

May 20, 2007 by Steve Brandon



Don't Forget His Ways

Malachi 3:13-15

1. He Lifts the Lowly (verse 13).
2. He Weighs the Heart (verse 14).
3. He Delays the Judgment (verse 15)

About two years ago, I remember reading a sermon that was written by Edward Payson in the 1800's. This sermon really helped me to bring clarity into my mind concerning certain the way I think about God and the Bible. This sermon was entitled, "God's Ways Above Men's." He took as his text, Isaiah 55:8-9, where God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways declares the LORD."

This sermon made such an impact upon my life that I wrote an article about it in our church newsletter. I posted this sermon to our internet site. (You can read it [here](#)). I have had very real thoughts about writing a book, that would expand upon Payson's thoughts.

The premise of his sermon was simple. As God is so far above us and beyond us in every way, He has done things in this world in ways that may not be clearly understood by us, but we must accept them. In other words, the ways of God are different then our ways. In the sermon, he provides eight different proofs of this fact by demonstrating that God has created a universe that is much different than what we would create (should we be God).

1. Existence of Evil. When our wisdom looks at the existence of evil in this world, it draws us to question either the goodness of God or the sovereignty of God. Throughout the history of the world, atheistic philosophers have always been quick to ask, "Surely a good God wouldn't create a world with evil, would He? Perhaps He isn't all-powerful. Perhaps He isn't God!" And thus, by exalting their reasoning over and against the wisdom of God, they conclude that God doesn't exist. But, in the wisdom of God, He created a world in which evil would come through Adam's sin (Gen. 3:1-7). God's ways are not our ways.

2. Adam as Our Covenant Head. Our wisdom is focused on individual responsibility. We think that each of us are responsible only for our own sin. We cry in outrage when a person is sent to prison for a crime that he didn't personally commit. But, in the wisdom of God, He considers every man or woman alive today to be responsible for Adam's sin and under the judgment of death. Theologians call Adam our "covenant head." When Adam sinned, it was as if we all sinned with him (see Romans 5:12-21). We would not create a world where all are guilty of one man's sins. But then again, our ways are not God's ways.

3. Salvation for Men Alone (not for Angels). Our wisdom loves to give others a second chance. When we see someone mess up, we often think that they deserve a second chance. This is especially true when it comes to saving people from the punishment of hell. Until the moment they die, people always have an opportunity to repent of their sins. But, in the wisdom of God, there are creatures for whom salvation is impossible. They are the evil angels (also called demons). Evil angels have sinned and can only expect to burn for eternity (Matt. 25:41). They have no opportunity to be saved from their sin. God has not provided a way of escape for them. They have no hope. Faith in Christ will not redeem them. Should we have created a world, we would tend to give all creatures destined for hell an opportunity to repent and be saved. But His ways are not our ways.

4. Providing a Redeemer. Our wisdom would have brought a Redeemer soon after the sin of our first parents. We also would have brought a redeemer in a great display of glory for all the world to see. But, in the wisdom of God, He delayed the coming of the Redeemer. As soon as man sinned, God promised to send a Redeemer to crush the seed of Satan (Gen. 3:15). And yet, God waited for more than 40 generations until Jesus Christ came upon the earth! During this time, God revealed His plan of redemption to one small nation among the many upon the earth. Furthermore, when the Redeemer finally arrived, He came, born of a virgin in a manger in an obscure village in the Middle East. Our Redeemer would have come quickly, in flash and glory. But, God delayed His Messiah, and brought Him in humility. God's ways are not our ways.

5. Messengers of the Gospel. Our wisdom naturally thinks that the best way to propagate our faith in Christ is to find someone who is well respected and allow him to tell others of the gospel of Christ. This is especially apparent when a well-known movie star or athlete turns to Christ. They are often given a platform to share with many people what the LORD has done for them. But, in the wisdom of God, He has determined an entirely different method for spreading the gospel. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen ... so that no man may boast before God" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

6. Few Will Be Saved. Our wisdom likes to picture most of the people alive today in heaven someday with God. But, in the wisdom of God, He has determined that only a few will be saved (Matt. 7:14). Jesus even said that "many ... will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). To be sure, there will be multitudes in heaven, which no man can count (Rev. 7:9). But, when placed against the number of souls that won't be in heaven, the multitudes will be easily identified as "few." I don't think that we would do it this way. We would probably send only the worst of sinners to hell. But, our ways are not God's ways.

