

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTIONS # 141 & 74.

(Larger Catechism)

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;¹ rendering to every one his due;² restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof;³ giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others;⁴ moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods;⁵ a provident care and study to get,⁶ keep, use, and dispose these things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition;⁷ a lawful calling,⁸ and diligence in it;⁹ frugality;¹⁰ avoiding unnecessary law-suits,¹¹ and suretyship, or other like engagements;¹² 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.¹³

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #74. *What is required in the eighth commandment?*

A. The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.¹⁴

Question 1—*What duties are required to the conserving of this eighth commandment?*

Answer—In this command is required all honesty of dealing in our contracts and commerce from man to man wherein we strive to be strict observers of truth and faithfulness, regardless of whether or not it is to our own prejudice, Ps. 15:2, 4. This simplicity and plainness of dealing supposes a studying of justice in these contracts and commerce, Zech. 7:4, 10; as well as a pursuing of that justice between men, Zech. 8:16, 17.

¹ Ps. 15:2, 4; Zech. 7:4, 10; 8:16, 17.

² Rom. 13:7.

³ Lev. 6:2-5; Luke 19:8.

⁴ Luke 6:30, 38; 1 John 3:17; Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:10.

⁵ 1 Tim. 6:6-9; Gal. 6:14.

⁶ 1 Tim. 5:8.

⁷ Prov. 27:23-27; Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 13; 1 Tim. 6:17, 18; Isa. 38:1; Matt. 11:8.

⁸ 1 Cor. 7:20; Gen. 2:15; 3:19.

⁹ Eph. 4:28; Prov. 10:4.

¹⁰ John 6:12; Prov. 21:20.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 6:1-9.

¹² Prov. 6:1-6; 11:15.

¹³ Lev. 25:35; Deut. 22:1-4; Ex. 23:4, 5; Gen. 47:14, 20; Phil. 2:4; Matt. 22:39.

¹⁴ Gen. 30:30; 1 Tim. 5:8; Lev. 25:35; Deut. 22:1-5; Ex. 23:4, 5; Gen. 47:14, 20.

Additionally, natural conscience, confirmed by the word of God, directs us to give each his due, lest we be found to rob or steal from them, Rom. 13:7. In whatever relation we stand to others, whether as masters, servants, neighbors, or under any particular bargain or obligation to them, we are to render what is due, Luke 20:25.

Question 2—*What privations are required under this commandment?*

Answer—This command demands that we endeavor a restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof:

First, simply in those things lost and found, wherein we are not to engage to conceal and keep what is another's, apart from the will of the owner, which is a sort of theft, Deut. 22:2, 3.

Second, complicitly when we have wronged others by taking what does not belong to us, it ought to be restored, Luke 19:8. This occurs when men: 1.) In case of trust, commit a thing to another which is then kept up upon some pretense that it is lost or otherwise, Lev. 6:2-5. 2.) In the case of trading together, when one puts into the hand of another something designed to deceive another in the transaction, Deut. 25:15. 3.) In the case of any violence, when men take away by robbery, stealth or oppression that which rightfully belongs to another, 1 Sam. 12:3. 4.) In the case of cheating, when by fraud and circumvention goods are taken away, Lev. 19:13.

This restitution is in all cases necessary, even beyond his means, Ex. 22:3. Thus, it is made one of the signs of true repentance that a man restore what he has unjustly taken, Ezek. 33:15. Furthermore, the party obliged to make restitution is not only the one who took the thing, but he in whose hand the thing is found is responsible, Lev. 6:3. The person himself, and his heirs are required to restore, Job 20:10. The restitution is to be made to the owner, or, if he is dead, to his heirs, or, if none can be found, unto the Lord, Num. 5:6-8.

Additionally, this command demands that we, according to our own abilities and the necessities of others, give and lend freely of this world's goods, Luke 6:30, 38. It is a duty we owe our neighbor for the welfare of his outward estate, Matt. 5:42. Although we might lend upon interest, so that it is moderate, Deut. 23:20; we must lend freely to those poor who are in need, Eph. 4:28; especially those of the household of God, 1 John 3:17; Gal. 6:10. Those who receive, must take care to return or pay again what is borrowed, Ex. 22:14. Though every attempt should be made to repay, Ps. 37:21; yet, if the incapacity flow from providence, it is affliction and no sin, 2 Kings 4:1.

Question 3—*What does this commandment require of us toward the world?*

Answer—This commandment requires men to a moderation of judgment, affections and wills towards the goods of this world, 1 Tim. 6:6-9; which is necessary for a right affectation toward the things of God, Gal. 6:14. This consists in: 1.) A provident care and study to get these goods, 1 Tim. 5:8. 2.) A provident care and study to keep, use and dispose of these things as necessary and convenient for sustentation of our nature, Prov. 27:23-27; Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 13. 3.) A provident care and study to do so suitable to our condition, 1 Tim. 6:17, 18; Isa. 38:1; Matt. 11:8.

Question 4—*How is this to be accomplished?*

Answer—In order to accomplish this, we must take several actions:

First, positively, we must: 1.) Engage in a lawful calling unto which we were called, whereby we are to come by these goods in honesty, Gen. 2:15; not displaying a fickleness or inconstancy in that calling, 1 Cor. 7:20; that by our own sweat and not that of others we

pursue our callings with care, Gen. 3:19. 2.) Exercise a diligence in that calling, wherein is to be found a lawful prosperity, Prov. 10:4; the purpose of which is to provide for both ourselves and others, Eph. 4:28. 3.) Exercise a frugality which is careful for these goods, John 6:12; without which these goods are simply dispersed abroad, Prov. 21:20.

Second, negatively, we must: 1.) Avoid all unnecessary lawsuits, 1 Cor. 6:1-9; it is best to seek peace quickly and privately lest we find ourselves overcome by a process above our power, Matt. 5:25, 26. 2.) Avoid entering into suretyship and like engagements, wherein we become pledge and liable for another in a matter of this world's goods, Prov. 6:1-6; 11:15.

Our goal with respect to these things is to keep a due medium between lavishness and niggardly pinching, Prov. 30:7-9.

Question 5—*What is the great responsibility held forth in this command?*

Answer—This commandment calls us to exercise a responsibility that extends to an endeavoring by all lawful and just means to procure, preserve and further the wealth and estate of others as well as ourselves, by: 1.) Relieving him in his poverty, that he might live apart from pressing poverty, Lev. 25:35. 2.) Exercising a care for his property, though prejudiced by his own or another's improvidence, Deut. 22:1-4. 3.) Demonstrating a concern even for the goods of thine enemy, for enmity provides no reason to defraud, Ex. 23:4, 5. 4.) Redeeming the property of others, when able, to provide them with future comfort in life, Gen. 47:14, 20. 5.) Exercising a care for the goods of others even to your own prejudice, Phil. 2:4. 6.) Displaying a near and careful regard for others from that principle of charity which is foundational to the entire second table of the law, Matt. 22:39.