

May 6, 2007 by Steve Brandon



# Don't Forget His Justice

## Malachi 2:17-3:5

- 1. He will send His messengers (verse 1).**
- 2. He will purify His people (verses 2-4).**
- 3. He will judge the wicked (verse 5).**

Today we will be focusing on the book of Malachi. It's the last book of the Old Testament. In recent days, we have been going through Malachi, verse by verse. We have arrived this morning at the precipice of chapter 3.

Fundamentally, the oracle of Malachi is a book of rebuke. Malachi is writing to a people, who were forgetting the LORD. He was calling them to remember Him! (3:7). These people forgot about the love of God (1:2-5), so God reminded them of His love toward them. They forgot about His honor (1:6-2:9), so God reminded them of how He is to be honored in the worship of Himself. They forgot about His people (2:10-16), so God reminded them of how important it is to keep their covenants.

Again, in our text this morning, we find the people of Israel forgetting something. They forgot the justice of the LORD. Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Don't Forget His Justice."

Malachi 2:17-3:5

You have wearied the LORD with your words.

Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?"

In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

At the very end of verse 17, we see the issue of the text raised. Israel asks, "Where is the God of justice?" Israel had doubted the justice of God. They had doubted His desire to punish the evil-doer and reward the righteous. The reason why Israel asks this question about God's justice is because of their observations.

They said (a little bit upward in the verse), "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them." Israel looked around at those surrounding them and they observed that things were going well for those who were doing evil.

Israel was expecting that these wicked people would have been cursed and punished by the LORD. After all, this is one of the main thrusts of the teaching of the Old Testament. The righteous will be blessed. The wicked will be cursed. Leviticus 26 is a great passage that you can read through to see this. In the first half of the chapter, God promises blessings to those who are obedient to Him. In the second half of the chapter, God promises curses upon those who are disobedient to the LORD.

The Bible is packed with this teaching. Many of the Proverbs could be considered. Here are a few:

Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent will rule but the slack hand will be put to forced labor."

Proverbs 13:15, "Good understanding produces favor but the way of the treacherous is hard."

Proverbs 14:22, "Will they not go astray who desire evil? But knowledge and truth will be to those who desire good."

Proverbs, 15:19, "The way of the lazy is a hedge of thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway!"

But, Israel wasn't seeing these things. Instead, they saw those who were engaged in wickedness living at ease. They weren't the recipient of curses. If anything, they appeared to be blessed.

It may well be that the wicked people they saw prospering were governmental officials from Persia. They may have been those from the foreign nations surrounding Jerusalem, who worshiped foreign gods, and yet, lived at ease. Or, these people may well have been fellow Israelites, who were walking in blatant disobedience before the LORD, and rather than receiving the curses that God had promised, things

were going well for them. It may have been all of these people. At any rate, the people of Israel were seeing the wicked doing evil without consequence. It was bringing doubt into their minds.

The people of Israel were bringing these concerns before the LORD. In fact, it appears (from the beginning of verse 17) that they were bringing these things to God frequently. At the beginning of verse 17, we read, "You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, 'How have we wearied Him?'" (verse 17). And then, the LORD explains that their constant nagging about the prosperity of the wicked was wearying Him. Fundamentally, with such complaints, they were bringing great dishonor to the LORD, as they were offering "proof" to others that God had forgotten them and abandoned them.

Down through the history of the world, there have been many people who have become distraught and disheartened as they have sought to serve the LORD. Their efforts have only brought trouble upon themselves. While those who have disregard for the LORD and for His ways have been at ease. The Bible doesn't ignore this question. It deals with it head-on!

One of the most famous of these is Asaph, who records his testimony for us in Psalm 73. He was a righteous man, who was pursuing God. He kept his heart pure (verse 13) in his walk with God. And yet, he faced great trials. His trials came about because he observed the wicked. They were at ease. They were prospering. Life was going well for them. And yet, his life was far different. He was suffering. Life was difficult for him. He was being chastened. Asaph said that these things were "troublesome" in his sight (Ps. 73:16). He began to doubt the LORD. He began to doubt the ways of God. He began to doubt the goodness of God.

