

Title: **DISCERNING BETWEEN**
THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

Text: Malachi 3:13-18

Subject: *This Difference Between Wheat and Tares*

Date: Sunday Evening — January 3, 2010

Tape: Malachi #16

Readings: *Allen Kibby and Merle Hart*

Introduction:

My subject tonight is **Discerning Between the Righteous and the Wicked**. — Our Lord Jesus tells us plainly that in every age, wherever the righteous are found the wicked will be found among them. In every field of wheat, there tares grow and thrive. Wherever sheep find pasture, goats will be found grazing beside them. He also tells us to let the tares grow together with the wheat and let the goats graze with the sheep. We are never to try to separate them. That is the Lord's work, and he will do it by the gospel.

We must never try to separate the tares from the wheat; and we must never try to separate the wicked from the righteous. But that does not mean that they be discerned and will not be separated. In Malachi 3, the Lord God makes a very clear discernment and assures us that, when he has finished all things, we shall with him — "*discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.*"

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(Malachi 3:13-18) “Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee? 14 Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered. 16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. 18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

GOD’S CHARGE

First, in verses 13-15 we read God’s charge against the wicked, the wicked among his own people, wicked men and women who profess themselves to be righteous and

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delude themselves into thinking that they are righteous, because they are religious.

“Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord.”

— Here the Lord declares that there are some in his house, among his professed people, who speak impudently against him, against his character as God, his gospel, his ordinances, his worship, his providence.

They pretend that they have not done so. — **“Yet ye say, what have we spoken [so much] against thee?”** In fact, few would ever use such speech, though in their hearts they constantly speak evil against God.

(Malachi 3:14-15) “Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? 15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.”

Few would utter such words, but many there are who are stoutly against God, judging him unjust and evil, because the wicked appear to prosper in this world. **Listen to Job’s reply to Zophar** (Job 21:6-15).

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(Job 21:6-15) “6 Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. 7 ¶ Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? 8 Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. 9 Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. 10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. 11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 12 They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. 13 They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. 14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?”

Sometimes true believers experience such beastliness as is described in our text. David did (Psalm 73). Sometimes the strongest of God’s saints are envious at the prosperity of the wicked. Do you ask, “Why do the wicked prosper?” Read the Word of God, and understand that when the proud are happy and those who work iniquity are set up, when those who defy God are delivered, it is that they might be ruined forever (Deuteronomy 32:35).

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(Deuteronomy 32:35) “To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompence; **their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand**, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.”

(Psalm 73:1-28) “A Psalm of Asaph. — Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart. 2 **But as for me**, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3 For **I was envious** at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm. 5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men. 6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment. 7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them. 11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? 12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. 13 **Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.** 14 For

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all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

15 **If I say**, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. 16 **When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.** 18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

21 **Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.** 22 So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee. 23 **Nevertheless** I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand. 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee. 26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to

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God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.”

(Psalm 92:1-15) “A Psalm *or* Song for the sabbath day. — *It is a good thing* to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: 2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, 3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. 4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. 5 O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep. 6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this

7 **When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:** 8 But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore. 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10 But **my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn:** I shall be anointed with fresh oil. 11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me. 12 **The righteous shall flourish like the palm**

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tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 **Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.** 14 **They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;** 15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.”

(Ecclesiastes 3:9-11) “What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? 10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. 11 ¶ He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also **he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.**”

THE CONTRAST

Second, Malachi draws a glaring contrast between the righteous and the wicked in verses 16 and 17.

(Malachi 3:16-17) “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine,

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saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

Though we sometimes think like the wicked and unbelieving, though we sometimes act like the wicked and unbelieving, yet the Lord God causes his own to hear his word. He graciously causes his chosen to hear when he speaks. And one of the ways he causes us to hear his Word is by our conversations with each other in his house. Notice how God’s elect are described here.

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.” — Of what do they speak? Of what do they think? They who fear the Lord think upon his name.

1st. **They are said to fear the Lord.** — The Holy Spirit, by tells us that “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Psalm 111:10). This godly fear includes the whole of true faith and godliness.

- Conviction
- Repentance
- Faith
- Worship
- Love

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2nd **The effects that follow godly fear are identified.**
“They thought upon his name.” — I have no doubt that the name of the Lord here is given to point us to our Lord Jesus Christ, God in his covenant love and faithfulness, as manifested in the person of his dear Son. — The name of God in scripture language, means the person, work and offices of God, particularly as revealed in redemption by Christ Jesus. — Let us think on his Name!

