We Shall Not Steal

Thou shalt not steal. Exodus 20:15.

Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. The eighth commandment condemns man-stealing and slave-dealing, and forbids wars of conquest. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage one’s self by the
ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another, is registered as fraud in the books of heaven.

The eighth commandment is to barricade the soul, and hedge man in, so that he shall make no injurious encroachment—which his self-love and desire for gain would make on his neighbor's rights. It forbids every species of dishonesty, injustice, or fraud, however prevalent, however palliated by plausible pretenses.

"Thou shalt not steal" was written by the finger of God upon the tables of stone, yet how much underhand stealing of affections is practiced and excused. A deceptive courtship is maintained, private communications are kept up, until the affections of one who is inexperienced and knows not whereunto these things may grow, are in a measure withdrawn from her parents and placed upon him who shows by the very course he pursues that he is unworthy of her love. The Bible condemns every species of dishonesty.

To trifle with hearts is a crime of no small magnitude in the sight of a holy God.

As we deal with our fellow men in petty dishonesty or in more daring fraud, so will we deal with God. Men who persist in a course of dishonesty will carry out their principles until they cheat their own souls and lose heaven and eternal life.

So long as heaven and earth continue, the holy principles of God's law will ... continue, a source of blessing, sending forth streams to refresh the earth.

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