

“You Shall Not Steal”
Exodus 20:15

INTRODUCTION

- Summary of the Law: To love God and your neighbor. Mt 22:36-40
-What does it look like to love God and our neighbor?

THE 8TH COMMANDMENT EXPLAINED

1. Definition: ‘steal’ = to unjustly take what does not belong to you

- Heb. *ganab* Lit. to carry away; taking what belongs to another by stealth, without consent
-It forbids any act by which we take what belongs to someone else.

2. The punishment for breaking this commandment was to make restitution.

- Stealing through deception, extortion: pay back the amount stolen plus one-fifth. Lev 6:1-5
- Stealing through robbery: pay back twice the amount stolen. Ex 22:7; Ref. Zacchaeus Luke 19:8
- Zacchaeus offered to pay back 4 X’s what he stole, defrauded (Luke 19)

3. The commandment is all-inclusive.

- I.e. Don’t steal *what?* (no explicit object; not tied to specific condition or circumstances)

THE 8TH COMMANDMENT APPLIED

1. The 8th Commandment demonstrates the Biblical legitimacy of private property.

- A large part of the OT is devoted to laws on private property, land, inheritance, money, and possessions.
- The NT has numerous references to Christians owning private property. Mk 1:29; Lk 8:3; Acts 2:44-45
-Jesus condemned the mis-use—not ownership—of private property. E.g., Parable of Talents Mt 25:14-30

2. The 8th Commandment is broken in numerous ways. Ref. Luke 3:8-18

- We steal through deception—using false weights and measurements. Dt 25:13-15; Amos 8:5
- We steal through extortion—taking advantage of those in need. Neh 5:1-10
- We steal by not paying bills and debts on time. Rom 13:8: *Owe no one anything, except to love each other.*
- We steal by not paying employees fairly or timely. Lev 19:13: *You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.*
- We steal by not paying tithes and offerings to the LORD. Malachi 3:8-11

3. The 8th Commandment exposes the real struggles of our heart. Mk 7:21-23

- Contentment with present circumstances. *I have all that I need.* Phil 4:11-13; Gen 33:11
- Trust for future provisions. *God will provide for me tomorrow. I can trust Him.* Phil 4:19; Gen 22:8
- Trusting God’s provision for others. *Stealing robs what God has provided for someone else.*
- Acknowledging lordship—admitting by my actions that I am not God. Joshua 7:1-26 (Achan’s sin)
- Stealing is a matter of stewardship.
-Eph. 4:28: *He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.*

THE 8TH COMMANDMENT FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

1. The 8th Commandment and the cross.

- OT prophecy foretold of a Messiah who would be numbered among thieves. Isaiah 53:12
- Jesus lived a sinless life only to be betrayed by a thief—Judas. Jn 12:6; Satan entered into him. John 13:27
- Jesus was crucified among thieves. Mk 15:27

2. The 8th Commandment and new life in Christ. [We of all people don’t need to steal!]

- Because of new life in Christ, we have access to unlimited resources. Eph 1:3: *...who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*
- In Jesus Christ, we have an inheritance—heaven. 1 Pet 1:3-4
- In Jesus Christ, we have a pledge (down payment) of our inheritance—the Holy Spirit. Eph 1:13-14
- In Jesus Christ, we have treasure more valuable than all that we own. Mt 13:44

THE WESTMINSTER STANDARDS
The Larger Catechism
Questions 140-142

Q140: *Which is the eighth commandment?*

A140: The eighth commandment is, *You shall not steal.*

Q141: *What are the duties required in the eighth commandment?*

A141: The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose these things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits and suretyship, or other like engagements; 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.

Q142: *What are the sins forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

A142: The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen; fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land marks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust enclosures and depopulations; engrossing commodities to enhance the price; unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness; inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming; and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate, and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction.... But what cannot be destroyed may be dispossessed, and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind....

There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some one object or other, this is unconquerable....

Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have something to lay hold of — and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system....

The only way to dispossess it of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one....”

-Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*

Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality. —A.W. Tozer