

## The Eighth Commandment

Stealing

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Given 02-Aug-08; Sermon #894

Exodus 20:15 simply and bluntly commands everybody on earth: "You shall not steal."

That commandment, all by itself seems clear enough, but it has very important ramifications to life because God affirms in and through this commandment a right that we Americans take for granted because we live with this right without much thinking about it. It is God's affirmation that every human being has the right to private property, and that others have no right granted by God to take that property from them without God-given, lawful permission.

On the other hand, Communists tell the world that owning property *is* theft. In other words, everything belongs to everybody. Not so, by a long shot. The Bible tells us that the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, and He gives it to whomsoever He pleases. In addition, He extends the right to all men to work **lawfully** to pursue ownership of their own private property.

Once one understands this commandment, it removes any doubt whatever that Communism, in which all property is owned collectively by the State, is a form of government that has His approval. But in every nation on earth, in every village, the possession of property is considered as proof of a person's worth. Now whether the property is wives, cattle, chickens, sheep, automobile, houses, land, or industry, people can look at the property and say, "Hey! He must be something. Look at all that he has."

In every community there are those who are clever, industrious, and careful, and because of these qualities they always seem to be on top of things and at the right place at the right time. Sometimes these people become owners of substantial amounts of property, while in the same community, at the same time, there are those who are disadvantaged for whatever reason it might be. They may be lazy, unintelligent, undisciplined, or turned off (as we might say today) and these people very rarely ever possess, let alone accumulate, substantial amounts of property.

Now everybody, in his heart of hearts, wants property, but how to get that property is all too often the critical issue. Ones who have little or no property do not generally deny the right of those who have property to possess the property, but they may very seriously question how and by what means the property-holder got possession of the property in the first place. Very serious, deeply emotional and bloody national revolutions have

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been waged over such matters. In such cases the disadvantaged accuses the advantaged property-holder that he got his property because he used questionable "legal" means to gain the property. The disadvantaged then feels that this justifies him to use any means at his disposal to take the property from the advantaged.

In Exodus 20:15 and in Deuteronomy 5:19, God says "You shall not steal," either by war (I might add) or by stealth. There are no ifs, ands, or buts, or, "maybe under certain conditions you can do this." In addition to affirming the right to own property, this commandment, in its spirit, also covers the principle of generosity more directly than any other by condemning its opposite. From this arises the two principles Mr. Armstrong used to like to talk about: the *give* way, or the *take*-way principle. So which is it going to be in life?

This commandment covers much more than mere thievery. It includes the careless damage that is done to another's property, the fraudulent retention of it through carelessness or of indifference. It also delves into the question of whether wealth was acquired fairly in business or whether people are getting a fair share of the good things of life. It poses the question: Is the rich man rich because of merit, or have the rules of the game been cleverly, avariciously and unlawfully tilted in his favor so that the few privileged can continuously steal from the powerless? This specific principle is one of the central themes of the book of Amos because it shows that the abuse of this commandment is a major reason God's wrath is falling on the people of Israel.

Let us begin with scripture in the book of Leviticus and establish a couple of things right off here.

**Leviticus 25:23** The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me.

We will add to this principle by turning to Numbers 33. The setting becomes a little bit clearer here. This is just before they went into the Promised Land.

**Numbers 33:53-54** And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. And you shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falls; according to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit.

This establishes very clearly and fully that God intended that each family own property, especially land. He consistently shows that, materially, land is fundamentally the basis of wealth. Furthermore, in Numbers 27, He shows that the private ownership of wealth and, again, most specifically land, is not restricted to men.

We will go back again to Leviticus 25, this time to verse 8. This precedes the scripture we gave before.

**Leviticus 25:8-10** And you shall number seven sabbaths of years unto you, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto you forty and nine years. Then shall you cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return every man unto his family.

These verses define when a Jubilee year occurs. This law covers the restoration of land, and therefore the potential to have wealth, to the original family owners that had been lost because of misfortune or mismanagement. It does give the original family the ability to once again accumulate wealth through disciplined work. In other words, a family would never lose any of their opportunity to accumulate wealth anymore than, at most, 50 years. If they lost it 25 years in between the two, then they would lose it only for 25 years, and it would be restored to that family once again.