7. Saved By Grace (not works). Our wisdom likes to imagine that we can earn our salvation somehow. Such is easily proved when you consider all of the world's major religions. All major religions believe that you can work your way to heaven. This may be through religious dedication, ceremonial activities, special knowledge, or good works (or a combination of the above). But, in the wisdom of God, He saves by grace alone, apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9). There is nothing that we can ever do to merit our standing before God. It is only by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone that we have any hope at all. Our ways are not God's ways.

8. Slow Sanctification (not instant). Our wisdom would think that God would desire to sanctify believers instantly. After all, if God wants a Holy people for Himself, why would He want to delay this process? But, in the wisdom of God, our sanctification is slow. God extends forgiveness instantly, but He keeps us in the flesh. And thus, believers in Christ are engaged in a lifelong battle with sin that occupies our attention for decades. It was so difficult for Paul that he cried out, "Who will set me free from the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24). There will be a day when we shall be pure like Him. But, until then, the process is slow and painful. Church family, let me say yet again, God's ways are not our ways!

This list that Edward Payson provided in his sermon is far from exhaustive. We might easily expand this list to include God's absolute sovereignty in salvation, or God's delay in final judgment (if He can't withstand evil, why delay?). Or His veiling of future events (if He wants us to know, why make it so cryptic?), or His historical revelation to only one nation (for thousands of years, God's salvation came only through one nation), or a myriad of other things.

The plain fact is that we live in the world that God created. It is not the world that we created. Thus, we must submit ourselves to Him in all things. God determined how it would function. We are not to call Him into question. Rather, we are called to worship the one whom we cannot fully understand. I believe that God has specifically created the world with these things in mind, so that in thinking about them, we might be humbled to realize how far above us God really is.

My message is entitled, "Don't Forget His Ways."

As we continue in our exposition of the book of Malachi, we come to see that the people of Israel didn't understand the ways of God. Their actions demonstrated it. Their words demonstrated it. Rather than submitting themselves to Him and His ways, they rebelled against Him, seeking their own ways instead. Oh, church body, it is important for us to know the ways of God and to gladly accept them, and, ultimately, embrace them.

Today, we come to chapter 3 and verse 13, where we read,

Malachi 3:13-15

"Your words have been arrogant against Me," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts? 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.'"

In our text this morning, we see three ways in which Israel didn't remember the ways of God. They should have known these ways. They were revealed to them in the Scripture. They should have been believed. But, they forgot the ways of God. May we at Rock Valley Bible Church not forget. The first thing they missed comes in verse 13.

1. He Lifts the Lowly (verse 13).

The Biblical principle here comes from 1 Peter 5:5, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Consider what we have here in verse 13, "'Your words have been arrogant against Me,' says the LORD." "Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against you?'"

One of the things that I have to do from time to time as a pastor is confront people in their sin. It's a task that I don't really enjoy doing. I often lose sleep about it. I often lose my appetite in doing it. I pray earnestly whenever I need to do it. But, I have noticed that when people are confronted, there are two ways in which they can respond. Either they will listen carefully to what is said and prayerfully consider what is spoken to them (this is the humble response,). Or, they will respond defensively, denying that they have sinned in any way.

When someone responds humbly to correction, I know that the blessing of God will be upon their life. Because, "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11) It's the way that God works in this life. He lifts the lowly (verse 13). But when people respond defensively, it's often an indication of a proud heart that is lurking beneath the surface. When you bring a word of correction to the attention of a proud person, a first response is to deny it and they often become defensive about what you are telling them. (I know this, because this is often how I respond to correction).

This is definitely the case throughout the book of Malachi. In fact, this is how the entire book of Malachi is structured. It is structured around these statements that the LORD makes about the people of Israel. In every instance, Israel responds with a defensive statement of denial. They deny what the LORD says. They demand proof. It's all an indication of their pride.

