

# “The Eighth Commandment”

## (Part 4)

### Exodus 20:15

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019 – Glenvista Baptist Church

34<sup>th</sup> Message in The Ten Commandments

**Exodus 20:15 (ESV)** “<sup>15</sup> You shall not steal.”

#### Introduction.

- a) We saw last Lord's Day that two markers on the road pertaining the spiritual health of the nation of Israel revolved around the Fourth Commandment and the Eighth Commandment. The way God's people honored the Fourth Commandment in their keeping or neglect of the Sabbath was always a good indication of where they were in their walk with God. And the way God's people gave to God in terms of not violating the principles of the Eighth Commandment was also a barometer of their spiritual condition. If that be true of both these commandments then it would be equally true that stealing from God not only includes robbing Him in tithes and offerings, but also robbing Him by stealing from Him in the sense of using the Lord's Day for other purposes. When believers therefore do not honor the Lord's Day, but use the Lord's Day for self-centered endeavors, and if God's people are not faithfully worshipping together morning and evening on the Lord's Day, they are stealing from God by using His day for purposes He has not prescribed.
- b) I think that is a helpful reminder of how deep and wide the implications are of the prohibitions contained in the Eighth Commandment. As we come today for the fourth time to the Eighth Commandment, we continue looking at the matter of **Stealing from God**, a matter on which the Word of God speaks forthrightly and clear. My task therefore is to define what stealing from God is and in which ways it would be possible for God's people to steal from Him. What constitutes stealing from God? What does it look like? And what measures has God put in place to safeguard us from violating the Eighth Commandment by means of robbing Him? We have thus far in this regard considered the Old Testament teaching pertaining tithing and there remains the need this morning to consider what the New Testament teaches about giving to God.
- c) The New Testament emphasis on giving uses words that are very descriptive about the way in which God requires His people to give to Him. The New Testament of course interprets the law for us, and as one reads passages in the New Testament that speak to giving, one gets a wonderful sense of what the Lord intends for His people to do. Passages like **2 Corinthians 8**, **2 Corinthians 9**, **1 Corinthians 16**, and **Mark 6**, presents a list of magnificent words that describe Christian giving, words such as: *sacrificially, joyfully, willingly, spontaneously, proportionately, abundantly, secretly, humbly, regularly, trustfully* and all of these words with the emphasis that none of these can be exercised if not bathed in **grace**. Let us therefore take an in-depth look at this teaching.

## Point 1 – “The New Testament Perspective” (v15)

**Exodus 20:15 (ESV)** “<sup>15</sup> You shall not steal.”

- a) I want to start our study in the New Testament this morning by first looking at a passage in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 “<sup>1</sup>We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- <sup>5</sup>and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. <sup>6</sup>Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. <sup>7</sup>But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also. <sup>8</sup>I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. <sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” I want to highlight a number of key areas from this passage for our consideration:

### a) “They gave themselves firstly to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5)

**2 Corinthians 8:5** “...and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

- a) V1 We have before us the example of the Macedonian churches; particularly how these Macedonian believers have operated in a certain way as to Christian giving and Paul here holds them up as an example.
- b) V5 Now we will not begin with **verse 1** but we will firstly focus our attention on what is said in **verse 5**, because this is a foundational element even though the Apostle Paul does not mention it until the fifth verse. We see here that they gave themselves first to the Lord. In other words their money was simply an expression, one expression, of their devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since they had, if you would like, put themselves in the offering plate, then the money followed naturally.
- c) You see, when a person understands that becoming a Christian is the giving of themselves to the Lord, then all of the other stuff follows in line; but until that is understood, until point 1 is in place in that they gave themselves firstly to the Lord, then all the other stuff will simply just not fall into its proper order.
- d) William Booth was asked at one occasion to account for the peculiar usefulness that God had made of him in the founding and the framing of the Salvation Army and he replied without any pride: “**Jesus Christ has all of me.**” None of us can get beyond the starting block in this issue until this matter has been resolved: they gave themselves firstly to the Lord.