In addition to the Jubilee, there are other laws scattered throughout Leviticus—mostly between Leviticus 22 and 27—to recovering specific situations where the property has been lost or sold, and even when it has been set apart—that is, devoted to earn money for God. We are going to take a look at this in Leviticus 27:16-24.

**Leviticus 27:16** And if a man shall sanctify [devote] unto the LORD some part of a field of his possession, then your estimation shall be according to the seed thereof: an homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver.

What we are talking about is that maybe the family, after devoting this ground to God to earn money to be contributed to God, let us say, in a charitable act, that after a number

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of years something they did not foresee occurred to them, and they went broke, bankrupt, or whatever. They got into a situation where they were not producing enough money, and God gave them that opportunity to buy it back from Him.

**Leviticus 27:17-19** If he sanctify his field from the year of jubilee, according to your estimation it shall stand. But if he sanctify his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall reckon unto him the money according to the years that remain, even unto the year of the jubilee, and it shall be abated [deducted] from thy estimation. And if he that sanctified the field will in any wise redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your estimation unto it, and it shall be assured to him.

If the family got into a financial problem and they wanted the land back to produce income for the family, it cost them to get it back, but they have the advantage then of the remaining years before the Jubilee to earn money for the family.

**Leviticus 27:20-24** And if he will not redeem the field, or if he have sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed any more. But the field, when it goes out in the jubilee, shall be holy unto the LORD, as a field devoted; the possession thereof shall be the priest's. [Interesting. The guy loses it.] And if a man sanctify unto the LORD a field which he has bought, which is not of the fields of his possession; Then the priest shall reckon unto him the worth of your estimation, even unto the year of the jubilee: and he shall give your estimation in that day, as a holy thing unto the LORD. In the year of the jubilee the field shall return unto him of whom it was bought, even to him to whom the possession of the land did belong.

God warns us of a form of what I will call "legal thievery." I want you to turn to I Samuel 8:9-18. God is speaking to Samuel.

**I Samuel 8:9** Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

The situation is this: Israel, in their impatience, wanted a king. There was nothing wrong with their wanting a king because God had already prophesied in Deuteronomy 17 that there would be a time Israel would *have* a king. The unspoken implication, though, when

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you put these two together, is that *that* king would be somebody God appointed, not somebody they chose or elected. So God says to them, "Okay. Let them have what they want, but don't do it without warning them." Now what was the problem? They wanted a king who would rule over them and do things like the Gentiles. Just as in religion they wanted to worship as the Gentiles did, in government they wanted a king like the Gentiles had.

**I Samuel 8:10-18** And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and you shall be his servants. And you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

God was warning them that their request was going to open the door to their self-appointed king and his government and bureaucracy to systematically steal their hard-earned wealth from them. How? Through the power of taxation; justified because the king and his bureaucracy claimed that they were serving the people. God warned them that this would be a curse beyond their present imagination and that the king would be taking their wealth legally—if you understand what I mean—and then use it for his own political end in order to extend *his* power.

Interestingly, I found an article titled "A Nation of Thieves." This article was written by Marvin Stone, who was at that time the editor of *U.S. News and World Report*. It is interesting that he interviewed a man by the name of William Werber. You probably never heard of William Werber. He was a professional baseball player, and he was a pretty good one. He was thirteen years in the Major Leagues with a high-ranking team. He played for the New York Yankees and was the first man ever to appear on a telecast in a live game. He was first batter.

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Mr. Werber left baseball after thirteen years, and went out into the business world and became a millionaire, completely separate from baseball, and became quite an economics expert along the way. Listen to this quote from him in Stone's article.

State and local government also come in for Werber's criticism. Werber said, "The mayors of cities trade political support for taxpayer dollars, and States cheat on population count to obtain taxpayer handouts not deserved." All of this leads Werber to the conclusion that economists are on the wrong track in treating inflation as economic problems. Werber said, "Inflation is more a basic moral issue than one of economics, and it all begins with the moral corruption in government."

Thus we can see that it runs the extreme end of a thievery cycle. The State assumes the right to indirectly steal because it has taxing power to use anything and everything to its own end. In the process the government ceases to be the servant, and instead becomes the served. Nowhere under any circumstance does God give either government, business, or individuals the right to steal another's property, regardless of how one feels the other came into possession of that property, or how greatly one feels justified in possessing that property.

