

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 # 142 & 75.

(Larger Catechism)

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,¹ are, theft,² robbery,³ man-stealing,⁴ and receiving any thing that is stolen;⁵ fraudulent dealing,⁶ false weights and measures,⁷ removing landmarks,⁸ injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man,⁹ or in matters of trust;¹⁰ oppression,¹¹ extortion,¹² usury,¹³ bribery,¹⁴ vexatious law-suits,¹⁵ unjust inclosures and depopulations;¹⁶ ingrossing commodities to enhance the price;¹⁷ unlawful callings,¹⁸ and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbour what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves;¹⁹ covetousness,²⁰ inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods;²¹ distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them;²² envying at the prosperity of others;²³ as likewise idleness,²⁴ prodigality, wasteful gaming; and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate,²⁵ and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.²⁶

¹ Jas. 2:15, 16; 1 John 3:17.

² Eph. 4:28.

³ Ps. 62:10.

⁴ 1 Tim. 1:10.

⁵ Prov. 29:24; Ps. 50:18.

⁶ 1 Thess. 4:6.

⁷ Prov. 11:1; 20:10.

⁸ Deut. 19:14; Prov. 23:10.

⁹ Amos 8:5; Ps. 37:21.

¹⁰ Luke 16:10-12.

¹¹ Ezek. 22:29; Lev. 25:17.

¹² Matt. 23:25; Ezek. 22:12.

¹³ Ps. 15:5.

¹⁴ Job 15:34.

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 6:6-8; Prov. 3:29, 30.

¹⁶ Isa. 5:8; Micah 2:2.

¹⁷ Prov. 11:26.

¹⁸ Acts 19:19, 24, 25.

¹⁹ Job 20:19; Jas. 5:4; Prov. 21:6.

²⁰ Luke 12:15.

²¹ 1 Tim. 6:5; Col. 3:2; Prov. 23:5; Ps. 62:10.

²² Matt. 6:25, 31, 34; Eccl. 5:12.

²³ Ps. 73:3; 37:1, 7.

²⁴ 2 Thess. 3:11; Prov. 18:9.

²⁵ Prov. 21:17; 23:20, 21; 28:19.

²⁶ Eccl. 4:8; 6:2; 1 Tim. 5:8.

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #75. *What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

A. The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.²⁷

Question 1—*What are the direct ways wherein we wrong others in their outward estate?*

Answer—As noted in the consideration of the duties required by the eight commandment, we wrong our neighbor in his outward estate whenever we neglect our duties toward others, Jas. 2:15, 16; because any failure to render what is due is an expression of a fundamental lack of charity toward others, 1 John 3:17.

Additionally, we break this command directly when there is a stealing, which is a taking away of the estate of another against his will, resulting in hurt or loss of some sort, which is an assault on his honor, Prov. 30:9. If this is done secretly, without his knowledge, it is called theft, Eph. 4:28. If it is done with any kind of accompanying violence, it is called robbery, Ps. 62:10. There are two sorts of direct stealing:

First, the stealing of persons, called man-stealing, 1 Tim. 1:10. Man-stealing, which lies behind many kinds of slavery, is species of theft which carries a death penalty, Deut. 24:7; this penalty carries whether or not the man-stealer, or kidnapper, has sold the person or retains him, Ex. 21:16. Those participate in this sin, who run away with persons for marriage, whereby their parents are robbed of what is their own, 1 Cor. 7:38; who entice children, or servants, to leave off due service of their masters to their prejudice, Ps. 127:1-3 (*inheritance*, תַּבְּרָכָה, “property”); and who seduce people's children to vicious and lewd practices, Prov. 9:16, 17. All of which are contrary to the golden rule, or justice, Matt. 7:12; and, as God is just, they counsel and commit such robbery to their own hurt, Jer. 25:14.

Second, the stealing of the substance, Matt. 6:19. This is done when: 1.) We steal from the public or commonwealth, thereby wronging nation and magistrate, when, passively, we fail to render due tribute, Rom. 13:6; or, actively, when we purloin what belongs to the public trust, Luke 19:2, 8. 2.) We steal from the church, taking what is devoted for pious uses, whether for maintaining the service of God or the care of the poor, passively, by denying to yield of our substance for this use, Mal. 3:8; or, actively, when we take what others have given and appropriate for our own use, Acts 19:37; John 12:6. This is called sacrilege, Rom. 2:22. 3.) We steal from single persons, whereby they are wronged in their private substance, Lev. 19:11. Whether great or small, the thief displays a willingness to trade his own soul for an ill-gotten consideration in this world, 1 Cor. 6:10.

