

## THE WORLD'S WORST THIEF

**TEXT: Malachi 3:8-11:**

***8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.***



***9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.***

***10 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.***

***11 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.***

The nations largest circulated newspaper provided these eye-capturing headlines: **“STEALING — THE NATIONS BIGGEST BUSINESS”**. A terrible business that is for any individual, much less a whole nation. It stated that over four billion dollars worth of merchandise and money are stolen each year here in America. Also, the reason for the high cost of food and many other staples is directly caused by stealing.

In other words, you are paying for those who are stealing. Not only are we paying higher prices for commodities we need, but also for law enforcement agencies, guards, and electronic equipment to detect the robbers. *“The mark-up of merchandise before it even leaves the factory is upped due to employee theft from the companies,”* said the news article. Most of this is done by white collar workers.



### **The case of a bank teller**

I know the case of a man who was up for a promotion at the local bank where we used to do business. The third vice president told me he was in line at the cafeteria, when one of the officers saw a teller up for promotion take a pat of butter and put it under the lip of his plate, and then move his salad plate to cover it. The officer decided this would be a good time to buy all the lunches. When seated at

the table, he told the employees to hand him their tickets because he was going to take care of them. Some jokingly remarked that if they had only known this, they would have loaded their trays. Soon a lively conversation followed. The official was careful to place on top the ticket he wanted to check out, and found the butter had not been charged. During the afternoon, he called this teller into his office and told him of the bank's plans for his advancement to an assistant cashier. He was elated at the news, but it didn't last long when he learned he was fired. *"If you would take a pat of butter from a cafeteria, you would, under appropriate circumstances, take much more from our bank. You have broken a trust that cannot be repaired,"* said the officer of the bank. The teller lost his job over a pat of butter.



I've read of cases in court where the judge provided stiff sentences where stealing was involved of company funds, more than when a thief used a gun on his victim. The judge declared; *"The worst kind of a thief is he who violates a position of trust, posing as a friend, and robs you blind in a sneaky and underhanded manner."* Thus, according to law, the most miserable thief is that person who has been befriended, pretends to be honest, and breaks that sacred trust in planned and deliberate acts of deceit.

I thought the meanest and worst thief I ever heard of was the drunkard who took the little shoes off his baby's feet in a casket, and then sold them to satisfy his craving for alcohol. But since then, I've changed my mind several times as to who the worst worldwide thief could be. I discovered in the Bible the one God calls the world's worst robber in:

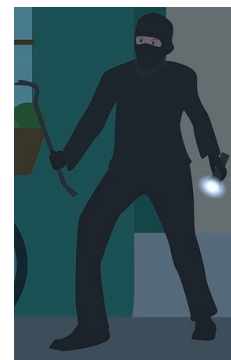
***Malachi 3:8-9:***

***<sup>8</sup> Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.***

***<sup>9</sup> Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.***

***Psalms 24:1: The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.***

***Psalms 89:11: The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them.***



**Haggai 2:8: The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of Hosts.**

**Psalms 115:16: The Heaven, even the Heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men.**

This isn't all the Lord has given us, for we read in:

**Romans 8:32: He Who spared not His Own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

**1 Timothy 6:17: Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the Living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;**

Aren't those wonderful words: Yes, God is a good God.

**Psalms 84:11: For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.**

Tithing is so important to God's work that He places a blessing upon those who give, and a curse upon those who don't. The cause of blights and blizzards, termites and tornadoes, the eruptions of volcanoes, famines, and frost is because people are robbing God, for these are the devourers God told us would come to them who rob Him.



I surely don't want God's curse on me, and that is exactly why I am faithfully preaching this Word to you to prevent the curse from coming. To those who are guilty of robbing God, you can be freed from the curse and be blessed again. I'll keep tithing and keep receive the blessings of the Lord. If you want to be stingy with God and have His frown of ill health, troubles, and other financial reverses, those are the interest payments God is collecting on the tithe debt you are owing.

We are told of a preacher in Arkansas who promised to give a tithe from his harvested crops to the work of the Lord. But when he got the money, he backed away from paying it. Then his best cow became sick and died. The preacher

would say that because he wouldn't give to God, he ended up having to give his best cow up to the buzzards, lost the blessing, and had no treasure laid up in Heaven. Besides, God knows where we live and how much we earn. I'll guarantee you this, that 9/10<sup>ths</sup> of your income will go further with God's blessing on it than the 10/10<sup>ths</sup> with God's curse on it. That may not make sense to you, but I'll show you it can make dollar sense.

