

March 10

"Wilt a man rob God?" — Malachi 3:8.

Is it probable? Is it possible? Can he be so disingenuous? What, rob a father, a friend, a benefactor; the best of all fathers; the kindest of all friends; the most generous of all benefactors!

Can he be so daring? To rob a Being so high and sacred, and whose glory so enhances the offence! To injure a fellow-subject is felony, but to injure the king is treason. To steal from a man is injustice, but to steal from God is sacrilege. The wretch adds profaneness to violence when he breaks, not into a house, but a temple, and takes off things dedicated to the service of the Deity.

Can he be so irrational? To rob a Being, not when he is absent, for he never is absent, but when he is present; not in the night, but in the day, and darkness and light are both alike to him; not when he sees not, observes not, but while he is looking on, and must look on, for his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he pondereth all his goings!

Can he be so desperate? To rob one who can, who will punish, and whose wrath is not only unavoidable, but intolerable! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Yet says God, and he cannot be mistaken, or accuse unrighteously, "Ye have robbed me." But on whom falls the charge? A Pharaoh only, who would not let the people go; a Nebuchadnezzar, who carried away the vessels of the Sanctuary; a Belshazzar, who profaned them; an Ananias and a Sapphira, who kept back part of the property they had sold; a Herod, who beheaded John; or a Nero, who slew Paul? Alas, the criminals are less obvious characters, and are found much nearer home; they are to be found in our own houses; they are to be found in the house of God.

Who has not robbed God of property? Our wealth is not our own. We are only stewards. It always looks suspicious when a gentleman's steward becomes very rich, and dies affluent. It is even so with professors of religion. It would be better for them to die comparatively poor; it would be better for their reputation; it would be better for their relations. A little, honestly obtained, would be better than a large accumulation embezzled from God; it would be more sweet; it would be more efficient. Substance is intrusted to its occupiers, for certain purposes plainly laid down in the Scripture, and the providence of God is perpetually calling upon you for it. Do you discharge these claims, or do you alienate from them, by hoarding or extravagance? How much do some unjustly expend; in table luxuries, in costly dress, in magnificent furniture? And they are fond of displaying these. They have little reason. They glory in their shame. These are all robberies. They are purloined from God's cause, or God's poor.

Who has not robbed God of time? The Sabbath he expressly claims for himself, and it is called the Lord's Day. Have we not often robbed him of much of this, perhaps of all, by worldly accounts, by evil company, by idle visits, by doing our own ways, and finding our own pleasures? Youth is the morning, the spring of life; it is our best season, and therefore God has a right to it, and calls upon us to remember his demands. But have we not partially, or wholly robbed him of these days; have we not squandered them away in vanity, folly, and vice? All our moments and opportunities are his, and he commands us to redeem the time. But who lays to heart the brevity and uncertainty of life? Who values it as "the day of salvation?" Who seizes it as the only season of usefulness? Who rises early? "Where is that thrift, that avarice of time —

O glorious avarice! — thought of death inspires?"

Where is He in all our ways, who said, "I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work?"

Who has not robbed him of the heart? This was made for him, and he demands it: "My son, give me thine heart." But the fear of the heart, the confidence of the heart, the gratitude of the heart, the attachment of the heart, we have transferred to the creature from the Creator, God over all, blessed for evermore.

And may not the same be said of our talents, of our learning, of our powers of conversation, of our retentiveness of memory, of our influence over others?

Let us not affect to deny the charge, and ask, as the accused here did, Wherein have we robbed thee? But let us repair to the footstool of Mercy, and cry, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?"

"But there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared: and with him there is plenteous redemption;" and we may, and we ought to approach him with the encouragement of hope. But this hope must be founded on his own invitations and promises. It must bring us "unto God by Him," who said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." To pray to God to save such creatures in any other way, is to disobey his dearest command. It is to affront and insult him, by beseeching him to be untrue and unrighteous, to frustrate his grace, and to make Jesus Christ to be dead in vain. But in him he can be just, and yet the justifier. He can redeem Jacob, and glorify himself in Israel.

We shall also be turned away from all our iniquity, for he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy. We shall also sorrow after a godly sort, and instead of complaining of any of the methods of his grace and providence, we shall cheerfully acquiesce in them all, and remember, and be confounded, and never open our mouth more, because of our shame, when He is pacified towards us for all that we have done.

Morning Exercises For Everyday In The Year
By Rev. William Jay