

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—

Lesson 78—The Eighth Commandment, Qs. 73-75

We've seen God protect *human life* by the sixth commandment and *personal purity* by the seventh, and now He protects *personal property* by the eighth. By the eighth commandment, God puts a divine hedge around every man and all his possessions. This commandment is concerned with all matters connected with the earning, saving, spending, inheriting, and bequeathing of money and property and teaches all men *their own right to own personal property* and *the sinfulness of taking from another what is his*.

The duties required, WLC 141

- I. The right to personal property is not from mutual consent or civil law, but from God Himself. Consider:
 - A. God gave the earth to man and he's to have dominion over it, Gen 1.26-28; Ps 115.16.
 - B. God gave the Garden and all its fruits to Adam, Gen 2.8-17. He gave the nations their boundaries, Acts 17.26. And He gave Israel her landmarks, Joshua 14.
 - C. God is the giver and taker of worldly goods, Gen 30.29-30; 1Sam 2.7; Job 1.21.
 - D. God commands us to tithe on our possessions as an acknowledgment that everything belongs to Him, Lev 27.30-34.
 - E. And God will require an account of our stewardship, Lk 12.48. Essentially, whatever God's given us is to be used preeminently for His glory, 1Cor 10.31, in the maintenance of our own households, in gifts to the needy, Mt 25.31-46; 1Cor 16.1, and in the advance of Christ's kingdom, 1Cor 9.11.
- II. The eighth commandment requires us to lawfully procure and steward our own property, 1Tim 5.8, and to respect that our fellowman has the right to do the same.
 - A. Although a man may come by his possessions through gift, inheritance, or purchase, usually he comes by his goods through hard, honest labor. Hence this commandment is also *a commandment to work*, to work faithfully, diligently, and honestly in order to provide for yourself, your family, and the needy, Eph 4.28.
 - B. We're to give ourselves faithfully to our calling, 2Th 3.10-12. Idleness gives way to thievery.
 - C. We're to be upright and equitable in all our dealings, Lev 19.36; Pr 11.1; 16.11.
 - D. We're to desire our brother's advantage and good as much as our own, Rom 12.10; Phil 2.3-4.
 - E. We're to respect the work and property of others, Ex 22.14; 23.4; 2Kgs 6.5.
 - F. We're to do what we can for the poor and needy, especially those in the church, Rom 12.13; 2Cor 8.1-8.
 - G. We're to be generous and hospitable with our stewardship, Rom 12.13; 1Tim 3.2; 3Jn 5-6.
 - H. We're to live in continual gratitude and praise to God for all we have and enjoy, Ex 6.8; Hos 2.8; Acts 17.25-26, being content with the Lord and His provisions, Hab 3.17-19; Ps 16.5-6; Heb 13.5.
 - I. We're to hold all our possessions with the open hand of a caretaker and steward, acknowledging that the Lord is the owner of it all, Job 1.21; 1Cor 4.7, and that He has a right to dispose of it as He will, give it to whom He will, send for it whom He will, and take it all from us in a moment if it pleases Him, Job 1.21.

The sins forbidden, WLC 142

- I. Theft, Lev 19.11; Dt 24.7; Ps 37.21; Mic 2.1-5; Zech 5.1-4; Eph 4.28.
- II. Cheating, Zeph 1.9; 1Pet 2.1; Js 5.4.
- III. Injury, Rom 13.10.
- IV. Oppressing, Ex 22.26-27; Js 5.1-4.
- V. Envy and jealousy, Gal 5.21, 26; 1Cor 13.4; Tit 3.3.
- VI. Coveting, Dt 7.25; Josh 7.21; Pr 12.12; Phil 4.11.
- VII. Discontent, Lk 3.14; Phil 4.11-12; Heb 13.5.
- VIII. Squandering, Pr 18.9; 21.17; 23.20-21; 28.19.

The chief causes of the breach of this commandment

- I. Unbelief in God's providential care, Ps 78.19; Mt 6.19, 25-33. Work hard and trust God, Ps 90.17; Pr 16.3.
- II. Covetousness and discontent, Josh 7.21; Js 4.2. Be content and thankful for what you have, Heb 13.5-6.