Let me illustrate this truth. A devouring flame was burning out of control in San Francisco. It had destroyed millions of dollars worth of property in its wake. Like greased lightning, it was headed toward Mr. Kerr's Fruit Jar Factory. His superintendent sent a long distance call to him in New York. Mr. Kerr was at the A & P 's main offices where he was to get a new contract. Mr. Kerr replied, *"Don't worry, that's God's property, and if He wants it to burn down, that's His business."*

The shocked superintendent soon learned how God takes care of those who tithe. The flames forked several blocks away from the plant and cleaned everything out on either side, leaving this Christian man's factory all alone. There it stood as a monument of God's goodness to his faithful stewards.

**. . . God takes care of those who tithe.**

Satan will tell you that you can't afford to tithe. I've told him: *"Mr. devil, I can't afford not to tithe, for God has been so good to me."* The Bible says:

***Proverbs 10:22: The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.***

One of our ministers was accusing me of trying to bring him back under the law after preaching on tithing. He said: *"The New Testament standard of giving is as God hath prospered you in:*

***1 Corinthians 16:2: Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.***

God let me know he was using this scripture as a crutch to duck and dodge away from giving one-tenth to the Lord. So I reminded him that tithing began about 700 years before the Law. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek in:

**Genesis 14:20: And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.**

Jacob also tithed a little over 300 years before the law. He promised God, in a strange and friendless land, that if the Lord would bring him home again safely and would provide for him a living, that 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all He gave him would be His.

**Genesis 28:20-22:**



**<sup>20</sup> And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,**

**<sup>21</sup> So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:**

**<sup>22</sup> And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.**

He returned home in peace and was a very rich man.

The tithe is actually a debt we owe to God:

**Hebrews 7:9: And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.**

**The tithe is actually a debt we owe to God.**

And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT? Here is a baby yet unborn paying tithes. Figure that one out, will you? What! Paying tithes before he is even born? Yes sir, that's right. God credited to his account tithes as given before he even discovered the world. Why? Because God knew before he was even born, that this young one would be giving to the building of His Kingdom. The tithe is the Lord's, so we are told in:

**Leviticus 27:30: And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD.**

Paul says:

***Galatians 3:29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the Promise.***

***Romans 4:11-12:***

***11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:***

***12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.***

Jesus came along and put the frosting on the cake with this statement:

***John 8:39: They answered and said unto Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus saith unto them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."***

Levi did it before his birth in the loins of Abraham, and we will do it, too, when we are really God's children by the new birth.

Jesus now takes us right to the core of New Testament stewardship, where there is no place to get out. It is so easy to remember this reference.

***Matthew 23:23: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.***

If we don't tithe, we are rated lower than the hypocrites to whom Jesus was speaking. Jesus never used the word 'give' concerning tithing. He said "pay", just like Levi paid tithes in Abraham. Why this "paying" tithes? The answer is because it is a debt! Any failure to pay the tenth to God is called stealing. That is why God is speaking to the Israelites in Malachi's day, saying, "*Will a man rob God, yet ye have robbed Me.*" "They asked: '*Wherein have we robbed Thee?*' God answers: '*In tithes and offerings.*'" God couldn't and wouldn't have called it robbing Him if it weren't a debt we owed to Him.

**Malachi 3:7-9:**

***7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?***

***8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings.***

***9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.***



Some of you are saying in your hearts: *“I can’t tithe because I have so many debts.”* This is why you have them. God is saying in the last part of this passage of scripture, *“You are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed Me even this whole nation.”*

I remember the incident of a Mr. White and a conversation he had with his uncle Henry. Mr. White was trying to show his uncle how to get the blessings of God on him by obeying the tithing command, but objected saying: *“But I owe too much money, and I must be just, before I am generous, you know”*. *“But Uncle Henry, you owe God a larger debt than you owe anybody else”*. *“That’s right, Whitie, but He ain’t pushing me”*, he responded.

The Bible refers to our material possessions about 1000 times. Sixteen of the 38 parables Jesus told were concerning stewardship.

Tithing is God’s own plan, and it strikes home at the selfish. It is His remedy for covetousness and greediness after filthy lucre. God never left His church to be cared for by pink teas, oyster stews, church suppers, ice cream socials, bazaars, or sauerkraut and wieners to raise money to spread the Gospel and support their ministers. Tithing is God’s plan and it has never been revoked or cancelled anywhere in the Bible. If you have to be coaxed to support God’s church by suppers or pot luck dinners, you are in a low state of grace, or no grace at all. To squeeze the nickel until the Indian rides the buffalo is no way to treat God.

