HICKORY GROVE
BAPTIST CHURCH

The 8th Commandment

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Exodus 20:15, Ephesians 4:28

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Exodus 20:15

15 *"You shall not steal.*

Ephesians 4:28

28 *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

(Pastor Prays)

Since we have so many of you that are guests here with us today, maybe for the first time, I just want to say that we don't just dive into two passages of the Bible. There's a method behind what we do here. We started in the book of Exodus back in 2025, so we have been in it for about a year and a half. We started in the book of Exodus, and we've come through and watched God save his people. The book of Exodus is the Old Testament gospel. God saved his people out of slavery; He brought them out of Egypt. The Egyptians chased after them. You know the story of the Red Sea, how God parted the Red Sea and God's people walked across it on dry ground. Once they got on the other side, God closed the sea on the Egyptians who chased them. And then once God had them in the wilderness, God brought them to a place called Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb. It's the Mountain of God. And it is there that God gives his people what we know as the Ten Commandments. In the Bible, they're called the Ten Words. And if you took those 10 words and you

put them on two different tablets, the first tablet would be vertical. What that means is that the first four commandments have to do with how you relate to God. So he'll start by saying, "You'll have no other gods before me." It matters who you worship. You will not have any graven images. It matters how you worship. You will remember the Sabbath day. That's the 4th one. The third one is you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. And then the 4th one, remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Every one of those has to do with how you relate to God. That's vertical. And then the second tablet would be horizontal. That means that the next six commandments have to do with how we deal with one another. And the Lord says you start with the family. So, the fifth commandment is that you honor your father and mother. And then you come out from there, and we start stacking them up. So after honor your father and mother, you have you shall not murder, and you shall not commit adultery.

And now here we are at the eighth commandment. You shall not steal. It would be good for us to define what it means to steal something. Here's a working definition: to steal something is to take something that doesn't belong to you without the owner's permission. This does several things, by the way. This commandment speaks against communism and for private property. It's partly why we hold to the truth of having private property. If it's not private property, it can't be stolen. So there is an assumption that when you say you shall not steal, it's somebody's property. Not only that, when you think about this commandment, it's good to think of it in some ways as an umbrella commandment. Almost every time that one of the commandments is broken, it includes breaking the eighth commandment. It's also true of the tenth commandment. For instance, if you were to bow down to an idol, you would steal God's glory. If you don't come and worship on the Lord's day, you steal God's day. If you murder, you steal life. If you commit adultery, you steal purity. And if you lie, you steal truth.

Don't you remember in Matthew chapter 19 when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus and he's trying to justify himself, and he says to Jesus, he calls him good teacher, and Jesus says, "Why do you call me good? Nobody is good

but God." But then they get on with the conversation, and he asks Jesus, "What commandments must I keep to be perfect?" And Jesus lists off commandments, and among those commandments, he says, "You shall not steal." In John 10:10, when Jesus wants to talk about the devil being a thief, when he identifies Satan as a thief, what does he say about Satan? He says that the thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. And then he flips it over and says, "But I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly."

So what does Jesus do? He says, that's what the thief does. I do the very opposite. So I had the idea that it's not enough to say don't steal. How do we as Christians live out the positive side of this commandment? The negative is do not steal. What's the positive? That's where Ephesians 4:28 comes in. If the negative is don't live as a thief, what is the opposite of living as a thief? So here's how I'm going to say it: it's the theme of the sermon.

Christians Live to Give

I didn't mean to make it rhyme, but there it is. Christians live to give. Let me show you where I get that. It's there in verse 28 of Ephesians 4. I'm going to walk through this verse and the exposition. If this is an exposition of the commandment, we're going to do an exposition of this verse. And I've got nine points today. Nine. That's right. I think if you have nine, at least one of them will be good. Normally, if Connie's out of town, that's when I come up with this many points. We were in the same house last night. I was just in a different room when I got this together. So let's talk about how do we live as Christians? How do we live? Here's the first one, number one.

