

# Legalized Theft (Exodus 20:15)

## Introduction: Review

**Q. 141. What are the duties required in the eighth commandment?** A. The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man;<sup>(a)</sup> rendering to every one his due;<sup>(b)</sup> restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof;<sup>(c)</sup> giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others;<sup>(d)</sup> moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods;<sup>(e)</sup> a provident care and study to get,<sup>(f)</sup> keep, use, and dispose these things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition;<sup>(g)</sup> a lawful calling,<sup>(h)</sup> and diligence in it;<sup>(i)</sup> frugality,<sup>(j)</sup> avoiding unnecessary law-suits,<sup>(k)</sup> and suretyship, or other like engagements;<sup>(m)</sup> and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.<sup>(n)</sup> (a) Ps. 15:2,4; Zech. 7:4,10; Zech. 8:16,17 (b) Rom. 13:7 (c) Lev. 6:2-5 compared with Luke 19:8 (d) Luke 6:30,38; 1Jn. 3:17; Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:10 (e) 1Tim. 6:6-9; Gal. 6:14 (f) 1Tim. 5:8 (g) Prov. 27:23-27; Eccl. 2:24; Eccl. 3:12,13; 1Tim. 6:17,18; Isa. 38:1; Matt. 11:8 (h) 1Cor. 7:20; Gen. 2:15; Gen. 3:19 (i) Eph. 4:28; Prov. 10:4 (j) John 6:12; Prov. 21:20 (k) 1Cor. 6:1-9 (m) Prov. 6:1-6; Prov. 11:15 (n) Lev. 25:35; Deut. 22:1-4; Exod. 23:4,5; Gen. 47:14,20; Phil. 2:4; Matt. 22:39

**Q. 142. What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?** A. The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required,<sup>(a)</sup> are, theft,<sup>(b)</sup> robbery,<sup>(c)</sup> man-stealing,<sup>(d)</sup> and receiving any thing that is stolen;<sup>(e)</sup> fraudulent dealing,<sup>(f)</sup> false weights and measures,<sup>(g)</sup> removing land-marks,<sup>(h)</sup> injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man,<sup>(i)</sup> or in matters of trust;<sup>(j)</sup> oppression,<sup>(k)</sup> extortion,<sup>(l)</sup> usury,<sup>(m)</sup> bribery,<sup>(n)</sup> vexatious law-suits,<sup>(o)</sup> unjust inclosures and depopulations;<sup>(p)</sup> ingrossing commodities to enhance the price;<sup>(q)</sup> unlawful callings,<sup>(r)</sup> and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves;<sup>(s)</sup> covetousness;<sup>(t)</sup> inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods;<sup>(u)</sup> distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them;<sup>(v)</sup> envying at the prosperity of others;<sup>(w)</sup> as likewise idleness,<sup>(x)</sup> prodigality, wasteful gaming; and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate,<sup>(y)</sup> and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.<sup>(z)</sup> (a) James 2:15,16; 1Jn. 3:17 (b) Eph. 4:28 (c) Ps. 62:10 (d) 1Tim. 1:10 (e) Prov. 29:24; Ps. 50:18 (f) 1Th. 4:6 (g) Prov. 20:10 (h) Deut. 19:14; Prov. 23:10 (i) Amos 8:5; Ps. 37:21 (j) Luke 16:10-12 (k) Ezek. 22:29; Lev. 25:17 (l) Matt. 23:25; Ezek. 22:12 (m) Ps. 15:5 (n) Job 15:34 (o) 1Cor. 6:6-8; Prov. 3:29,30 (p) Isa. 5:8; Micah 2:2 (q) Prov. 11:26 (r) Acts 19:19,24,25 (s) Job 20:19; James 5:4; Prov. 21:6 (t) Luke 12:15 (u) 1Tim. 6:5; Col. 3:2; Prov. 23:5; Ps. 62:10 (v) Matt. 6:25,31,34; Eccl. 5:12 (w) Ps. 73:3; Ps. 37:1,7 (x) 2Th. 3:11; Prov. 18:9 (y) Prov. 23:21; Prov. 23:20,21; Prov. 28:19 (z) Eccl. 4:8; Eccl. 6:2; 1Tim. 5:8

## 1. Life

Kidnapping or *man-stealing* is the most serious form of theft (Ex. 21:16, Deut. 5:19), a crime punishable by death (Ex. 22:3, Deut. 24:7). The prophets threaten God's wrath to nations that violate the laws of Exodus 21 and 22. In Amos 1:6-10 and Joel 3:6, for example, we read of impending judgment upon the nations for the sin of kidnapping people and selling them into slavery, an act forbidden in 21:16.

## 2. Liberty

The law required restitution rather than imprisonment (e.g. Exod 21:1-9), allowing for repentance and restoration, as Zaccheus repaid fourfold (see Luke 19:8-10). "Restitution reveals both the wisdom of God and the failure of the present approach to criminal justice in America. Restitution ... enabled him to make his offense right by repaying the victim of the crime in a way that replaced the harm by a positive benefit. ... Today, the victim receives little or no compensation, the offender makes no restitution, and is forced to live apart from society, at a price society is penalized to pay (B. Deffinbaugh).

## 3. Property

"The decline of tithing led . . . to a decline in Christian social financing. The result was the shift of power to the state, and also the growth of taxation to remedy the lack of financing. Without restoration of the tithe, there can be no restoration of Christian social order ... Within a generation after the abolition of the legally required tithe in the United States, the state supported and controlled schools came into existence. .... A new social order came with the abandonment of the tithe, and the raid increase of taxes ensured, or statist double and triple tithes and more, to further a new order" (J. Rushdoony).

**Conclusion: Who Makes the Difference**