**Tithing is God’s own plan, and it strikes home at the selfish.**

***John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only***

***Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***

What does God want done with the tithe?

***Numbers 18:21: And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.***

The tithe is the Lord's, and if we take it and use it, we are robbing God. Therefore, we have broken the eighth commandment and are convicted of the law as transgressors.

**The tithe is the Lord's, and if we take it and use it, we are robbing God.**

Only the devil would tell you to cheat God out of what really belongs to Him. He put this in the heart of some people mentioned in the Bible which is recorded in **Acts 5**. Their names are Ananias and Sapphira. They are the world's worst thieves, as found in the Bible:

***Acts 5:1-10:***

***<sup>1</sup> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,***

***<sup>2</sup> And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.***

***<sup>3</sup> But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?***

***<sup>4</sup> Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.***

***<sup>5</sup> And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.***

***<sup>6</sup> And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.***

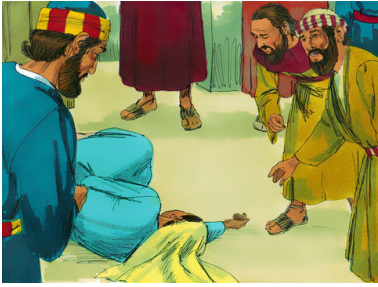
***<sup>7</sup> And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.***

***<sup>8</sup> And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.***





**<sup>9</sup> Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.**



**<sup>10</sup> Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost [died]: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.**

What happened to the first church after this? Did it scare everybody away for fear that something awful would happen to them, also? No, not exactly, but I'll tell you what did happen. Joining that Church was at a low ebb for awhile, for people said:

*"You are surely going to be right and do right to be in that church."*

*"Hypocrites or pretenders don't stand a chance, nor get by around there."*

*"Reforming and turning over a new leaf isn't enough to stand the test they put you through."*

Well, Amen, that is what it should be. Thus, a real revival broke out and multitudes of people who wanted reality came hunting this church out to be saved from their sins. It says:

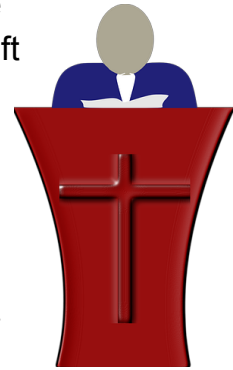
***Acts 5:14: And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.***

For the presence and blessings of God is on the church that is cleaned out. Is that the kind of religion you want? Well, you can have it, for Jesus is here right now to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. For God sent His Son to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

***Acts 3:26: Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.***

God has been so good to us, but what have we shown Him in our appreciation for all He has done for us? Here is what He requires: God wants us to support His church, which is His dwelling place.

God is the author of all law, order, and government in the universe. He has provided a divine plan for the sustaining of all life in His creation. The CHURCH, is the highest conception of God's creation. He has not left unprovided. To the church He commits the task of evangelizing the whole world. He provided the law of TITHING TO CARE FOR ALL ITS OPERATING EXPENSES.



The worst sin in the world today is selfishness, and God wants to prove to the world His children's love to Him. We are to pay 1/10<sup>th</sup> of our income (which is the tithe) into the storehouse. The Bible says: "The tithe is the Lord's".

***Leviticus 27:30: And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD.***

Honor The Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of ALL THY INCREASE.

***Proverbs 3:10: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.***

If we don't give the firstfruits of all our labors to the Lord, we are robbing Him. If you earn \$10.00, then \$1.00 belongs to God. You are violating a sacred trust if you don't. It is a disgrace to Christianity that so-called Christians will live in nice homes and neglect God's cause, the church. When the world jeers, and infidels mock our religion and our church, we are offended and hurt. But we have given them reason to doubt and question our sincerity, all because we are so tight and stingy with God in our giving. We spend our money mostly on ourselves, then turn around and say we love the Lord with all our hearts. Our actions speak louder than our words.

I know that the most sensitive nerve in our body is that one which runs to our pocketbook or purse. But when our hearts are really filled with the true love of God, we are the most generous. We give without grudging and complaining. This is the only kind of giving that the Lord loves and blesses.



***Corinthians 9:7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,***

***so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.***

How much love is flowing in your direction, I wonder?

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