

Christians, do you trust God to keep his promises? I'm sure most of you would probably say, "Yes. Of course we do. We know that he's going to do what he says." But the question that we must ask ourselves is: do your actions show that too? Do your actions show that you trust God in all things, so that your words and what you do match up with each other?

Because God in the beginning of our reading, Malachi chapter 3, verse 6, says this: "I, the Lord, do not change. Therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed." What he means by this is that he does not change in keeping his promises. He does not change in doing what he says. Because if he did change, and if he did destroy the people of Israel, he'd be breaking his promises. The promise that he made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and that in them all the nations of the earth would be blessed. If he destroyed these people right now--and trust me, they deserved it--but if he did it, then he would not be keeping that promise. So no, the Lord does not change, even though Israel has been changing, has been faithfulness towards him. And so he says to his people in verse 7: "Return to me, and I will return to you." "Repent! Turn away from your sins. Come back to me, and I will forgive you, just as I promised that I would." Because as 1 John 1, verse 9, tells us: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He's faithful! He's going to do it, because he has promised to do so.

But the problem is that Israel doubts that. They're not taking God at his Word. They don't think that he's actually going to do what he says he's going to do. And we know this, God says, because of the way that they're acting. They are not giving to God the full tithe. They are not giving the full contribution that he had commanded them to give. Because in the Old Testament, Christians, God's people were commanded to give a tithe, to give ten percent of their income. Whether it be their possessions, whether it be their animals, whether it be their money, whatever it was, they were supposed to give ten percent of it to God. And the reason why they did that was so that the priests had something to live on. They would have the money they needed, the food that they needed, and they would be generally taken care of. That was the reason why God wanted them to do this, so that they could take care of each other. But the people of Israel aren't doing that. They're not giving the full tithe. They're not giving the full ten percent. They are, as Malachi says, robbing God.

Now, why are they doing that? There could be any number of reasons, really. Some of them, I'm sure, were simply greedy. They just didn't want to give it up. They want to hold onto the money and not give it to God. Some of them probably were just indifferent. They just didn't care what God had to say, and so they were going to give whatever they felt like giving. But some of them, I'm sure, were afraid and worried. And the reason I say that is because of what we hear in verse 10, where God says: "Put me to the test if I will not open the windows of heaven for you." That expression "the windows of heaven" in the Bible means "rain." We know that because of a passage like Genesis chapter 7, talking about the great flood. It says in that passage that "God opened up the windows of heaven" and it rained for forty days and for forty nights. So in other words, the problem that they're facing right now is not only that they just don't care what God has to say. They're also in the middle of a drought. And so I'm sure that because they're in that drought, they're worried. "Are we going to have enough? Are we going to be able to take care of our needs? Are we going to be able to take care of our family, if we give the full ten percent? It feels like we're just going to be poor, like we're going to be hurting really, really badly. So we'll

just keep some of it for ourselves." And probably also, "We wouldn't be able to get the things that we want," too. But because they were so worried about their situation, worried about what would happen to them in the middle of this drought, they weren't trusting God. Because God had promised them that he would bless them, that he would provide for them, that he would take care of them. And if they gave that tithe like he was commanding them to do, they weren't going to be lacking anything. But they didn't take him at his Word. They didn't think he was going to do it.

So Christians, do you trust the Lord to do what he says he's going to do? Do you trust him to keep his promises? Or do you show doubt like Israel did in the things that you do? Because how we approach the Lord, Christians, says a great deal about the truth of our hearts. It says a great deal about what we really think about God. And it could be something like giving, since that's what God is talking about here in this passage. We as Christians are not commanded to give a tithe. That is something that was part of the Old Testament that has been done away with in Jesus Christ. But that being said, God still wants us to give, so that we can take care of the needs of each other and also the needs of the church. Do we give generously for these things, so that there is no lack? Or do we find ourselves giving little, because we wonder, "Well, am I going to be hurting in the end? If I give what God wants me to give in this way, am I going to be lacking in the end?" Because when we act in this way, Christians, unfortunately it shows that we are doubting God's promises, a promise like what we hear in 2 Corinthians 9, verse 11, where Paul says: "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." When we give generously as Christians, we're not going to be hurting. We're not going to be lacking, because God provides everything that we need. And he gives us these things so that we can take care of one another as well.

But it doesn't have to be just something like giving. It could also be something like prayer. Let me ask it this way. How often do you pray? How long do you pray? Now, again, we're not given a specific command. We're not told that you're supposed to pray this many times a day or for this long when you do pray. That is part of Christian freedom. But the question still stands. Do we find ourselves not coming to God very often, not praying to him about our problems, because deep down we wonder, is it really going to do anything? Is it really going to make a difference in the end if I pray for this thing or not? But when we do that, Christians, unfortunately, that shows that we are doubting Christ's promise, a promise like he says in John 16, verse 23: "In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you." God has promised to hear our prayers and to hear us every single time we come to him. And so we are called, then, to trust him in this and to bring our petitions to the Lord. But I think we can see through these examples, Christians, that our actions, often louder than our words, tell us something about what we think of God.

But Christians, God is faithful! God will keep his promises. He's going to do everything that he says he's going to do, and far beyond our expectations! Far beyond what we can even imagine. "Put me to the test," he says. "Try me, and I will show you just how faithful I am. I will show you that I am going to keep my promises and that I will do what I say that I'm going to do. All of your doubts, all of your worries, all of your wonderings, I will take away. And I will show you just how faithful I am." And to Israel, God promised that he was going to give them a tremendous harvest, that they would no longer have a drought, that they would no longer have to

worry about locusts destroying their crops. There would only be an abundance, because God is faithful and true.

And to us Christians, God has promised something far greater than even a harvest. God has promised us every good thing in his Son, Jesus Christ. Whatever we ask in his name, he will give to us, because God has promised these things to us. And as Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8 verse 32: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" God was so faithful to us, Christians, that he gave us Jesus to forgive us our sins, to make us his people, just as he had promised to do. And if he gave us Jesus, what makes you think he's going to forget all the rest of these things? God will do what he says he's going to do, because he is faithful and true.

So come to him, Christians. Don't hold back. Don't doubt. Don't stand off wondering if he's going to do it. God will do it, because he is faithful and he keeps his promises. And as Paul tells us in Philippians 4, verse 19: "God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." He will give us everything, Christians, because he has promised to do so. And God never goes back on his Word.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, you have promised us every good thing in your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray that you would help us to trust you, to know that you are faithful and true, and that you will give us every good thing in him. In his name, we pray. Amen.