**Cross And Crown Christian Outreach**

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**Do Not Rob Jehovah**

**“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. -** Mal. 3:8 NIV

Today’s Devotional continues to examine the message of Jehovah to the people of Judah who had chosen to accuse Jehovah of being dishonest with his claims of loving them (Mal. 1:2-5), and also being a God of justice – Mal. 2:17-3:5. They will rather attempt what seems like a blackmail of the personality of Jehovah, than do a honest self examination, to determine where and what they are likely to have done wrong, to cause the non-acceptance of their offerings by Jehovah. They simply could not understand why all their offerings to Him, done with the expectation of reprieve from all their pains and restoration of their losses, were unsuccessful. As far as they were concerned, His not accepting those offerings and His refusal to restore their blessings was not expected of a God that claims, not only to love them, but also lays claim, in their own view, to being a God of justice.

The Prophet Malachi had earlier listed three acts of the people of Judah, that had contributed to the refusal of the Almighty God to heed their demand for reprieve and restoration as follows:

1. They were offering blemished animals for sacrifices, contrary to his instructions on what the standard of items to be offered to Him, should be – Mal. 1:6-14.
2. They were breaking faith with pledges made, or actually separating from the wife of their youth. According to Jehovah, He hates separation of all forms and breaking faith with pledges already made – Mal. 2:10-16.
3. They were deeply involved in acts of injustice and yet, they were expecting justice from the God of Justice – Mal. 2:17-3:5.

In today’s Devotional, the Prophet Malachi focuses on the fourth reason why the offerings of the people has remained unacceptable to Jehovah. He had found them guilty of robbery, an accusation which they denied, probably ignorantly. How could they, mere mortals, ever rob a great god like Jehovah, they asked. In the scripture that is the foundation of today’s Devotional, the Lord identified two areas where they were committing the crime of robbery against him as the area of tithes and offerings – Mal. 3:8.

Jehovah recalled how, from the time of their fore-fathers, they have always turned away from His decrees and not observe them, yet he never stopped loving them and that has not changed even in their own time. All he required was for them to return to Him and He will turn to them and restore them, as their act of robbing Him had automatically brought them under His curse – Mal. 3:6-9. Definitely, there was no way they could thrive under the curse of Jehovah. All He wanted of them was that they bring the WHOLE tithe into the store house so that there will be food in His house, and they will be restored, asking that they should test Him by implementing his request, to confirm His willingness and readiness to act according to what He has promised – Mal. 3:10. For Him to do this,

1. He will throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out blessings that their store will not be able to contain – Mal. 3:10a.
2. He will prevent pests from devouring their crops – Mal. 3:11a.
3. He will ensure that the vines in their fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe - Mal. 3:11b.

The result of the above actions by Jehovah, after they would have done the needful, will make the nations describe them as blessed, as their land will become delightful – Mal. 3:12.

Obviously the people have the impression that they were bringing offerings and more importantly tithes to the Lord, but probably out of ignorance or deliberate negative smartness, they were short-changing the Lord. The reaction of Jehovah to their actions reveals clearly that man cannot just bring anything before the Lord in the name of offering or tithe and expect to be rewarded. There is indeed a measure that is expected by Jehovah and unless such expectations are met, such offerings will always be rejected by Him with the individual possibly regarded as an ingrate or a robber, as such will be in possession of what should by right belong to Jehovah.

Christians need to be aware that they are not in any way doing Jehovah a favour by bringing offerings and tithes. It is a requirement from Him and the standard and quality of what is to be brought is clearly specified by Him – Lev. 1:1-7:38; Num. 15:1-31; Deut. 26:1-15. The comment of Jehovah with regards to the actions of the people of Judah indicated that they were indeed bringing somethings in the name of tithes and offerings but a portion of what should be brought was being held back.

With regards to tithes, the calculation is very clear as it is a demand by God for one-tenth of the profit of the harvest to be brought into His house – Lev. 27:30-33. To feign ignorance of how this will be calculated can sometimes be an attempt by men to be hypocritical, as the impression being given is that the one earning income does not know what constitutes Capital and what constitutes profit. The one who intends to bring anything called tithe to the Almighty God must make sincere efforts at ensuring that nothing is removed from what should be the real value. It may be possible for Jehovah to forgive a honest error of calculation, but a deliberate short payment of what is called tithe for any reason whatsoever, will make such a person incur the curse of Jehovah as stated in this scripture – Mal. 3:9. That there is a role for tithe payment in the release of blessings to the Christian is not arguable and the one who intends to tap into this source of blessing will be better off, over-paying as short-changing will always be punished.

Similarly, Christians need to also be very careful with offerings brought to the Lord. Aside from the quality of the offering, the scripture for today’s Devotional talks about not paying what is expected. Fact be told, Jehovah expects that what is brought as appreciation will reflect the extent of what was received just as Jesus made it clear that there is a higher expectation from the person that was given more – Lk. 12:48. The bottom-line is that there is an expectation from the one that gave in the first instance. That expectation if not met, or surpassed may make offering become a curse rather than blessing. The one who does not know what that expectation is, will most likely err in this regard, unless such takes a decision to give generously. Unlike the case of tithe, it seems to be a value determined at the discretion of Jehovah.

Whatever the case may be, to short-pay in both cases and expect the reward of blessings associated with complete payment will be hypocritical. Cain and Abel both brought offerings to the Lord but only the offering of Abel triggered the reward of blessings from Jehovah as He rejected what Cain brought on the basis that it did not meet his expectation – Gen. 4:1-15. It is not about the size of that tithe or offering but its meeting up with His expectation, based on what He has done for you. He is not a beggar and so is not expecting alms from you. He considers tithes and offerings as a right because He has responsibilities to people who are in His vineyard. He had them in mind when He chose to bless you, by making available to you an amount, ten percent of which will cover His anticipated expenditure. You, not paying at all or short-paying presents Him to those to whom He had made promises, as irresponsible. That definitely does not bring honour to Him. If you are a tither, ensure that you do not hold any amount back, because it is on that unwritten agreement between Himself and you that he based the amount of blessing that He has made available to you. You did not make that wealth because you were very hardworking, but because He chose to grant you the grace to make it – Deut. 8:18. Your not fulfilling that unwritten agreement based on what he blessed you with, and how much He expects in terms of tithes and offerings, could just be the reason why all those financial pipes have run dry. You can get them flowing again if you do the needful. Return to Him all that you have stolen from Him, Yes!, stolen from Him and He will in turn, be willing to open those floodgates of blessings – Lev. 27:31. This is the only solution as fasting, prayers and vigils will never replace such act of restitution. May God give us the sincerity to remain upright in our dealings with Him in Jesus name. Amen.