To these direct acts must be added that of knowingly or willingly receiving stolen goods, which is a kind of consent to the thievery, Ps. 50:18; whereby a man makes himself a partner to the stealing to the detriment of his own soul, Prov. 29:24.

Question 2—*By what other ways do men violate this commandment?*

Answer—This command is violated when we engage in any kind of injustice or cheating in matters of bargains or commerce, 1 Thess. 4:6. Men are guilty of breach of this command when:

First, they engage in any kind of use of false weights and measures, wherein men study one standard by which to buy and another by which to sell, which are both an abomination to the Lord, Prov. 20:10; and contrary to that justice wherein the Lord

²⁷ Prov. 21:17; 23:20, 21; 28:19; Eph. 4:28.

delights, Prov. 11:1. Such are the devices of the wicked and covetous of this present age but unbecoming Christians, Mic. 6:10, 11.

Second, they seek to take advantage of their neighbor's necessity, whether: 1.) In buying or selling, so that all rational recompense is dispensed, Lev. 25:14. 2.) In bargaining by over representing or under representing the true worth of the commodity, Prov. 20:14. 3.) In taking advantage of the ignorance of another in buying or selling, Lev. 6:2. 4.) By adulterating the commodities in bargain, mixing or degrading them, so that the buyer is deceived, Amos 8:6.

Third, they unsettle the nearest commonwealth of neighborhood, and break the common fellowship of society, through the removal of landmarks, Deut. 19:14; Prov. 23:10.

Fourth, they engage in injustice or unfaithfulness: 1.) In contracts between man and man, whether actively, by vitiating of the contracted bargain, Amos 8:5; or, passively, by refusing to pay just debts when we are able, Ps. 37:21. 2.) In matters of trust, when men betray any business committed into their hands by another, Luke 16:10-12.

Fifth, when they engage in oppression, Lev. 25:17; wherein the poor and needy are mostly harmed, Ezek. 22:29. This may take several forms: 1.) Extortion, which is the obtaining of property through the wrongful use of actual or threatened force under color of office and law, Ezek. 22:12; which may extend to ecclesiastical office and law, Matt. 23:25. 2.) Usury, or the charging of unreasonably high rates of interest, Ps. 15:5. 3.) Bribery, which seeks to gain influence by giving of gifts, Job 15:34. 4.) Vexatious lawsuits, whereby men are harassed and kept from enjoying their estates in security, 1 Cor. 6:6-8; since all community relies upon a principle of mutual trust, this is inherently destructive of community, Prov. 3:29, 30.

Question 3—*Wherein is this command violated by our uncharitable disposal of our estates?*

Answer—This commandment is violated when men snatch at advantage by: 1.) Unjust enclosures and depopulations, whereby lands are surrounded and there follows a dispeopling, Isa. 5:8; usually for the interest of one or few, under a pretense of right, Mic. 2:2. 2.) Engrossing of commodities, by hoarding or otherwise acquiring a monopoly, whereby prices of necessary commodities are inflated, Prov. 11:26.

Question 4—*What are the unlawful and unwarrantable ways of getting gain?*

Answer—Unlawful gain is characterized by the Spirit as *filthy lucre*, Tit. 1:11. This is accomplished in several ways: 1.) Through use of unlawful callings, Acts 19:19, 24, 25. 2.) By the unjust or sinful taking, Job 20:19; or, withholding of our neighbor's goods, Jas. 5:4; or, any other deceitful device for obtaining goods, Prov. 21:6.

Question 5—*How do we become guilty of indirect violations of this command?*

Answer—This command is violated indirectly whenever there is: 1.) Covetousness, which undervalues the real purpose of life, Luke 12:15. 2.) An inordinate prizing and setting of the affections on worldly goods, 1 Tim. 6:5; Col. 3:2; which are passing and prone to make one vain, Prov. 23:5; Ps. 62:10. 3.) A trustful and distracting care to acquire, keep and use these goods, Matt. 6:25, 31, 34; which increases with the increase of goods, Eccl. 5:12. 4.) Envy at the prosperity of others, Ps. 73:3; 37:1, 7. 5.) Idleness, which tends to dissipate, 2 Thess. 3:11; Prov. 18:9. 6.) Prodigality, wasteful gaming, or any other way whereby we prejudice our outward estate, Prov. 21:17; 23:20, 21; 28:19. 7.) Not a due use and comfort taken in the estate given by God, Eccl. 4:8; 6:2; 1 Tim. 5:8.