- **JEHOVAH-JIREH** — “The **Lord will provide.**” “*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*” (Gen. 22 :14).
- **JEHOVAH-RAPHA** — “The **Lord that healeth** thee.” “*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee*” (Ex. 15:26).
- **JEHOVAH-NISSI** — “The **Lord our Banner.**” “*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi*” (Ex. 17:15).

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- **JEHOVAH-M'KADES** — “The Lord which doth sanctify you.”: “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13); “And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you” (Lev. 20:8).
- **JEHOVAH-RA-AH** — “The Lord my Shepherd.” “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1).
- **JEHOVAH-HOSEENU** — “The Lord our Maker.” “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker” (Ps. 95 :6).
- **JEHOVAH-ELOHEENU** — “The Lord our God.” “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy...He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions” (Ps. 99:5,7,8).
- **JEHOVAH-ELOHEKA** — “The Lord thy God.” “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the

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land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: ... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me...Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex.20:2,5,7).

- **JEHOVAH-ELOHAY** — “The **Lord my God.**” “*And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (Zech. 14:5).*

- **JEHOVAH-SHALOM** — “The **Lord our Peace.**”: “*Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites” (Judges 6:24).*

- **JEHOVAH-TSEBAHOTH** — “The **Lord of Hosts**” “*And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there” (1 Sam. 1:3); “And as Esaias said*

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before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrhah” (Rom. 9:29); “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (Jas. 5:4).

- **JEHOVAH-HELEYON** — “The **Lord Most High**.” “*I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high” (Ps. 7:17); “For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth” (Ps. 47:2); “For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods” (Ps. 97:9).*

- **JEHOVAH-TSIDKEENU** — “The **Lord our Righteousness**.” “*In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6); “In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 33:16).*

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- **JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH** — “The **Lord is there.**” *“It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there”* (Ezek. 48:35).

When our hearts are full with thoughts of the Lord in his grace, and love to our souls; we speak of those things to one another; for *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”* Thus love is kindled and communicated from one to another by heart-refreshing, soul-comforting conversation.

They spoke not now and then only, but “often” one to another. They helped each other, by reminding one another of the Lord God and his wondrous works for them and in them

- Electing Love
- Redeeming Blood
- Covenant Faithfulness
- Special Providence
- Prevenient Grace
- The New Creation
- Preservation
- Constant Mercy
- Abiding Forgiveness

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- Perfect Righteousness
- Heavenly Glory
- The Triune God — God the Father — God the Son — God the Holy Spirit

3rd **The Prophet tells us that the Lord our God hears, approves of, accepts and remembers such speech among his children.** — So pleasing are such things to the Lord, that, speaking after the manner of men, *“he hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him.”*

Obviously the God of Glory does not need records, or make records to remind him of things. He is listening to the words or actions of his creatures, to gain information! — *“All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:13). Malachi is simply telling us that our great God delights in our praise of him and in hearing us speak to one another about his greatness, his goodness, his grace and his glory. — **IMAGINE THAT!**

He draws nigh to all who delight in him in mercy, love and grace; and he manifests himself to us in such a way as he does not to the world (Luke 24:13-32; John 14:22, 23. Psalm 145:18-19).

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(Psalm 145:18-19) “The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. ¹⁹ He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them

GOD’S PROMISES

Them, the third thing we have before us in verses 17 and 18 is God’s special promises to those who fear him, call upon his name and speak forth his praise.

(Malachi 3:17-18) “And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. ¹⁸ Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

“*And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.*” — The figure here made use of concerning the great day of God, is that of the world on fire, and Christ gathers his Bride, his chosen ones, as jewels from the flame, as men would save their valuables from a burning house.

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“*They shall be mine.*” — Manifestly Mine! We were his from everlasting, by the gift of the Father, and redemptively the purchase of his blood, and the regenerating testimony in our hearts by the work of God the Holy Spirit. But in that day he will publicly own us before a congregated world of men and angels, and take us to himself forever.

(Ephesians 2:4-7) “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶ And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

Oh, what blessed securities these are! Oh, how gracious is the Lord God our Savior, in the giving us such promises by the way! Oh, how safe we must be in a and with and by Christ Jesus!

(Malachi 3:18) “Then (**when the Lord our God has made all things new**) shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him

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that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”

Let us, as long as we live in this world, especially as often as we gather here in his house...

- Fear the Lord
- Speak often to one another about him.
- Think upon his name.

Amen.