

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 43 (HCLD 42)¹

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 3.

Question: Which is the eighth commandment and what duties does it require?

Answer: The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.[1]² The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man;[1] rendering to everyone 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 lawsuits [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]³

It would seem that this is straight forward and with an understanding of where the extensions of the Westminster Divines come from, and that they are not additions but explanations of the fullness of the commandment we need little comment on this commandment.

However, since the modern propensity is to shorten and rationalize away the duties implied in the commandment, we shall make mention of these and why they are needed. There was a time when even among the non-believers a man's word was his bond and the statement that truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts was a duty of the moral law was not needed. The case today would perhaps most often be one of outrage when this was pointed out to a man. Why? Like of spiritual discernment and the guilty one always screams the loudest as if it would wash away his guilt. Perhaps we see this violated most in the work place, not in legal contracts for goods or services, but in the employer/employee relationship. The employee in violation of the fifth commandment has no respect for his employer and little tolerance of him except to receive his wages. He misuses, takes unlawfully from material things

¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 42

Q110: What does God forbid in the eighth Commandment?

A110: God forbids not only such theft [1] and robbery [2] as are punished by the government, but God views as theft also all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we seek to get our neighbor's goods, whether by force or by deceit,[3] such as unjust weights,[4] lengths, measures,[5] goods, coins, usury,[6] or by any means forbidden of God; also all covetousness [7] and the misuse and waste of His gifts.[8]

1. I Cor. 6:10 2. I Cor. 5:10 3. Luke 3:14; I Thess. 4:6 4. Prov. 11:1; 16:11 5. Ezek. 45:9-10; Deut. 25:13-15 6. Psa. 15:5; Luke 6:35 7. I Cor. 6:10 8. Prov. 5:10; I Tim. 6:10; John 6:12

Q111: But what does God require of you in this Commandment?

A111: That I further my neighbor's good where I can and may, deal with him as I would have others deal with me,[1] and labor faithfully, so that I may be able to help the poor in their need.[2]

1. Matt. 7:12 2. Eph. 4:28; Phil. 2:4; Gen. 3:19; I Tim. 6:6-7

² 1. Exod. 20:15

³ 1. Psa. 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; I John 3:17; Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:10 5. I Tim. 6:6-9; Gal. 6:14 6. I Tim. 5:8 7. Prov. 27:23-27; Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; I Tim. 6:17-18; Isa. 38:1; Matt. 11:8 8. I Cor. 7:20; Gen. 2:15, 3:19 9. Eph. 4:28; Prov. 10:4 10. John 6:12; Prov. 21:20 11. I Cor. 6:1-9 12. Prov. 6:1-6; 11:15 13. Lev. 25:35; Deut. 22:1-4; Exod. 23:4-5; Gen. 47:14, 20; Phil. 2:4, Matt. 22:39

(Usually small as if there is a value set in the command do not steal) and even more often he steals time the employer has paid for. Then when the employer in violation of the fifth commandment regarding duties of the superior mentions slackness or other misdeed the employee rises up in self-righteous indignation against the employer. Like wise in violation of the fifth commandment we see employer have little or no respect for the employee beyond a day's work, for what often is not a day's wages. In efforts to line their own pockets we see all sorts of forced dealings that result in older employees laid aside one way or another that a newer recruit commanding less wages may fill the vacancy. Vacancy, which the employer has perhaps even told the other no longer, exists. There is no loyalty left in the work place. Both employee and employer are violating two commandments, and wondering why they are not blessed as an individual, or business. The Bible says we should make no oaths, but when we do we are held accountable to the last penny. To which the one in violation will most often say there is no written contract. Quite true but the relationships between superior and inferior do exist, and an oral contract which may or may not stand up in a civil court do remain valid before God, and the violation of such brings God's displeasure without further argument nor mere human rationalization.

If all of the paper clips, pens, and various other objects removed from places of business or the workplace in what amounts to theft were returned we would find ourselves with many in the office supply business out of work. The average business that requires the use of a pen by the customer will go through a case of pens at least weekly and often more often. If all the quarters for coffee in offices that pay by the honor system were suddenly to appear many companies would find themselves in another tax bracket. Sadly the missed payment for the coffee, or the sticky pen is chargeable to the account of someone who says they are Christian.

Is this petty and not worth commenting on? I think differently and we all actually know better, we just look at the small value and disregard the sin. That sin may be holding back your blessings from God, God will not bless where unrepented sin exists. Holiness demands we claim and confess our sins. There is no place for hunting for circumstances that bring justification apart from confession to God and restitution to the one from whom we have taken anything illegally.

Then there is the attitude we may have toward worldly goods that would steal from God by the misuse of the money we are given stewardship over. Not only money but how we care for and use all material things, and a special care concerning our attitudes toward material things lest they come between us and God or cause us to sin in being miserly with God's gifts to us, or misusing the same gift. Not to mention the robbery of God in failure to pay a proper tithe.

Consider the duty concerning lawsuits in the USA today. We are in deep trouble in this nation because of the use of the courts so easily, most often to get what we have no proper right to.