Perhaps you have experienced similar thoughts. For example, you say, ...

"LORD, I'm seeking to serve you with all my heart. I have set you always before me. I have dedicated the first portion of every day to you. I have sought to walk with integrity before you. I have taught my children of your ways. I have made the church a priority with my time, talents, and treasures. I have extended my hand to the poor and needy. And yet, what have I received? I have received nothing but trouble.

Things at work are not going well. I feel overworked. I feel ridiculed and oppressed by others for my boldness. I need a vacation, but we can't afford a vacation. Our finances are always tight. Our possessions are worn down. Our cars need repair. Our house needs repair. Our clothes are old and ragged. Our health isn't good. My body aches of arthritis. My wife is sick often with migraines. Is this what I get for serving you?

But, when I look at my neighbors, it's a different story. They haven't set the LORD before them. They spend their days in their own, selfish pleasures. They frequent the most evil of movies. They spend their weekends in their cabin on the lake. They never step foot into the doors of a church. They never give You, O LORD, a second thought. And yet, what have they received?

They have received nothing but blessing! Their sales job is going so well, they spend but a few days working each week. They take frequent vacations to the countries of their choice. Their cars are new. Their house is big. They eat the choicest of foods. Their bodies are strong and lean, as they visit the health club every day.

LORD, what is up? Why does it go so well with those who are rebelling against You? Why does it go so hard with me, who is seeking to serve You? Where is your justice? Hello? Are you up there?"

This is where Asaph was. Listen his testimony,

Psalm 73:3-12

For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.  
For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat.  
They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind.  
Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them.  
Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot.  
They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high.  
They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth.  
Therefore his people return to this place, and waters of abundance are drunk by them.  
They say, "How does God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High?"  
Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

Seeing these things gave Asaph reasons to doubt his own effort to follow the LORD. He thought that all of His effort was in vain. He said, ...

Psalm 73:2, 13-20

My feet came close to stumbling, My steps had almost slipped.  
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence;  
For I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning.  
If I had said, "I will speak thus," behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.

When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight,  
Until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end.  
Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.  
How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!  
Like a dream when one awakes, O LORD, when aroused, You will despise their form.

With these words, Asaph was satisfied. He was satisfied with the apparent injustices that surrounded him. He could declare, "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" (verse 1).

What was it that satisfied Asaph? It was a vision of the end. "[When] I came into the sanctuary of God, I perceived their end" (verse 17). Asaph found his comfort in knowing that the end, God would make right every wrong. Every evil deed would be punished. Those who are from God will perish (verse 27). Those who are unfaithful to the LORD will be destroyed (verse 27). Asaph lived with the end in view. Though it appears now that God is rewarding the wicked and punishing the righteous, all will be made right in the end.

As followers of Christ, this is how we need to live. We need to live with the end in view. We need to trust Him, that the workers of evil, who appear now to be living the good life, will ultimately be punished. We need to trust Him, that the righteous, who are suffering today, will ultimately be rewarded.

D. A. Carson said it very well, "Like prints on a sandy beach that are obliterated by the incoming tide, so the heavy trace of wicked people, so appallingly evident to us now, will be swept aside by God himself." [\[1\]](#)

As believers in Christ, we need to keep these things always before us. It may well be that we look upon the wicked and despair, because they are at ease, while we suffer. Be assured that God will deal with them. His justice may be delayed. But, be assured, that His justice will come.

In our text this morning, we will see how God points the people of Israel to the realities of the end. In the end He will show forth His justice. The first five verses of chapter 3 are an attempt to demonstrate how His justice will prevail. Each of these verses point to the future and put forth the ways in which the LORD will show forth His justice.

First of all, ...

