

The Eighth Command: Its Meaning

When we come to the Eighth Commandment we meet a point that seems less severe than the 6th and 7th words. Stealing seems mild as compared with killing or adultery. Yet it is a giant cause of grief as men clutch their own possessions greedily and reach out at times to take what properly belongs to others. That, of course, is what constitutes stealing...it is the taking of what belongs to another for yourself. The nature of the article or the intent of the "taker" has little to do with the matter. When one takes what belongs to another for himself, that is stealing. It is a violation of the law and the offender is a thief.

Any form of stealing produces frustration and resentment. When the identity of a thief is known, both that party and those close are marked with an unhealthy reputation. In some societies thievery has been such a feared thing that the hands of thieves have been cut off and put in public display. But when the thieves are not known, the frustration of the matter is increased and the victims may take vengeance on an innocent party! While stealing may not be as immediately severe as murder, its effects in aggravation are far-reaching and its ultimate results may be expressed violently.

The Eighth Command: Its implications

The positive side of the command offers a number of interesting implications. As we have mentioned, the commands of God all carry positive overtones that are perhaps more important than the physical prohibitions. This one is no exception. What are the positive implications?

First of all the law teaches us to recognize the sovereignty of God as He is the giver of life and ability, things and possessions. When I steal from another I am defying God in that God has allowed him to possess