

END-TIMES ISSUES



#124 Commandment #8 – Introduction.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I


1

Do you ever get *tired* of trying to do things God's way?

Don't you wish you could just *relax* and do things the *easy* way?

The PROBLEM is ...

- **The *easy* way tends to be the *sinful* way.**
 - ✓ We were born with a sin nature; and for much of our lives, we developed *habits* that complied with that sin nature.
 - ✓ Even if we have begun to follow Jesus, the impulses of the flesh – habits – still hound us.
- **In this present life, doing what is right takes effort.**
 - ✓ It gets easier, as we develop *new* habits to replace the old ones. But old habits don't always die off. We won't be *fully* delivered from them, until we are with Jesus. So, when we let down our guard, the devil tries to use them to once again ensnare us.



2

- This is one of the reasons we need to *encourage* each other.

Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but **let us encourage one another**, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Heb 10:25 (BSB)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV); see also v. 10.
- **Right now, God's people may groan; but it's for a different reason.**
 - ✓ BEFORE SALVATION: "You mean I *have* to obey these rules?"
 - ✓ NOW: "I *want* to obey Jesus... yet my flesh keeps fighting me!"
- **The day is coming when, in Jesus' presence, we will have complete rest from our struggles.**
 - ✓ (We looked at this issue, when we studied the Fourth Commandment.)

3

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS:
SUMMARIZING THE DUTY THAT ALL PEOPLE HAVE!

Fear God and keep his commandments,
for **this is the duty of all mankind.**

For **God will bring every deed into judgment**,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:13b-14 (NIV)

- **Some observations about the Ten Commandments:**
 - ✓ These commandments function as a *unified whole*. They are not arbitrary, but interrelated. Breaking *one* of them will amount to breaking *many* (sometimes *all*) of them, in one way or another.
 - ✓ They define the *nature* of righteousness and sin.
 - ✓ The "do not" commands *also* imply what we are to "do"; and the "do" commands *also* imply what we are to "do not."

4

The Commandments can be grouped into 4 categories:

- **Commandments #1, #2, #3 – God's exclusive, sovereign claim on us;** our obligation to our Creator: complete loyalty in thought, word and deed.
- **Commandments #4, #5 – God's established foundational structures** that enable a proper relating of people to God and to the rest of society (beginning with one's parents). Our attitude toward God flows through these two commandments, on to the rest of them.
- **Commandments #6,#7 – Basic human obligations;** this involves issues pertaining to the very nature of humans, as God's image-bearers. (This is also the basis for human dignity.)
- **Commandments #8, #9, #10 – Basic social obligations,** necessary for the proper functioning of a society; related to actions, words and thoughts.
- Note that each of these categories is interrelated. Loyalty to God (#1–#3) enables the proper use of the foundational institutions (#4–#5), which protects human dignity (#6–#7), which sustains social order (#8–#10).

5

Regarding this fourth category: Commandments #8, #9, #10.

(These are our basic *social* obligations.)

- A society cannot function properly without these. They show us what life in a community should be like.
- Families need to be assured that they can maintain their place and their rights within the community.
- How? By...
 - ✓ Being able to maintain ownership of their goods. (Commandment #8)
 - ✓ Having others bear truthful testimony about them. (Commandment #9)
 - ✓ Being free from the unrestrained covetous desires of others. (Commandment #10)

GOD HAS PLACED ME IN THIS COMMUNITY, AND GIVEN ME VARIOUS GIFTS AND ABILITIES.

I NEED TO BE ABLE TO USE THOSE GIFTS AND ABILITIES IN A WAY THAT HONORS GOD – WHICH WOULD BE FOR MY OWN WELL-BEING AND FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY!

6

Today, we introduce the **Eighth Commandment**:

You shall not steal.

Exodus 20:15 (BSB);
also in Deuteronomy 5:19

LIKE ALL THE COMMANDMENTS:

- We can trace its origin back to the Creation account in Genesis. It is not in the "do not" form that we are familiar with, because:
 - ✓ **Concepts are just being introduced** (sometimes implied, rather than being directly stated).
 - ↳ In Genesis, the focus is on the "positive" obligation to be faithful stewards of what God has given us.
 - ✓ **Sin had not yet entered the world.** Sin would influence *how* the commandments needed to be expressed.
 - ↳ Sin resulted in scarcity. This makes matters more complicated, and creates the need for the "do not" aspect of the command.
 - ↳ This scarcity will end only when Jesus returns.

7

LIKE ALL THE COMMANDMENTS: (continued)

- **This command was later expressed in the Ten Commandments.**
 - ✓ In this list of ten commandments, we find it in the "negative" form. Yet the "positive" obligations are also implied.
- **It is found in Jesus' teachings** in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.
 - ✓ Jesus often emphasizes the "positive" side of the "do not" commands.
 - ✓ He also focused on the root cause issues – the internal attitudes that influence the way we respond to situations.
- **It is mentioned in the writings of the apostles.**

★ IN THE FUTURE ★

These commandments will be the *standard* by which we are judged.

8

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT in Genesis 1:

You shall not steal.

