

Robbing God? **By Bob Young**

Can we rob God? Certainly we can. How? In the same way that God's people robbed God in the days of the prophets--in our tithes and offerings.

Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah 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. (Malachi 3:8-10 ASV)

I am grateful for the marvelous way in which God has blessed my life, both spiritually and physically. Having been born in the U.S., I share the experience of many North American Christians who have been blessed with financial resources far beyond those available to the majority of the world's population. As a group, we have excess and abundance; we have the ability to purchase our basic needs and much more than our basic needs. Our expenses are less than our available financial resources. Has God blessed us in this way simply for our own benefit? We have more money than we know what to do with. Are we justified in buying more simply because we can?

Our lives can go astray and we can depart from God in many ways. I hope that I am a faithful servant in the use of abundant financial resources. I hope that the money I spend on self is acceptable to God. We live in a world where hunger, medical problems, and multiplied hurts can be solved with just a few dollars. A family can eat for a month for the dollars we spend on a single restaurant meal. So much money flows in our U.S. society—money spent for all kinds of things and pleasures, luxuries and niceties. I hope God does not see such expenditures as a terrible selfishness and waste.

In the Old Testament, God's people were commanded to tithe and give offerings (actually there were multiple titles for various things). God blessed his people and they became wealthy. With such wealth, many failed to fulfill their responsibilities to God. A helpful New Testament text to guide our attitudes toward money is in 1Timothy 6:17-19 (ASV).

17 Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed.

Many of us are rich in this present world. How shall we respond? These verses from 1 Timothy are powerful guides for the Christian attitude toward and use of wealth.

- Avoid pride and arrogance, do not depend on riches, do not let riches become a competing god, recognize the uncertainty of riches, set your hope in God, know that God blesses us with wealth for our enjoyment.
- With regard to our wealth, be careful to do good, in our physical riches be rich also in good works, be quick to give to those in need and quick to share.
- Use wealth to lay a spiritual and eternal foundation, knowing that the life that is really life, the life that really matters, is more than our physical existence. Wealth can be used to lay hold of the life that is life indeed!

May God give us wisdom and tender hearts of compassion as we seek to glorify him in every aspect of our lives!