

END-TIMES ISSUES



#133 Commandment #8 – Stealing from God.

AND BEYOND!

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

Can a person rob God?

Does the Eighth Commandment apply to our relationship with God?

You shall not steal.
Exodus 20:15 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:19

✚ The answer is a resounding "YES!!!"
⇒ People do rob God; and they do it in two ways: directly and indirectly – as illustrated in the following verses:

DIRECTLY – by sinning against GOD.

Will a man rob God? Yet **you are robbing Me!**
Malachi 3:8a (BSB)

INDIRECTLY – by sinning against PEOPLE.

"Then the King [= representing Jesus] will answer, 'Truly I tell you, **whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.**' "
Matthew 25:45 (BSB)

✚ In both cases, we are withholding something we owe to someone. ✚

HOW can we ROB God?

Since God is "uncreated" and we are "created" ...

- We cannot get out of the "realm of creation" and enter the "realm of the uncreated" and directly attack God *in person*. Every interaction we have with God is in the realm of creation.
- ✓ **God is the owner of creation.** Every thing we do within this realm of creation – whether action, word or thought – is an action that relates to God, either directly or indirectly.
 - » Directly – when the matter specifically involves our relationship with God.
 - » Indirectly – when it involves people or other elements of creation.
- ✓ **We owe God (the owner of creation) a proper interaction:**
 - ① with him personally (since he is the owner), as well as, ② with all that belongs to him. **Any failure to do either of these amounts to stealing from God something that we owe him.**

HOW can we give God what we OWE him??

It should be obvious...

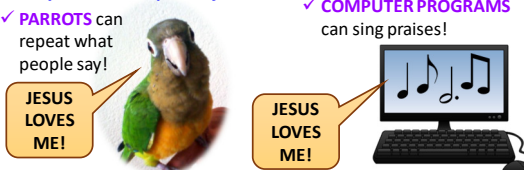
- Every expression of "love for God and neighbor"** is an expression of giving to God what we owe him.
 - ✓ Since God owns our "neighbor," anything we do to "neighbor" is indirectly being done to God. **EXAMPLES:**

Whoever oppresses **the poor** taunts **their Maker**, but whoever is kind to **the needy** honors **Him**.
He who mocks **the poor** insults **their Maker**; whoever gloats over calamity will not go unpunished.
Proverbs 14:31; 17:5 (BSB)
- Our treatment of creation:** Though not given as great an emphasis as the focus on "neighbor," Scripture *does* contain some commands and instructions related to this issue. This implies that what we do with *all* of creation (especially care vs. deliberate acts of destruction) are indirectly being done to God, its owner. (It also effects people.)

REMINDER: Prerequisites for giving God what we owe him ...

- We need a "renewed" mind** (Romans 12:2) so that we don't try to do it the *world's* way. (That would be an *insult*, not an act of *obedience*!)
- We need to do it, not just talk about it.** *Fakes* can talk without doing!
- We need to have the right motives and attitude.** *Fakes* can do things, but not for the right reasons or with the right attitude!

- Even non-human entities can do some of these things... but not in the way that God requires of humans!**
 - ✓ **PARROTS** can repeat what people say!
 - ✓ **COMPUTER PROGRAMS** can sing praises!



>> HERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT WE OWE GOD. <<

Every command in Scripture is relevant; but here are a few selected items that, in some ways, encompass *everything* we owe to God.

1 We owe him GLORY; we are to glorify his name – i.e., who he is.

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness.
Psalm 29:2 (BSB)
(See also 1 Chron. 16:29; Psalm 96:8.)

- ✓ First of all, God's "name" represents *everything about him* – who he is, what he does, his trustworthiness, and the fact that it is *him* and not some other "god."
- ✓ "Glorifying" God focuses on declaring the greatness of who he is – all that is represented by his "name." Its greatest expression occurs when it is done *publicly* – when we are expressing *to other people* his character, faithfulness, etc.

- This is related to the concept of "honor."

