

promote the advantage of my neighbour in every instance I can.” You see from this answer again how the commandments are, as one put it, not “just prohibitions, but they are a pattern for living the life God wants us to live in gratitude to Him. And by doing so we are faithful to the Spirit’s working in our lives as we help to preserve and enrich the lives of people around us.”

Thinking of this positive side and requirement of the eighth commandment, who will not admit we have but a very small beginning of that obedience that God calls for from us? Which person will not be convicted of so much sin and shortcoming even in reference to just this one commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal*”? Who of us does not have reason to confess so much sin and shortcoming also in reference to this commandment?

The purpose of this message is not just to convict of sin but to draw us to the Saviour from sin, Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ, the One Who perfectly obeyed this commandment too in all His life, never taking advantage of anyone wrongly while always giving Himself completely for the wellbeing of others, was crucified, who were hanging with Him, one on His right and one on His left? Two thieves and robbers! Jesus was numbered among transgressors and He gave Himself sinners to save. And even the story of Golgotha brings out that whoever calls upon Jesus and His mercy and trusts Him to save shall be saved and whoever will not repent and believe will perish in their sins. The one thief believed and went to heaven; the other rejected Jesus and perished in his sins.

The Bible says clearly in I Corinthians. 6:10 and elsewhere too that no thief, no unconverted thief, shall enter into the kingdom, but every sinner against also the eighth commandment who looks to Jesus may have all his sins washed away through Christ’s shed blood for sinners. What a blessing to be able to preach on the eighth commandment in light of the cross of Jesus! “*If you love Me*”, says Jesus in John 14:15, “*keep My commandments*”, including also the eighth commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal*”. Are you living also by this holy law of God in spirit and in truth? Amen.

*Hans Overduin, Radio Pastor*

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**BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

*Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America*

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)*



### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

*Thou shalt not steal.* This is the eighth commandment of God given both in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. In this message let us think about what “not stealing” means according to God’s holy standard.

The eighth commandment of God forbids all robbing of others. How evil really is this act of being a thief and a robber. The fact that God forbids all stealing shows what a good God He is. In His Word God promotes the matter of private property and having personal possessions and He calls for duly respecting that from one another. You are not to steal from another what belongs to him or her. You are not to rob someone of that which they have worked for and earned or that which has been given to them by others. You are not to snatch what someone else has under any circumstances, thinking thereby to make it your own, or to profit from the sale of it to someone else. Who listening will not agree this is something God clearly forbids with the eighth commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal*”.

But we need to look deeper into what kind of robbery and thievery the eighth commandment actually all forbids. You agree that the obvious, open, and often violent robbing of others is wrong. God forbids it because it is so unjust and He is totally just and right in all His works and ways. His laws reflect His perfect holy character. But what does ‘no stealing ever’ mean? It means no stealing in more secretive and sly ways, under cover even of pretending you are so good. There are countless ways to steal and still appear to be a good and moral citizen. But God sees through it whenever we in any way rob or steal from Him or from others, whoever they are, and however small or great the stolen items may be. The fact is there is a lot more so called ‘nice tricky theft’ happening than ‘violent open theft’. For example, what about the business and corporate scandals that we hear about too often? This means people in nice suits in big offices are deliberately changing or covering up number figures on papers to somehow fill their own pockets while robbing from others.

Could it be you, maybe even with your income tax papers, or in some other sly devious way, are guilty of stealing? Maybe you don’t report all your income and accept cash deals under the table. Is that not a form of thievery? Oh, but others do it all the time! Yes, but does that mean Christians should do it too, those who profess to live, and say they want to live, in perfect obedience to all God’s commandments? God forbids thievery of any kind, regardless who all might do it.

What about cheating others too by misrepresenting the facts, or here and there not quite doing what you promised to do in your work contract, or maybe extending your hours just a little on your bill for that certain person whom you figure has lots of money anyways? You said you would put in a half inch rebar, but instead you opted for a quarter inch; or you said the base would be 8 inches gravel but instead you only put in 4 inches worth, just to give some examples. You said you worked 3 hours on that vehicle whereas if the truth be told it was little more than one hour and three quarters. You said that item you want to sell was just two years old but you know it actually is four years old. You sell that item where what is on top looks all just right, but you know on the bottom layer are several not the best at all....and so I could go on, could I not? There are countless ways to cheat on and misrepresent the facts to others for the purpose of your own advantage. But God forbids it. His eighth commandment is, "*You shall not steal*", not in any way, at any time, with any one!

