

Rev. Reuel Dawal

Heidelberg Catechism / Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28

1. Why Stealing is Wrong
2. Various Ways We Rob Others
3. God's Provision for Robbers

Notes

Benediction: Philippians 4:19-20

Introduction

- Everybody knows that stealing from someone is wrong (e.g., video of riding tandem). It is obviously wrong
- But despite that common knowledge, people still rob one another (in different ways).
- Martin Luther , *"If we look at mankind in all its conditions, it is nothing but a vast, wide [shelter] full of great thieves."*
- Some steal also in non-violent and indirect ways.
 - Government projects (e.g., logo of PAGCOR, pera ng taumbayan)
- SEGUE: Obvious or less obvious stealing —> robbery because of consumerism, materialism, and other forms of self-gratification.
- POINT: **Not only do people take what *already* belongs to others—we also take and withhold what could have been given to others instead.**
- Outline:
 - a. Why Stealing is Wrong,
 - b. The Various Ways we Rob Others, and
 - c. God's Provision for Robbers.

Main Point 1. Why Stealing is Wrong

a. God's sovereignty and wise providence

- Highest authority and power, owner of all
- Psalm 50:12 "... *the world and its fullness are mine.*"

We don't own anything (just stewards and servants)

- POINT: We don't own anything
- CLARIFY: In human terms, we have our own possessions (i.e., car, house named for the buyer).
- But the ultimate reality is, God is the owner of all things and **we are just stewards.**
 - Genesis 1:28 - not "fill the earth and **own** it, and take **possession** of the fish of the sea... and so on."
 - Genesis 2:15 - Stewards and servants to work and keep the God's world.

He's the sovereign owner and ruler of all things.

God's providence

- Sovereign, but also exercising wise providence despite man's sinfulness and problems
- Divine providence = wise distribution of portions for each creature. I have my own portion, you have your own portion.
- And it's not by chance, but given by God (rich or poor, businessman or employee, gifts/abilities)... God gives one a greater portion than the other.

So in everything—whatever he gives us, that is our due, that is our portion. Whatever he gives others, that is their portion.

Not everyone has equal right and enjoy all portions of this world (#SanaAll)

POINT: So the point is, everything given to us and to others is **not by chance but by the wise distribution of the sovereign Lord of all.** (don't pervert God's distribution).

b. God is the God of justice

- He distributes everything to everyone fairly and righteously according to his perfect will.
- *Not because we are deserving... but in his wisdom and justice, he gives what he think is right.
- POINT: So there's no injustice/wrong in God's part that we have what others don't, and others have what we don't have. (don't pervert that just distribution of God).

[TRANSITION:] ... That is the reason he commanded us, "*You shall not steal.*"

c. Stealing defined and illustrated

- Stealing is taking the **rightful** possession of our neighbors for ourselves (don't take or use without consent)
- Also, *intentionally* destroying others' possession (e.g., vandalism)

Severe penalty for stealing (Old Testament)

- Exodus 22:1-4
 - Evening - no bloodguilt; morning - bring to authorities for punishment
 - In any case, there's consequence. Multiple times higher recompense/payment (or else thief will become slave)

Severe penalty for stealing (New Testament)

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

That's how much God hates stealing from others.

Illustration: Me Stealing from Others as a Child

- Thief in childhood (family knows)
- Grade 4 or 5 (shampoo)
- How sinful that is?

- Greed and envy of what others have
- Ingratitude of what I have
- Destroying God's world.

CONCLUDING POINT: So, friends, stealing from others is wrong and sinful because it is **opposing and perverting God's sovereign, wise, and just distribution of our portion in this life.**

[TRANSITION]: ... the law of God is comprehensive, and the truth is—we have been robbing others in various ways. And that leads us to the second point...

Main Point 2. Various Ways We Rob Others

- Not limited to physical possessions and the outright stealing of physical possessions
- 4 major other ways (with specific examples).

Other Way 1. Committing other forms of sin

- 3rd & 4th commandment
- 5th, 6th, and 7th commandment
- Interrelated commandments... Any kind of sin = one way or another, we are robbing God and others.

