

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

- Q. 73. Which is the eighth commandment?
- A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.
- Q. 74. What is required in the eighth commandment?
- A. The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.

Scripture References: Exod. 20:15. II Thess. 3:10-12. Rom. 12:17. Prov. 27:23. Prov. 13:4; 20:4. Phil. 2:4.

Questions:

1. What is the main subject matter of this commandment?
The main subject matter of this commandment is the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.
- 2. May we use any means to acquire our wealth and outward estate?
No, our means must be consistent with the Word of God, our means must be lawful in the sight of God.
3. What means would we consider to be consistent with the Word of God?
Means that are consistent with the Word would be labor and industry in some honest calling in the sight of God (Eph. 4:28).
4. Could you name some lawful means that would be consistent with the Word of God?
Some lawful means would be: (1) Asking God to lead us to a calling that would be His will for us (1 Cor. 7:20, 24); (2) Praying that we will do our task in a way that is well-pleasing in His sight, in an honest and decent way (Rom. 12:17); (3) Endeavoring to live in a sober way before the Lord, not wasteful (Titus 2:12); (4) Being always diligent in our work (Prov. 13:11); (5) Remembering always that we have a duty towards others, a duty to have a public spirit (I Cor. 10:24).
- 5. What would be a good rule to remember when we are dealing with the wealth and outward estate of others?
A good rule to remember is found in Matt. 7:12.
6. What is our duty toward the poor in this commandment?
Our duty toward the poor is to relieve them whenever possible for such is the way of charity and is to the glory of God (Prov. 19:17).

CONTENTMENT

Whenever we consider what is required in the eighth commandment and pray for the ability to fulfill it to the glory of God, we are brought face to face with the whole concept of contentment. To fulfill the requirement of this commandment and to avoid the sin of the commandment, the believer must learn to be content with the estate that God has given him. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 13:5: "... and be content with such things as ye have ..." It is indeed good advice for us and will help us to avoid the breaking of the eighth commandment.

John Owen tells us that this "contentment is a gracious frame or disposition of mind, quiet and composed; without (1) Complaining or repining at God's providential disposals of our outward concerns; (2) All envy at the more prosperous conditions of others; (3) Fears and anxious cares about future supplies; and, (4) Desires and designs of those things which a more plentiful condition than what we are in would supply us withal."

As believers we should make a real study of contentment. And when we think of contentment, we should remember that all we really need is what God would have us have in order to reach heaven in His time. This does not mean that we should not show forth all effort in what we have to do in fulfilling our responsibilities on this earth. God has given us six days out of seven in which to do this and we should make full use of our time. The difficulty with many believers is that they want too much. They want to go beyond what is good for them. There is an amazing verse in I Tim. 6:8 — "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." And the Apostle goes on and points out the dangers facing the rich, those who are captured by the love of money. The believer is told to flee such things and to follow after the way of righteousness.

The question was once asked a group of doctors and ministers, "From where does much of the despondency, depression arise in your opinion?" Their answer was that much of it came from a desire after worldly things that are not good for a person to have. Indeed it is not for the believer, such is very plain in the Word of God. Paul's secret of happiness is very obvious in Phil. 4:11.

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