Exodus 20:15 (BSB);
also in Deuteronomy 5:19

- This familiar "do not" form of the commandment is *not* found in the Genesis account. Since sin had not entered the world, God only had to tell Adam what he needed to "do," in order for him to fulfil this obligation.
- The "positive" form of this commandment involved humans ruling over the earth. They would work with creation ("rule over it and subdue it"). The result would be that creation would provide for them whatever they needed. Since sin had not entered the world:
 - ✓ The concepts of "ruling" and "subduing" did not have the negative consequences that they often have today.
 - ✓ The concept of "work" – *still* a moral obligation for humans – did not have the negative connotations that it often has today.

9

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV)

- ✓ **This command to rule over creation did not mean** "trash and destroy it." Rather, they were to take care of it and use it for God's glory. The first example of this being done was in chapter 2, where Adam learned the significance of various animals, and named them accordingly.
- ✓ **Ultimately, this obligation would be the basis for** just about every aspect of human endeavor – science and technology, culture and society, art and aesthetics, and more. We are to use (and improve) creation for the good of humanity and the glory of God.

10

- **SIN introduced "scarcity."** Adam's sin destroyed *his* ability to work properly with creation, as well as *creation's* ability to reward one's efforts the way it originally did. (See Genesis 3:17-19.)
 - ✓ **Work becomes difficult**, and the rewards for work will be less.
 - ✓ **There will be scarcity.** Some people will "have" and others will "have not," for a variety of reasons – different circumstances and/or abilities, sinful conduct (by *both* "haves" and "have nots"), the inability of creation to produce the way it once did, etc.
 - ✓ **Things will continue this way until Jesus returns** and restores creation – freeing it from its current "bondage to decay." (Until then, we need the "do not" form of the commandment.)

The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but because of the One who subjected it, in hope that **the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay** and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:19-21 (BSB)

11

The Eighth Commandment – the basic concept:

- **This commandment opposes theft.** This type of activity is *contrary* to life within the community.
 - ✓ **A typical punishment would be the return** (or replacement) of the stolen item, *plus compensation* for expenses that would have been incurred by the owner, because of the loss.
 - ✓ **This is in contrast to the Sixth and Seventh Commandments.**
 - » The commandments about *murder* and *adultery* often required the punishment of death, because those sins are a direct attack on human beings, *who are made in God's image*. Because of this, they are also indirectly an attack on *God*.
- **Our tendency is to interpret this commandment in a very limited way:** "What's mine is mine... and you can't have it."
 - ✓ **We tend to cling to what we have**, and we use this commandment to justify doing so.
 - ✓ **We tend to forget (or ignore) – the "plus" side of the command – our obligation** to also promote the good of the *community*.

12

- The concept of "**stewardship**" is part of this commandment.
 - ✓ People often interpret this word very narrowly: such as in reference to giving money to the church.
 - ✓ This word (as used in this context) actually refers to: what you do with *everything* you have and *everything* you are... *all the time*.
- This commandment also applies to our interaction with God.
 - ✓ Do we squander what God has given us?
 - ✓ Do we take for ourselves things that belong to God?
 - » Achan, in the Old Testament, stole something that belonged to God... and paid for it with his life. (See Joshua 7.) His fate is a "picture" of what we deserve, when we steal from God.

WHAT ARE YOU CLINGING TO?

Consider this: Our possessions are not *ours*, but *God's!* We will be judged for how we use them, and what we do with them.

13

A range of applications.

- When we originally introduced the Ten Commandments, we used this Eighth Commandment to illustrate the nature of the commandments.
 - ✓ Each "do not" command also implies "do" obligations.
 - ✓ Each commandment represents a *category* of obligations and prohibitions.
- We saw that this commandment PROHIBITS:
 - ✓ Obvious theft. ✓ Less-visible forms of theft.
 - ✓ Greed. ✓ Misuse of one's gifts and abilities.
- We saw that this commandment REQUIRES:
 - ✓ Doing all that we can for the *good* of our neighbor.
 - ✓ Treating others the same way we want treated.
 - ✓ Working, with the goal of being able to share with others.

WE WILL
LOOK MORE
AT THESE
ANOTHER
TIME.

Every application of this command is to be an expression of *love* – to both God and neighbor.

14

"Do not steal."

In what "direction" does this commandment apply?

- Our tendency is to view the commandment *this way*:

I HAVE IT... YOU CAN'T HAVE IT.

- ✓ We tend to view it as the "haves" protecting themselves from the "have nots."
- ✓ But in the Old Testament, the *greater* problem was often the *opposite*: The "have nots" needed protected from the "haves."
- ✓ It works both ways. *Neither* has a right to steal from the other.
- God does not show favoritism in *either* direction.
 - ✓ Nobody has a "right" to violate this commandment – whether rich or poor, wise or foolish, wasteful or thrifty, greedy, lazy, skilled, misfortunate, blessed, or any other category we may be in.
 - ✓ Everybody has an obligation to obey this commandment.

15

OUR MISSION:

THIS IS JUST AN *INTRODUCTION* TO THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO *THINK* ABOUT IT...
TO *CONSIDER* ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR LIVES.

How do these observations compare to your *original* understanding of this commandment?

- What are some of the ways the rich steal from the poor? Ways the poor steal from the rich? (Include ways that don't involve money or possessions.)
- What are some ways a person can obey the "plus" side of this commandment? (Not just ways that involve money, but also in ways that don't.)

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Credits

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