

The Book of Remembrance

We'll be in Malachi Chapter 3 if you'd like to turn there.

- I read through Bible in 2019. I used a plan that had daily readings in the OT, the NT, Psalms, and Proverbs. Two big picture themes were impressed in my consciousness:

- **God is sovereign -**

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. 1 Chronicles 29:11

- **The main thing God expects from us is a reverential fear of Him and humble obedience -**

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD.

But this is the one to whom I will look (to whom I will show special favor):

he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. Isaiah 66:2

- These themes have served to color the way I view God and my relationship with him. God is so BIG, I am so small...but he will look to me, he will favor me, if I tremble at his Word.
- On the very last day of the year, in the Old Testament part of my daily reading, some verses from Malachi touched me.
 - Malachi's prophecy is considered to be the last inspired word from God prior to the advent of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
 - Malachi ministered to those returning to Jerusalem and Judah after the Babylonian captivity, approximately 420 years before Jesus was born.
 - He called the people of God back to fidelity in their ways and in their worship. God confronts the priests and the people, through Malachi, about their hypocrisy, their infidelity in marriage, their despising of God's requirements for sacrifices, their stinginess, and their general lack of faith. He also offers reassurances to them, and he tells them what to look for in the future before the "awesome day of the Lord" which was the anticipated advent of the Messiah.
- Malachi 3:13-15:

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.'"

 - This is murmuring. God frowns on murmuring. Those children of Israel, after leaving Egypt, who murmured against the Lord were wiped out by plagues, or swallowed up by the earth, or they were not permitted to enter the promised land. At every turn, they complained, even only hours after witnessing the most amazing miracles like the parting of the Red Sea, or after God's provision of manna. And through the history of Israel and Judah, recorded in the Old Testament,

the story of their unfaithfulness is so repetitive, with grumbling and disrespect toward God being a constant theme.

- We have a tendency to read these stories and to shake our heads and say “How could they have been so hard hearted?” But...
- Are we not guilty of murmuring or grumbling? We may not use these exact words, but our complaints are similar. At the most fundamental level, grumbling is an expression, against others, that we have been treated unfairly, that we don’t deserve the affliction we’re under, and that people less deserving get all the breaks. It seems to be a part of our sinful, fallen condition.
- Ultimately all grumbling or murmuring is against the Lord, even though other people or situations may be the immediate target. Remember, in our text, the people said to God, “But how have we spoken against you?” They couldn’t see that their murmurings were directed at the Lord. If God is sovereign over all things, this means He has allowed whatever comes to pass in our lives (even stubbed toes, broken down cars, or property taxes that are too high).
- There is a truth, taught by Jesus, that applies here: *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.* Luke 6:45. If we have a continuous habit of grumbling and complaining, it reveals that the “treasure” in our hearts is evil or bitter. It reveals a lack of faith. It reveals that we don’t tremble at his Word.
- The Christian missionary and author Amy Carmichael has a revealing observation in her little book titled *If*. She said, “A cup brimful of sweet water cannot spill even one drop of bitter water, however suddenly jolted.” If we are carrying a cup of coffee, and we get bumped, coffee will spill from the cup. If we are carrying a heart full of bitterness and unforgiveness and we get jolted by some unwelcome event, or person, or circumstance, bitterness will pour out of our mouth. On the other hand, if we are carrying a heart full of gratitude and we are jolted, thankful, positive words will come out.
- Keep all this in mind as we return to the text:

- Malachi 3:16-18:

16Then 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. These verses provide both a remedy for a murmuring heart attitude, and a reward that comes as a result:

- Vs 16 - **those who feared the Lord** spoke with one another -
 - The remedy starts with a healthy fear of the Lord. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 9:10.* Realize He is sovereign. Become familiar with his word. Tremble at his word. Humble yourselves. Become contrite in spirit. Repent of the bitterness in your heart. Agree with God that it is wrong. Confess your anger toward God and others. Forgive

those who have wronged you. Forgive those who you *think* have wronged you (maybe they really didn't wrong you).