1. He will send His messengers (verse 1).

Consider again verse 1, "'Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts."

In this verse, we see two messengers identified. The first is identified as "My messenger." The second is identified as "the messenger of the covenant."

The identity of these messengers are easy to establish. The first messenger, is John the Baptist. Three of the four gospel writers quote this very passage and link it up with John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27).

One of them comes in Matthew 11. John the Baptist was in prison, and he was confused as to the ministry of Jesus. On the one hand, John thought that Jesus was the Messiah, as He was preaching wonderful messages and performing great miracles, just as prophesied in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1). Yet, on the other hand, there were some other things about the ministry of Jesus that didn't quite match up with the coming of the day of the Lord. John was probably expecting fire and wrath from heaven. He was probably expecting a political revolution where "The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of man will be abased and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day" (Is. 2:17). But, John didn't observe any of these things.

So, John sent some of his disciples to ask Jesus whether or not He was "the Expected One, or shall [they] look for someone else" (Matt. 11:2). Jesus explained to John's disciples that He was performing the signs of the Messiah (Isaiah 61:1).

As they returned to tell John, Jesus turned to the crowd and spoke about John the Baptist, ...

Matthew 11:7-10

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "Behold, I send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you."

This is a quote straight from the mouth of Jesus, who quoted from Malachi, chapter 3:1. He was identifying the messenger of Malachi 3:1 with John the Baptist.

John's role was to prepare the way for the coming of the LORD. And he did that very well. John 1:8, "He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light." John said, "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent ahead of Him. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28). "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29)

The second messenger mentioned in Malachi 3:1 is Jesus. This isn't quite as clear as the first messenger, as no New Testament writers say this exactly. And yet, nobody doubts that this is Jesus.

This verse seems to indicate that the role of the first messenger is to prepare the way for the second messenger. They cannot be the same person, because the "messenger of the covenant" was to come after the first messenger. Who came after John the Baptist? It must be talking about Jesus.

You are even given this clue by reading the next part of the verse, "The LORD, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming."

The biggest question that comes at this point is whether these refer to His first coming or to His second coming. It must be referring to His first coming. John the Baptist didn't prepare the way for His second coming (some 2,000 years later). Rather, he prepared the way for His first coming.

And yet, there are overtones in this passage (especially verses 2-4) that give us a hint of His second coming as well. Things that weren't fully accomplished in His first coming.

Theologians call this the "already/not yet" dynamic. There are portions of the prophecy that are already fulfilled. But, there are portions of the prophecy that not yet fulfilled. This is how prophecy often works.

For instance, after the mount of transfiguration, Jesus had a conversation with the disciples concerning His resurrection to come. The disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Matt. 17:10) Listen carefully to the words of Jesus. They prove to be very insightful, especially for our passage this morning, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things, but I say to you, Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." (Matt. 17:11-12). The disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist (Matt. 17:13).

Jesus said that there are two Elijahs. One has already come. One has not yet come. This is the dynamic of our text this morning.

The messenger of the covenant has already come. He came into His temple suddenly. He made purification of sins. But, the messenger of the covenant has not yet come in His fullness. There will be a day when all enemies are placed under His feet. In that day, He will judge the world with finality (verse 5). But, we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Here's the big question on the table, "How does this help the one who is doubting the justice of God?"

I believe that it helps in the same way as when you have had an accident on the road, and you hear news that the police are on their way. You are driving along the highway, and the traffic ahead of you slows down and comes to a stop. So, you stop with the traffic. You look in your rear view mirror, only to see a car coming pretty fast. You don't think that it's going to stop. And then, "Bam!!" you get hit in the rear.

You get out of your car and inspect the damage done. And then, the guy who hits you begins to blame you for stopping too suddenly. He claims that you are at fault. You respond by saying, "No. We were in the same traffic. I was able to stop in time when the cars in front of me stopped. You should have been able to do so as well. I believe that the accident is your fault." He responds by saying, "No. It's your fault."

