

Studies in Malachi #4: Robbing God

As a review, the previous messages looked at various offenses the people were committing against God.

Offense #1 – They denied that God really loved them (1:2-5)

Offense #2 – They despised God's name by offering unworthy sacrifices (1:6-8, 11-14)

Offense #3 – Their priests were unfaithful, hypocritical, and half-hearted (2:1-9, 17)

Offense #4 – They profaned the covenant by intermarrying with the heathen (2:10-13)

Offense #5 – They were divorcing their wives (2:14-16)

Offense #6 – They said that evil people are good in God's eyes, and that God will not judge evil (2:17, 3:13-15)

Offense #7 – Various specific sins (3:5)

Offense #8 – They rob God of tithes and offerings (3:8-12)

"Will a man rob God? Yet he have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation."

This is a serious charge, and shows that men who live their lives ignoring God and his provisions, never returning anything to God in the form of offerings to church or other godly works, who spend everything that comes into their hands on themselves, are in reality robbing God! If we rob God, then eventually the blessings will dry up.

We are not Jewish and are not under the law of tithing, yet we are still required (by God) to return a portion of our money or other forms of blessing to him indirectly, by supporting the local church, giving to the poor ("alms"), or supporting other godly works (for example, World Missionary Press, PreBorn, various Bible publication or translation organizations, valid missionary outreaches, etc.). Some people are so bound to tithing that they will write out their checks to the exact penny. My belief is that 10% should be the minimum that we give. Even in the OT they gave more – they had normal tithes but also thank and peace offerings, vows, and of course the sacrifices for sin and cleansing, and for the annual festivals, etc. If we cannot even give 10%, then we are either unthankful, greedy, or unbelieving (to think that if we give our 10% that we would then go hungry).

We should however be aware that as stewards of God's resources, we are responsible for where that money goes and how it is spent. I could not in good conscience give a single penny to denominations that have surrendered to the woke agenda, to LGBTW perverseness, or that support the communistic WCC and NCC, UN organizations, etc. Our money (God's money) should be going to places where it will support the work of the kingdom, not work against it.

But even in God's rebuke he makes a promise of blessing, actually in the form of a challenge. 3:10-12 – "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground: neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

So if you are guilty of having lived for self, and have been robbing God, he tells you that if you will change, and acknowledge your dependence on God, that you are not the owners but the stewards of God's gifts, and start giving in obedience and generosity, he will abundantly provide more. His beneficence will be seen in more income (he will pour us out a blessing), and less waste and loss (he will rebuke the devourer).

Prov. 19:17 – "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

Lk. 6:38 – "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

But we should also realize that giving must be done with the right attitude.

2 Cor. 9:6-9 – “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.”

This means that in our giving,

- We should be generous, not stingy.
- We should give cheerfully, not grudgingly and complaining in our hearts.
- As we give properly, God will provide us with the means of “abounding to every good work”.

There is a related lesson in the book of Haggai. The people had returned from the Babylonian captivity and rebuilt Jerusalem’s city walls and gates, and should have been rebuilding the temple. They became more concerned with their own homes and property than the temple, and so that work got bogged down. God rebuked them through the prophet Haggai. In chapter 1 we see that:

1. They justified their inaction by saying it was not the right time. 1:2 – “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.”
2. Their lives were not being blessed. 1:6 – “Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag of holes.”
3. The reason is because God was himself resisting them. 1:9-11 – “Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. ... And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon the labour of the hands.”
4. Why did God resist them? Because they were neglecting the house of the LORD. 1:4 – “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?” And 1:9 – “... Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.”

Then the people responded and began work on the temple in earnest, and the result was that God promised to bless them and remove his curses. 2:18-19 – “Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day I will bless you.”

Lessons:

1. We must recognize that as our Creator, God has every right to lay upon us an obligation to return a portion of our income and blessings to him and the work of his kingdom.
2. We should recognize that frequent loss from drought, blight, insects, mold, thefts, etc. may not just be “things that happen”, but may actually be God’s chastening hand upon us, cursing our blessings in order to turn us back to obedience.
3. We must stop making excuses for why we cannot give (“it is not the right time”).
4. The purpose of giving is not just obedience, it is for the blessing of those who receive it, and for the work of the kingdom.
5. We must repent of “robbing God” and start giving regularly, punctually, generously, and with the right attitude.
6. Although guarding against the false and ungodly motivation of the “give-to-get preachers”, we should expect that God actually will give us abundantly more, in response to a right-hearted obedience.
7. The purpose of this increase in “income” is not merely for our pleasure, but that we would have more to give in the future.