We live with repentance

Don't be afraid of that word, repentance. Take that word and enjoy the word repentance. What does the text say in verse 28? Let the thief no longer steal, but, (here's the contrast) rather let him labor. This is what you used to do, now don't do that anymore. But you didn't just quit the bad behavior. You started something else. Look, if you're a Christian, you already are familiar, at least you should be, with the word repentance. Repentance is an important

part of our salvation. When you hear the gospel, that God is holy and you are a sinner. That God created you in his image, but your sin has so tainted that image that it's not even recognizable anymore. You are under the condemnation of God because you are a sinner; that's bad news. The good news is that God loves you in spite of that, and he has sent Jesus, his only son, who is fully God and fully man. He lived perfectly in a way we couldn't. He never lied, never stole, never cheated. And at the cross, Paul tells us that he who knew no sin became sin. At the cross, he takes our sin and all the judgment that goes with it. That's why the cross is so important to Christians. It's not just a symbol. It's not just "hey, we should be like Jesus." It is that he died for us. God the Father killed God the Son in place of us. Then God raised him from the dead. He's ascended into heaven. And the way the gospel truth becomes yours is repentance. You turn from your sin and you trust. Jesus did that for you.

So repentance is a part of our salvation, but not just our salvation. Repentance is part of our sanctification. Sanctification is you growing in Christ's likeness. It is the truth that tells us that every single day, I know that I have sinned. And so what do I do? Do I lose my salvation? No. But because I am a sinner saved by grace, my confession is, yes, I'm a sinner, but that sin is paid for at the cross. I confess my sin and the salvation found in Jesus.

Something else happens, too, in repentance. If you think about repentance, once you're saved, repentance ought to be daily, every single day. It ought to create change. You turn away from that bad behavior; don't keep going back over there. Do something to keep yourself from going back over there. So it's daily, there's a change. If you have sinned against someone, repentance means restitution. If you did them wrong, you cheated them out of money, pay them back. Restitution. That's repentance. Repentance is not just being sorry; it's being sorry and then going back to make up what you can.

It's not just restitution, but also reconciliation. If you sinned against someone, or they sinned against you, and that has broken a relationship between two Christian brothers or two Christian sisters, as a gospel-believing Christian,

repentance means reconciliation. Repentance means there is fruit-bearing; there is evidence, as we see it. Crocodile tears and saying you're sorry is not repentance if it's not followed through with a change. That is just regret that you got caught. Repentance is something completely different. Instead, now do the positive.

One of the best books I ever read on repentance is written by a man named Richard Owen Roberts. I don't even know if he's living anymore. I met him one time. He was ancient then, probably 10 years ago. When I met him at a prayer conference, he was old, and he made me nervous. He had one eye bigger than the other, and just like an Old Testament prophet, I didn't want to look him in the face when we talked. He wrote the best book I've ever read on repentance. I mean, to hear him speak is unbelievable. And if you want to find the book, it's Repentance by Richard Owen Roberts. It is very helpful in thinking about living your life with repentance. That's the first point. Number one, live with repentance. Let me give you a second, number two.

We live with ambition

Ambition. What does the text say in Ephesians 28:4? Let the thief no longer steal, let him labor. See that word labor? Let him work. Right there is a reminder of the goodness of work. When God created Adam and Eve and put them in the garden, before they fell into sin, they were to work. Don't think that you having to work is because you're a sinner or because of the fall. That's not the case. Work is hard because of the fall, and bees sting because of the fall. Bad things happen because of the fall, but work has been there from the very beginning, and it is good. It's good to provide. There's a change. It used to be that somebody stole stuff, but now they work. That's what Paul writes about to the church at Thessalonica. What does he tell them in 1 Thessalonians 4:11? He tells them to aspire to live quietly and to mind their own affairs. Work with your hands as we instructed you. I mean, honestly, truthfully, brothers and sisters, sometimes there is nothing more godly than you doing your job to the best of your ability, taking care of your family, and minding your own business. There's very little that is more Christian than that

right there. It's the whole idea of common sense, that common sense isn't that common. Maybe 1 Thessalonians 4:11 is not that common, but it should be. That we have an ambition to not be thieves, but to work. We live with ambition. Let me give you a third point. One of these is going to hit sooner or later. Okay, here's number three.

