

Offending God - Malachi 3:13-15

Introduction: Once a rather opinionated lady went to see her Pastor and said to him, *"I've been thinking about it for a long time, and, well, there's something I need to tell you. There's something about you that offends me."*

The Pastor sat up in his chair and said, *"Well, by all means tell me. Whatever it is, I want to clear it up right now."*

The lady bristled up and said, *"Well, it's your ties. They're ugly, and you wear them way too long."*

At that, the pastor reached into his desk and pulled out a pair of scissors and handed them to her and said, *"Well, if that is what's offending you, just cut it off to where you think it should be."* She reached over and cut about 3 inches off his tie and handed the scissors back to him.

Then the pastor said, *"Since we are talking about being offended, there is something about you that offends me. It's your tongue. Here, stick it out."*

As we've studied the book of Malachi we've seen several things about the people that offended God. And one was their tongue. Twice Malachi says that God was offended by their words: In 2:17, they were wearying God with their words. And in 3:13, they were saying some harsh things against God.

They were saying some untrue things about God that were hateful and offensive to Him. The verb that is used in vs. 13 is descriptive of a group sitting around gossiping. They were gossiping about God! Can you imagine that?

But God knew all about their gossip sessions. Just like He knows everything we mutter under our breath about Him or other people. And now it was time to confront them over what they'd been saying and end the gossip and the lies and tell the truth.

The amazing thing to me about all this was that when God accused them of being offensive to Him, their response was, *"What have we said against you?"* In other words, they had become so cold and calloused; they were completely unaware of saying anything hurtful.

It reminds me of the lady who was accused of being a gossip and her reply was, *"I'm not a*

gossip...everything I say about people is true!"

Well, what were they saying about God that was untrue? What were they saying that was offensive to God? They said:

1. There's Nothing to Gain by Serving God (14a)

They said, "*What's the point in serving God.*" We've done all these requirements for service, and what has it brought us – nothing! There are three things wrong with what they said:

First of all, this was:

A. A Fraudulent Claim. This was a claim that they had actually been serving God. They boasted about being involved in the Lord's work when nothing could have further from the truth. All throughout this book, it's been obvious they weren't living for God, much less serving Him. Any so called "*service*" to God had been done out of duty or drudgery or for show.

Did you know that even Christians can claim to be serving God, but not actually do it? A lot of people who claim to be Christians just go through the motions. They treat their service to God as something that is a drudgery – something they have to endure. Something that can't be fun or fulfilling.

They are what I call Dead Sea Christians. The Dead Sea was formerly known as the Salt Sea because of high content of salt in its water. Because of the heavy salt content, there is very little life form in the Dead Sea. And one of the reasons there is so much salt in the Dead Sea is because it has 6 main inlets but no outlets. It's always taking in but never giving out.

Listen, if all we do for the Lord is attend worship services, we're just taking in. Unless we give out something in true service to the Lord, we'll become just like that Dead Sea – no life.

That was what was happening with these folks. They were making a fraudulent claim of serving God, when there was no service at all taking place.

They had not even starting serving him in the first place. I mean, how could they know it was fulfilling or not? How could they expect to gain anything from doing nothing? You can't expect to reap a harvest if you don't put the seed in the ground. The truth is, there is nothing as fulfilling as serving God.

Is. 65:14 says, "*Behold, My servants shall sing for joy.*" The happiest and most contented people in this world are those who have given their life to Jesus and are actually and truly and joyfully serving Him!

Knowing and serving God is the secret for a fulfilled life. But He's no secret. Anyone can know Him. But also, this was:

A. A False Contemplation - The attitude of these folks was, "*We have done what God wanted, but it hasn't done us any good. We haven't got our cut out of the deal.*"

Well, their attitude revealed that they thought that they were serving God, but for all the wrong reasons. They only did it for what they could get. Apparently, the only reason they served God was because they expected to receive something in return.