### b) “They gave in response to the Grace of God” (2 Cor 8:1 and vs. 6-9)

**2 Corinthians 8:1** “We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia”

**2 Corinthians 8:6-9** “Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”

- a) **V1** We will now go back in the text up to **verse 1** and we will see here that they gave in response to the grace of God. That is why the apostle Paul is able to say: “**We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia**”. Now this should be no surprise to us, because any consideration of giving inevitably begins with the fact of God's giving. That God is the giver of every good and perfect gift as James says in **James 1:17**. That He gives to us one blessing after another in the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the most famous verse probably in the New Testament we have in **John 3:16** the giving of God is the Person of His Only Son. And here in the very passage we are studying this morning Paul writes: “**For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.**”
- b) **V2** Notice then in **verse 2** that their generosity was preconditioned by the two things Paul mentions here: that of being <sup>1</sup>severe trial and <sup>2</sup>extreme poverty. See then here how Paul uses as an example to the Corinthian believers. He tells them about the Macedonian Churches who were helping the struggling believers in Jerusalem at a time in which the Macedonians were experiencing extreme poverty. You see Paul was not using here the example of a group of churches that had plenty; he is not here speaking of believers who had so much cash that they did not know what to do with it. No dear friends look carefully at the text. He is speaking here of believers who did not even have enough for themselves. Yet because they had given themselves completely and firstly to God; giving to others who were in great need whilst they themselves were in need, simply came naturally to these Macedonians. So listen to the text here: “**for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.**” It was **IN** the midst of their trial and poverty that they gave abundantly to the needs of other believers. Yet their extreme poverty welled up in an abundance of generosity.

### **c) “They gave even beyond their ability” (2 Corinthians 8:3)**

**2 Corinthians 8:3** “...For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord.”

- a) **V3** Here in **verse 3** Paul makes it clear that the Macedonians gave even beyond the means of their own ability. This literally means they gave till it hurt and they did not give from an abundance. You see my dear friends; anyone can freely give from an abundance. But it takes special grace and commitment towards God, for us to give when we have little for ourselves.
- b) The best means in which we can understand the fact that they gave “**beyond their means**” was that **they were willing to let go of a legitimate want in order that they might be able to supply a legitimate need.** They were in other words prepared to squeeze themselves so that others might not feel the pinch.

- c) **Dear friends, if you and I are simply giving to the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the realm of our comfort zone, then we have not even begun to understand true proper biblical giving that brings glory to God.** These Macedonian believers knew what it meant to give from a generous heart and what it means to give freely and with great joy.

## **Point 2 – “The Instruction to Give Cheerfully and Regularly” (v15)**

**Exodus 20:15 (ESV)** “<sup>15</sup> You shall not steal.”

- a) Whenever we consider any form of our service in the Kingdom of God, we always need to be aware of the motive from which we serve. If we serve from the wrong motive, we would for instance want recognition for such service, or we would want public praise and accolades bestowed upon us by men. The same of course would be true for us in our giving unto God. Our giving always ought to be in secret, so that God only knows, then, if our motive is purely obedience to God and love for God, we would not want accolades and we would not need the praises of men.
- b) Today sadly there is much false teaching that forces people to give on the premises that God would make you healthy, happy, and wealthy when you give to Him, and the more you give the more God will give to you. This teaching degrades God to nothing more than the Genie in the Bottle that dances to man's tune. This is not our God and this teaching is not in His Word. It is though true that the New Testament teaches that as we give to God, He indeed in turn will multiply unto us that we have more than enough for ourselves and that we can in turn give unto others as well. That is no doubt true. But it's never a manipulative game in which our giving is the driving force that dictates to God how He must in turn respond to us.
- c) In **2 Corinthians 9:11** we read that God is not concerned for our wealth but rather for our ability to continue being generous to others who have need - “<sup>11</sup> **You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.**” This type of giving can only happen when a believer gives cheerfully unto God, when we from inward and overflowing delight give to God as much as we can, without restraint and without grumbling. **I pointed out last Lord's Day that we read in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that “God loves a cheerful giver”.** Friends, this means God finds great delight in one who gives sacrificially, consistently, and lovingly in obedience unto Him as a matter of worship. Not only does God delight in this but **verse 11** points out that it produces thanksgiving in the hearts of God's people, when generous giving to God is the rule of the day.
- d) Therefore, our approach to giving ought never to be how little we can give, or what is leftover and that we will give. This approach does not honor the Lord. A note on this to our parents. We do an injustice to our children when the offering bags come around and mom quickly scratches in her purse for some coins. By this we are teaching them that we give our scraps, our left overs to the Lord. Guess what? They see you do it at the mall when you begrudgingly give the car guard a one- and coin, and when they see you doing exactly the same in Church it teaches them that God has no more value in your eyes than the car guard at the mall. Rather equip and teach your children to give sacrificially from their own pocket money. Teach them to give systematically and regularly. Teach them to decide before each Lord's Day service how much they will give and, in such manner, you are teaching them to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted unto us.

