



Thou shalt not steal. (Ex 20:15)

Very short and simple, is it not; but perhaps presents a deeper implication than we first imagine. Anyone who steals is classified as a thief. You may believe that you have never been a thief, but chances are that you have been a thief more than once. Right of ownership of private property is a right justified in Holy Scripture. It is right and just that a man be able to defend his private property against all thieves, rogues, and unjust governments. *“A state that enacts bad laws is as criminal before God as the individual who breaks good ones.”*—Adam Clarke's Commentary

Let us bear in mind that the guilt of a few, as opposed to many, violations of this Commandment – and all others – is not tempered by the rarity of breaches. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* (James 2:10) There is no tolerance or margin for error in the keeping of God's Law, and none alive today have kept it. Since the lapse of obedience in only one results in a guilty verdict for the other nine, we all stand guilty before God for the violation of all Ten. Moses was God's instrument as Giver of the Law received on Mount Sinai, yet poor Moses was the first to break all Ten Commandments at once! *And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.* (Ex 32:19) Although the anger Moses experienced at the sight of widespread idolatry was justified, his casting down the Tables of the Law that God had written with His own Finger was not righteous. Though anger is, at times, justified, it must not be uncontrolled anger.

You may aver that you have never broken into another's personal belongings and stolen them; therefore, you are guiltless of this one Commandment. Did you break any others? If so, you are guilty of breaking them all. But, the premise of the first statement is not valid. Theft does not always involve the actions of a criminal burglar. Have you ever cheated on a test, rounded up in a business transaction, marginalized the taxes you owe to Caesar, taken a company pen or note pad from the office, or lazed about on the job when you were being paid to work? If so, you are termed a thief under this Commandment. *“But we all do it!”* you allege. Yes, that may be true, but we are all, at the same time, THIEVES! What about contracting debt from credit cards or other sources without repaying them? Or what of taking government treasures, taken by force from fellow citizens, without desperate need? (Welfarism). What of downloading copyrighted audio and video clips from the internet without paying a copyrighters fee? Is that not stealing also. So, you tell me you have done none of these! Think deeply, for I believe you are mistaken. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* (2 Thess 3:10) Were we not commanded by God in

Genesis to labor for our own bread, and not to eat the bread of the labors of others? *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* (Gen 3:19)

Because the world is rife with thieves, men and organizations spend a great deal of money fortifying their homes against theft. Strong locks and doors, alarm systems, closed circuit video taping, and even personal firearms are purchased to allay theft. If the occupant is strong enough, he can prevent the thief or robber from taking his possessions. *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.* (Luke 11:21) If personal property was not a God-given right, it is not likely that our Lord would have used such an example and expression.

Allow me to tell you of another form of theft that may have completely escaped your mind – gossip! How is it possible to tie gossip in with stealing? It is very easy. Gossip is unsubstantiated claims against the name and character of another human being. To take another persons good name is the most egregious form of theft. *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.* (Prov 22:1) If we have stolen, through slander and gossip, a man or woman's good name, we have taken from them a treasure greater than that of silver and gold – grand larceny! As you can see, this Commandment is related to others of the Ten, and coincides in many points.

The misappropriation, or mal-appropriation, of tax revenues by the national governments of every country is alike theft. If the laws and judiciary of a national government are not consistent with the Law of God, that government and its laws are, to that extent, invalid. So that government will take a club, or a badge, to enforce the theft it may impose on its citizens.

If the Federal government of the United States has served her citizens faithfully, would it not be theft to deny faith and allegiance to that government that has so benefitted you in matters of national, personal, and financial security? How many are willing to sit back and disparage the men-at-arms in the Armed Forces of our country with seeming impunity until the war tocsin sounds in our own neighborhood, or on the street where we live? We owe true faith and allegiance to our government and, if it is abusive of its responsibilities, it is the right, moreover the duty, of the American people to force that government to change and purify its legal system. After all, who is Caesar in America if it is not the people?

The responsibilities and duties we owe to others, so well enunciated in the second Table of the Law, is graduated according to severity of need. For example, the first law of neighborly dealings is *"Thou shalt not kill"* for thereby you deprive the man of all possessions including life. The second is that of not committing adultery, (*"Thou shalt not commit adultery"*) for a man's home is his castle. Without home and family, he is abandoned as a vagabond upon the earth. The third is *"Thou shalt not steal"* protects the possessions of the home and grounds that the man possesses for without possessions, we are little more than beggars.

We have already discussed the fact that the Ten Commandments are not ten separate and independent Commandments, but form a Unified Code or Whole of the Law. It is for this reason that we refer to them as the Table of the Law and not LAWS. IT is the LAW of God and not the laws. If they were independent laws, we might suggest that one or another was of greater gravity; but it is easy to see from all textual references, that the Whole Law stands on its own since the violation of one is the violation of the whole.

Now, since there are none who read the devotion who are free of violation of one

of all of the Commandments (read all), and the wages for sin is death, is there any escape for the sinner? *"For the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) But you may say, "I am no sinner!" Is that really true? *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) Who is right – YOU, or God? Thank God, there is a means of pardon in Christ. Being covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb remits our sins, and justifies us in the eyes of the Lord. If we read the remaining clause of the verse quoted above, we shall discover that pardon: ". . . . *the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Romans 6:23)