

**Subject: *Stealing from God***

**Scripture: *Malachi 3:8-12***

One of the best stories about a thankful heart involves the famous Bible commentator Matthew Henry. After he had been robbed he wrote that he was grateful for three reasons: 1) I'm thankful that he took my money and not my life; 2) I'm thankful that he didn't get much; and 3) Most of all, I'm thankful that he robbed me and not I who robbed him. That's a true story and a wonderful story about Christian gratitude.

The Bible says we must not steal from anyone. The 8th commandment says "You shall not steal." In our text we have stealing of the worst kind, even stealing from God.

### **1. The charge (vs. 8-9)**

Malachi (my messenger) delivers another part of God's message, this time in the form of a question and accusation. As usual the Jews denied the charge and accusation and countered with another question, "In what way have we robbed you?" Malachi didn't pull any punches, "In tithes and offerings."

There are other ways they robbed God. They robbed God of the honor and respect He deserved (1:6). In 3:7, we see that they departed from God and His Word. And we should see verse 7 and 8 together as Matthew Henry points out: "These are wicked servants indeed that not only run away from their Master, but also run away with their Master's goods."

#### **A. This is a shocking charge – Will a man rob God?**

Will a person take something that belongs to God, something that is rightfully His? This wasn't a charge of stealing from the Temple or stealing from the priests; it was stealing from God. This was such a heinous crime, no wonder they didn't own up to it. It's shocking to read that the Jews, God's own people, would rob Him and yet God's people commit the same crime today.

"Tithes" refers to the tenth of all crops and income that was required by God in the Old Testament. "Offerings" refers to the portions of animal sacrifices given to the priests. Tithes and offerings was God's plan of finance for His people. It was designed to remind His people that He owned it all and they were stewards (managers) of it. Tithing was spelled out in the law God gave on Mt. Sinai, but the principle of tithing existed even before the Mosaic law. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20) and Jacob promised to give tithes to God (Gen. 28:22). Tithing is not commanded for Christians in the NT, but we are instructed to give sacrificially, abundantly, and cheerfully, not grudgingly. The OT principle is still in force, ***Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.***

#### **B. This is a serious charge – You are cursed with a curse; for you have robbed me.**

As we have seen, the people were full of indifference and apathy and it showed in their attitude and actions: they doubted God's love; they dishonored God's authority; they defiled God's altar; they disobeyed God's Word; they despised God's character; and they denied God's accusations. So it was fitting that they deserved God's judgment (a curse). Like so many people today, they want God's blessing, but they are receiving God's curse.

## **2. The challenge (vs. 10-12)**

What kind of God would say, “You have robbed me,” and then follow that with a promise to bless them abundantly? That’s amazing grace.

### **A. God gave them a command**

It was a simple command and a specific command: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse.” The storehouse was the storage facility in the temple area (“my house”).

### **B. God gave them a promise**

His promise was in the form of a test. God said, “Put me to the test.” This is the exact opposite of the normal biblical pattern where God tests the people. In this case He wants to prove to His people that He is able and He is faithful to fulfill His promise. It was a gracious promise and a generous promise: I will pour out a blessing from heaven and I will protect your crops. This is a promise from God, and not a sales pitch from Malachi. God says, “Test me and trust me.”

Stealing from anybody is a terrible sin. Stealing from God is the worst kind of sin. Stealing from God is taking something for yourself that rightfully belongs to Him. It’s bad.

If you are stealing from God, stop it.

If you are robbing Him of tithes and offerings, stop it.

If you are robbing Him of time and worship, stop it.

If you are robbing Him of respect and service, stop it.