

87. The Seventh Commandment.

That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such. 1 Thess. 4, 6.

The Fifth Commandment safeguards the existence of life, the sixth regulates the continuation of life, the seventh protects us in the enjoyment of the things which serve to sustain life. Especially this commandment reaches far into the daily lives of men. The world is full of thieves. Therefore this commandment uncovers and punishes many sins.

God commands that no one shall damage or injure his neighbor in his possessions. We should so fear and love God that we will not take our neighbor's money or property nor get it by false ware or dealing. To steal is nothing else than to get another's property wrongfully into our possession.

The love of money is the root of all evil. Many have sinned for a trifle. Many a merchant has bought a place in hell for selling false goods. To save a little money, for instance, in order to get half-rates for their children, parents will make a false statement as to their age. To cheat the Government out of part of the taxes they ought to pay, many do not mention all of their property or give its full value to the assessor. God says Lev. 19: "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have: I am the Lord, your God." The prophet Amos censures the merchants of his time for swallowing up the needy and making the poor of the land to fail; for falsifying the ephah, the three-peck measure, making it small when they sold and making the shekel great, that is, taking too much money for inferior goods. Has the world grown better since those days? Do not our present-day business methods tally with those in vogue when Amos lived? What enormous thieves we have! Soon after each succeeding bankruptcy they start business again on a still grander scale. But they have their reward. God says: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong!" Oh, that everyone who desires to be a Christian would repent in true faith if he has sinned in this respect and henceforth always remember this word of God: "Let him that stole, steal no more."

Prayer.

Almighty God and Lord, who art the Lord of all and the Giver of all good gifts and who hast entrusted to us our portion of earthly goods that we should use them for Thine honor, for our own welfare, and for the benefit of our neighbor, we beseech Thee, for Thy dear Son's sake forgive all the infidelities of our stewardship, our coveting of what is not our own, and all our unfair dealings with men. Grant us grace to work with quietness, diligence, and faithfulness and to eat our own bread. Amen.

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy free bounty gave
My body, soul, and what I have
In this poor life of labor.
O grant that I may through Thy grace
Use all my powers to show Thy praise
And serve and help my neighbor.

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