We live with endurance

We live not just with ambition, we live with endurance. So you see the text. *28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work.* You see that phrase, doing honest work. That maybe should be translated as "doing hard work." Actually working and doing the selfless things. Some of you have a job like this. Maybe it's the unseen things you do for someone, and they are not thankful. It's doing the thankless things, and doing it without complaining. Maybe you work with someone like this. Maybe you're a teacher or a businessman or a doctor or a salesman or a mechanic. You work with someone who is prone to saying, "That's not my job." The person living with endurance instead walks into the room and says, how can I help? When Paul wrote to the church of Colossae, in Colossians 3:23-24, he says, whatever you do, if you're staying at home, if you're a stay-at-home mom, working at home, raising your children, or you work remotely, whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men. See, you know that, from the Lord, you will receive your inheritance as your reward. You are not serving men. You are serving the Lord Christ. Do you have a job that you hate? You ought to take this passage right here and memorize it. Put it in your heart and remind yourself that you're not working for that guy. You're working for the Lord. Live with endurance. Let me give you something else. Let's go to the fourth one, number four.

We live with integrity

Integrity. What does it say in chapter 4:28? *28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands.* It's an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. One of the greatest things you can do as a

Christian is to live your life and work in whatever organization you are a part of. There will be people there who see how you do it. And if they know you're a Christian, the gospel is adorned. Christians should be the very best employees. We work because we're working for the Lord. We are not cheating the system, not cutting corners. Or if you're an hourly employee, not riding the clock. You see your Christianity, your love for God, and how you've been saved, and that affects your Christianity. It extends to how you spend your time. If you work at home or you're at home, this extends to you. Why? Because we are seeking to redeem the time, because the days are evil. So we live with integrity. Let me give you something else to consider. We're almost halfway there, number five.

We live with generosity

Let me show you where I get that. Truthfully, this is the centerpiece of what Paul does with turning away from being a thief and turning towards good work. This is the reason behind it. Like the job you have, you hope to make more money in it, and you sometimes will take another job because the pay is going to be better or the circumstances are better. Those things are good. But that job has a purpose. That purpose is found in verse 28 of chapter 4. Let me read it to you. *28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* So the command you just had, let him work with his own hands, what for? So that he may have something to share with anyone in need. The job is not there to make you rich. Thank God if you are rich, I'm thankful. Send some of that over here. I'm not complaining about you being rich. But that wasn't what it was for. According to what he says here, the positive is that we've been given a job that pays so well that you are actually able to be generous.

So how do we do that then? Let's think in concentric circles. Start in the very middle. Put your family in the middle, you've been called to provide. If you have someone you're responsible for, a husband, wife, or children, you've been called to provide and take care of your family. You do that selflessly.

You sometimes wonder where the money goes. If you have children, they become teenagers and students, where did the money go? Some weird math that just flies out of the window. But God has called you for that little nucleus that you've been called to, to be responsible for, to provide there.

And if you go one rung beyond that little inner circle, and maybe as a part of that inner circle, there's some debate, should you give to the Lord first? I would say you're giving to the Lord as you give to your family. But in a formal sense, one rung outside of that is the church and its mission. That you've been given a job that you worked really hard at, and those hours that you worked, that education that you got, all of that is your life. You spent time in your life to do that. And that money you are compensated with, that's given as a symbol, this is your life. And when you give that money, you are giving your life. And part of what you give to is your family and then to the gospel mission of the church. We, all together at Hickory Grove Baptist Church, gather together on Sunday mornings. Can you imagine coming to church on a Sunday and never actually giving to the mission? It's astounding to me that you could. There's something you need to let go of to understand how good God has blessed us and how joyful it is to give to him.

When you read through the Bible, it's God putting his people in place and blessing them so that they might honor him. When you get to the book of Malachi, at the very end of the Old Testament, God speaks to his people who were hoarding what they had been given, and he says to them, "Why would you rob me?" It's the same word, thief. Why would you steal? And here in the New Testament, we have even more cause to give to the Lord because of the grace given to us in Jesus. So I would call you, as a Christian, when you think about that, you shall not steal, you got that one covered. That's the negative. The positive is in Ephesians 4:28: Paul says you have all that labor so that you are able to be generous with your family and with the church.

I think you could go another circle out. All of us have people in our orbit that are in need. It is good for us to give to those that are in need. Or you could go out another circle. There are worthy ministries that have been put into our

orbit that we should give to. They are fulfilling the gospel even beyond what the church is doing.

