

*See Mr. Archibald's Sunday School Application*

*Your words have been stout against me, v. 13.* The worst abuse of the divine gift of speech is to turn it against the Giver in words of rebellion, unbelief or blasphemy. Such words reveal an impious heart. They deserve special condemnation when they come from those who, like the people Malachi was addressing, enjoy great favors and blessings from the hand of the Lord. Men may think that their "hard speeches" against God will pass unnoticed by Him, but "every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12: 36).

*It is vain to serve God, v. 14.* They are unexpectedly confronted with their own words. They were diligent "temple-treaders." They had practiced the art of sanctimoniousness with great pains. But "all in vain," say they. They spoke and acted as if religion were of the nature of a trafficking with God. If they offered sacrifices or kept fasts or attended services, they expected to be well paid for their trouble in temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Such religion, whether in ancient or modern times, is spurious and abominable in the sight of God. We must love and obey God for His own sake, not for what we expect to gain of worldly good by doing so.

*We call the proud happy, v. 15.* If man's chief good is the attainment of worldly ease, success, or pleasure, then the proud, the "workers of iniquity," "the tempters of God," are sometimes to be envied and their tactics followed. But is the view-point the proper one? Take a lesson from one who had had all of good that the world could give and stamped it "vanity." "Fear God," he cries, "and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12: 14.)

*Then they that feared the Lord, v. 16.* There was a "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11: 5) even in those degenerate times. "They spake often one to another, holding sweet communion even in the chil-

ding atmosphere of formalism and iniquity by which they were surrounded. And God, who never misses anything that His people do, wrote their names and their sayings in His book of remembrance. What higher honor could anyone have reached or what stronger assurance of reward?

*They shall be mine, v. 17.* God is the treasure of His saints amidst the many temptations to set their affections on earthly things. They will be His treasure in the great day. He is preparing them now for that hour, purging them from dross, cutting and polishing them so that "They shall shine in their beauty, bright gems for His crown." Saved souls are the crown-jewels of the King of kings.

Ch. 4: 1-3. The theme of these verses is "the day" or "the day that I do make" (v. 3, Rev. Ver.) That day will be the "day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. 2: 5.) A cloud now covers the face of God's throne. At that day the Sun of righteousness shall rise in all His splendor, scattering the mists and darkness. To the wicked His rising will mean destruction. The fire of His just wrath will consume them like stubble. Neither root nor branch shall be left. To those that fear God's name, His rising will mean healing for all their wounds and woes, emancipation from all oppression and injustice, the filling of their hearts and lives with a new and enduring joy, victory over all their enemies.

*Remember the law of Moses My servant, v. 4.* Forgetfulness of this law was the source of all the departures of the Jewish people from the living God. God had given them a guide for faith and conduct. If they had followed it faithfully, it would have led them into fuller light. We of to-day have not only the law of Moses, but the words of grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, and walk by them "until the day dawn and the shadows flee away."