Perhaps the public attitude for keeping all of the commandments is most clearly seen in the overwhelming disrespect for keeping this *particular* commandment.

When I worked in the steel mill, stealing was constantly going on. Twelve thousand men and women worked in that steel mill which was one site of U.S. Steel Corporation. From my own experience I know that stealing was going on constantly. It seemed that most of the employees had the idea that anything that was not welded down, and especially if the object they wanted was small, it was fair game. The justification most commonly used was, "What difference does it make? If I don't take it, somebody else will," or "The company is so rich they won't miss this thing I am taking."

I left the steel mill in 1958. In 1976 my mother sent me a picture of where that steel mill used to be. It was gone. I mean, lock, stock, and barrel. The United States Steel Corporation tore it down. They could no longer afford to operate it. The Japanese were beating them at every avenue. Since stealing was continuing to go on, it was playing a part in that loss. [The employees' attitude was] "The company is so rich it won't miss this little thing that I am taking."

There was a man who worked in the next shop over from me. I was a welder. He was a

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pipe-fitter helper, and was right next to us there. Everybody called him "Brassy." He was quite a character. In both summer and winter Brassy wore an overcoat to work. I did not find out until a couple of years that he earned that nickname because virtually every day he stole something made of brass. He took it out of the mill and sold it.

The statistics on this crime from the FBI Uniform Crime Report are appalling; almost mind-blowing. There is no way the statistics can be totally accurate because it has been estimated by the people who delve into these things that no more than 50% of this type of crime is even reported because of people's frustration with the police and the courts. The FBI includes under this heading of stealing: robbery, burglary, larceny, motor-vehicle theft, fraud, and embezzlement. I am going to define them the way the government defines them.

**Robbery:** The stealing or taking anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person by force, violence, or putting in fear. "By force" is the key. Robbery, by definition, takes place in the presence of the victim.

**Burglary:** Any breaking or entering of a structure with the intent of committing a felony or a theft, and includes such things as housebreaking and safe-cracking.

**Larceny:** The unlawful taking, carrying, leading or riding (because sometimes animals are stolen) of property for the possession of another without the use of force, fraud, or violence. This category includes shoplifting, pocket-picking, and theft *from* motor vehicles, and the theft of motor-vehicle parts and accessories.

I specifically put that in because I went to school with a man who was a year ahead of me in school. He was into racing. This man had a lot of brass, a lot of gall. He was really bold. There was one time he needed a radiator for one of his race cars. I do not know how many he had. He went into the little town where I went to school, and on the main street he put up the hood of an automobile, detached the radiator from the car, and stole it. That is the kind of thing you see in the movies. He did that.

**Motor Vehicle Theft:** This is kind of self-explanatory, but it includes buses, trucks, motorcycles, motorscooters and snowmobiles.

**Fraud:** Deceptive conversion in obtaining of money, of property by false pretenses. It includes writing bad checks and counterfeiting.

**Embezzlement:** This is the misappropriation or misapplication of money or goods entrusted, and this, brethren, is a biggie. Fraud and embezzlement are the two big ones

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on this in terms of dollars.

Let me give just a little bit of preface for this.

The Justice Department has a way to rate these crimes, so it gives us a pretty good view of how much stealing is being committed out there. The best picture you can get is that they have this thing all the way up to 2003. From 1960 you can compare the rate of every kind of crime from that time forward.

Robbery: The rate of robbery in 1960 was 60.1 according to their scale. In 2003 the robbery rate was 142. It more than doubled in those 43 years.

The burglary rate in 1960 was 508.6. In 2003 the burglary rate had climbed to 740. This is a 46% increase since 1960.

Larceny: In 1960 the larceny rate was 1,034.7. In 2003 it had climbed to 2,414.5. It too has doubled since 1960.

Some of you younger people here may not believe it, or just pass it off as nothing, but when Evelyn and I, and Melvin here were kids, people could literally go away from their house and never lock it. They would take a two-week vacation, come back, and everything was still in place. People just were not burglarizing or committing larceny, or whatever, at the same rate. These days, people will lock their doors because they live with the fear that anything that is not nailed down is fair game to far too many people out there.

