

STEAL NO MORE

It is not surprising that God tells us not to steal any longer, but it is quite an eye opener when we look at some spiritual truths about theft and its consequences. There are three ways that property can be stolen... secret theft, robbery by force and robbery by deceit. All three forms of robbery are mentioned on numerous occasions in the scriptures. However, God in his wisdom always seems to be able to include an unexpected twist behind many of his principles... we will look at such a principle in these notes.

In the middle of some solid direction on Christian living, Paul reveals another level of understanding.

EPH 4:28 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. *This verse starts off with obvious instruction, but then takes a turn to a deeper awareness. Stop stealing and go and work for a living... why? So you will have enough money to not only provide for yourselves, but so that you can provide for others as well.*

There is a second level of theft implied in these verses. God provides so we can provide... if we don't provide for others, then we are also practising another form of theft.

This principle is made very clear in the following verses.

MAL 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. *Stealing from God would appear to be a serious crime.*

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it. When we steal from God we also rob ourselves... the blessings that are rightfully ours are forfeited... this also has a high level of spiritual cost as well. Thus God's reason for forbidding theft has much depth to it, as we now see... the consequences are self destructive.*

In today's world, the priesthood has a responsibility to serve the needs of the people... the people in turn have to serve the needs of the priesthood... thus God's potential for generosity can be fulfilled. In this country we still are obliged to meet the needs of God's people, but greed often overtakes many and selfishness and theft cancel many of God's blessings out of the lives of individuals. The end result of this is, that those who rob God end up putting long hours and much effort into their own future, ending up with much less than their potential... they also cloud their vision and lack spiritual stability and momentum...they have robbed themselves of their spiritual blessings. They become weak, because they rob themselves and their families as well as God's family.

Private property is a means of power, either for good or for evil, depending on one's attitude toward it and the use of it. One can use it to enrich himself at the expense of others, or one can use it to help others to the glory of God. The latter is faithful stewardship.

Jesus also highlighted another aspect of theft... this deals with spiritual integrity.

JOH 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. *This is not talking about money on this occasion, but about shepherding and caring for our brothers and sisters. Verse one sets the topic... v1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. The term 'thief and robber' is used once again. There is only one way into the kingdom of God and likewise, only one way to walk in that kingdom.*

When we flee our responsibility, we rob our friends (God's children), from their rightful blessings

JOH 10:13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. *We fail to honour the responsibility of fellowship, witnessing, follow-up, etc. We run away and feed ourselves on selfish motives. James tells us that our life needs to be more than words... Jam 2;15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. We all have a common need to be does of the word... doers are givers... givers are receivers.*

God has so much in store for those who are faithful and supportive... no one can afford to miss out on his blessings.... go and steal no more!!!