Worthy are You, our Lord and God,
to receive **glory** and **honor** ...
Revelation 4:11a (BSB)

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive ... **honor** and **glory** ...
Revelation 5:12b (BSB)

- ✓ The concepts of "glory" and "honor" are in many ways interchangeable. *Both* are our response to God – his character and his greatness.
- ✓ But technically, there is a difference in focus:
 - » "Glory" tends to have a greater emphasis on *acknowledging before people* these things about God.
 - » "Honor" tends to focus on *our personal response* to these things, and is expressed by *what we do*: the faithfulness and obedience that flows from such a recognition.

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- 2 We owe him FEAR; and there are two potential reasons.

BECAUSE OF
OUR SIN

Who knows the power of Your anger?
Your wrath matches **the fear** You are due.

Psalms 90:11 (BSB)

BECAUSE OF
WHO HE IS

There is none like You, O LORD.
You are great, and Your name is mighty in power.

Who would not fear You, O King of nations?
This is Your due.

Jeremiah 10:6-7 (BSB)

- ✓ Many people strongly oppose connecting this word "fear" to "God," even though Scripture tells us:
 - » It is *impossible* to have genuine wisdom, knowledge or understanding without the "fear of God" – Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Micah 6:9.
 - » The *wicked* are the ones who don't have the "fear of God" – Psalm 36:1; Romans 3:18.

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- Fear because of our sin. (This is what all people deserve.)

... a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that
will consume all adversaries.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:27, 31 (BSB)

- ✓ Because of our sin, we have not honored and glorified God. Nor have we feared him in the way that we ought. We have not given him what we owe him.
- ✓ **We have become debtors to God.** We owe God something. We have to *pay* for every sin we have ever committed (or will ever commit in the future). The only way we can pay this is by means of what Scripture calls "death." *Eternal death.*
- ✓ **Jesus has offered to pay this debt** for us and to make us his followers, *if we are willing*. It's our choice... *who will pay?*
- ✓ If Jesus pays our debt, we won't need to have this *first* type of fear: the fear of punishment. *But we will have the other type.* →

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- Fear because of who God is. (This is what all people need, yet few have.)

[God] welcomes those from every nation
who fear Him and do what is right.

Acts 10:35 (BSB)

- ✓ This fear centers not on God's wrath, but on His majesty, holiness, and transcendent glory – his matchless power as Creator; his ongoing dominion over all creation; his purity, perfection and separation from evil; his authority and justice.
- ✓ This type of fear drives a person toward worship, love, and a desire to please him – not merely because we *need* to (though that is true), but also because he is the God who *deserves* it.
- ✓ We will fear sinning; but it isn't because of eternal punishment. Rather, sin separates us from the fellowship and joy we have in God; and it may require discipline. (We also know that persistent willful sin suggests that we aren't really his children. When we sin, knowledge of this fact drives us back to him in repentance.)

10

FEAR AND GOD'S PEOPLE (SOME N.T. PASSAGES ABOUT IT).

- Those who fear God...

- ✓ They receive mercy (Luke 1:50); they are accepted by God (Acts 10:35); they will fear God because he is holy (Revelation 15:4).
- ✓ They are aware that judgment is coming (Revelation 14:7), and that God has the power to send people to hell (Luke 12:5).
- ✓ They do not have to fear the hostility of the world (John 14:27), nor eternal punishment (1 John 4:18).

- Because they fear God...

- ✓ They encourage others to repent and make peace with God (2 Corinthians 5:11).

- This type of fear of God is the context for...

- ✓ Praising God (Revelation 19:5); working "out" (not "for") one's salvation (Philippians 1:12; see also v. 13); living life on earth as a "stranger" (1 Peter 1:17); and *genuine* church growth (Acts 9:31).

NO WONDER THIS TYPE OF FEAR IS SO IMPORTANT ... AND VALUABLE!

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- 3 We owe him SACRIFICES.

