

Sunday, August 9, 2026

To fear or not to fear? That is the question.

Malachi 3:13-4:3 **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. Evil doers 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. **1** “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evil doers 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.

- **Cynical theology** is an ideology that limits God to past actions. Those who practice this ideology believe God will only do what he has done before, relying on history and personal experience rather than the Holy Spirit. This mindset lacks the fear of God because it dismisses his sovereignty and dynamic ability to be present and active in the lives of his people.
- As we approach this text, I'm going to take a moment to pan the camera out and invite everyone to study the entire book of Malachi. I know that, generally, the only time you hear about this book is when we are talking about tithes and offerings, but I

would offer that this is one of the most real conversations God had with his prophet and his people, as recorded in Scripture. (1:2, 1:6-7, 2:13-14, 2:17, 3:6-6)

- At the beginning of our text, the Lord declares that the people's words have been hard against him. Let's get a few things straight...
 - ***GOD is not one of your little friends.*** Even though he has made himself totally available to us and seeks to fellowship with us, we should never allow our intimacy with God to cause us to think, feel, or believe that we are equal with God.
 - In your anger, pain, hurt, or frustration, **be very careful not to hurl unfounded accusations toward the God of the universe.** The calamities we face on this earth are byproducts of sin. We are either experiencing the consequences of our own sin or experiencing the outworking of another's sinful acts.
 - **God is altogether perfect, lovely, and good; therefore, it is contrary to his nature to cause you harm unjustly.** In his sovereignty, he will allow man's free will to run its course; however, even in such catastrophic events, he has a divine way of making all things work together for good.
- In Verse 16. We are told that those who feared the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord heard them.
 - **The fear of the Lord creates the godly community.**
 - **The fear of the Lord garners the attention of the Almighty.**
 - **The fear of the Lord creates a legacy of faith.**
 - **The fear of the Lord creates righteous distinction.**
- In the first three verses of chapter 4, we are made aware of a great and terrible day that awaits all those who do not fear the Lord.
 - ***If you live your life with an arrogant attitude and evil intentions, you are in danger of hell's fire,*** and I urge you to repent while you still have time.
 - However, ***if you live your life in the fear of the Lord, healing will be your portion.***