

Series: Ephesians

Title: Robbers Restored to be Restorers

Text: Eph 4: 28

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Ephesians 4: 28: Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

This is not law; this is grace. The law God gave at Mt. Sinai said, “Thou shalt not steal.” (Ex 20: 15) That is it! No grace, no spiritual discernment, and no constraining love is given by the law. There is only the strict command, “thou shalt not steal.”

Proposition: Our text is not law but an exhortation God gives to believers who God has saved from being thieves through faith in Christ, who God makes to be restorers to the needy, not by law but by God’s grace.

Christ’s people are: Robbers Restored to be Restorers

In these exhortations, we need to see the difference between law and grace? The believer—God’s elect called from among the Jews or from among the Gentiles—is not under the law; we are under grace.

God’s elect—spiritual Israel—are saved by the grace of God—by God giving us what we do not deserve, by God giving what no sinner can obtain by the works of the law, by God making us the righteousness of God—the righteousness of the law—through faith in the Son of God who fulfilled the law on our behalf. So why did God give the law at Mt. Sinai? Why did God give the law which said, “Thou shalt not steal?” (Ex 20: 15)

I. THE FIRST THING GRACE DOES IS TEACH GOD’S CHILD THAT IN ADAM, WE BROKE THE WHOLE LAW OF GOD—Note it says: Ephesians 4: 28: Let him THAT STOLE steal no more:...that is why God gave the law.

We Broke the Law in Adam

Adam represented every child born of Adam; Christ represented every child born of Christ.

Romans 5: 17:...by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Romans 5: 19: For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Unregenerate sinners hate the truth that we became sinners by the doing and dying of another, Adam. But regenerated sinners love this truth because it also declares that we are made righteous by the doing and dying of another—Christ Jesus.

So when God gave the law at Mt. Sinai, every sinner had already broken every commandment, even “Thou shalt not steal”, because of Adam’s transgression of God’s one command in the garden. Why then did God give the law at Mt. Sinai?

Romans 5: 20: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.

God calls his law given at Mt. Sinai: “the ministration of condemnation.” It is because God gave his law to teach his people that we came under condemnation when Adam sinned in the garden. (2 Cor 3: 9) God calls his law “the ministration of death.” (2 Cor 3: 7) It is because God gave his law to teach his people that death passed upon us by Adam’s one transgression in the garden.

Romans 5:12: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

We Broke Every Command in Adam

We broke every law of Mt. Sinai in the garden when Adam broke them by his one transgression of one commandment. God says “whosoever shall offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (Ja 2: 10) We broke the whole law of God by Adam’s one transgression in the garden.

Exodus 20: 1: 3: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Satan told Eve “ye shall be as gods.” Adam’s disobedience against God by transgressing the one law God gave in the garden was his heart, saying, “I will not have God reign over me; I will be my own god!” The second commandment goes right along with the first—idolatry is in the heart—the worship of self—which is what Adam did by his transgression.

Exodus 20: 7: Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.

Adam’s disobedience was Adam cursing God.

Exodus 20: 8: Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

To rest on the Sabbath day meant trusting God’s full provision. Adam’s transgression was his refusal to rest in God’s full provision—believers rest in Christ our Sabbath, God full provision of grace!

Exodus 20: 12: Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Adam’s disobedience dishonored God his Father and he died that very hour

Exodus 20: 13: Thou shalt not kill.

Adam’s disobedience was Adam’s heart murdering God and his authority over Adam.

Exodus 20: 14: Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Adam’s disobedience to God was spiritual adultery

Exodus 20: 15: Thou shalt not steal.

Adam’s disobedience robbed God of the glory due unto him. You get the point. God gave many more commandments than just ten at Mt. Sinai, but all were given that “the offense” might abound. We broke the whole law of God by Adam’s one transgression in the garden.

Romans 3:19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God....23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Ignorant of the Spirituality of the Law

When we thought we were keeping the law, we did not know the spiritual depths of the law. By just thinking we were keeping the law, we were stealing from God, because we were calling God a liar, because God says,

Romans 3: 20...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

1 John 1:10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

We had no idea the many ways we were stealing every day. This is how strict God is. Here are some examples of how we steal and break God's holy law.

- To know our expenses are more than our income, yet to continue to live off our creditors, is stealing.
- To slander a neighbor steals their character by ruining the good opinion of those who hear us speak—even giving an hear to slander is stealing.
- To not give our employer a full days work or to not give your employees a full days wages is stealing.
- To make someone wait is to steal their time.

The law reaches, not only to the act, but to the thoughts and intents of the heart. God says to use a false weight or measure when buying or selling is stealing. But God condemns even thinking about doing so...

Deuteronomy 25: 13: Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. 14: Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. 15: But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have:...