- Vs 16 - those who feared the Lord **spoke with one another** -
 - Another Proverb says *Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.* Proverbs 13:20. If you want to cultivate a healthy fear of the Lord, it's best to surround yourself, whenever possible, with those who have matured in a healthy fear of the Lord.
 - If you want to rid yourself of a murmuring heart and a bitter attitude, it's best not to hang out with those who stew in bitterness. If you have a choice, avoid those who constantly grumble and complain.
 - Have you noticed how refreshed you feel after fellowshiping with other believers? Perhaps this is why the writer of Hebrews says:
24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25
- Continuing in vs 16 **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.
 - How comforting are these words?!! Beyond the tangible and immediate benefits we receive from meeting together and encouraging each other, it's wonderful to know that the Lord is paying attention and that he hears our expressions of faith and testimonies of his work in our lives. Not only does he hear them, but he's recording them in a book for future reference.
 - He is pleased when we gather, even if it's only 2 or 3 at a time, and we speak faith filled words to each other that are encouraging and that express gratitude.
 - He is pleased when our words honor him as we walk through each day. Moses gave an encouragement to the people of Israel as they were about to cross the Jordan into the long awaited promised land. Here's what he said in Deuteronomy 6:4-9:
4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
- It's a matter of taking one step at a time. Of stopping and starting. Stop grumbling, reacting negatively, and using curse words, both big and small. Why is it acceptable to say "Awww crap!" but it's wrong to say "Aww sh**!" Both expressions reveal a heart attitude that is

murmuring toward your Maker. Are we all guilty of this? Yes! Should we seek to eliminate it from our lives? Double yes!

- Practice giving thanks for God's hand in your life, even when the circumstances aren't so pleasant. It's not negative to say, "This is hard, but I'm trusting good will come of it!" This small, humble expression of faith will make it into the Book of Remembrance, I'm sure. James exhorts us to remember that *God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble*. James 4:6. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:9

- Back to our text in the 3rd chapter of Malachi. Here's the reward for fearing the Lord and speaking words of faith to each other: 17 *"They (those who feared the Lord) 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.*

- We will know we are making progress when our manner of speaking is distinct enough to stand out.
- Steve has said that, when he prays for all of us, he prays that we would be asked, by others, about the hope that is in us. He is referencing, in his prayer, 1 Peter 3:15: ... *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...*
- If, in our hearts we honor Christ the Lord as holy, then the abundance of our hearts will flow out through our speech. The things we say will reveal the hope we have as believers!
- So many of us are terrified about doing things like street witnessing, knocking on doors, or even proactively speaking out about our faith on Facebook. But, if our hearts are full of faith and assurance, positive and hopeful words will naturally come out in the things we say.
- And the best part...? God takes note and numbers us among his "treasured possession!" How wonderful is that!!!
- Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2:14-15 comes to mind: *14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world..."*

- If we live this way, particularly as we cultivate hearts of gratitude that overflow in gracious speech, we can live in joyful anticipation of the final judgment at the end of time. Recall the Book of Remembrance we read about in Malachi? I can't help but believe this is the Lamb's Book of Life spoken about in Revelation Chapter 20, where, in his vision, the Apostle John foresaw the final judgment. Listen:

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15

- John goes on to describe The New Heaven and the New Earth where those whose names were recorded in the Lamb's book of Life would dwell forever, as *His treasured possession!*
- To review
 - God is sovereign over everything.
 - His expects us to live in reverential fear and to give him our humble obedience.
 - We have a sinful tendency to murmur.
 - Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
 - God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
 - If we confess our sins, God forgives and cleanses.
 - God is writing a Book of Remembrance, and he is making us his treasured possession.

I'll close with this exhortation by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:12-17. This is our charge:

- *12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
- Close with prayer.