

Stinginess in God's cause is robbery of a vile sort, ch. 3 : 8.

"No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5 : 5), ch. 3 : 9.

We should not merely give out of our plenty, but give that we may have plenty, v. 10.

Those who do fairly by God, God will do fairly by, vs. 11, 12.

Pithy Paragraphs

The giving of money is sometimes made the subject of foolish joking. The solemnity of God's arraignment of those who hold back

their offerings is increased by eight-fold repetition, within these eleven short verses, of the august title "The Lord of Hosts." It is the God of battles who contends for the honor due unto His name.

Our Church has to-day a unique opportunity to put the Church's Lord and Master to the test. He invites the test. He says of the Century Fund, "Prove Me now herewith." Failure to raise the proposed million dollars would be ludicrous. "This [Church] began to build and was unable to finish" (Luke 10 : 30), men would say. And the reproach would be just; for the sum is really trifling when everyone answers for his proper share.

TEACHING HINTS AND HELPS

There are several ways in which the duty of giving may be enforced, as, for example, (1) By explaining the law of the tithe and how far it holds under the New Testament dispensation; (2) By shewing that God's goodness requires such a return; (3) That the responsibility for extending Christ's kingdom has been laid upon us, hence we must give freely; (4) That cheerful and generous giving brings evident blessing from God to the giver.

But it is always best to seek to bring out the truth as God Himself sets it forth in the passage in hand. And so, leaving general considerations to one side, we take this particular instance.

It is a case of sharp yet gracious dealing with robbers of God with a view to bringing them to a better mind.

First, it is THE PRIESTS, 6-10.

NOTE 1. The touching appeal of v. 6; the Father and the Master tenderly claiming His due.

2. The searching exposure of their sin in the latter part of v. 6 and vs. 7, 8. God's reasoning with them is quite easy to follow, and the shame and meanness of their conduct, evident. The distressing feature (and here the teacher should press the truth urgently) is that they had become so saturated

with sin as to be unaware of their real condition.

3. The play of emotions in vs. 9, 10, 11. They must earnestly seek God's pardon for their sin; yes, and in true humility, for God has no special favor for them because they are His priests—a sinning priest is just a sinning man. Then God's impatience breaks out; rather the temple doors shut, than such worship as theirs (v. 10, Rev. Ver.). He will look for true worship to the Gentiles; and not to His own people (v. 11.)

Impress on the scholars how jealous God is of the whole heart's love and service of His people. (Compare Matt. 6 : 33 ; 10 : 37, 38.)

Secondly, it is THE PEOPLE, ch. 3 : 8-12.

1. Accused of robbing God in withholding the tithes and offerings, v. 8.

2. Accused of God as the just punishment of their crime, v. 9.

3. The way of restoration and enrichment made known, vs. 10-12. The details here are interesting, the tithes, the offerings, the test proposed ("Bring the whole tithe, and I will bless beyond measure"), fruitful fields and vines, and a prosperous land, the envy and blessing of all nations.

Then comes the Golden Text.