Look back at chapter 1, verse 2. The LORD says, "I have loved you." (1:2). Immediately, the people deny it by demanding proof, "How have You loved us?" Even after God affirmed His love for them, by these words, they demonstrated that they didn't believe God and defied Him to prove it. You can see their arrogance in these words, and that they were spoken defiantly.

This same sort of response comes again in verse 6. God said, "A son honors his father; and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect(verse 6a). Here, the LORD was confronting the priests of Israel about how

they were dishonoring Him. And they respond defensively and defiantly, "How have we despised Your name?" (verse 6b). Even when God presents them with some proof, they continue in their arrogance against Him. God said, "You are presenting defiled food upon My altar" (verse 7a). They responded, "How have we defiled You?" (verse 7b). These were arrogant responses to the LORD, who was confronting them of their sin.

Their defiance comes again in chapter 2, verse 17. In those verses, the people of Israel are confronted, "You have wearied the LORD with your words." Again, arrogant, defiant words come from their mouths, "How have we wearied Him?" "No, we haven't! Prove it!" For two chapters previous, Malachi had demonstrated the ways in which Israel had wearied the LORD. They had failed to believe that He really loved them. They had failed to give Him the honor that He deserves. They had failed in their commitments to one another (2:10). They had been warned repeatedly to reform their ways (2:15, 16). They had doubted the justice of God (2:17). And yet, in their pride, they refused to acknowledge the ways in which they were wearying God.

In chapter 3, verse 7, the arrogant responses continue on. The LORD made this incredible promise, "Return to Me, and I will return to you." And yet, in their arrogance, they again responded, "How shall we return?" I believe that they firmly believed that they had never left the LORD in the first place. "How can we return to something that we have never left?" It was as if all of the LORD's corrections had fallen upon deaf ears. Again, in chapter 3, verse 8, the LORD told them that they were stealing from Him. And yet, they again denied it. "How have we robbed You?" And so, God spends several verses describing how they had been robbing God.

Throughout the book of Malachi, we see their arrogant words. They are always denying what God says about them. This is the ground of the LORD's accusation that came upon them in verse 13, "Your words have been arrogant against Me."

Had Israel remembered the ways of God, perhaps they wouldn't have responded so arrogantly to all of the accusations that the LORD brought up against them. It's not like they didn't know this about God. Those of Malachi's day knew this. They had the Scriptures among them. When they came back into the land, Ezra had taught them the Scriptures. Proverbs 18:12 says, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, but humility goes before honor."

This past week, I experienced this first-hand. I took my son and a friend skateboarding at a skate park. It's a big park, with dozens of kids there. I was very content to watch them all skateboard to their heart's content. At one point, my son's friend asked me, "Pastor Steve, are you going to skateboard?" I said, "No. I don't think so." I was enjoying my reading too much. However, as the evening went on a bit, I found myself a bit chilled in the cool weather. But, I saw many of the skateboarders in short sleeves. So, I thought that I would pull out the skateboard and warm up a bit. Well, I had a fantastic time. I was skateboarding better than I ever had been before. I'm not real good, but was able to go up and down the half-pipe like never before.

Anyway, near 8pm, when it was about time to leave, I went down one last time and crashed hard. I fell from about 4 feet right, head first onto my face on solid concrete. Initially, I feared that I had fractured my cheek bone. It took me about a minute to gather myself, after which, I was able to walk away and drive home. However, as the evening progressed, my elbow was hurting more and more. To make a long story short, I went to DeKalb this morning, where my retired father was able to practice his medicine on me. After checking me out and looking at my xrays, he concluded that I had a slight fracture of my left radial head. For you non-medical types, I broke my left elbow. My father aspirated 17 cc's of blood from my elbow, which made my elbow feel much better. Fortunately, it wasn't a very big break, and I'll be on the mends for only a few weeks.

My fall was a great picture of Proverbs 18:12. I was high and thinking that I was good stuff. But, in my fall, I was greatly humbled.

God will honor the humble, but He will oppose the proud. God lifts the lowly, but He will bring down the proud. I'm sure that many of the Israelites of Malachi's day had heard the story of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had warned him of his coming destruction. And yet, he continued to lift himself up in His pride. While overlooking the city of Babylon, he said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). And after his pride, destruction came. He was "driven away from mankind" to dwell "with the beasts of the field, until he would humble himself and "recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes" (Dan. 4:32).