I wonder how many times we do God the same way. How many times do we give of our money in hopes that God will give us back more? How often do we give of our time with the idea that God will show us a little favor? How often do we come to church on Sunday and hope it will help keep trouble away the rest of the week? How many times do we work in the church so others will compliment us, and brag on us? That's sort of like treating God like He is some sort of vending machine. We drop in our coins of service and hope we get the good inside.

This is a selfish motive that God certainly will not bless. Serving God ought to be motivated by love for Him rather than by trying to get something from Him. We serve God for one reason and one reason only – because we love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind. But this attitude was also:

C. A Faulty Characterization - They claimed that it didn't pay to do God's will. Again, nothing could be further from the truth. Ask anyone who has surrendered to the will of God from the heart and with a pure motive, if it pays.

George W. Truett said, "*To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge. To find the will the God is the greatest discovery. To do the will of God is the greatest achievement.*"

It may not pay off financially, materially, socially, but it will pay off spiritually and eternally.

Late one night many years ago, an elderly couple walked into a small hotel in Philadelphia to rent a room

for the night. They had checked with several hotels, and had been unable to find a room. The young clerk on duty told them that they too were sold out, but as they turned to walk away, the young man felt sorry for them and said to them, *"Listen, I have a room here and I won't get off until in the morning. It isn't much, but it's clean and you can at least have a place to sleep for the night."* The elderly couple thanked the young man and followed him up to the room.

The next morning when the couple left, they thanked the young man again, and the man said to him, *"You are too fine a clerk to spend the rest of your life working in this kind of hotel. Someday I will build a hotel for you and let you run it."* The young clerk thanked the elderly man but thought to himself, *"He's just being kind."* Two years later he received a letter from the man. He had forgotten about the incident. The man was inviting the young clerk to come to New York City, and included a round-trip train ticket. When he arrived in New York the couple met him. They took him to the corner of 5th Ave. and 34th Street. The elderly man pointed to a newly constructed building that looked more like a castle than a building. The man said, *"This is the hotel I promised you. It's yours to manage as long as you want it."* The elderly man's name was William Waldorf Astor. The young clerk was George C. Boldt. The hotel was the original Waldorf-Astoria.

I'm not saying that God will pad your pockets or make you famous, but if you put God first He will bless you in ways that are far better than money or fame! They were saying that there was nothing to gain by serving God, but there's something else they were saying that was offensive to God. They were saying:

3. There's Nothing but Lies in God's Word. (14c)

They said, they were *"going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty."* They claimed that God had not fulfilled His promise to them - that His Word was unreliable. First, look at:

A. Their Hypocritical Actions. Their claim of going about like mourners referred to the wearing of dark garments by people in sorrow. It was a claim that they had humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes, and fasted and mourned for God to bless them according to His promise.

Yet they were not blessed by God. They may have mourned outwardly but they were inwardly still corrupt. It was a hypocritical statement of sorrow. But then look at:

B. Their Hateful Accusations. (15). They went as far to say that instead of God blessing them, He blessed the sinners and rewarded their sins. They saw the wicked as the ones who were happy and blessed and honored of the Lord. They felt that the wicked been excused and spared of God's judgment. It was a hateful accusation that God had blessed the ungodly and burdened the godly. In effect, they were saying, *"God, you lied to us."*

But if you know God at all, you know that God never lies. He cannot lie. If He makes a promise, He will keep it. And He does promise to bless His people – those who follow Him and do what He says. You see, that is what we often fail to realize is that many of God's promises are conditional. **Romans 8:28 (NIV)** says, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

So God's Word is reliable. It is true and can be trusted. And if we read it for what it says, not for what we think it says, we understand that we have to hold up our end. A faithful life will always experience a faithful Lord. A believer true to God's work and will always finds that God is true to His Word.

When Joshua was dying he said in **Joshua 23:14 (NIV)** *"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed."*

So, don't be guilty of offending God by saying untrue things about Him. Serving Him does have its reward, and God's promises are true! His Word is reliable all the time – every time!