

Subject: *God's Book of Remembrance*

Scripture: *Malachi 3:13-18*

In this passage we see two distinct groups of people. Verses 13-15 describe people who have spoken against God in a sinful way. Verses 16-17 describe people who have spoken about God in a reverent way. Verse 18 is a summary statement and a contrast between the two groups.

In the middle of the passage we read about a book of remembrance that records the godly, reverent people. This passage reminds us that God knows every word that people say, He hears and knows every word, and what we say matters to Him, and it should matter to us. Christ said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

The outline of this passage is clear when you look at the summary statement in verse 18. There are two groups: the righteous and the wicked, those who serve God and those who do not serve Him. We tend to think of wicked people only as those who do evil things, but this passage brings something else to light. The wicked are known by their words, attitudes, and thoughts. And they are known as those who do not serve God. And the righteous are known by their words, attitudes, and thoughts. And they are known as those who serve God.

1. The words of the wicked (vs. 13-15)

As we have seen the pattern in this book, we see again that God makes an accusation: "Your words have been stout (hard, harsh, strong) against me." Then the people deny the charge with a question: "How have we spoken against you?" Then God tells them what they have said because He heard every word, and their words revealed their wicked heart.

A. They said "It is vain (useless) to serve God."

Whenever a person says that, he is in deep trouble. It reveals a wrong view of God. In Mal. 1:6, we see that the people were not honoring God as their Father and Master. They were saying (at least in their heart) God is not a good Father or a good Master. He's not worth serving.

B. They said "It doesn't pay to obey God or be humble."

They had outwardly obeyed God's Word and outwardly humbled themselves, but obviously their heart was not in it. As far as they were concerned it was a waste of time.

C. They said, "Proud, sinful people are blessed."

They were saying that people are better off to be proud, do wickedness, and put God to the test because God will deliver and bless them anyway. What a mixed up sense of right and wrong! Isaiah confronted the same kind of people when he prophesied about 300 years earlier.

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

2. The words of the righteous (vs. 16)

Just as the Lord heard what the wicked were saying, He heard every word the righteous said, and it revealed their humble heart.

A. They feared the Lord

They are described twice in verse 16 as those who feared God. Their words were reverent, true, and wise. The sure mark of godly wisdom is the fear of God.

Proverbs 9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

They feared God because they knew God. Any person who knows God will have a reverent fear of God. The fear of God is the constant awareness that God is with us, watching us, listening to us, guiding us, and providing for us. The fear of God is a sense that we are accountable to God as our Creator and Redeemer. The fear of God is a sense of love to God as our Father, a sense of duty to Him as our Master, and a sense of responsibility to God as our Judge.

Verse 16 says they thought upon God's name (His character, attributes). If you think clearly, deeply, and consistently about God, you will learn to fear God. We think about people and things that are important to us. We think about people we love and cherish. How much do you think about God and His character?

Psalms 86:11 *Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*

Isaiah 26:3 *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

B. They spoke often with others who feared God

They enjoy being with like minded people who fear God, and they enjoy talking with them about God. That's what a church family is for. When we are with our brothers and sisters we should be talking about the goodness and greatness of God, the faithfulness and kindness of God, the promises and blessings of God. Those are the things we want to talk about.

Psalms 119:63 *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.*

Psalms 89:7 *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.*

C. They were written in God's book of remembrance

God liked what he saw and heard and had it written down. This was God's way of honoring them and remembering them in a favorable way. He wants their words and attitude preserved as a memorial. Who do you want to remember you? What do you want to be remembered for? Several years ago Steven Covey wrote a best-selling book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and in that book he suggested that a person should imagine himself at a funeral home going up to the casket and seeing himself there, and then asking the question, "What do you want people to remember you for?" There's a far more important question, "What do you want God to remember you for?"

D. They will be part of God's special treasure

They are like valuable jewels to God and He will keep them safe. Jonathan Edwards made this comment: "God has chosen them to enjoy him, and to see his glory, and to dwell with him forever. He has chosen them as his treasure, as a man chooses out gems from a heap of stones, with this difference: The man finds gems very different from other stones, and therefore chooses. But God chooses them, and therefore they become gems, and very difference from others."

E. They will be spared in the time of God's judgment

On judgment day the wicked will receive justice. They will be condemned to the punishment they deserve, but the righteous will receive mercy and be spared. Spurgeon said, "Thou art precious to Him if He is precious to thee, and thou shall be His in that day, if He is thine in this day."

Verse 18 says there is a clear difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not serve Him. There is a difference in their words, in their attitudes, in their actions, in their eternal destiny. What has God recorded about you in His book of remembrance?