

## **EXODUS 20:15—THOU SHALT NOT STEAL**

We have been looking at the ten commandments in our study of the book of Exodus. We now come to the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment dealing with stealing. All societies would be in agreement with this commandment for it is the infringement of the rights of another on his personal property. Nobody likes the terrible feeling of having found that what they once owned has been taken from them by someone else. One has been violated against when he has been invaded whether it be his house or car or the pockets. Nobody has respect for a thief. Like murder, it is a law that all cultures have, for obvious reasons. Laws originally come from God and governments use the wisdom that God has given, to curb somewhat, the evils of man. Whether a nation believes in God or not, does not negate the fact that God gave these commands, to honor Him and others.

Stealing effects so many other commandments and we have seen that all commandments are connected to the other ones. In this particular commandment, we can see how we break the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment. We can steal from parents by not honoring them. When there has been murder committed, one has stolen a life. Adultery steals for it has taken the spouse of another. Stealing deceives and lies. Coveting, the tenth commandment, is directly connected with it, for once one wants what their neighbor has and it is not his, stealing is in the heart. The first four commandments are broken and theft is involved when we don't honor God. We steal from Him when we don't pay Him what He is owed, which is worship.

We might have the thought, like this, well I'm not a thief so therefore I don't have to be convicted by this commandment. I should have no problem with this one. But we are guilty on this one just like all the other commandments. There are broad, sweeping implications with this command as well as the other ones. The law shows us what absolute true righteousness is. The law is relevant to us, even as Christians. Thankfully Christ conformed to the law perfectly and in Christ we walk in the spirit. We see the high standards of God and by His grace, we have the desire for Him to govern our behavior.

So, let's take a look at the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment.

### **1. THE REALITY OF THEFT IN A FALLEN WORLD**

#### **A. ALL CULTURES RECOGNIZE IT AS WRONG**

Man has to be governed, for it would be absolute chaos if there was no law for stealing. We are thankful that the law protects us from people coming into our home and stealing and plundering everything we own.

#### **B. THE NATURE OF MAN**

Man's sinful nature wants to go against God's law, even when there are laws against crimes that can bring incarceration. We have seen when there are disasters, such as flooding or tornadoes, or hurricanes, people think they have the right to go into stores and take whatever they want, because there has been an evacuation. People can show their absolute depravity when they behave in this way against other people. New Orleans

is a perfect example of how wicked people are in the hurricane Katrina incident as people acted like animals, shooting at people and the raping of women. The 8<sup>th</sup> commandment was being broken all over the place at that time.

1. Sin of unbelief Psalm 78:19

The main problem is that people don't believe God. They will scheme and plan how to get possessions and sometimes work harder than they would, than if they had a job to get the things they need. They don't believe in God and His ways, so they go against Him and violate His laws and other's rights to get stuff. When one is a thief, they do not believe God. God will take care of people and give them what they need, if they would just trust Him.

2. Covetousness Col 3:5

Coveting is mentioned in the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, so we will not elaborate on this very much, but it is connected with stealing and is wanting something that someone else has. This amounts to idolatry. In the desire to gain more, (greed), means that one is worshipping his desire for things. Because of that they are committing idolatry. This means having other gods.

3. Slothfulness

People who steal, don't want to work for what they want. They are lazy, so they let other people work hard for what they buy, then they steal it from them. Thieves are lazy, they covet, and worst of all, they are unbelievers. Colossians 3:6 says God's wrath will come upon them.

## 2. WAYS THE COMMANDMENT IS BROKEN

How is this commandment broken? There are actually many ways. We will look at a few. Most of them we will recognize as pure thievery. But there are some we don't usually think of as robbery and that is where we should see ourselves as being susceptible to breaking this command.

### A. BLATANT THEFT

This is easy to recognize. Anybody knows that stealing is wrong. When this is done, anybody should agree that this is wrong, against the law.

### B. BORROWING AND FAILING TO RETURN

This may not be as obvious, because sometimes it is not done in a blatant, planned manner. We might tend to forget about returning things to people that we fully intended to just borrow, but as time goes on, we just set it aside and it is never returned. That is stealing. It is not caring enough to get it back to the one who loaned it.

### C. NOT PAYING A DEBT

Someone may lend us some money that we are to get back to them over a period of time. Because they are friends or relatives, we are not always moved to get it paid back on time or to complete it. That is stealing money from someone who has the right over it.

### D. MISUSING THE EMPLOYER'S TIME/PROPERTY

The statistics say that American goof of 20% of the time at work. People call in sick when they are not sick, give less than their best work, and take supplies from their work place. It is staggering to see how much this goes on in the work place.

Even something that seems so small as taking an extra few minutes off from work can be considered to be stealing time and money from the one who hired you, if it's not permitted. Equipment in the office that is meant for only office work, but is used for personal reasons can be breaking this commandment. It may seem minute, but it shows our attitude if we take away time and use property that is not meant to be used in that way.

We might chat with other employees or surf the internet on the employers time. It may seem so innocent but it can be wrong.

E. WASTING OTHER'S POSSESSIONS

This would include renters of houses who don't take care of the house. Luke 16:1-13 is the parable of the unjust steward who was guilty of wasting the resources of the owner.

