of Heaven. And God gives the key to which and with which a man can open the windows.

V. 10 God says to the prophet - write these words to the people. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me now, herewith, now saith the Lord of hosts. If I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour out the blessings so great, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Now perhaps some of you wonder about that Scripture and have thought about it.

I. AN IMPERATIVE

This verse says, just as Jesus said it - in The Sermon On The Mount. (Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.) That is not an option - that is really not a choice. That sounds like a command. Jesus says do this, and if you do this, there are certain consequences that are going to happen.

The Old Testament had the same idea. Bring all of the tithes into the store-
house. To bring our money to the church. But what does that have to do with my
goal in life or my happiness.

Here is a question what is the tithe. You say, I know. That is 1/10 of
everything earned. No, the tithe is the first tenth - not the second tenth or
the forth. But the first.

Here is the principle - the priority starts on the first page of the Bible.
And runs to the last. God says to order you life in such a way that your priority
and God's will is going to be the purpose of your life. The principle is the
firstness. Not just to your heart and your soul - but your goods and your deeds.
God says put me first - the first tenth.

It started with Cain and Abel - God's first command to them. Bring ye the
first fruits of the flock and the field, and of the grain, and of the first corn.
This is an acknowledgement of my ownership of your life and your stewardship of
what you have.

The Ten Commandments - God says he gave to society - and thou shalt have no
other gods before me. God was going to be first. In a moral society, God must
be first. Not the second or the forth, but first.

In Egypt the Hebrews, in bondage were going to be delivered. You will be my people. But God says, set aside the first son in each household. For service in the temple. Again there is the idea of the first.

Then in Mal. (3:10) - the first tenth of what I have, what you earn, bring it as an acknowledgement of priority. Jesus summarizes it in - seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, that is - it takes in my things, my family, myself, and my decisions in life.

Now, in the area of money - that is a very sensitive area in a person's life. If we can settle that, we can settle most other areas. What am I going to do with my time, my service. God first What am I going to do with the Lord's Day. Remember the Sabbath Day - it was set aside - one day in the week. I can do business on the other days. But God has a claim on my routine. Now I do not have to fight the battle of whether I am going to be loyal to my church services. Or whether I am going to be present to teach my Sunday School Class. Or whether I am going to be there to serve when I am needed in my church. I have already settled that, when I decided that I was going to give a tenth of my money to my church. Do you see how this bears on all of life.

In a magazine, they featured Mike Maus - N. B. C.'s anchorman on the radio news is heard five times a day. His voice and his name is familiar to millions of people. There was an article about his finances. And he was giving his income a breakdown of his budget. The largest single item in his budget is tithes and contributions. It was more than housing, entertainment, or anything else. The article went on to say that giving away 10% of his pre-taxed income for the Lord's

work, he vows that he would never stop tithing and his wife agrees. He is an elder in a 2200 member of a Presbyterian Church. He spends as much as 20 hours a week in voluntary service as a layman.

The principle is, the testimony we hear again and again - I belong to the Lord. I made a committment.

The command goes on to say - bring the tithes into the storehouse. Now people are often asking what is the storehouse. Why, it is the church! The church is the institution that is going to be the continuing witness of Christ, in the world today.

(your Church - your Membership)

When are we to bring it. The Scripture says the first day of the week. Systematically as God blesses, we bring.

Who is to do it - every one of you. Bring ye all the tithes. That means, if I am the head of the household, I will divide it up among my family and my children, in order that they might share in this experience. Saying, this is our testimony. Of the claim that God has on my life and what I have.

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Why - V-8 - Cat - not steel
(Bob Trull) Ark. N.C.

II. A CHALLENGE

God says, prove me! It is as if God draws a line out here, and says step across.

And see what happens. Test me, try me, prove me. This is a question of whether we can trust God.

Can you walk by faith and believe that God is going to keep His promise. Would God lie to us. Would he deceive us. He will not promise something that he will not give us. Try me and see. We tried God when we trusted him for salvation. When we asked him to forgive us of our sins. We need to try God in other areas too.

III. PROMISE

See if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing. God wants to open those windows of Heaven. He wants to shower down upon us unlimited and an abundance of blessings.