- ✓ People tend to think of "sacrifices" as something that was done because of *sin*; but even in the Old Testament, this was not true! For instance, some sacrifices focused on *fellowship* and *gratitude*.
- ✓ Jesus has now dealt with – and become – the final sacrifice for sin. But there are many other sacrifices that remain as obligations – though they do not necessarily involve the "external practices" (animals, grain, etc.) that were usually a part of the O. T. sacrifices.
 - » (We will see that this includes certain things that we do not normally view as being "sacrifices.")

⇒ When God saves people, he calls them to be *priests*. We will look at some of the sacrifices he expects us to make. →

But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9 (BSB)

12

- The sacrifice of a **broken self** – the sacrifice that makes all the other sacrifices possible.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and a contrite heart,
O God, You will not despise.

Psalm 51:17 (BSB)

- ✓ This is *more* than repentance (though it *includes* repentance). And it's more important than all the religious rituals a person might do (see v. 16) – though it doesn't *negate* them (v. 19).
- ✓ This sacrifice involves recognizing the horror of one's sin, and agreeing with God about its seriousness. At the same time, this broken, humble heart itself is also described as *God's creation* within the penitent person. This is why the psalmist (David) prayed:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10 (BSB)
- ✓ This internal transformation – this changed heart – gives meaning and significance to the external acts of obedience and worship.

13

- The sacrifice of **our bodies** – even while remaining alive.

- » This implies a lot: It encompasses all of life, and *even includes the way we think*.
- » Yet it is all made possible only because of *God's mercy*.

Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as living sacrifices**, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by **the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1-2 (BSB)

- ✓ In the rest of the chapter (and beyond), Paul shows how this "translates" into life. It is done by ...
 - » Using one's gifts and abilities for the good of others,
 - » Expressing love in all situations; and more.

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- Sacrifices as **an expression of love**; Jesus as the **ultimate example of this**. Jesus' sacrifice of himself for *our* benefit teaches us what self-sacrificial love for one another is all about.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as **Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant sacrificial offering to God**.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (BSB)

- **Willing to die for the good of others**. The following verse actually describes two sacrifices: Paul's potential "drink offering" and the Philippians "sacrifice" (to be described later).

But even if I am being **poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith**, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Philippians 2:17-18 (BSB)

- ✓ Paul was willing to die, if that would make the Philippians' sacrifice "complete." If this were to happen, it would be the *ultimate* illustration of imitating Jesus' example: sacrificing one's self for the good of others. (We can also imitate him *without* dying.)

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- **Caring for the needs of others**. We already looked at Paul's sacrifice; now we look at the Philippians' sacrifice.

... the **sacrifice and service of your faith**, ...

Philippians 2:17b (BSB)

... I have received **your gifts** from Epaphroditus. They are **a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice**, well-pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:18b (BSB)

- ✓ In 2:17, it's not their *faith* that's being sacrificed; rather the sacrifice is the *result* of their faith. Their faith *motivated* them to serve sacrificially. (This is why it was acceptable to God.)
 - » Their expression of faith and love involved a *financial gift* (4:18). They also sent Epaphroditus to take care of Paul's needs (2:25).
- ✓ Paul considered *their* "practical" gift of caring for his needs (and the advancement of the gospel) to be superior to *his own* potential sacrifice of his life. His death, had it been necessary, would have been just a "completion" of *their* sacrifice. [In the O.T. sacrifices, "drink offerings" (v. 17a) would sometimes be poured out – over, or next to, the primary offering.]

16

- A sacrifice of **praise** – a God-focused sacrifice.

- » This can be done only "through Jesus," by someone who "confesses his name."

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God **a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name**.

Hebrews 13:15 (BSB)

- » "Confessing his name" refers to publicly acknowledging who God is, what he has done, etc.
- » The praise is the *fruit* or result of the public "confessing." (This is all made possible through the work of Jesus.)
- ✓ **How can it be done "continually"?** (Praise seems easy when things are going well, but hard when things are NOT going well.)
 - » "Continual" praise flows from a *transformed heart* that *trusts* God, regardless of circumstances; it comes from someone who wants to honor God in *every* context and season of life.
 - » This is similar to 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which tells us to "Give thanks in every circumstance."