As you go back and forth, you are quite discouraged. Clearly, in your mind, the other driver was the guilty party, but in refusing to take the responsibility, you feel wronged. Your mind floods with financial questions. You are thinking insurance. If he refuses to take the responsibility for the accident, neither will his insurance company pay for the repairs. And so, your mind begins to think about how to fix your car if he doesn't own up to his error. And so, you are worried. You are frustrated. You are anxious.

And then, you get news that the police are coming. Though things aren't settled at the moment, you can have great peace, because you know that one is coming who can determine the guilt or innocence of each party. You know that you are innocent and that the other driver hit you. Things are not settled yet, but soon they will be.

Sure enough, when the policeman comes and reviews the facts of the case, the driver who hit you gets the ticket, because he was at fault. The judgment has come down and all is well with you.

When did the turn in your mind come? The turn in your mind didn't come entirely when the other driver received the ticket. The turn came when you heard that the policeman was on his way. When you heard these words, you knew that things would all be straightened out someday!

In a similar way, this is the reality chapter 3, verse 1. "Do you think, O Israel, that I'm going to simply allow the injustices continue? Sure, it may appear to be going well with the evil people today. But, listen up. I'm coming. And I'm going to stand in my temple and make right the wrongs. Those who are guilty will be charged. They will be booked. They will be punished in accordance with their sins. So, don't fret, because, my day is coming."

And so, church family, Don't Forget His Justice. There will be a day when, (1) He will send His messengers (verse 1). And when they come, all will be made right. His justice will shine brightly, which is the point of verses 2-5.

The second instruction comes in verses 2-4, ...  
2. He will purify His people (verses 2-4).

Malachi 3:2-4

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and

silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

Verse 2 begins with two rhetorical questions. When Christ appears, who can stand before Him? Of course, because of our sin, nobody can. Psalm 130:3, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Before a holy God, we are "undone" like Isaiah was (Isaiah 6:5).

The only way that we can stand before God without being consumed by His holiness is if we too are holy and righteous. Which is what verses 2 and 3 address. These verses are saturated with words of refinement and purifying and cleansing.

"He is like a refiner's fire." When Jesus comes, He will come with a refining fire. When gold or silver or copper or any other metal are mined from the earth, it doesn't come out pure. There are many impurities in it. The refiner takes the impure metal and heats it up, until everything melts. As the liquid metal/impurity mix settles, the pure gold (or silver or copper), sinks to the bottom, and the impurities rise to the top, where they can be skimmed off the surface. This is the refiner's fire.

"He is like a fullers' soap." When Jesus comes, He will come with purifying soap. He's talking about the process of cleaning clothes. Today, when we think about our laundry, we think about a big appliance, into which we can throw our dirty jeans, along with some laundry detergent. We then, turn a dial, and let the machine do it's thing for 45 minutes or so. Out pops some clean clothes that we need let dry. But, back then the picture was a bit different.

In the days of Malachi, laundry was done a bit differently. They didn't have big machines. They used washboards or stones. They would first soak the laundry in water, then mix in some soap, and then scrub and scrub and scrub and scrub, until the dirt came out of the garment. This is the picture you need to have in mind.

When Jesus comes, "he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap" (verse 2). He's going to turn the heat up, until the impurities rise to the top and are taken away. He's going to scrub and scrub us until the dirt is removed. These pictures aren't pleasant. These pictures should bring with them a feeling of pain in your soul, as the Lord does His sanctifying work among us.

I can think of several ways in which He purifies His people.

1. Fundamentally, the Lord refines us through His own work on the **cross**. As the refiner has to stoke the fire, and As the launderer has to scrub the cloths, So also did Jesus have to come and die for our sins. It was a painful labor. And yet, it was a labor of love. It is His work upon the cross that has cleansed us from all our sin. He has accomplished the purifying work for us. But, it doesn't come into our lives without a bit of pain, on His part, as least.

