

Subject: God's Moral Law – The Eighth Commandment

Scripture: Exodus 20:1

1. THE COMMAND AGAINST STEALING

Like the other commands, this is not an option or a suggestion. God says, “Don’t steal.” Civil and criminal laws make a distinction between kinds of stealing, but God says all stealing is a sin. Human laws make a distinction between robbery (stealing by force) and burglary (stealing by secret). When a person steals money from a corporation we call it embezzlement. God simply says, “Thou shalt not steal.”

A. Don’t steal another person’s money or property

Stealing is wrong no matter how much a person may steal. A person who steals \$1 is guilty of stealing the same as if he stole \$100 or \$1,000. Stealing is wrong no matter how many times a person steals. Whether a person steals one time or many times, we would still call him a thief.

B. Don’t steal another person

Adultery is a form of stealing. A man or woman is guilty of stealing a person who belongs to someone else. Kidnapping is another form of stealing, and it must have been common in Bible times.

Deuteronomy 24:7 *If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.*

1 Timothy 1:8-10⁸ *But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;*⁹ *Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,*¹⁰ *For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*

I came across this interesting story reported several years ago in the Bristol paper:

“A corpse was taken for a ride in Cleveland, OH, then dumped by thieves who stole the funeral home’s hearse and abandoned it with a note telling police where to find the body. Police found the woman’s body in a bag and on a gurney at the location specified in the note. Computer equipment was also taken from the funeral home during the break-in. The investigation is ongoing and no arrests have been made. The funeral home has issued an apology to the family, stating it was not unusual for the body to have been left in its vehicle which was locked inside the building.” People will steal almost anything.

C. Don’t steal what belongs to God

It is a sin and shame to steal from another person, but even worse to steal what belongs to God.

- Stealing God’s glory

Acts 12:21-23²¹ *And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.*²² *And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a*

god, and not of a man. ²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

- Stealing God's money

Malachi 3:8-9 ⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. ⁹ Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

D. Don't violate the spirit of this commandment

We must not only obey the command, but we must also obey the spirit of the command. Here are some ways to violate the spirit of the eighth command:

- The employee who steals property or time from his employer
- The taxpayer who cheats on his taxes ("Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's...")
- The person who borrows and does not repay or return to the lender
Psalms 37:21 *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again...*
- The businessman who cheats his customers or suppliers. The Bible condemns those who use diverse weights and diverse measures in cheating people. Jesus drove out the moneychangers in the temple and said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13).
- The employer who does not pay his workers. ***Leviticus 19:13*** *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.*
- The student who cheats or takes credit for someone else's work

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF STEALING

There are all kinds of ways people try to justify stealing in one form or another, but there is no way to justify something when God says it is wrong. And stealing has consequences.

On October 19, 1989, a man purchased his dream car, a red Porsche. He drove straight from the car lot to the 3rd game of the World Series at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. During that game a major earthquake shook the city and the game was called off. The man walked back to the parking lot where his new car had been stolen. After several days the car was located. It was buried under the collapsed Nimitz Freeway and the driver was found dead. The thief died in the car he stole.

Here are a few things the Bible says about the consequences of stealing:

A. Stealing defiles a person

Matthew 15:19-20 ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: ²⁰ These are the things which defile a man.

B. Stealing demands a payment

Those who steal must make restitution or repayment of what they have stolen.

Proverbs 6:30-31 ³⁰ *Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;* ³¹ *But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.*

C. Stealing deserves a punishment

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 ⁹ *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,* ¹⁰ *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. But there is good news in the next verse, **1 Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. You can't justify stealing, but God can justify the person who steals.*

3. THE CURE FOR STEALING

The cure is not for a thief to reform his ways and try to do better. God knows the problem lies far deeper than the act or the habit of stealing. The cure must deal with the sinful heart. We like to try half measures and partial remedies, but only God can give us a new heart. As we think about the cure for stealing, consider these examples:

A. Zacchaeus and his salvation

The tax collectors were known for their greed and dishonesty. They were thieves operating under the authority of the Roman government, and the Jews despised them. Luke 19 tells the story of a man named Zacchaeus who was the chief tax collector and he was rich. He climbed a sycamore tree to get a good look at Jesus as He passed through town. The important thing that day wasn't that he saw Jesus, but that Jesus saw him.

Luke 19:5-10 ⁵ *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.* ⁶ *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.* ⁷ *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.* ⁸ *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.* ⁹ *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.* ¹⁰ *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* That last statement means that he was in good standing with God, a spiritual son of Abraham. There were probably several tax collectors in Israel, but we only know of one who was saved.

B. Four thieves and their connection with Christ

As we come to the end of Jesus' earthly life, it is interesting that four thieves are in the spotlight: Barabbas, Judas the traitor, and the two thieves who were crucified beside Jesus.

Barabbas is described as a robber. He is the one that was released when the crowd called for Jesus to be crucified. As far as we know, he never was saved.

Judas the traitor is described in **John 12:3-6** ³ *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.* ⁴ *Then saith one of his disciples,*

Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, ⁵ *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?* ⁶ *This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*
Judas committed suicide and as far as we know, was never saved.

The two thieves died beside Jesus, one on either side. One went out into eternity lost, and the other was saved. It's as if the Lord is painting a picture for us, a picture of sin and salvation. Four men all guilty of stealing, and only one of the four is saved and forgiven. Couldn't all four have been saved? Yes. The Lord would have forgiven all four, but only one repented of his sin and asked Jesus to have mercy on him.

The cure for stealing is simple. Repent or turn from your sin and trust Christ. Then stop stealing and start living the right way.

Ephesians 4:28 *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

The Bible commands believers to stop stealing. If you are guilty and will admit it, there's hope for you. If you refuse to see anything wrong with stealing and won't repent, God offers no hope for you. When a person steals anything from anybody at any time, he breaks God's law. To be forgiven, something else needs to be broken...our heart. Our hearts need to be broken over the things that break God's law and His heart.