Then we must remember the other side of the coin so to speak and understand that in the command not to steal we find the command to preserve, both the property, time and other valuables of the other, but also self. Now perhaps we might begin to understand it is important for us to know the difference between want and need. I used to smile a lot at my daughters prefacing every request for a purchase in the store with dad I need this, or dad I want this. Most often in more words and an emphasis being placed on whether it was a need or want. I do not remember teaching this lesson, but it sure got stuck in the front of her mind along the way. However the joy was short lived, as the comment became a question of dad can we afford this? Which soon was modified to this is a need, but it can wait if you don't have the money now. The lessons along the way have all been in connection with the thoughts around this commandment. Quantity versus quality in deciding value both for what we sell to another that we don't defraud another as well as consideration of the same when making a purchase that we are not defrauded and found guilty of not giving proper care to what God has provided.

It is the use of God's Word in such casual everyday things that brings us into organic union with Christ, where the being in Christ and Christ in us becomes a tangible thing to us. This will result in a deeper spiritual awareness of the presence of God in all things and add a real personal element to our worship of God. Here in my opinion lies the real worship desired of God, not in some sanctuary where we do the proper thing at the proper time by the proper person. God is honored when His full word becomes an automatic part of our life where we are constantly weighing every word and action by His commandments, until the time they become automatic. It will then transfer itself to the formal worship

times, and suddenly that pulpit which has been so dry and useless in your life becomes a wellspring of life. You are fed where before was only group action for you.

So it is not only in the physical sense that learning and understanding the finite application of the moral law lies, but ultimately it affects your complete life in Christ and worship becomes the thing of the moment rather than formally come Sunday. It is my prayer you understand this, for it is the heart of the journey I have taken through this portion of the Westminster Standard. It seems every day I walk closer to God and find myself seeing the wonderful attention to detail He has so gracefully given us in His law. Formal prayer times have increased, but of far more value are the constant word prayers that punctuate every moment as I see God's hand in all things I say and do, and in the actions of others around me. Now for the utterance of one word by another I find I can ask God for forgiveness for them or thank God for being with them. It is not a tangible thing others might notice, but you will note the difference from living within the Living Word of God.

I think there is great value in using just this section concerning the moral law and its attendant proof texts for daily devotions until the whole has been burned into your heart and mind. Here we find what true holiness for those created in the image of God is. All of God's law-word then becomes a thing of grace bestowed and never a burden to be borne. The heathens rage, believers find all is of grace.

Suggested Sermon Outline

Whose Hand? Whose Pocket?

What does God forbid In the eighth commandment?

He forbids not only the theft and robbery which civil authorities punish but God also labels as theft a// wicked tricks and schemes by which we seek to get for ourselves our neighbor's goods, whether by force or under the pretext of right, such as false weights and measures, deceptive advertising or merchandising counterfeit money, exorbitant interest, or any other means forbidden by God. He also forbids all greed and misuse and waste of His gifts.

But what does God require of you In this commandment?

That I work for the good of my neighbor wherever I can and may, deal with him as I would have others deal with me, and do my work well so that I may be able to help the poor in their need.

I. God Prohibits Theft

A. Thieves do not go to heaven. *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.* (1 Corinthians 6:10)

B. The church cannot excuse theft - in its multitudinous forms - or accept bribes to be silent about it. *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.* (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

II. God's Definition of Theft Is Broad

A. Being free to claim a supposed right does not actually make something right. *And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.* (Luke 3:14)

Society provides legal contexts for practices which are actually no better than theft. Human civil law cannot invalidate heaven's moral law. How does this stand with God is a more important question than can I do it Legally?

B. God demands full and genuine measure. *A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.* (Proverbs 11: 1)

C. Sharp business practices incite God's wrath. *Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.* (Proverbs 12:22)

We do not worship the God of fine print.

D. Those who serve the God of grace have no business getting even with others. *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.* (Luke 6:35)

God is a participant in every transaction.

E. Sharp and deceptive business practices which take advantage of one of the contracting parties put both parties at a disadvantage over time. *He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.* (Psalm 15:5)

F. Any commercial practice rooted in covetousness is wrong. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* (Luke 12:15)

The 10th commandment overlaps this territory - Godly contentment.

III. Prevent Conditions for Theft

A. Practice the Golden Rule. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 7:12)

B. When you identify your problem, take the information as Providential direction toward a new life. *Let him that stole steal no more. but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, THAT HE MAY HAVE TO GIVE TO HIM THAT NEEDETH.* (Ephesians 4:28)

C. Believers do not function as individual units apart from the covenant community. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* (Philippians 2:4)

D. Remember the Westminster perspective. *What is required in the eighth commandment? The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.* (Westminster Shorter Catechism 74)

1. The patriarch made those around him prosperous through his industry. *For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?* (Genesis 30:30)

2. Notice how Paul extends the term "his own" beyond the nuclear family and makes provision for this larger community a test of doctrinal faithfulness. *But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* (1 Timothy 5:8)

3. The condition of our neighbors inherently affects our condition. *And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.* (Leviticus 25:35)

Questions 110 - 111
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