

# Answers to Sermon Notes

“Turning Hearts, Part VI”

“Responding to the Love of God...With Corporate Commitment”

Malachi 3:16-18

3/26/23

<sup>5</sup> “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

- 1) For the last few weeks we have been considering these verses and their **application** to our own lives and the **days** in which we live.
- 2) Thus far, we have seen:
  - a) That our turning can only be **empowered** by a profound understanding of God’s **love** to us.
    - i) In both his **Electing** and **Performative** love.
  - b) That the overall response to this love will be lives of **worship**.
    - i) Living sacrifices that are **free, pleasing** to God and **reverent**.
  - c) That central to being turned toward him is a **passionate** concern for true **instruction**.
    - i) Impartially **guarded**, taught, and **applied**.
  - d) That these hearts must be hearts of **persevering covenant** faithfulness.
    - i) Through **time**, disillusionment and the **refining** process.
  - e) That these are hearts focused on **proper** priorities.
    - i) Centered on the **house** of God: the **church**.
- 3) Today we see that all these things must be secured through **Corporate** Commitment.
  - a) The central reason for this securing is the concept of spiritual **entropy**.
    - i) **Entropy**: a process of degradation or running down or a trend toward **disorder**. (Merriam-Webster)
    - ii) While the entire universe is subject to **entropy**, it is especially true regarding **spiritual** health and vitality.
      - (1) The standard direction of spiritual health is **downward**.
      - (2) Only by an **infusion** of the power of God does it **gain**.
        - (a) Regular feeding on his **word**, empowered by his **Spirit**.
      - (3) For **communities**, this gain often comes in waves of renewal/**revival** of various intensities.
        - (a) The **Reformation** was such a time.
  - b) At these times, those whose hearts have been **awakened** seek to band together with others, similarly awakened, in order to **hold on** to what they have received.
    - i) Seeking to **fend off** the spiritual entropy that led them **away** from God in the first place.
    - ii) **This** is what is happening in our text.
- 4) While we are **not** given a lot of information about this banding together that we see here, and while what we are given is somewhat **unclear**, the little we have, **combined** with what we have in other

parts of scripture reveal some of the basic aspects of this corporate commitment that are very **important** for us to understand and embrace.

- a) It is **Covenantal**.
  - i) There is a **formal** nature to this shared commitment.
  - ii) **Names** are written down.
    - (1) The Book of **Remembrance**. (**only** time this term is used in scripture)
      - (a) The text does not make clear **who** wrote it and whether it was **literal** or **metaphorical**.
        - i. The scriptures contain references to **both** types.
        - (b) But, in the most **prominent** biblical example of a renewal moment, the writing down of names and commitments was **literal**. (**Nehemiah 9:36-38**)
        - (c) And it seems clear that the speaking going on in verse 16 is a **formal gathering** to discuss the matters that God has presented them through Malachi.
        - (d) And only this kind of formal commitment would **justify** God's **promise** in verse 17.
          - i. **God** goes on record because **they** have gone on record. (vs. 18)
          - ii. **Separating** themselves from the rest.
      - (2) This is why we have formal **membership**, for it is a formal **commitment**.
        - (a) Otherwise, a relationship to a church is like **cohabitation**.
  - b) It is **Confessional**.
    - i) This book of remembrance would surely have **included** what this list of people was agreeing to.
      - (1) Even as the record in **Nehemiah** did. (**Nehemiah 10:28-31ff**)
      - (2) Formally **restating** the truths of God that we are **recommitting** to.
    - ii) We **agree** to **agree** about what the truth of God is, and we commit ourselves to **it** as we commit ourselves to **one another**.
  - c) It is **Cooperative**.
    - i) Each one commits to using his/her own unique **gifts/resources** for the good of the whole.
    - ii) Doing that which is necessary to keep the community of faith **growing** and on **course**.
      - (1) One **body**, many **members**.
      - (2) Also noted in **Nehemiah**. (**10:28-29**)
  - d) It is **Confirmed** in **Heaven**.
    - i) God **ardently** approves of these things.
      - (1) He pays **attention** and responds with holy **affirmation**.
      - (2) And assurance that we will, indeed, be **saved** from the coming **wrath**.

5) The days in which we live place all of these things **before us**.

  - a) Not only are there **signs** everywhere of spiritual **entropy** (degradation),
    - i) There are many **promoting** teachings that are not in line with the **truth** of God.
  - b) But, the voice of **Elijah** is also speaking today.
    - i) Driving us to the **truth** and driving us to the **cross**.
  - c) It is in **response** to that voice that the Spirit of God has brought us **together**.
  - d) We are told in II Chronicles 16:9 that, "The eyes of the LORD **search** the whole earth in order to **strengthen** those whose **hearts** are fully committed to him."
    - i) May the LORD continually strengthen our hearts as we seek to go forward in **corporate commitment** to him.