2. In our lives, He purifies us through **conviction of sin**. Sin is something that the LORD hates. And when you come into a knowledge of your own sin before the Lord, it's a painful experience. David wrote, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away, through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer." (Ps. 32:3-4).

Conviction of sins is painful. The only cure for conviction is confession. David went on to say, "I acknowledged my sin to You and my integrity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the LORD.'; And You forgave the guilt of my sin." (Ps. 32:5)

Confession is so simple. But confession is also so difficult. It shatters all pride and self sufficiency.

But, church family, know the blessing! "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the one to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." (Ps. 32:1-2)

Confession is simple, but it is never easy and without pain. Yet, it is part of the purifying process.

3. Jesus also purifies us through **trials**. The first chapter of James tells us to rejoice when we "encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4). Trials are a bit like spiritual exercise. When we exercise our bodies, we become strong and physically fit. When trials come in our lives, they strengthen our faith, which has a purifying effect upon our lives. Certainly, trials aren't particularly enjoyable. No. They are often painful. But, they are sovereignly designed to perfect you by faith.

4. Jesus purifies us through **discipline**. Proverbs 3:11-12 explain what the LORD does in our lives when we stray. "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loath His reproof, For whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights." When we go astray, the LORD puts His hand upon us and inflicts pain, that we might learn not to do those things again. Though the "discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

Please observe that the end result of these things is good. Oh, the experience may be painful, but the effect is good. This is exactly what we see in verses 3-4. As you read them again, I want for you to see the end result of the purifying process, "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years."

The end result of such purification is a people who are able to please the LORD in their worship. The purification of the sons of Levi will allow them to bring righteous offerings to the LORD. The purification of Judah and Jerusalem will allow the LORD to be pleased with their offerings given to the LORD.

I believe that these words clearly speak of God's faithfulness to Israel. Malachi uses the phrases, "Sons of Levi" and "Judah and Jerusalem" to explain who will be purified. Indeed, there will be a day when the Jewish people will come back to the LORD. This is the clear teaching of Romans 11. In that day, their worship will be acceptable to the LORD. By extension, these words also apply to all who have known and experienced the purifying effect of the cross of Christ upon their lives. When you are cleansed from your sin, your worship to the LORD becomes well-pleasing in His sight!

That's how the Christian life works. As God does His painful sanctifying work in our lives, we in turn, give Him great honor and glory, as we worship Him with lives consistent with His righteousness. Several Psalms address this issue:

Psalm 24:3-4 - "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully."

Psalm 15:1-2 - "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?  
He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart."

This is the great reality of the people of God. We have received the free forgiveness that is offered through the blood of Christ. We have experienced our sins taken away, never, ever to return again. Motivated by love for our Savior, we have sought to live lives worthy of the gospel that has saved us. And God is pleased to accept our worship.

This is what Jesus will do when He comes. (2) He will purify His people (verses 2-4). But, all won't experience His refining work. There will be some who will experience His judgment. This comes in verse 5, which is my third point this morning.

### 3. He will judge the wicked (verse 5).

In verse 5, we read, "'Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,' says the LORD of hosts."

In this verse, we see a list of sins that the LORD will punish in the day He returns. Certainly these aren't the only sins He will judge. It's merely a sampling. His judgment will be against, ...

**1. Sorcerers.** These are those who delve into spiritualistic practices of the occult. This could be witchcraft or astrology. Perhaps superstition, the signs of the zodiac, or the Chinese calendar. You could apply it to any spiritual activity apart from the LORD.

**2. Adulterers.** These are those who are sinning sexually. These are those spoken about in the 7th commandment, who take another man's wife. By extension, this certainly applies to all sexually misconduct.

**3. Liars.** Literally, this is against those who falsely swear. They make solemn promises of things that simply aren't true, and thereby deceive others.