But, the people of Israel in Malachi's day had forgotten what the LORD will do to the arrogant. As a result, God's curse was upon them. Rather than lifting them up, God would resist them and suppress them. If they were seeking the blessing of God upon their lives, they were doing it the wrong way. In God's economy, the proud will be brought low. But, the lowly will be lifted high. And after six episodes of prideful responses, the LORD confronted them. And they again failed the test, saying, "What have we spoken against You?" (verse 14).

Now, when you think about their responses for any length of time, the more terrorizing they become. See, it is one thing to be confronted of your sin by another sinful human being like yourself, who might be wrong. But, it is another thing all-together when the sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-pure, God of the universe comes and confronts you of your sin. When God is pointing out sin in your life, that's not the time to be arrogant. That's the time to be humble and confess your sins. Israel was dealing with the words of the LORD. God, Himself, was confronting Israel in their sin, and they were responding wrongly. Why? They had forgotten the ways of God.

Isaiah give us some of the clearest words as to how it is that we ought to respond to the word of the LORD. In Isaiah 66:2, the LORD declares, "To this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." When Isaiah said that He would "look" upon the these types of people, it doesn't mean that He simply sees them. God knows and sees all things. "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Rather, when Isaiah 66:2 speaks about God "looking," it's that He looks with favor upon these types of people.

God looks with favor upon those who broken in their spirits and who shake in holy reverence when they hear the word of God. When you hear the word of God, does it make you tremble for fear? Have you ever had your Bible open, only to read a portion of it and realize how far short you fall? Yesterday, I had one of those encounters. My son came into my office and confronted me, with a Bible passage in hand. He

was confronting me on some of my recent behavior. I confessed my sins to my son, trembling at the word of God.

This is the path of salvation in Christ! God saves those who see their sin and cry out, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" God is apposed to the arrogant, who parade their righteousness before God. God lifts the lowly. God opposes the proud.

You might ask, "Well, then, how should they have responded to the LORD's confrontations?" Rather than continuing on in their pride, they should have responded humbly, by acknowledging their faults and confessing their sins. When the LORD said, "I have loved you" (1:2), they should have responded, "O LORD, life is difficult for us, and we have doubted your love for us. Please help us to see!"

When the LORD said, "Where is my honor? And ... where is My respect?" (1:6), they should have responded with words like, "O LORD, you are right, we have brought dishonor upon Your name. We have presented faulty sacrifices. We have despised Your altar. We have defiled Your name. O please, forgive us. O please, help us to change our ways."

When confronted with dealing treacherously against each other (2:10, 11, 14), they should have confessed it and sought for help. "O LORD, we have been unfaithful in our relationships. We have divorced our wives and married foreign women. We have neglected You. O come and forgive. Heal our land!"

When told that they had wearied the LORD (2:17), they should have said something to the effect of, "O LORD, we don't want to be a burden to you. We want to be a joy to you! Our sins have mounted high and certainly, they have become a burden to you. Forgive us. Strengthen us for Your service."

When God told them "Return to Me, and I will return to you" (3:7), there was a right way to respond. "LORD, you have shown us some of the ways in which we have drifted. We will return to you. We will rest in your love for us. Thank you for not destroying us as you did Edom. We will reform our worship, so that we bring our best. We won't allow lame or blind or sick sacrifices anymore. We will deal faithfully with each other from this day forward. O LORD, help us in these things."

When God said, "You are robbing Me!" (3:8), they should have confessed their failure in the past to give and given their pledge to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse from this day forward (3:9, 10).

There is a way to respond to the LORD that is acceptable to Him. There is a way to respond to the LORD that is unacceptable to Him. Don't forget His ways. He lifts the lowly (verse 13). Second, ...

2. He Weighs the Heart (verse 14).

The Biblical principle here comes from Proverbs 21:2, "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts."

We see this in verse 14, where the Israelites really believed that they were in the right, but God knew their hearts. "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?'"

The issue here is that the people were discouraged. They thought that they were serving God and expected some return for their service. Instead, they faced hardship and difficulty. Rather than humbly seeking the LORD in repentance, they jumped to some wild conclusions. They said, ...