Other Way 2. Taking Advantage of or Disregarding Others

- HC = Pang-gugulang/pandadaya (e.g., business dealings, gusto tayo lamang)
- Example: High pricing/barat magbayad (e.g., business clients before)
- Principle: If we only seek our advantage at the expense of others or **in disregard** of others—we are withholding and stealing from them (consciously or unconsciously).
- Example: Kainan (especially men and young men)

Again, hindi man po natin **intensyon** na nakawaan o ubusan 'yong iba, gawin nating **intensyon** na isipin at mag-malasakit sa iba.

Philippians 2:3–4, *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Other Way 3. Abuse and Misuse of God’s Gifts

- HC = “God forbids pointless squandering of his gifts” given to us
- As Calvin said: *“The commandment requires that every man exert himself honestly in preserving his own.”*
- This covers everything that we have
 - Bodies,
 - Cultivating skills
 - Money (e.g., gambling or risky endeavors)
 - Other ways (Unnecessary shopping. Unnecessary eating. Unnecessary credit.) = Materialism in our generation
 - ILLUSTRATE: Kailangan kong kumain—does it *always* or does it *often* have to be in a high class restaurant? (Unless special celebration, with budget). Kailangan ko ng phone—does it *always* or does it *often* have to be the latest version?
 - Workshop on financial management

POINT: **Our money is ultimately not our money.** It is God’s (Stewards)

- Whatever portion we have (any), not for our own way and purpose... But for God’s purposes, including sharing with others.

Other Way 4. Not Giving to Others what They are Supposed to Receive from Us

And this too, has different examples.

1. Fulfilling our callings (pastor, employees, employers’ fair pay)
2. Serving one another (HC, LD 21, Q. 55, page 28)
 - a. Young - strength, energy, time

- b. Old (not insignificant in church) - Experience (insights, wisdom), care
- 3. Offerings (cf. Malachi, though no longer tithes, still applies to offering)
 - a. Withholding or misusing money = robbing God and family
- 4. Commitments ("Filipino Time", lateness robs others their time and attention)

POINT: Romans 13:7 - *"Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."* And we could add: Love to whom love is owed. Support to whom support is owed... and so on and so forth.

[*TRANSITION:*] Examine —> there's **only one verdict—we are all robbers**. In many ways, we rob God and fellow men. We are all **guilty of misusing and distorting God's distribution** of gifts to us and others.

But thanks be to God, **he nevertheless gives us exactly what we need**... And that leads us to our 3rd and final main point.

Main Point 3. God's Provision for Robbers

- Our need (forgiveness, deliverance from selfishness and greed, salvation) —> Exactly what Christ came for.
- Matthew 27:38 - *"two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left."*
- In fact, by submitting to **crucifixion meant for robbers and criminals**, Christ identified himself as **a criminal on our behalf**.
 - On the cross, Christ **paid** the penalty for us (forgiveness, eternal life, all saving benefits—including Holy Spirit)
 - Belgic Confession Article 21—in Christ, **God gives to us what he has not stolen** in the first place (His generosity since Adam)
 - We are the ones who owe God. We are the ones who destroyed

God's good creation.

What grace of God in Christ, right?

- Christ paid what we owed (for we can't), and out of his poverty made us spiritually rich
- Friends, we are thieves and robbers, but that is what Christ has done for us. Do you believe it? Do you receive it?
- Same hope and assurance with the thief, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

Application for believers

- As believers, Christ gives the Holy Spirit (transforms, encourages, and enables good stewardship).
- The Word reminds — pay what we owe to others (even gradually), serve and share, be content
- Romans 8:32 (We can serve and give to others, and not hold back!—because it is God who gives and sustains us sufficiently and generously.
- PRAYER: Needs and for things to share with others (cf. Proverbs 30:7-9)
- God faithfully provides and sustains. (End with Ephesians 4:28, *"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."*)

Let us pray.

BENEDICTION: Philippians 4:19-20