Motor Vehicle Theft: In 1950 the motor vehicle theft rate was 183. In 2003 the figure grew to 433.4. This equates to a 137% increase since 1960. It too has doubled.

All these figures about one of the most common of all crimes—robbery, burglary, larceny, and right on down—is taking place in the midst of the greatest expansion of prosperity I think any nation has ever gone through in the history of this earth. And this is just Americans! It gives you the impression that people are stealing things left and right.

I will give you a few more statistics. Maybe this will get you a little bit. These are 2003 figures: The total larceny was 6,607,013. That is one every 4.8 seconds in the United States of America. The number of robberies reported in 2006 was 447,403. That is one every 70 seconds. That is a violent crime. Total burglaries in 2006 were 2,183,746. That is one every 14 seconds. Motor vehicle theft was 1,192,809. That is one every 26.4

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seconds. When you put them all together, at this point, it adds up to a stealing crime occurring every 3 seconds in the United States. That is 20 every minute, 1,200 every hour, 28,800 every day.

You might also be interested to know that, according to the Justice Department, the average loss to a private citizen for any burglary invasion of his home, in 2003, was \$1,626.00. In the same year, the average loss from motor vehicle theft was \$6,797.00. The total nation-wide loss due to automobile theft, including such things as police costs and insurance company costs, in addition to the personal losses, is a staggering \$8.6 billion. And believe it or not, this is a crime in which the overall figures are declining.

Motor vehicle theft is far and away a big city crime, with the rate being several times higher in major cities than in small towns. You might be interested to know that there are 2-1/2 times more burglaries in metro areas as in rural, but rural law-enforcement agencies in general, and the South as a region, have the best record in the United States for apprehending and convicting a perpetrator.

The worst month for stealing is August. You can probably figure that out because people are away on vacation. Their homes are empty, and it is fair game. The best month is February for fewer stealings. The people are at home and the thief does not feel as free to actually go into the home.

Overall, the FBI reports that there is one index crime, when we add murder and aggravated assault to that, occurring every 2 seconds in the United States, with again August being the worst month and February the safest.

You may find those statistics to be boring, or whatever, but you should not, because it tells you about the times we are living in, and it shows you how little regard, how little respect, how little fear there is of God and His commandments, and this occurring in a supposedly "Christian" country.

**I Corinthians 5:10-11** Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must you needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat.

Do you see the word "extortioner"? That is a robber, and the particular word in the Greek means "one who steals by violence." The word literally means "to obtain by

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violence, threat, oppression, or abuse of authority." It is the word *harpax*—an adjective, and actually describes a grappling iron in battle, and so it is used here by the Apostle Paul as "grasping that which one has no right to." I bring this to your attention because these people were in the church. Hopefully they were not continuing it, or hopefully they were just very weak, slowing down, but Paul said we should not keep company with them. And even if they are not in the church, they also should not be kept company with. Why? Because they stain your reputation and therefore God's reputation.

I Corinthians 6:10 is kind of an interesting one. You can see that God categorizes things just like the FBI and the Justice Department do.

**I Corinthians 6:10** Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God.

What is so interesting about this is the way the word is translated into the English word "thieves." It is *kleptic*. That is the word for thievery, but this same word is the root word for the English word "kleptomaniac." There is another interesting thing tied to this because it is used metaphorically by Jesus to indicate a false minister. A false minister is a *kleptic*. He is a thief who steals away salvation from unsuspecting people. You can begin to see what I mean about how the spirit of this law reaches in to so many areas. While in God's scheme of things, though He wants us to have property, there are only two right ways to come into possession of anything: One is a free gift from God or man, and the other is by honest labor.

People tend to commit crimes within the range of their opportunity. Bankers rarely rob banks at gunpoint, but bankers have embezzled *millions* of bank funds. Now an armed robber would steal by violence, but the banker by clever intrigue, but one is just as much a sin as the other. Thus stealing can disguise itself in the respectability of a fine home in a good neighborhood, in fine clothing, and in the furniture of a corporate board room. It is white collar crime that reveals the broad extent of social corrosion even more than the crime of violence. Embezzlement, stock manipulation, bribery, tax fraud, stealing business supplies from the company, consumer fraud and the like, dwarfs—and I mean Dwarfs, with a capital "D"—all the crimes of the violent nature combined. If you want to hear it bluntly, the real thief is wearing a white collar.

