

COMMANDMENT NUMBER EIGHT: DO NOT STEAL

Exodus 20:15

Introduction: In the sixth and seventh commandments the sacredness of human life and personality are spoken about. In the eighth commandment the human right of ownership is spoken of. When speaking of a person's possessions, it strikes very close to a person's heart. God points out that things more valuable than property can be stolen. Nine of the commandments deal with what a person is and what he/she does with him/herself - brain, heart, tongue, the will. This eighth commandment is the only one that concerns property. This points out that God is more interested in the spiritual person than in the material. Sadly, we are the opposite for we are more interested in things, possessions, but God's chief concern is our spiritual welfare.

I. THE RIGHT OF OWNERSHIP

1. All things belong to God. All property is vested in Him. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." "All the earth is mine." "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."* In a sense God holds mortgage on everything. The house you live in belongs to Him. The money which you claim as yours belongs to Him, you are just a "trustee." He has entrusted you with these possessions for a short time only. If He chose to do it, God could wipe out everything you own in a second's time.
2. We have title companies which trace the titles of property. However God has never transferred the right of ownership to any government ever. Here we see how gracious and wonderful God is. Though He owns everything, He loves us and lends these things to us for our enjoyment. Yes, God owns everything and we are simply His trustees. A trustee is one who holds and handles property for the benefit of another. The trustees of a college do not own the college, but are to help direct the activities of the college.
3. While all of this is true, people do have a right of ownership under God. The right to own property under God is certainly proved by the Scriptures. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father."* God's greatest men in the Bible owned property: Abraham, David, Solomon. In the beginning of the world God gave Adam the right to have dominion over every living thing. Therefore God says: *"Thou shalt not steal..."*

II. THE RIGHT OF OWNERSHIP VIOLATED

1. One can rob by stealing property. This is the most common type of theft, but it is not the only type. There are three ways to gain property: a gift, by work, by theft. The first two are lawful but the third is unlawful.
 - a. One can rob by direct seizure. A man robs a bank or breaks into your home, or takes your property. - If a thief steals ten dollars, he has really lost more than the one who lost the money. He has lost self respect, is known as a thief and will suffer the penalties that come to a thief. Whether it is a large amount or a tiny amount, it is the same for one is guilty of stealing and is a thief.
 - b. One can steal from others by fraud. Not open robbery but deceit, lying, dishonesty and just plain cheating.
 - c. Another way to violate this commandment is by gambling. God's principle is that we obtain what we need by working for it. Many people want something for nothing and in a way a thief and a gambler have much in common for they pride themselves on out smarting someone else.
 - d. A common but very vile form of stealing is failing to pay one's debts. History tells of a revival in a certain country where thousands of people were saved. One of the local merchants remarked that there was nothing to revivals. However after the revival was over many of this man's customers began to come and pay their overdue bills. He was moved and said that there had to be something to that revival that

would cause people to come in and pay their bills.

2. Then there is the theft of a person. There are hundreds of cases of kidnapping every year in this country. This is perhaps the worst kind of stealing.
3. There is the theft of purity. How vile a person is who steals the innocence of the pure and ruins their entire life.
4. There is the theft of peace and happiness. This is where robbery happens through neglect. Neglect of our children, wife or husband, and the Lord. Men and women steal the affection and eventually the love of a married person bringing hurt to all that family and eventually separation and perhaps divorce.
- Employers steal from their employees by not paying a fair wage and employees steal from their employers by not giving a fair day's work for what they are paid.
5. There is the theft of reputation. Gossip is the main cause for one's reputation to be ruined and the person who started the gossip and all those who took part in such gossip are guilty of theft.
6. There is theft of character. Look at our world today. What are our children watching on t.v. What games are they playing? What kind of example are the adults setting for their children? What kind of character do our children have today? What happened to it? It has been stolen.
7. There is the theft of faith. Anyone who says or does anything to cause one to not every have faith in God or to cause them to lose their faith in God is a thief. Parents need to take a good look at what they are doing to their children's faith. So does our government.
8. There is the theft from the needy. Jesus went about doing good and it was always to and for the needy. If God blesses, then that blessed person is expected by God to help those who are in need. To not do so is to be a thief.
9. There is theft from God. The prophet Malachi asked the question: ***"Will a man rob God?"*** The answer was: ***"Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings..."*** It is indeed a terrible thing to steal from God. ***"The love of money is the root of evil..."*** The greatest evil about about money is connected with stealing from God. People are quick to condemn a person for not paying his/her debts. God has a right to condemn you if you are taking part of His money. Remember the husband and wife that stole from God? Ananias and Sapphira stole from God and then lied about it. They paid with their lives. Just a word about those who are true "tithers" to God, they always seem to have enough left to pay their debts.

CONCLUSION:

1. The remedy for stealing is the same remedy that applies to all sin - come to Jesus, confess that sin in sincerity and He will forgive, cleanse, restore and give you power to overcome that sin of stealing.
2. Who can say that they have never lied? Who can say that they have never stolen? ***"All have sinned..."***