All of that to say, the purpose of your employment and the provision you have been given is that you ought to be able to display gospel giving. It seems like the more we have, the harder it is. Poor folks don't have as much trouble being selfish. You don't have anything, so you go ahead and start giving. But the more we get, the harder it gets because we can see it stacking up, and we want to hold on to it. And this is the very opposite of being selfish. There's no need to go any further than the cross of Jesus. We go and stand there at the cross of Jesus, and we think not just that he died in my place, but now I have you think about his example and the sacrifice. So we live our lives with generosity. That's five. Let me give you a sixth, number six.

We live with affection

Or if it's easier to write, we live with love. Let me show you where I get that. I'm going to leave Ephesians now. It's from Romans. *Romans 13:8-9. Paul says, [8] Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. [9] For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Isn't that the fountainhead of giving? As a Christian, you have several impulses. Oftentimes, your impulse is to help. When you see someone hurting, you want to go help. That's a Christian impulse. You have an impulse to give. You have an impulse to speak to. You have an impulse to defend. But one of the impulses we have when it comes to giving is to love. We get that from God. Even in the story of salvation. Think about the gospel story. Think about John 3:16. For God so loved, loved the world, the impulse is he gave. It's the same picture for us. The reason we are generous, the reason we give, is that we love. And Paul says that if, in fact, you love God and love other people, you don't have to live as a legalist, checking off the rules. You end up having the right impulse to actually help people. You see, the fountainhead of keeping these commandments is a love for God and a love

for people that's found right inside the gospel. That's six. Let me give you a seventh, number seven.

We live with contentment

Contentment. To get that, I go to a prayer. It's a rare prayer that you find in the book of Proverbs right in the middle of your Bible. In the middle of your Bible, you find that wisdom book called Proverbs. At the end of Proverbs, in Proverbs 30, there is a prayer from the author. It's a great prayer. *Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, 9 lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.* It is a prayer of contentment. Brothers and sisters, one of the greatest safeguards in your heart when it comes to sinning is contentment. When you are content in Christ, and you are filled up with the Holy Spirit, when you have fed on the Word of God, and you are not hungry for the junk food of this world, when you have fed on the Word of God, and you are content with what you have consumed, you don't consume trash. It's good for us to go and think on the death of Jesus on the cross. Think of how he died. Think of why he died. Think of the violence that accompanied his death. Think of the separation of God the Father and the Son. Think of him actually being dead. Think of the bodily resurrection. If you go to a funeral in the next few weeks, think of the resurrection of Jesus. Be content in that. Think of Jesus in heaven at the Father's side. There's a man in heaven, a glorified but scarred body, taking his wounds, pleading them to the Father. Think of the simple provisions that God has given you. And when you can be content in Christ, you are much less likely to fall into sin. So we live with contentment. That's number seven. Almost there, number eight.

We live with gratitude

Do you find that when you are complaining, you are not being thankful, and when you are thankful, you are not complaining? And one of the things that is helpful, and I haven't mastered it yet, is when I have an impulse to complain,

to start thanking. I did that just a minute ago. When we opened up, I had a complaint in my heart against the rain that was falling outside. I don't like it one bit. So I made myself thank God for the rain. You start thanking God for the things you tend to complain about. What does James say in James 1:17? James says, *17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* List them, list the events. List the events that have happened in your life in the last year. Some of them good, some of them bad, some of them tragic, some of them glorious. Thank God for this list. List the pains that have visited you and your family. Thank God. List the provisions. There are some things that you were just given, God provided. Thank God for that. List the luxuries. There are some provisions that go above and beyond what you need; they are in excess, and God has given them. That is good. Thank God for that. List the sins that you've committed, that you can remember. List them and remember they have been paid for at the cross and thank God for the forgiveness that has come your way. So we live with it. Let me give you one last one. I need to wind it up here. We live with gratitude, and I'll make this the last one, number nine.

We live with grace

Grace. The commandment is you shall not steal. If you go to the end of the Gospel of Luke, you'll find that Jesus is crucified between two thieves. Those thieves are hurling insults at Jesus. But one of those thieves stops mocking Jesus. The Spirit has awakened him to believe. And that thief said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus said to him, "Today you will be with me in paradise." When Christ died on the cross, he died for thieves. He died for those who break the commandments. He died for you. And by his wounds, you are healed. You see, Christians, by grace, live to give.

(Pastor prays)