I opened one website that was primarily intended for lawyers. It listed 24 different kinds of fraud: telemarketing fraud, Internet fraud, identity theft, false advertising, false billings, and pharmaceutical fraud. Now here is a big one coming up: bankruptcy fraud; scams against businesses, insurance fraud, fraud against the elderly, and on and on.

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In one day, a white collar criminal may bribe a policeman, or a building inspector, short weight his products, entertain his wife with company expense, receive a kickback in a business deal, buy personal gifts with company money, cheat on his income tax, fail to pay the maid's Social Security, do his personal shopping on company time, type a personal letter on company time and on company stationery, bribe a purchasing agent and overcharge on a government contract.

Embezzlement is technically a fraud, or a fraud committed by a person who is in a position of trust who usually takes money from his employer for his own use. This is one of the more sophisticated employee thefts. Just to give you an idea of how great the losses can be in this one kind of fraud, in January 2008 it was discovered that a young hedge fund trader working for a French bank—Societe General—defrauded that bank and its customers of \$7.2 billion through a scheme he concocted. When they caught up with him he was virtually broke. I do not want to give you the impression that he took all this money himself, but it was still a \$7 billion theft that he distributed to others. In other words, there was more than one person in on this deal, but he was the one who was the quarterback of all this.

According to U.S. Government statistics gathered in 1985, it stated that white collar embezzling amounted in excess of \$5 million per day. That same source said that employee theft alone in 1984 amounted to about \$30 billion. By 1990, using a different source, it stated that this had climbed to \$60 billion.

In addition, it was reported that employee theft was responsible for 30% of all business failures, that 15% of the retail cost the consumer pays for manufactured goods is the result of theft, that 50% of all inventory shortages are due to employee theft, and that banks consistently lose over two times as much to employees internally as to robbers and burglars. At that time the average shoplifter was stealing \$17.00 a year. Not much. Just to show you the difference between the two, the average embezzler was stealing \$1,500.00; but they both got exactly the same sentence. Today, the IRS estimates that in excess of \$50 billion per year of taxable income goes unreported.

Here is a strange statistic that I think gives some insight into the way Americans have a tendency to look at this crime. Don't you think it is strange the way we look at DUI? Those people get away with drunken driving left and right.

Here is another crime that shows some of the same kind of thinking. A convicted embezzler received an average of 1.58 years of prison for a first offense. However, with his second offense—(He gets out of jail and goes right back to doing it again)—he received 1.16 years of prison. In other words, his sentence is reduced across the board.

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What kind of thinking is going on? What it shows me is that there are some crimes about which we have a rather cavalier attitude.

Remember in my previous sermon on adultery I showed you from the book of Amos that though God accuses Gentile nations of vicious violence, He shows the Israelitish people as being irresponsible, unwilling to keep our word. Being trustworthy and loyal to God and each other is very difficult for us. You can see some of this even in the scattering of the church. People are floating all over the place from one group to another group. They are unsettled, and that is the way our attitude is toward criminals. It is just unsettled. I will tell you I am certainly glad that God is loyal to us and to His purpose, despite our many flaws.

Regarding fraud, so many people seem to look at this sin as if the guy got away with it—"Good for him for being so clever." We have kind of a twisted admiration for crooks until it hits us directly, and then we feel violated.

A recent statistic revealed that there are over one billion people worldwide who are accessing the Internet. Internet fraud has become a *huge* business for Americans, because according to the FBI, 71% of that fraud originates in the United States. Judging by what God says in the book of Amos, it seems to fit right into our character. Being trustworthy is something very difficult for us.

Perhaps you will find this puzzling. Interestingly, according to the FBI, those who have a college degree, including those who have some degree of college-level education, are the most vulnerable to becoming a victim of fraud. Maybe there is something in the education that makes them feel they are too smart to be outwitted. I do not know. Anyway, Internet scams alone now amount to \$40 billion a year in the last year that it was reported on.

I want to read something to you from an article I took from *The Nation*. It is a business magazine. The article is titled "White Collar Crime Is Big Business." The opening paragraph states: "Corporate illegality usually escapes major media attention until its cadre existence is discovered in a state-of-shock headlines, as though it were a new form of Legionnaire's Disease. Such was the case in the past month when an apparent corporate crime wave dominated the front pages of our newspapers.

