

TEACHING GOAL

To study the negative requirements of the eighth commandment.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

Q. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

Q. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.

S.C. 75, L.C. 142, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 97-98

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Luke 16:1-14

Support Passages: Proverbs 11:1, 20:10, 18:9, 21:17, 23:10,20-21, 28:19; Isaiah 5:8; Ezekiel 22:29; Leviticus 25:13-17; Deuteronomy 19:14, Malachi 3:8; Amos 8:5; Psalm 37:21; James 2:15; I Timothy 1:8-11, 6:10

BIBLE STORY

Achan's sin; Joshua 7:1-26

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.'" (Luke 16:13, ESV)

APPLICATION

There are many things that are forbidden by the eighth commandment. Among them are kidnapping, receiving stolen goods, fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, violation of trust, oppression, extortion, exorbitant usury, bribery, price fixing or collusion and wastefulness. These things are typical of those who are "lovers of money". To the contrary we need to be faithful in little things such as Mammon or riches which are very small compared to the treasures of heaven. We must be careful with our use of wealth and the possessions of others.

SUMMARY

Quite simply, the eighth commandment forbids stealing or anything that amounts to it. The support texts in this lesson detail a long list of such things. Theft, robbery, kidnapping, receiving and dispensing stolen property, fraud, counterfeiting, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, breaking legitimate contracts, oppression, extortion, exorbitant usury, bribery, trivial lawsuits, eminent domain property seizures, price fixing, gambling, envy, idleness, wastefulness, complaining about our circumstances, are all the sort of things that amount to stealing but the Lord Jesus teaches us a very different and important principle in our study text.¹

Luke 16:1-14 relates the parable of the unjust steward which has been greatly misunderstood by many, some even suggesting that Jesus approved of the dishonest steward and instructed His disciples to imitate him. Others suggest that since the unjust steward was praised by his master, the wrong of dishonest gain can be atoned for by charity. Jesus, however, makes a much different use of the parable.

There is strong evidence that the steward was dishonest in that it was reported that he was squandering the possessions of his master. In addition, he fraudulently modified the bills of his master's debtors downward, in order to ingratiate himself with them. By feathering his nest in this manner he is termed "shrewd" and Jesus observes that "*-- the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.*"² The sons of this age know how to gain an advantage for themselves and are not deterred by conscience and moral considerations. Christians, to the contrary, are often not as shrewd in their own dealings with each other and with the world. The Christian's heart is set on the treasures of heaven but the hearts of the sons of this age are set on the things of this world. It is no wonder then, when it comes to dealing with people in their generation, that the sons of this age are far shrewder than the sons of light. It could not be otherwise, and this is by no means a criticism of the Lord's people.

Though this parable has been the object of much perplexity, only one interpretation commends itself as the truth, namely, the interpretation given to it by the Lord. Jesus draws our attention to the very opposite of what the steward really is. The complete unrighteousness of this steward regarding Mammon or riches helps us to see and attain to the very opposite, complete righteousness regarding our use of unrighteous Mammon. Jesus wants us to use our money properly, for the glory of Christ and His kingdom. He wants us to be careful with the value we place on money and we are to strenuously resist the temptation to sin with regard to money.

The steward used the money of another shrewdly to make friends for

himself. We are to do the same thing but to make our use quite the opposite. The manager was a steward and so are we. He was entrusted with money and so are we. To him it was unrighteous Mammon and so it is also to us. He makes friends with it and so do we. He comes to an end and so do we but one that is completely different. The sons of this age end up with the things of this world, but the sons of light, the Lord's people, end up with eternal habitations. The one is motivated by unrighteousness but the other by righteousness. Use your money, Christians, so that you end up with eternal dwellings. By no means should we rob God or anyone else.

Verses 10 through 12 of the text teach us the value we are to place on money. To the sons of this age, Mammon is everything. They will sell themselves into unrighteousness for the love of money which is a "*-- root of all kinds of evils.*"³ But to the sons of light, who judge Mammon in the light of the Scriptures, it is a "*very little thing.*" It is the least as compared to their eternal possessions. As the steward used Mammon to make friends of this world we should use it to make friends of God.

By saying that no servant can serve two masters the Lord teaches us that no man is his own master. It is our very nature to be governed by someone or something else. The question is, who or what shall this be? The two masters Jesus has in mind are God and Mammon or wealth. Only one of these can be our master and the lord of our hearts. We might think that we could give half-hearted service to Mammon but whole hearted service to God. The danger is always that we will hide our love for Mammon by a half-hearted show of service to God. We must constantly resist the power of Mammon in our lives. We must purge our hearts of the unrighteousness of Mammon, and serve God alone.

¹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Luke's Gospel*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Augsburg Publishing House, 1961, p. 823ff

² Luke 16:8, ESV

³ 1 Timothy 6:10, ESV