This means also then at work you are not to goof around while being paid to produce. How much theft takes place in this way all too often? People playing computer games on office time while supposed to be doing their work...have you heard of that before? What about unlawfully taking things from the work place? Stores and hospitals and factories lose massive amounts of things through employees generously helping themselves with things from paper clips to linen sheets, to tools... and you name it. What about employers stealing from employees, wrongly holding back well earned wages? That happens sometimes too, doesn't it?

There is theft through wasteful use of our resources. Letting water unnecessarily run is a form of theft from others. Keeping the lights on in your room when you don't have to is a form of unthoughtful waste, as you may have been told before. Many of us are so privileged with all kinds of water, heat, and light privileges but we should also be responsible with these resources. Then there is what we may call theft from God Himself. God speaks in Malachi 3 about the Israelites robbing Him as they refused to give first of all to the Lord of all their income. When we will not give liberally and first of all to God from all He gives us, God says it is robbery! Terrible robbery too, for we move and live and have our being from God and from Him all blessings flow, and shall you and I not acknowledge and honour Him with our first fruits then? Are there robbers of God listening now to this message, people who don't tithe? Are you maybe such, even with your Sunday suit on?

We could go on to other forms of robbery and stealing. You can steal another person's purity by taking advantage over their body, either by way of fornication or adultery. Oh, I know that would be more what the seventh commandment is about, but the point is, breaking the seventh commandment means also stealing meanly and selfishly, taking what doesn't belong to you at all! Then what about the theft of someone's name, actively working to bring someone else's reputation down to try to promote your own? That too is a cruel form of robbery that can have devastating

results. Even, there is what we might call 'robbing someone's soul' which means not taking care to lead others in the way of God's Word and working actively even to try to have people turn away from the Bible and its gospel message. There have been parents and teachers and professors who have robbed children and young people of their respect and attention to the Bible as God's holy authoritative Word in all matters. If you as a parent live and act as if God's Word is not very important and other things of this world are just as and even more important, are you not robbing your children of the one thing needful? The Bible warns how terrible is God's punishment for those who actively teach or else inactively and indifferently live so as to lead others in sin, away from God and His gospel truth. Are you a thief and robber in this way presently?

If you start to reflect on the countless ways theft and robbery can and does take place in life, you soon conclude, "Lord, who then is free from sin also against the eighth commandment?" Yes, especially also when you take seriously what the Bible-based Heidelberg Catechism rightly teaches in Question & Answer 110 that God forbids in the eighth commandment not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law, but in God's sight, theft also includes cheating and swindling our neighbors by schemes made to appear legitimate, such as inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume, any fraudulent merchandise, counterfeit money, excessive interest, or any other means forbidden by God. And if you still think that leaves you guiltless, there is added that He forbids also all covetousness or greed, and all abuse and waste of His gifts! Have you never wasted time or resources or opportunities given to you? For sure God's commandment is exceeding broad and deep and high and none of us live by its perfect standard totally. How much we all fall short just talking now about this one commandment which maybe you thought was the least you had to be concerned about.

And we are not done yet by any means in our treatment of this commandment and learning what not stealing means according to God's standards. No, for God's laws don't just negatively forbid certain things, but each law also positively calls for certain things. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 4:28. "*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may be able to give to him that needeth [is in need]*". From the so called Good Samaritan parable of Jesus in Luke 10:25ff, we learn the meaning of positively obeying the eighth commandment. You may know the story, and if not, you can read it now. Notice how that Samaritan did not just pass by a person in need, but how gently and generously he came to his help, not sparing any effort or means to restore him to health and safety, and Jesus highly commended his action as that which was right and good.

Consider what God positively requires with this commandment, as again also faithfully expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, Question & Answer 111. What is required with the eighth commandment is not only that negatively I don't not rob from others in any way, but positively also "that I