They are not individual crimes, but corporate crimes in which a corporation is doing the stealing behind its corporate image. Many corporations steal from the public through price-fixing. Corporate heads will set up a cabal [a secret meeting] in which they get together and amongst them design to charge the same thing that is over the price of a

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fair legitimate bid. These companies are bidding against one another, but they have stacked the deck in their favor. That is a *huge* one.

Here is another way that people are being stolen from: pollution. Pollution can ruin a person's health. If a corporation does not take the steps to cut down their pollution as far as they could, and may even be legally required to, that goes into a theft category, because they are causing the medical problems to rise in an area.

Then there is the price of discrimination on the basis of race, and the discrimination on the basis of gender. Women honestly are really cheated in business because a man will normally get a higher pay than a woman.

There is the price of pay-offs and bribes. This is something that happens a great deal in trading with people in other nations.

Here is a big one. The price of product defects. In almost any given month in the United States we are hearing of products being imported from China in which the product is dangerous because of one thing or another that is built into the product (whether it has lead paint in it, or whatever) and is then sold to America's unsuspecting citizens. This is a biggie.

You probably do not remember it, but maybe you will recall this when I start telling you about it. Probably the single biggest one of these incidents was one in which the Ford Motor Company was caught lying to the public because they built an automobile that was unsafe. It was the Ford Pinto. Many of these automobiles were struck in the rear where the gas tank was, and they burst into flame. Do you know how great this cost was? At least 500 people died being caught in a burning Pinto, and Federal estimates say it could have been as high as 900 people.

Do you know how much the part cost to make and eventually install on the Pinto? Ten dollars! Let me read this to you. "Internal memorandums from the Ford Motor Company showed that the firm *knew* of the danger, and refused to install the ten dollar shield around the gas tank because the total fleet-wide cost would exceed the probable cost of an occasional lawsuit." They *knew* it was coming, and as a corporation shut their eyes to the danger. Deliberately! Now even to this day, the Ford Motor Company thing aside, according to a report in *The National Journal*, dangerous or misused products result in 28 thousand deaths and 130 thousand serious injuries every year.

Do you see what this means about the "real thief is wearing a white collar"? It makes those who are robbing by force or burglarizing a home look like pikers by comparison.

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Can you understand why this Werber said we are a nation of thieves, and that he pointed at inflation as being only one effect? The American government and business are stealing legally? I do not need to go any further there. I think I have given you enough in that regard. But white collar crime is big, big business. This is one serious crime.

Leviticus 19:35-37 applies directly to this Ford Motor Company. We will say it applies to corporate crimes in general.

**Leviticus 19:35-37** You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall you have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore shall you observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD.

It is the corporate executive responsibility before God to make sure its product is good enough to be sold to the public. That falls under the Eighth Commandment—stealing—because the consumer is getting a defective product. You are stealing from the buyer.

Look at Deuteronomy 25:13-16:

**Deuteronomy 25:13-16** You shall not have in your bag divers weights, a great and a small. You shall not have in your house divers measures, a great and a small. But you shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shall you have: that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God gives you. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD your God.

God states things so simply. In these laws God is saying that companies have a responsibility to produce a high-quality fairly-priced product. While the producer, the manufacturer, has a rightful claim to a profit, he is not permitted by God to increase his measure of the profit at the expense of the consumer or the public at large. I might add here, or nature, for that example. That is where the pollution comes back into the picture once again.

In Zechariah 5:1-4, we see here and end-time prophecy.

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**Zechariah 5:1-4** Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll [a scroll]. And he said unto me, What seest you? And I answered, I see a flying roll [scroll]; the length thereof is twenty cubits [about 35 feet], and the breadth thereof ten cubits. [This is a pretty big thing flying through the air.] Then said he unto me, This is the curse [the symbol of the curse] that goes forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that steals shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that swears [meaning anyone who swears falsely is a hypocrite.] shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, says the LOORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that swears falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

This is a pretty serious prophecy for those who steal. In case anybody thinks that stealing is overlooked by God, if anybody thinks that a human being can look at it in a way that is different from the way God does, He is warning us this is no minor thing. Do you know why? It destroys trust in a community and promotes fear. Is not a person who is always fearful that things are going to be taken from him a slave to the atmosphere of attitude that surrounds him, and is being held in check for really enjoying a nice, free, productive, and prosperous life?