Matthew 15: 19: For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20: These are the things which defile a man:

We Stole the Glory of God in Salvation

The worst of all stealing is to steal the glory which belongs to God in his Son—this we all did while we were dead in sins. For example:

- To believe in our hearts that God chose his people based on some good in us is to rob God of his glory in sovereignly electing his people not based on any good or evil in us.
- To believe in our hearts that Christ died for all sinners, only making salvation possible, giving the sinner the glory of making his blood effectual, is stealing Christ's glory who by himself purged the sins of his people and accomplished eternal redemption for us.
- To believe in our hearts that we made ourselves born-again is to steal the glory of God the Holy Spirit who alone regenerates his people, irresistibly according to his own will.
- To believe in our hearts that a sinner is saved, though he never believes on Christ or does not persevere unto the end in faith, is to rob God of his glory in giving faith and preserving his people by his power and grace.
- To believe in our hearts that a man is sanctified by the works of the law by his flesh is to rob God in Christ of the glory that belongs to him for being our Sanctifier and our Sanctification.

- Simply to not believe on and rest in Christ is to steal Christ's glory—Joh 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Do you see how far reaching God's law is? The first thing grace does is to teach us that we are guilty of breaking the whole law of God in Adam, as well as by our own thoughts—Ephesians 4: 28: Let him THAT STOLE steal no more. This word does not suggest that some stole but others did not—this word declares we all stole because we are all guilty in our flesh.

II. SECOND, GRACE TEACHES GOD'S CHILD THAT CHRIST ALONE FULFILLED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW FOR HIS PEOPLE.

When he says to each believer, **“let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth,”** we first must understand Christ did this for his people.

The Law of Restitution

God requires not only that the law be kept but God requires restitution, by the thief, to those whom he robbed:

Leviticus 6: 4: Then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, 5: Or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering. fifth part

We robbed God and we robbed ourselves.

Restitution to God

Christ Jesus never stole anything—from God or man. But his people did. So Christ made restitution to God on behalf of his people

Psalm 69:4...I restored that which I took not away.

Christ did so by glorifying God in his heart and his life in all things, by establishing God's law by his perfect holiness and righteousness, by satisfying divine justice by his death on the cross, by his labor—by his finished work—Christ made full restitution to God on behalf of his people.

Restitution to The Robbed

Here is the part that is amazing! God's elect were the robbers—we not only robbed God, we robbed ourselves. Yet Christ not only made restitution to God on our behalf, Christ made restitution to us, above and beyond what we robbed ourselves of by making us righteous and holy before God's holy law, by sanctifying us by creating a new man in us in true righteousness and true holiness, by making us eternally alive to God so “nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” (Rom 8: 35-39)

By Laboring

Christ did this for us, **Ephesians 4: 28, by laboring.** Christ's work on this earth was tiresome labor.

John 4:6: Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

In the garden of Gethsemane, his disciple slept because they were tired—because they followed Christ as Christ labored on behalf of his people. But Christ did not sleep.

Hebrews 12:4: Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Christ did! He labored for his people, striving against sin.

Working the Good Thing

Christ did this for his people, **Ephesians 4: 28, by working with his hands the thing which is good,**

John 4:34: Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

John 9:4: I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

John 17:4: I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Christ Gives to the Needy

Christ did this for his people **Ephesians 4: 28:...that HE may have to give to him that needeth.**

We are the one in need: the poor and needy, bankrupt, guilty, robbers! But because Christ labored working with his hands Christ has all spiritual blessings to give to him that needeth. Christ gives us everything we need for acceptance with God, for eternal salvation:

- The gospel
- Life and a new holy heart
- Faith and repentance
- Perfect righteousness, free justification
- Constant protection from all our enemies
- One day he will give us a new, glorified, immortal body
- He has made us joint-heirs with Christ of all his eternal inheritance

Joshua 24:13: I have given you a land for which ye did not labour,...

It is all because Christ Ephesians 4: 28: labored, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. So grace gives the believer an entirely new motive: it is the mercy and love of God freely bestowed upon us.

2 Corinthians 5: 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

III. NOW IN LIGHT OF WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US, LET'S HEAR THE EXHORTATION AND THE REASON GIVEN—Ephesians 4: 28: Let him that stole steal no more:

but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

We Serve the Lord in our Jobs

Believer, as we consider how fervent Christ was, in laboring to work out a righteousness for us, who said, “I must be about my father’s business”, it is an easy and light yoke for Christ to say to us, be

Romans 12: 11: Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;...13: Distributing to the necessity of saints;...

Colossians 3: 22: Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24: Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Colossians 4: 1: Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Our Master in heaven—by his labor—is just to give us mercy because he satisfied justice so he is just to make us the righteousness of God in him. We have that perfect measure God requires to be accepted of God. Christ gives it to us justly and equally.

Giving to the Needy

Brethren, it is a great blessing Christ has given us, to have a heart to imitate Christ in laboring and giving to those in need. It is Christ our example whom Paul followed as Paul set an example for the church,

Acts 20:35: I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

So God says to us for whom Christ labored:

Hebrews 13:16: But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

God is well-pleased with Christ’s sacrifices, well-pleased with communicating to us the manifold riches of his grace, well-pleased as we give to the needy what God has given to us—**CHIEFLY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!**

It is the will of the new man, created within us, to always work an honest job and to give cheerfully to those in need—especially through the furtherance of the gospel—because we understand what great love God loved us in Christ

1 John 3:17: But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

One last thing: this provision should be sacrificial. Because we are called to trust that God, who spared not his only Son, shall freely provide for us so we are able to minister to those in need.

1 Corinthians 15: 58: Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Hebrews 6:10: For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11: And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Amen!