- e) Here is one way in which you can test whether you are giving cheerfully unto the Lord. If the thought crosses your mind that there is so many other things you can do with that money, then you are not giving cheerfully but rather you are guilty of then giving grudgingly to God.
- f) **Then also our giving needs to be regularly.** The Word of God is abundantly clear on this as well. We have the following imperative in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** - ***“<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”*** Paul admonished the Corinthian believers that they need to give careful thought and planning to a deliberate and regular means of giving. It needs to be done beforehand; they need to give this forethought, so that when they come together ***“each one has decided in his heart”*** (2 Cor 9:7) what he will give unto the Lord. Can you see that quickly scratching in one's purse the moment the offertory bags come around, goes against the implications taught in this text? Note in **verse 2** that God commands this to happen ***“every week”***. That enforces the regularity required in our giving.
- g) **Cheerful and regular.** Those are two words that define very particularly what the motive behind any form of giving unto the Lord always ought to be. Friend, won't you prayerfully weigh up your own giving in light of these commands. And if God highlights that you are erring and not pleasing Him, won't you turn away from such sin and turn to Christ for help and grace as you seek to correct that which is wrong?

### **Point 3 – “Our Father's Full Giving” (v15)**

**Exodus 20:15 (ESV)** ***“<sup>15</sup> You shall not steal.”***

**2 Corinthians 8:9** ***“<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”***

- a) Paul here unexpectedly introduces the highest possible example. In other words what Paul does here is showing forth that the greatest reason for generous and sacrificial giving within the Kingdom of God comes as a result of the generous and sacrificial giving of God our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) **It is therefore firstly important to stress that God's giving reflects His priorities.** God's priorities are mirrored for us in Romans 8:32 ***“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”*** You see what Paul is saying here: God gave His Son whom He loved with an unbroken harmony, into the hands of sinful men. And why was this? It was because His priority was not the unbroken fellowship with His Son, but rather ***“giving up”*** His Son to rescue sinful men and women. And according to **2 Corinthians 8:9** this was precisely reflected in the willingness of the Son Himself to leave that perfect harmony with His Father in order to accomplish our salvation. And there dear friends is our pattern. Our giving reflects our thinking and our thinking controls our priorities. God's priorities were seen in the giving of His Son. His Son was willing to be separated from His Father, as our salvation was primary in the thinking of the Godhead.
- c) **Secondly I want you to see that God's giving is liberal.** By drawing attention to the giving of the Father in giving His own Son, Paul knew that no one could object to that example. They may have been tired of hearing of the example of the Macedonians but they



certainly could not complain about the giving of God's own Son. The Apostle James reminded the Churches that **"God...gives generously"** (James 1:5). The Apostle Paul's final thrust comes at the end of the next chapter when he says **"Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!"** (2 Cor 9:15). The same theme of the extravagant giving of our God is seen in 1 Timothy 6:17 **"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy."** You see the point dear friends? God's giving and generosity should be answered by ours.

- d) **Thirdly then also see that God's giving is joyful.** We see in the example of the Macedonian Churches a pattern of joyful giving but that clearly was not the case with the Corinthian Church. You see, dear friends, it is all too common to give out of a sense of Christian duty or even legalism without a delight and joy. Once again in this Christ is our highest example as we see in Hebrews 12:2 – **"...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."** You see, our Lord did not leave heaven reluctantly or begrudgingly, nor did the Father send Him unwillingly. You see the incarnation of our Lord, Him becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us was with the joyful anticipation of the value of His life and death for a myriad of rebels against His Father's rule.
- e) And so there you have it: the greatest example of all. This is why we should give. This is why we should give freely. This is why we should give joyfully. This is why our priorities should reflect the kingdom as first in all things. For God gave His only Son freely, with joy and grace to reflect that His priorities were His own glory seen in the salvation of sinners. And so our giving should reflect just that.

## **Conclusion:**

- a) In conclusion I want to wrap up our study of the admonitions and prohibitions contained in the Eighth Commandment by asking you quiet simply to ask yourself four questions this morning, and then to respond as befits a true believer as God sheds lights on our hearts:
1. **Am I giving myself fully and wholeheartedly firstly to the Lord?** Can I come anywhere close to William Booth and am I able to say: **"Jesus Christ has all of me"**?
  2. **Am I giving in response to God's grace?** Is this what drives and motivates my giving? Is that what determines the extent of my giving?
  3. **Am I giving beyond my ability?** Am I giving beyond my comfort zone? Or is my giving simply within the realm of what is secure and in a way that it does not affect all my other financial commitments?
  4. **Am I giving regularly and cheerfully?** Is there a deliberate attempt at my giving? Am I giving out of love and joy for my Savior? Am I giving every Lord's Day as God has commanded? And can I give without thinking that I could have used that money for something else?
- b) May God give us grace to respond in truth and in love so that He may receive all the praise and the glory. May God enable us to respond correctly so that we may in no way through lack of giving be guilty of violation of the Eighth Commandment.

Amen!

Soli Deo Gloria (For God's Glory Alone)

Glenvista Baptist Church – 3 March 2019