Are there not sections of your city where you are afraid to go into at certain times of the day, maybe even in broad daylight, because at the very least you are going to be roughed up and your wallet or your purse taken from you? That is not a free life, but a state of fear in which distrust is being created as the multitude of these things continues to mount.

Turn now to the book of Proverbs and we are going to look at a number of these Proverbs which are brief and do not need much in the way of expounding.

**Proverbs 16:11** A just weight and balance are the LOORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.

He is overseeing things, He says.

**Proverbs 20:10** Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LOORD.

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**Proverbs 20:23** Divers weights are an abomination unto the LOORD; and a false balance is not good.

Virtually the same thing is said in Micah 6:10-14, in Amos 8:5-7, and in Ezekiel 45:9-12.

**Micah 6:10-14** Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore also will I make you sick in smiting you, in making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat, but not be satisfied; and your casting down shall be in the midst of you; and you shall take hold, but shall not deliver; and that which thou deliver will I give up to the sword.

**Amos 8:5-7** Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? The LOORD has sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

**Ezekiel 45:9-12** Thus says the Lord GOOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, says the Lord GOOD. You shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

God mentions business crimes of this nature every bit as much as He does the personal little things that the robber, the burglar, and larcenist person does.

Let us go to Hosea 4:1-3. I read this verse in my previous sermon on adultery. God here describes His people, His nation of Israel.

**Hosea 4:1-3** Hear the word of the LOORD, you children of Israel: for the LOORD

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has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwells therein shall languish [meaning, to sort of fade away, waste away in fear], with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yes, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away [as punishment].

Now here is direct, plain and straight-forward commandment from God's apostle, Paul, in Ephesians 4:28.

**Ephesians 4:28** Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.

Property and possession are to be gained by honest work. The verb "labor" indicates exertion to the point of exhaustion. Work is not merely to satisfy personal desire and need, but that any excess may be freely given to one in need.

**Acts 20:35** I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Jesus Christ said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Stealing is totally going against the grain of God's way of life, and in the spirit of God's law a person not only steals by taking another's possession, but by the refusal to work hard and honestly in order to share and give to others. Both of them are part of the same sin, but one is just as bad as the other.

In John 5:17, Jesus said, "My Father works hitherto, and / work." There is the example. Even though they are who they are, they work. And what do they work for? They work to be able to give. We understand that being what they are, they do not need to work to live, and so their kind of spent is working always to give. We will never achieve that until we are in the Kingdom of God, but that has to be part of our thinking.

It is not merely that we are working to eat, to own a house, or to own an automobile. There is nothing wrong with those things, but we always have to understand that the

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reason God makes us work is that we learn to give—to give in sacrifice, to give in material things, to give of our time, attention, and in service, and on and on, and on.

Do you know the Scriptures say that Jesus became poor in order to make us rich? He gave up all of the embellishments, if I can put it that way, of a God-being in order to become a human being to give Himself in sacrifice in order to give forgiveness, to give eternal life to those who, by and through faith, repent and devote their lives to becoming like *they* are. You can find those principles in Philippians 2:5-8 and in II Corinthians 8:8-9.

**Philippians 2:5-8** Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

**II Corinthians 8:8-9** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich.

Do you know that God even warns to stay away from "Get rich quick" schemes? He does. He does several different times, because He says that anybody who does that is, in the end, going to be poor. It is a gamble, and God is against gambling. God is for patient working and accumulating through what He gives to us.

Let us conclude in Proverbs 30:7-9. This could be a prayer of ours as well as the man who originally gave it.

**Proverbs 30:7-9** Two things have I required of you; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches [both which are trials he wishes to avoid]; feed me with food convenient [or fitting, or just enough] for me: Lest I be full, and deny you, and say, Who is the LOORD [because I have so much I don't need Him]? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Stealing profanes the name of God, and we bear it as His children. The person is asking

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God to keep him at an even keel lest he either denies his dependence on God, or steal and justify himself, and by doing so blaming God indirectly for not supplying his need. Very interesting.