

Robbers of God

1

Mal 3:8

2

8 “Will a man rob God?”

What an interesting idea. Can God be robbed? According to Malachi, the answer is yes. I suppose the question then is, how? How do we rob God of anything? Malachi gives us some answers...

Mal 3:7

3

7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’”

Malachi, in addressing the Israelites speaks to them of the history of disobedience that has been theirs from the beginning. From the time of the Exodus, they have made a consistent practice of turning from God’s commandments, time after time fallen into idolatry. God has dealt with them firmly but with patience, trying to get them to see the error of their ways and give themselves wholly to Him. But that hasn’t been their reaction to His punishments and discipline. They have stubbornly refused to make the commitment of the true believer. So Malachi uses their reaction to God as the lead in to his statement that..

4

8 “Will a man rob God?”

I don’t see this as an empty statement on his part. I think Malachi is telling them that they have indeed taken from God, what is His by right. Anytime a debt owed is not repaid, that, by definition, is stealing.

Ps 100:3

5

3 Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

By right. God is our creator, He has brought us into being and has given us absolutely everything we need or could ever want, including the way to have a right relationship through with Him through His Son that He sent, Jesus Christ. God has the right to expect His creation, man, to respond to Him as their creator.

That is what we see in Malachi’s statement to the Israelites. After everything God had done for them, it was His right to receive from them faithful obedience to His statutes. That is the point...

It is God’s right to expect His creation to give Him the glory and obedience!!

Notice what Malachi says in the continuance of the verse...

8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.

He makes the point that they were robbing, taking from God what is His right to expect, when they chose to not give Him His due.

If we go through this life thinking we owe no one anything, least of all God, we will fail, not only in this life, but the one to come. We want to look at some points from Malachi’s admonishment to the Israelites to see if we can find application for us today.

7 1) Surprise that a debt is owed

8 ***“Will a man rob God?”***

The question is asked as if it were improbable, if not impossible, man, an insignificant creature, dependent upon his God for the very air that he breathes, can he rob God? Will a man rob GOD?"

This surprise, on the part of the Israelites, is evidenced in Malachi’s answer.

9 8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’

They can’t believe his answer when he says, “you are robbing me,” I think the implication of that answer is that it is God saying, “You are robbing Me.” They want to know how, and that’s when Malachi tells them...

10 ***“In tithes and offerings.”***

I can just imagine them wondering as to what significance tithes and offerings had to do with robbing God. It’s God, He doesn’t need tithes and offerings any more than a centipede needs another leg, what difference does it make if we bring our tithes and offerings, what would He do with them anyway? The point isn’t the value of the offerings, the point is the value of returning to God that which is rightfully His.

That’s the point of verse 7...

11 7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,”

When we don’t keep God’s statutes, His commandments, we turn from Him, we rob Him. That was Malachi’s answer. Maybe it’s just me, but I think that the astonishment illustrated here comes from the fact that most of us think that God needs nothing, or at the very least nothing that we can give. Therefore, we owe Him nothing. Yet, that is what Malachi defines as robbing God.

Friends, why would we ever be surprised to find out we are not giving God what we owe. If we give everything we have to God, it could not be enough to repay Him for what He has given us.

Heb 1:1-3 **12**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

God gave Jesus, the Son of God, who God, because of His love for man, sent. How can that ever be paid back? It can't, but the fact that it can't be paid back in no way negates the validity of the debt owed. The debt is owed and cannot be denied or avoided.

That said, our next point of discussion is...

13 2) Debt demands confession

There are four passages I want us to look at that speak to this thought...

Matt 10:32 **14**

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

Jesus tells us that this idea of confession of Him is vitally necessary for us to be recognized by Him before God. This is one of the most poignant passages in terms of what Christ does for any who accept Him. This makes such an impression on me to think that Jesus the Christ will stand before God, my creator, and accept me as one of His. Add that thought to our next passage...

1 John 4:15 **15**

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

John tells us that when we accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and confess Him, then God abides in us, and we in Him. This means that when we accept Jesus as the Christ, we do so because of the evidential truth of the Gospel. When we believe in the truth of the Gospel about Christ, it of a necessity demands that we believe in the truth of the Gospel about God our creator. Malachi tells the Israelites that they owe a debt to God that can only be paid through giving back to God the only thing that He wants from us, our love and worship. This is borne out in both Hosea and Proverbs...

Hos 6:6 **16**

6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Prov 21:3 **17**

3 To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the Lord more than sacrifice.

God desires nothing that this world has to offer, but He does desire the willing, voluntary, loving offer of worship from the believer who accepts Him and everything He has done.

The third passage concerning this thought of confession is found in...

1 Tim 6:13 18

13 I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

Christ Himself showed what this confession is to be...

John 14:6 19

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Then in...

John 18:37 20

37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

Jesus knew exactly who He was and why He was sent. That is seen in His comment to His mother, when, at the age of 12, he stayed behind to discuss the Law with the leaders of the Temple and when asked why He said,

21 ***"Do you not know that I need to be about my Father's business?"***

The last of the passages concerning the thought of this confession is in...

Phil 2:9-11 22

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Remember the debt that Malachi laid at the feet of the Israelites. They owed God for everything God had done for them. The extension of that that thought is that all men owe a debt to God for all that God has done for man. Creation, blessing man with the things of this world that man needs for survival, and ultimately the gift of His Son, so that no one need languish under the penalty of sin but can find eternal life in Christ. There is a debt owed, and here is the point, and please get this point...

23 ***That debt of confession will be paid!!!***

That is exactly what Paul is saying in Philippians. Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess the good confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Friends, we choose whether we will make that confession now or wait until Christ returns to make it. Either way, we will make it. In that, there is no choice. The difference is what the results of that confession will be.

If we make it now, in our lives, we will be rewarded for it through God's grace and mercy, if we choose to wait until there is no more choice offered, we will be rewarded with the wrath of God. The debt will be paid. This brings us to our last point...

24 3) Payment of debt requires repentance

As we have just discussed, the debt will be paid, either now or later. If we make the smart choice, how can we pay the debt now? We have said and illustrated that there is nothing of this world that God needs or wants. But there is something from man that God truly desires...

Acts 17:30 **25**

30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

God wants all men everywhere to repent, to willingly change their will to His will. He wants man to follow His commandments. He wants tithes and offerings, but not for the sake of the tithes and offerings. He wants them for the sake of the faithful obedience, founded in love for Him, of the believer.

2 Cor 7:9-10 **26**

9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. **10** For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Here, then, is how the debt is paid. Paul writes to the Corinthians that he rejoiced that they were made sorrowful concerning their sin, because it is the sorrow that is produced by the Will of God, His Word, that motivates us to repent, to turn from our stubborn willful way to God's statutes. But, do you see what Paul says concerning that repentance? That repentance leads to salvation.

Until we decide to look at ourselves, our actions, our words, everything that we are in light of what God's word says, we cannot begin to hope to repay the debt we owe to God. When we refuse to recognize what we owe to God, we rob Him of what we owe. When we refuse to recognize our transgression of His word, we rob Him of what we owe. When we refuse to repent, to be sorrowful for our sin, we deny Christ and do not confess Him before men, and will be denied before God.

Brethren, we need to be careful to not get caught in the trap of our own stubbornness or arrogance and to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We need to repay the debt that we owe.