

Stealing From God?

Scripture Reading — Malachi 3:1-12

“I will be quick to testify against ... those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress ... and deprive ...”

Malachi 3:5 —

The times of the prophet Malachi were not prosperous. The Jews who had returned from exile were struggling just to keep their community alive. Yet Malachi prophesied that they would not endure the coming day of the Lord if they oppressed the poor and failed to give to the Lord.

Malachi said the Lord would come like a refiners' fire. Those who are pure enough to withstand are those who have served God in righteousness—honoring the poor, the orphan and widow, the refugee, the weakest members of society.

Malachi goes on to say that by withholding tithes and offerings, God's people were actually stealing from God. God's desire is that his people gladly offer their gifts and resources to him. When they do, he is eager to pour out blessing upon blessing over them. But those who do not give are under a curse.

A wealthy man I know once told me that he finds it almost impossible to give money away. When he does, it seems he is always blessed with more. That seems to be the plan God has in mind. We are called to give without expecting anything in return. And yet God promises that he will bless us. Cheerful giving shows that we cannot dictate our own success. It's up to God. Greedy hoarding steals from God and earns the just punishment of consuming fire.

Prayer

Lord, spare us from robbing you. Help us to give gladly, and to trust you to care for us. Help us remember that all our resources are yours. Amen.

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