**4. Oppressors.** These are those who use their positions of authority to wrong others. In this case, Malachi gives a list of four people who are in positions of weakness: Wage earners, widows, and orphans. A laborer is at the mercy of his master, to be paid what is due him. The widow and orphan are defenseless and are at the mercy of many. The alien is the immigrant, who is seeking merely to survive. He too is weak to stand on his own. He needs help. In the end, God will stand up for those who are weak and defenseless.

**5. Those who don't fear the LORD.** Ultimately, this is the main reason why people pursue the occult: they don't fear the one, true God. This is why people commit adultery. They don't think that there will be a final reckoning. This is why people feel free to lie. They don't think that anyone is around with the ability to hear. This is why people will oppress the weak. They don't believe that there is anyone able to stand up for them.

When you step back from verse 5 and look at the big picture, you realize that the God of justice will arise. And He will make things right. Though things now may appear to be upside-down, with the righteous suffering and the wicked prospering, it won't be like that forever.

And so, church family, when you see injustices arise in this world, (and there will be many), "Don't Forget His Justice." He will judge the wicked (verse 5).

The judgment may come a bit slower than you would like it to come. Perhaps you want it to come right now! Perhaps you are like James and John, who witnessed the Samaritans reject Jesus. They were so angry that they said to Jesus, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). Perhaps you hear the blasphemies from the mouths of people and your blood boils up. Perhaps you see the injustices and have a righteous anger that wants to see the Lord deal with them right now. This is often the motivation behind those who bomb abortion clinics. It is righteous anger that takes matters into your own hands. But, God says this, "There is

a day coming when I will bring the wicked into my courtroom. They won't get away with anything."

Again, I quote D. A. Carson, "The wheels of God's justice grind exceedingly slow, but they grind exceedingly fine." [2] In verse 5, the LORD is guaranteeing that a day of reckoning is coming in His own timing and in His own way.

Practically, this makes a great difference in your life. I know that there are people here in our congregation who have been hurt badly by other people. Perhaps your parents abused you in some way as a child. Perhaps a brother or sister has greatly wronged you. Perhaps a close friend has turned against you.

The good news today is that you don't have to take vengeance into your own hands. You don't have to stew on the offence. You don't have to figure out how to get back at them, so that justice is served. You can allow the offence to roll off your back. Because, you know that God is ultimately going to settle the ledger.

The fact that God will judge the wicked is what allows you to follow Paul's words in Romans 12:17 and 19, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. ... Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

It's not that you have to deny the offense. Nor, do you have to deny that justice that is due the one who hurt you. Nor is it the case that you can never seek through the civil magistrates for justice. Rather, this means that you simply need to trust that the LORD will bring His justice against whoever it is. God will make them pay. His punishment will perfectly fit the crime.

Last night in our family worship, we were reading in the book of Numbers, the account of Miriam and Aaron murmuring against Moses. The LORD was not happy with their complaining. So, He came down and struck Miriam with leprosy (Numbers 12:10). Moses, being the humble man that he was, pleaded for the LORD's mercy upon her. "O God, heal her, I pray" cried Moses (Numbers 12:13). But, the LORD wasn't so gracious in his punishment. He expelled her outside the camp for seven days as punishment before she was healed.

This is a perfect example of how we ought to act. We don't know all of the facts. We can simply plead God's grace, and trust that His punishment will fit the crime. When slapped on the right cheek, we can turn the other cheek, because God will judge the wicked act (Matthew 5:39). We can trust confidently in God, who will ultimately right all wrongs.

Where is the God of Justice? He is there. He is recording every injustice done. He will deal with every lawless deed in His time, and not ours. In His own way, and not ours.

The people of Malachi's day were simply impatient. They didn't entrust themselves to the perfect timing of God. Church family, "Don't Forget His Justice"!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 6, 2007 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] D. A. Carson, "How Long, O Lord?" p. 142.

[2] D. A. Carson, "For the Love of God," entry for April 6.