

**Fresh Fire Ministries**  
**The Expository Teaching Ministry of Jay Duane Driver**  
January 1, 2010

**“Return to the Lord”**

*Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from my ordinances and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you says the Lord of hosts. But you said, "In what way shall we return?" Malachi 3:7 (New King James Version)*

The pastor stands and walks toward the podium to begin his time of preaching the word of God. He opens his Bible, and recites the chapter and verse of the subject for the days' message. Malachi Chapter three. Before he can get the rest of the passage stated for your hearing, you immediately think, "Oh no, another message on tithing!" He doesn't begin at verse 8, but he begins and ends with verse 7. We must be careful that we don't view the context of Malachi's prophecy on one verse alone.

The overall focus of Malachi's prophecy is God's unchanging love for His people. This unfailing love is a result of God's mercy that endures forever. Malachi's voice resonates in the fashion of the first New Testament prophet John the Baptist simply, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Malachi had an extremely heavy burden for the people of God. (See Malachi 1:1) He was burdened with the alarming sins of his people and spells out in detail several indictments regarding their behavior. To put it briefly but bluntly, they had denied God's love, despised His name, defiled His altar, and disregarding His law. There was a vain attempt to blame God for their circumstance and behavior by stating that He had not extended His love to them. "I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, "In what way have you loved us?" Malachi 1:2 (NKJV)

In the midst of Israel posing such a ridiculous question; God responds to their inquiry concerning His unfailing love. (v.3-5) Those select verses hold God's response from an historical perspective concerning His covenant relationship with them. But in our devotional text he uses the one word that strikes directly at the heart of the matter when we come to a place in life where not only Israel but we also believe that God's love is not abounding toward us. Return. This one word suggests that God is still where He has always been; surrounding us with His love and protecting us from all harm, when we are the ones who have become "estranged" in our relationship with Him. Return. In the original text it means to "restore, refresh, or repair". This act of reconciliation must be initiated by the one that has left the relationship.

The beauty of this text is that no matter what you have done, you can always return to the Lord. When you return, He will return. His returning does not indicate in any way shape or form that He has ever left. What it does suggest is that when you return He simply meets you at the place that He has always been. He looks beyond our faults and with an unfailing love, meets us at the point of our most immediate need. If God is not there, guess who left? "And the Lord, He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed." Deuteronomy 31:8 (NKJV)