F. PAYING BAD WAGES

This deals with the owner who doesn't pay the wages that were earned by the worker. This is equal to thievery. James 5:4

When we fail to tip waitresses and waiters, we are stealing from them.

G. SLANDER

Slander happens when we talk about somebody behind their backs. It steals others reputations.

H. ADULTERY AND FORNICATION

This takes away the moral purity from the other. One's purity has been stolen when this act happens. In adultery it means one's spouse has been stolen.

I. PLAGARISM

This makes someone else's work as your own and take credit for it.

J. CHEATING

Cheating on schoolwork and exams is stealing.

K. TAX FRAUD

This misrepresents what we really owe to the government. To cheat on taxes is to steal from the people of the United States.

L. IDENTITY THEFT

Nine million Americans per year have had their identity stolen as reported by the FTC.

This is something we all hear about in the current time. Many people have heard about people getting their credit card numbers stolen and as a result have lost thousands of dollars. Money is stolen electronically out of people's accounts. The electronic, digital world has its benefits but anything in modern technology can be used for good or bad. It is like any kind of instrument which can be used for God's glory or evil.

M. COPYRIGHT VIOLATION

Music is one of the biggest ways that the copyright laws are broken.

Today, more than ever, music is being stolen from the writer. Once again, technology has a lot to do with that.

N. UNLAWFUL DOWNLOADING

The internet is a wonderful thing and gives us a tremendous amount of information and we have an opportunity to use it for God's glory.

The gospel is gotten out in a huge way with ministries opening up the floodways of their ministries with free downloads. That is great.

Our own church uses this opportunity to get out our messages. In whatever way that God uses that, we give Him glory. But there are unlawful things happening that are dishonest. The stealing

off internet is on a wide scale, as people are illegally downloading music and videos. Some have been caught, but the percentage would be very minimal. The writers and artists are having their music being duplicated and not getting paid for it. People might have a cd and they burn off copies for as many as ten friends. That is stealing from the artists, companies, company reps, and retail stores, as I am well aware of what a lot of young people are doing. It may seem innocent but it is against the law and God's law and it effects the salary of a long list of people.

O. DECEITFUL SCALES Amos 8:5-6

When people mark up the price of their products exorbitantly and make more than what a product is worth, they have stolen from the consumer. In our time, it seems like everybody is gouging and extending the price much more than ever before and it is less in quality at the same time.

Jesus condemned the money changers at the Temple. He called it a den of thieves.

We are to be honest in all matters.

P. THE ULTIMATE THEFT Malachi 3:8-10

Robbing God is the worst way we can steal. This is something that nobody else will probably know about, but God does. When we fail to give Him His due, we have stolen from Him. When we hold back from giving our money to the local church, we are guilty. There are many ministries we individually want to give to and that is good. We need to do that, but the church is a storehouse to spread God's blessing. We want to make sure that the church distributes what it can to other needs.

We also rob God of our talents, energy, and resources, when we don't use what God has given us to use for His glory. If we hold back any of these things we are breaking the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment and actually stealing from God. Wow, is that ever convicting? See how broad the implications go with this commandment. The guilt is as if we stole from the National treasury.

### 3. THE DIGNITY OF PERSONAL OWNERSHIP

A. THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY---Exodus 22:1-9 This chapter is a clarification and scope of the commandment.

Deut 23:25---Property is to be respected. Property is a right. We all should have the right to own property. God is not a Communist. We do not "share the wealth", regardless of how virtuous that sounds. We are to respect other's property. We have our own things but our own things are really not ours, but belong to God. 100% is owned by God, and we manage it. So when one steals, he really steals from God.

There are many biblical instances of God meaning for people to own personal property and manage it.

1. Adam and Eve Gen 2:15

They were entitled to everything but the tree of life. They were to subdue it and have dominion.

2. Abraham and Sarah

Abraham wanted a tract of land for his wife and had to buy it.

3. 12 tribes

Each tribe was allotted a certain area. That land was to be

their own.

4. Naboth and King Ahab

Naboth owned the land and did not want to sell it as King Ahab and Jezebel wanted that land. There was private ownership in that instance.

5. Jesus' parables

Jesus told of stories of landowners and servants who were responsible. So, we see Jesus taught of private ownership. There were vineyard owners, stewards, and talents talked about in these parables.

B. WORK ETHIC

1 Thess 4:11-12

Eph 4:28 Hard work is the best remedy if prone to steal.

We are to give to those in need as that is one of the reasons we work. We want to help those in need, such as widows and orphans, but not to those who don't want to work.

2 Thess 3:10

We are blessed to be able to distribute. Acts 20:34—It is more blessed to give than to receive.

**4. STEWARDSHIP**

This is the positive side of the commandment, the flip side.

God owns all, and we manage it. God says , all the earth is mine and all its fullness.

A. THE USE OF MONEY IS THE MEASUREMENT

There is personal property but we are just stewards despite what we own. We just have stuff for a season and we are responsible with what we do with it.

1 Tim 6:17-19

Eph 4:28

The essence is giving, not taking.

B. A TRANSFORMED THIEF Luke 19

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who took extra money from people He had to return four fold to all he cheated. He was changed.