"It is vain to serve God! LORD, look at all that we have done! We have kept your charge. We have suffered for your sake. We are the ones who have chosen to return with Ezra and Nehemiah. We have labored to build the temple. We have labored to build the wall. We have labored to restore worship back into your city. We are bringing lambs and sheep to be offered up on your altar! We are worshiping you in accordance with the law. We are giving of our financial resources to help with the temple! And what have we received? NOTHING! N-O-T-H-I-N-G! It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?"

But, because they weren't being blessed, they concluded that it was in vain that they were serving the LORD. Their problem was that they had forgotten the ways of the LORD. Service to the LORD is more than simply going through the motions. They may well have sacrificed much in returning from Babylon. They may well have sacrificed much in building the temple and the wall. They were certainly bringing animals to be sacrificed upon the altar. They may well have been contributing financially to the operations of the temple. They may well have done many good things.

But, with everything that we know about the people in Malachi's day, they were hardly serving the LORD with a clean heart. Their sacrifices were sub-standard (blind, lame and sick) (1:8). They were dealing treacherously with each other (2:10). They had been unfaithful in their marriage vows (2:14). They weren't bringing the "whole tithe into the storehouse" (3:10). (From our last point, we see that) they were proud and arrogant. In reality, these people were hypocrites. On the outside, there may have been some things that looked good. But, certainly, on the inside, there were many things wrong.

Being disobedient to the LORD on several accounts, they claim to "have kept His charge" (verse 14). But, in reality, they had failed to do so. God saw their hearts, and exposed it in several ways. But, they maintained that they were pure.

When you think about what they did, it's really quite horrifying what they were doing with saying these things. Not only were they hypocrites. But, they also sought to bring the name of the LORD down into the ground. They tried to place all of the blame upon God for their woes! Rather than singing Psalm 34:3, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together," they were singing the opposite, "O *belittle* the LORD with me, and let us *complain* about Him together." Though they were seeking a blessing from the LORD, they would

receive nothing but a curse for their actions.

Fundamentally, it's not so much what the LORD sees on the outside that makes a difference in His evaluation of people. Lots of people can put on a big show of religion. (And perhaps there were many things that the people of Malachi's day were doing right!) Lots of people can persuade their own hearts that things are well with their souls. But, it's what the LORD detects from the heart that ultimately makes a difference. He weighs the heart (verse 14).

We read in 1 Samuel 16:7, "man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." This is what was so wrong with the Pharisees. They thought that only the externals mattered. But, God's ways are not our ways. God weighs the heart. And the LORD was able to clearly see the wrong-hearted approach that these Israelites were taking.

We may be inclined to see partial obedience and commend the good that we see. But, partial obedience is often an indication of a bad heart. And the LORD sees perfectly what is going on. He will act appropriately.

Church family, the application comes almost directly to us! In all the things that you do for God, in your service to Him, be checking your heart. When Jesus condemned the Pharisees, He quoted from Isaiah, who said, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But, in vain do they worship Me." The LORD weighs the heart, and where the heart is willing the feet are swift. The willing heart will present an unblemished sacrifice. The willing heart will seek to keep promises. The willing heart will give generously.

Though these people in Malachi's day might claim that "It is vain to serve God," we can say with full confidence that this simply isn't true. When the Corinthians were tired and weary, Paul urged them on, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the LORD" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Oh, there may be times when it appears to be in vain. I'm sure that Joseph may have felt that his service to the LORD was in vain. It landed him in prison. I'm sure that Daniel may have felt that his service to the LORD was in vain. He was thrown to the lions because he regularly prayed to the LORD. I'm sure that Peter may have been tempted to think that his labor was in vain, when his preaching landed him on death row. Perhaps Paul and Silas were tempted to despair when their boldness in proclaiming Christ in Philippi landed them in prison.

But, in every single one of these instances, the LORD was faithful to reward their service in His time and in His way. Joseph became ruler in Egypt and saved his family from famine. Daniel was saved from the lions and "enjoyed success in the reign of Darius" (Dan. 6:28), while his enemies were eaten by the same lions (Dan. 6:24). Peter was delivered miraculously by an angel (Acts 12:7), while Herod, who had put him in prison was eventually eaten by worms (Acts 12:23). Paul and Silas were eventually vindicated by the leaders in Philippi that they had done an unjust thing, and along the way, the circumstances led to the conversion of the jailor.

