

8th Commandment: "Don't Steal!"-God Gives and God Takes Away

^{ESV} **Exodus 20:1** And God spoke all these words, saying, ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." ¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. ²² And the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it. ²⁶ And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.'

Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰

But that is not the way you learned Christ!- ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. 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. ²⁹

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Introduction

Poor workmanship.

Customer Service reps who don't seem to care about our concerns and complaints.

"They just don't make them like they used to!"

Well, if I am not appreciated, I will take my time, talents, and tithes somewhere where I will be honored and appreciated in the way that I think I should be.

In a land of thieves, and those who steal from us by not doing their work and fulfilling their vocation to the glory of God, we are called to work and labor diligently before the face of God.

In the Garden of Eden that which was entrusted to Adam was tainted and lost by the fall of man. Israel was called by God to show forth to the world what living in covenant, giving and living *coram deo* looked like before a world of thieves, where private property was valued and honored, and man worked together heartily in order to serve God and neighbor.

Heidelberg Catechism on 8th Commandment: What does God require in this commandment? ***That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, that I treat him as I would like others to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.***

I. The Sovereignty of God:

Do You Trust God with what He has provided to you? Private Property and Stewardship understood in light of God's Sovereignty

a. Read: Matthew 6:25-33

- 1) Jesus on worry and anxiety about God's faithfulness.
- 2) Jesus on storing up Treasures in Heaven (keeping our eyes on the real goal of this life).
- 3) Scriptures focus our attention on **responsibilities rather than rights** in our culture.

II. Right to Private Property – and Responsibilities of Having Private Property

- a. All belongs to God, but there are differences between what belongs to you and to me. [Horizontal-owners and Vertical-stewards; 2 perspectives]
- b. Understood as that which God has given to us.
- c. Understood in light of the fact that God can give and God can take away, yet we are willing to say with Job: ***“Blessed be the Name of the LORD.”***
- d. True Justice today? (cf. Exodus 22): Distributive as well as Retributive Justice?
- e. Pay the victims or lawyers?
- f. No one is allowed to take from one’s private property, it is ultimately what God has given and entrusted to our neighbor.

All that we have has been given to us as stewards by a gracious and loving God. We steal first from God when we steal!

III. Vocation: Calling and Gifts

- a. Man was called from creation to be good stewards of God’s property:
 - i. “Be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over the creation.”- Gen. 1:26-28
 - ii. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”- Gen. 2:15
 - iii. Man is always a steward of a portion of God’s creation in his calling or vocation.
 1. Christians should be the greatest “tree huggers” and environmentalists! It is God’s good earth that we are to take care of!
 2. Christians should love their animals as God loves the animals he has created (cf. Jonah 4:11; Exodus 23:5;

Sabbath rest for animals, Exodus 20:12; Deut. 25:4;
Proverbs 12:10: “a righteous man cares for the needs
of his animal.”

- b. What is vocation or calling before God?
- c. *Coram Deo*
- d. Work is a good gift of God! Part of the creation mandate (Gen. 2:15).
- e. “What do you have that you have not received (from God)?”- 1 Corinthians 4:7

IV. **What is Stewardship?**

What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? -1 Corinthians 4:7

- a. **TIME** (How we spend our lives that God has granted to us graciously):
- b. **TALENTS** (How we use the gifts God has given to each of us):
- c. **TITHES** (How we give to the Church and to those in need):

Calvin on Stewardship as part of the creation mandate:

“the custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated.

Let him so feed on its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits it to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.” –Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis 2*.

V. **How Do We Steal from God and Our Neighbor?**

- a. **Luther's Large Catechism**: This commandment is violated by "taking advantage of our neighbor in any sort of dealing that results in loss to him."
- b. Work that is not done before God in attitude and ethic.
 - i. "A deal's a deal!"- Keep your word you make with someone (including paying back those who you owe money).
 - 1. It is hard to live today without some forms of debts, but we must seek to honor what we borrow, and we must seek to find low interest loans and be disciplined by God's grace to pay back over time and not default.
 - 2. High and unfair interest on money loaned (Be generous, but don't expect someone in Christ to do anything other than simply pay you back in an agreed upon time period).
 - 3. If Christians in the church would loan to one another, we wouldn't need VISA "for everything else"!
 - ii. Work that is done grudgingly. It is our work that matters, not the attitude in which it is received.
 - iii. Work that is done shoddily with no thought or care for God's glory.
 - 1. Luther's comment on a cobbler's commitment: "Make a good shoe and sell it at a fair price."
 - 2. Be knowledgeable of where products are being made in other countries. Are some people getting ripped off on their labor, and the product being inflated for consumption in America? Slave labor?
 - iv. Doing a job that is not ours at the moment.
 - v. Doing a good job only when others are watching (Col. 3).
 - vi. Think about what you need more than merely what you want!
- c. Refusing to use the gifts God has given us until we are honored in a way that we think we should be honored or noticed.
- d. Not working when we should be working; not playing and resting when we should be playing and resting so that we can work well when we are supposed to (the importance of the Lord's Day and the 4th Commandment).

- e. Capitalism is good and has created more wealth for more people than any other system, yet Capitalism in and of itself is not the end goal for the Christian, but responsible giving and living *coram deo* with regard to God and our neighbors.
- f. Greed is not good! It may drive the market, but it is a sin in God's world. It is greed and the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil!
- g. **Excellent Quotation on Marketing and Christian Business Practice Today:** As Christians, we are to live out the 8th commandment through loving God and neighbor. Michael Horton says that the Christian businessman should ask himself: "Am I attempting to create a desire for something that is unnecessary or even harmful to the consumer?" In business, as in any other occupation, we are rendering a service to the community. A society cannot last long once it has adopted the view that the community exists to serve the individual (or what he can get out of it no matter how many people it affects). The Christian idea of the commonwealth is taken from the imagery of the body of Christ, each part supplying its unique role in supporting the whole, no part being despised, regardless of how diminished its role may be, compared to other parts of the body." - 'The Law of Perfect Freedom', pg. 214.

VI. Christ and His Work for Thieves Like Us

- i. In Christ our debts are all paid in full before God.
- ii. Jesus died between two thieves, and the one thief who looked to Christ for salvation was told "Today you will be with me in paradise."
- iii. In Christ we are heirs of all of God's riches, including his creation restored and renewed in Jesus' Kingdom (Gal. 3:26-4:7; Romans 8:15; cf. Romans 8:18-25).
- iv. We must live as Christians thanking God for the right of private property and at the same time the call to be good stewards of all that God has given to us!
- v. Unfortunately, I am sometimes cynical when I see a Christian business, because as I have experienced, and perhaps you have as well, some of the

shoddiest work that has been done for me at exuberant prices, has been Christian businesses. This ought not to be! We must begin with the Church.

- vi. How do you serve within the Church?
- vii. Parable of the Talents: Matthew 25:14-21
- viii. 1 Thess. 4:11-12: ...And to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.
- ix. ^{ESV} **1 Peter 4:10-11** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies- in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.