Wouldn't you like to start today - saying I wonder how God is going to surprise me today. He has been so good to me. And yet he keeps on blessing, and blessing, and blessing. That is what he promises us.

Now you say, are you telling me that God is going to make me a millionaire if I start rithing. If I give a tenth of my income, I am going to get more and more money - no, this is not what I think this Scripture teaches.

(Seed corn - idea)

What is Bible idea -

The Scripture teaches that He is going to bless us, with his abundance. Our problem is, we think abundance supplies things like money. He may bless you in that way. Because he is always looking for stewards that he can trust.

You remember Jesus in the parable of the pounds and the talents. The Master gave one five, one two, and another one. But this one was not. The two were faithful. He blessed them, and he cursed the one who did not carry out the stewardship.

There are stories about George Kraft, the cheese man. And the druggist in Whichata, Kansas who developed a formula of mentholadium during the depression - they were about to close that church. The man said, my drug store is about on the rocks. But I am going to give God 1/10 of everything I make at the store and everything that I get from this formula. He became not only a great church man but it saved the church by his example, and he became a multi-millionaire.

The real story that I want to tell you is this, God says I will bless you out of my abundance. And you will get abundant living. It is not the abundant things that we want, it is an abundant life.

I've been around a lot of people at times - who have had power and great wealth. They had all of the money that they needed. But the great tragedy in their lives - they were miserable. But the abundance of things is not to mean to have an abundant life. He wants to bless you beyond things.

The mountain that I would like to climb, is to do the will of God in my life. Now if it is the El Capitan - this 3600 foot mountain. You will never reach it in one leap. But you have to start eating an elephant one bite at a time.

What can I do right now. I am starting on this journey. I have tried to do God's will as it unfolds for me. I am going to put the tithe in the Lord's house each step of the way as I climb this mountain. I can take that check and my money, and the first tenth is the Lord's.

Next Sunday, we can try to do this. All of us together. And through the tithe - this is the Lord's. What would happen in your life, if you just tried it. What will happen if every one of our members brought the tithe next Sunday. We would discover that God would bless this church - why it would explode in outreach for people. If every member said, I will put God first.

Now we are starting out on a Week Of Prayer For a Foreign Mission Offering, and then we are going to adopt a Church Budget, in a couple of weeks. And this will be an opportunity that we can know that God is ready, if we will just use the key that opens the window.

Dr. George W. Truett for many years a preacher in Dallas, Texas - would go out and hold "Cowboy Revivals" - where ranchers lived. In his "Cowboy" meeting one year, after the service one night. A rancher came to him and said - I never knew until tonight, that God really owned this spread of mine. Those miles of pasture. Those thousands of cattle that run on my spread. I thought they were mine. My ranch, my

cattle, but you have showed me that they are God's. And that I am just a steward. Dr. Truett, I want you to pray for me. " I want to dedicate my life as a steward to God tonight. I want you to have a prayer with me - so they knelt down in the shade of a bush. And they prayed.

This man has given it all to you, Lord. It is yours anyway. Bless him as a steward now, as he tries to serve you. And when he said Amen. The man said, let me pray now. I have given your land back and your cattle. I am just a steward. But there is one thing I cannot give you tonight - and that is my son. He has to give himself to you, Lord. I want him to be saved more than anything else, it is more important than all the cattle and land for my boy to be a Christian. And to live right and to be right - Lord save him.

Dr. Truett said, the next night as he preached, he saw a young man easing his way to the front. Suddenly that young man broke down the aisle with his hands in motion and said, stop, Dr. Truett, stop. I cannot wait any longer. I want to be saved and I am ready to give my heart to Jesus right now and he began to weep. It was the old rancher's son. The old man came forward and took him in his arms.

Do you see, that is the (windows of Heaven) opening. When we are ready to say, I am going to put things in the right order, and start now, and do it now, we are going to open the windows of Heaven and God's blessings abundantly. With the things that really count in life.

Why not take that step today. Whatever it is. If you ought to profess Christ as your Saviour. If you ought to come for baptism, or move your letter. If you ought to rededicate your life - you ought to do it publicly. And you ought to do it now.