

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 75. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth, or may, unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.

Scripture References: I Tim. 5:8; Eph. 4:28; Prov. 21:6; II Thess. 3:7-10

Questions:

1. What does this commandment teach the believer regarding his behavior?

This commandment teaches that the believer is forbidden any part of the area of theft regarding himself and others.

2. How could a believer steal from himself?

A believer could steal from himself by being idle when he should be at work; by not making use of the blessings that God has given him; by being wasteful of the material things God has given him.

3. What is the more direct teaching of this commandment?

The more direct teaching is the believer stealing from others.

4. What does the teaching contained in this commandment mean by stealing from others?

Stealing from others could be in the area of defrauding others in buying or selling; in the area of stealing money, a person's name and reputation, and God Himself in not giving to Him what rightfully belongs to Him; extortion and all oppression (especially of the poor and afflicted).

5. Can theft be committed against the church?

Yes, it can be committed against the church either by simony or sacrilege.

6. What is simony?

This is a reference to Simon Magus in Acts 8:18, 19 who attempted to buy spiritual power for money. This could be done today, for example, in the case of a man who bought or sold in reference to a church and made profit.

7. What is sacrilege?

Sacrilege is the taking away of anything which has been dedicated to a sacred use. (Prov. 20:25; Mal. 3:8).

WILL A MAN ROB GOD?

Usually when this question is asked the mind focuses immediately on man's responsibility to give of his tithes and offerings to God. Certainly, it does have to do with this portion of man's responsibility. A man, a believer in Jesus Christ, can rob God in this way and many do in not being faithful in their giving habits to the church of Jesus Christ. However, a man can rob God in many other ways and do so while being very faithful in the giving of money, in his monetary stewardship responsibilities.

How else can a man rob God? He can rob God by forgetting the abmonition in the Bible to keep holy the Sabbath Day. He can rob God in this way by only giving God a part of the day, congratulating himself on attending church in the morning and then using the rest of the day for himself. This robs God of His due and makes him worse than many heathens who give one whole day each week to their false gods.

A believer can rob God by the wrong use of his body. He can call upon the body beyond the limits of endurance, be careless of the care of the body. A believer can rob God of the service he should be performing. God calls upon his children many times for tasks that must be accomplished. But many times because of wrong use of time and energy in other pursuits the believer is not ready physically for the testing time when it comes.

A believer can rob God by not allowing the grace of God to work in Him as the Lord would have it work. God so desires that we make use of that grace, that power of the Holy Spirit. But we so many times block it by our sin, by our preoccupation with self in our lives. And then we are, in effect, robbing God.

When a believer robs God, he is hindering his own "outward estate" for he is stealing from himself, from what God would give him in his life, all to the glory of God. He is not putting to full use the providence of God in his life. God has so much for all of His children. When we rob Him we are really robbing ourselves and our relationship is not what it should be to Him. We must learn to live Matt. 6:33 in order that we may never rob Him.

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