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- **Doing good; sharing with others** – "people-focused" sacrifices.

And do not neglect to **do good** and to **share with others**, for with such **sacrifices** God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:16 (BSB)

- » This shows us that obeying the Eighth Commandment in "people issues" (i.e., what we owe to *people*) is directly connected to giving to God what we owe to *him*. God sees it as a "pleasing sacrifice."
- » People who "confess his name" (v. 15) will praise him with their lips (and heart). But such an expression of praise, if *genuine*, will also express itself in the way we interact with people. *We cannot tear-apart love for God and love for neighbor!*
- » Verses 15 and 16 go together. We aren't really praising God if we're unwilling to do good and share with others. And doing good and sharing with others has little value in *God's* sight, if we choose to keep God out of it.

18

- **"Spiritual sacrifices."**

- » We, collectively, are the "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17); and God has made us to be priests (see also Revelation 1:6). As such, it is our obligation to offer "spiritual sacrifices."

[We] are being built into a **spiritual house** to be a **holy priesthood**, offering **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:5 (BSB)

- ✓ **What are these "spiritual sacrifices"?** *This does not mean "do religious activities" (though that might be part of it). Rather, it refers to all behavior that flows from the Holy Spirit's transformative work within believers. This would include everything that is a part of expressing love for God and neighbor!*
- » As we look through 1 Peter, we see that his focus is on concrete acts of *obedience* and *service*, not abstract spiritual *experiences*. This includes actions (done in public), which demonstrate the transforming work of the Spirit. It may even include suffering from persecution. (Read 1 Peter for other examples.)

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4 Withholding from God what we owe him is called "ROBBING God."

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!"

But you ask, 'How do we rob You?'

In tithes and offerings.

**You are cursed with a curse, yet you—the whole nation—
are still robbing Me.**

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this," says the LORD of Hosts. "See if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you blessing without measure."

Malachi 3:8-10 (BSB)

- ✓ These "tithes and offerings" refer to specific obligations given in the Law of Moses, regarding tithes (of which there were three or four different ones), and offerings that were a part of certain sacrifices.

So how does it apply to us today? →

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- **The issue of "robbing God" – HOW DOES THIS APPLY TODAY?**

- ✓ **Regarding donating money to the church:** *This is not a command under the New Covenant, demanding that we donate 10% of our money to the church!*
- » If God has changed our hearts, *we don't need a command. The heart-embedded desire to love God and neighbor will suffice.*
- ✓ **What this statement teaches us: The nature of robbing God.** *Any time we withhold from God something that we owe him (illustrated by what they did), we are robbing him.*
- » Have we robbed God of the wholehearted love, trust, obedience, service, and worship that we owe him?
- » This can include what we do with our money. But it also applies to whether or not we are stingy with our time, or if we are neglectful in prayer, worship, and service to others.
- » All of this is a reflection of our values. **What values are we demonstrating?**

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- **If we claim to love God and neighbor, how do we demonstrate it?**

- ✓ Even though we don't have to live by an "external" law, God has given us the Old Testament law to *teach* us principles of conduct, which show us the importance of putting God *first*.
- » We know, by reading the Old Testament, how important it was for the people to give money to the work of God. We also know what happened when they neglected it.
- ★ *Scripture also describes the people's heart condition (their moral and spiritual values), which determined what option they chose.*
- ✓ **Perhaps we should be asking:** "If God's Law is now embedded within my heart, *how does it express itself in my values?*" God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7); but this cheerfulness is a reflection of the *heart's condition*, not an emotional happiness! Generous people are cheerful when they are overflowing with love and generosity!
- ✓ What we do with our money is often just a *symptom* of deeper issues. How many of our financial resources do we think God *deserves*? *What does our financial situation say about our trust in God?*

22

YOUR MISSION!

IF YOU ARE FOLLOWING JESUS...

BE the priest God made you to be!!!



DON'T:

☒ **Rob him!**

DO:

- ☒ **Fear him (the *right* way)!**
- ☒ **Glorify and honor him!**
- ☒ **Offer sacrifices to him!**

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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