

The Ten Commandments

The Eighth Commandment

“Thou shalt not steal.”
Exodus 20:15

The Foundation

- All this exists belongs to God by right of creatorship – Exodus 9:29, Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 24:1
- While God ultimately owns all things, He was ceded to mankind a right of ownership over parts of His creation – Genesis 1:28-30
 - Boardman: “And this commission to subdue the earth—that is, to subsidize nature—is the moral basis of property. A man has the right to own what he wins, provided he wins it under the authority and according to the terms of the divine charter. Not that he absolutely owns what he wins; for he is not the creator of the earth—he is only an administrator of it; not the owner—he is only a tenant; not the lord paramount—he is only a feudatory. In other words, man holds the estate of earth in trust, his only right here being the right of usufruct.”
- Thus, the right to own personal property is God-given and fundamental to human civilization.

The Commandment

- The Hebrew word *ganab* (Strong’s H1589) means either “to steal” or “to go by stealth” (Genesis 31:20, II Samuel 19:3).
- There is little to add. The language is concise and clear: we are to respect the personal property rights of others.

Historical Application for Israel

- Various rabbis have seen the primary concern of this command as:
 - Men-stealing (to enslave) – Exodus 21:16, Deuteronomy 24:7
 - Mistreating the Poor – Deuteronomy 15:8, Job 20:19-22, Amos 8:4-6
- Other examples of theft:
 - Withholding what is due – Leviticus 19:3, Proverbs 3:28
 - Dishonest business practices – Leviticus 19:35-37, Deuteronomy 25:13-16, Proverbs 11:1, Micah 6:10-11
 - Moving landmarks – Deuteronomy 19:14, 27:17; Proverbs 22:28, 23:10
- Thieves were to make restitution for what they stole – Exodus 22:1-15
- It is possible to steal from God – Malachi 3:8-11

Practical Application for Today

- The New Testament continues to condemn stealing – Matthew 19:18, I Corinthians 6:10, I Thessalonians 4:6
- Christ teaches us that the source of theft is the depraved human heart. – Matthew 15:19
- Ephesians 4:28 is key to understanding New Testament principles on theft.
 - A Christian should put away stealing with other sinful actions.
 - The opposite means of gain are theft and labor.
 - Labor is infinitely greater and is blessed of God.
 - Our needs are met through our labor and God's supply.
- In essence, theft is distrust in God's care.
 - The thief pridefully claims right to something they have no right to.
 - The thief greedily claims right to something God has not given.
 - The thief lazily takes that which he did not earn in honest labor.
 - The thief uncaringly defrauds their victim of their possession.