If you render true service to the LORD, which comes from a true heart, the LORD will reward your service. Consider carefully the promise of Galatians 6:7-9, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

God weighs the heart. He will reward the faithful service in His own time and in His own way.

Don't forget His ways. (1) He Lifts the Lowly (verse 13). (2) He Weighs the Heart (verse 14). And now, thirdly, ...

3. He Delays the Judgment (verse 15)

The Biblical principle comes in Proverbs 16:5, "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished." Oh, it may look like they are getting away with sin today. But, the Scripture says, "Assuredly, he will not be unpunished."

Now, look at verse 15. Again, this comes from the disgruntled people of Malachi's day. 'So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.'" Once again, we see these Israelites mocking God! The LORD identifies the "proud in heart" as an "abomination." But, the Israelites were calling them "blessed."

With such statements they were striking at the very heart of God's character. It strikes a blow at the justice of God. "God is not fair in allowing sin to go unpunished!" It strikes a blow at the holiness of God. "God is able to tolerate sin!" It strikes a blow at the omniscience of God. "God doesn't really know what's going on!" It strikes a blow at the omnipotence of God. "God is powerless to punish the workers of iniquity."

To be fair to those in Israel, it is what these people were observing. They saw people testing God and escaping unpunished. We all know that it is wrong to test God. When tempted by the devil, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test." But, these people were testing the LORD and getting away with it, in the sense that they were escaping punishment right now. But, that's only because God delays His judgment.

Oh, it may look now like the wicked won't be punished. But, the Scripture is clear, "The wicked will not stand in the judgment" (Ps. 1:5). The wicked will be punished. Indeed, it may not appear that way right now. But, that's only because God delays His judgment.

A few weeks ago, we spent some time thinking about Psalm 73 and Asaph. He was distraught because He "saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 73:3). In life, they never suffered want (Ps. 73:4). In death, they died peacefully (Ps. 73:4). Though they had lived sinfully, and had spoken against the LORD (Ps. 73:9), they live at ease (Ps. 73:12). There are plenty of people like this. There are Biblical examples of this. You simply need to read through the Psalms. Almost half of them deal in some way or another with how the wicked are oppressing the righteous, while it appears the God is simply sitting by, doing nothing. Let me read a few of them for you. It didn't take me long to find them.

Psalm 3:1-2, "O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God."

Psalm 10:1-2, "Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised."

Psalm 37:12-13, "The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth. The LORD laughs at him for He sees his day is coming."

But, church family, there is coming a day when the wrongs will all be made right. Let us not be like the Israelites of old and call the arrogant blessed. Let us not ever think that people "test God and escape." Oh, they may well appear to escape the judgment. But, the judgment will come upon them.

This is a recurring theme in the book of Malachi. We dealt with this very topic two weeks ago, when we were looking at chapter 3, verse 5. God says, "There will be a day when I will draw near to you for judgment" (3:5). It will come up again (in chapter 4, verse 1), "Behold, the day is coming burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze." But, it's not now, because the LORD delays His judgment. If it were up to us, we would like to judge them right now! But, God's ways are not our ways.

What is particularly sad about this passage of scripture is that Israel repeatedly made the same mistakes over and over and over again. The problem with these people of Malachi's day is that they stray in their hearts and don't know the ways of God, therefore, were destined for judgment. Psalm 95:10-11 records the errors of the people of Israel while in the wilderness. "For forty years, I loathed that generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they do not know my ways.' And I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest."

Do you know His ways? My message this morning is the gospel. Do you want to be blessed of God? Don't forget His ways.

(1) He Lifts the Lowly (verse 13). God isn't looking for the proud achiever. He's looking for the repentant sinner. He hates grumbling and complaining. He loves those who seek mercy.

(2) He Weighs the Heart (verse 14) The promise of Scripture is this, if you seek the LORD with all your heart, you will find Him. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

(3) He Delays the Judgment (verse 15). Today is the day of salvation. But, the day is coming soon, when God ends His wait.

Oh, Rock Valley Bible Church, may we not forget His Ways!

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For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
