

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for December 9, 2018

From Stealing to Sharing
Ephesians 4:28

I. Stop stealing

Let the thief no longer steal,

- Same Greek word used twice in this phrase, “*klepto*”
 - We recognize it from our English word, “kleptomaniac”
- Steal - “to take (the property of another or others) without permission or right, especially secretly or by force”¹
- Clearly prohibited in 10 commandments, the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets
 - Exodus 20:15 “You shall not steal” (8th commandment)
 - Leviticus 19:11a, 13 “You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely... 13 You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning.”
 - Joshua 7:10 “The LORD said to Joshua, ‘Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? 11 Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings.’”
 - Hosea 4:1-2 “Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; 2 there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”
 - Jeremiah 7:9-10 “Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, 10 and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations?”
- Demonstrated in the Garden of Eden
 - Genesis 2:15-17 “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”
- Clarification of stealing

¹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/steal>

- Taking for ourselves what God has given to someone else to steward or manage
- Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,”
- James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”
- Thus, all that we have is clearly a gift from God to enjoy and steward/manage to the best of our ability for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31)
 - This applies to all your assets
 - Money, cars, trailer, boat, house(s), etc.
- It is not your place to independently decide you deserve someone else’s things
- It is not your right to autonomously decide you deserve someone else’s stewardship from God
- God has given to them exactly what He wants them to have for His glory
- God has given to you exactly what He wants you to have for His glory
- To steal is to tell God that He is wrong
- To steal is to rebel against God’s plan and provisions for you in life because you are convinced you need something more or different
- To steal is to fail at recognizing God’s gifts to you as an opportunity for you to be a steward for His glory
- How was this happening with the Ephesians?
 - Utilizing the Christian community as a means to further their business
 - Christian relationships were only a means to an end
 - Unethical practices in jobs that had become the norm in society
 - Tax collectors
 - Lazy and idle people stealing since they were out of a job
 - There was not exactly a welfare system established
- Paul addresses all of these practices of stealing and exhorts the one engaged in theft to steal no longer
- How does this happen in the church today?
 - Utilizing the Christian community as a means to further their business
 - Christian relationships were only a means to an end
 - Unethical practices in jobs that had become the norm in society
 - Jobs containing practices of stealing, lying, cheating, or fraud all are a form of theft because one is taking that which they did not properly earn according to the rules of the government
 - Lazy and idle people stealing since they were out of a job
 - People find Christians to be suckers and generous; thus, they constantly look for handouts from those in the church, even though they could get a job

- Why does this happen in the church today?
 - Greed, coveting, discontentment, jealousy/envy, laziness
 - As with any outward expression of sin (such as theft) it always springs from an inward desire at odds with God’s will and character

II. Toil tirelessly

but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands,

- Paul calls the Ephesians to put on “labor” and “honest work”
- Notice that Paul does not call these believers to beg or team up with a rich family in the church at Ephesus
- Paul calls these believers to stop stealing and to start working!
 - Obviously we assume that these believers had the physical abilities to work
- Why does Paul call these Ephesian believers to work?
- Why is work the solution for these thieves that were prone to steal?
 - First, because work is what we were designed to do
 - Genesis 2:15-17 “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”
 - Second, because work is the means by which we “earn our own living” rather than becoming a burden to others
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:12 “Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.”
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8 “For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.”
 - Third, because work will prevent us from becoming a busybody or a gossip
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:11 “For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.”
 - Fourth, because work is the opposite of idleness and laziness
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:11 “For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.”
 - Fifth, because work is the means by which we take care of our families
 - 1 Timothy 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

- Sixth, because work is a part of our witness to the world
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 “and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.”
- Seventh, because work is an example of a good work that we have been called beforehand to walk in during our Christian lives
 - Ephesians 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”
 - ESV - “doing honest work”
 - “Honest” = “good” or “*agathon*”
 - NKJV - “working with his hands what is good”
- This gives us an insight into Paul’s view of work
 - Paul did not view work as a necessary evil
 - On the one hand work was/is certainly a means to an end
 - Paycheck, providing for one’s own needs, providing for family, etc.
 - On the other hand work was/is a sanctified endeavor by which one brings glory to God
 - Paul says that the work itself is a participation in doing good works
 - Work itself fits perfectly into God’s plan for you to walk in good works
 - Sanctification - Diligence not laziness
 - Witness - Sharing Christ at work
 - Glorifying God - Working as man was designed to do (Genesis 2:15-17)
- Hopefully the Ephesians examined their lives and their hearts upon hearing this verse
 - They needed to plainly consider whether or not they were working
 - They also needed to consider what their mentality was at their job
- We too need to examine our lives and hearts after reading a verse like this
 - Are we working as God has designed us for work?
 - Is our attitude correct in our approach and efforts at our work?

III. Give generously

so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

- While we have encountered several reasons across Scripture for the purpose of work, Paul reveals a specific reason here at the end of verse 28
- The Ephesians were to stop stealing and start working so that they might be positioned to generously share and contribute to those in need
- Examples of generous giving in the early church

- Acts 2:44-45 “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”
- Acts 4:32, 34-35 “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”
- Think of the impact that such generosity would have upon the saints at Ephesus
 - Jews and Gentiles looking out for one another’s needs and interests
 - Surely this would be a most unifying act for those in the church
 - John 13:35 “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - The world would see and be amazed at the generosity of such antithetical people groups
- Example of generous giving in Paul the Apostle
 - Acts 20:33-35 “I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”
 - Paul’s own address to the Ephesian elders
 - “By working hard in this way we must help the weak...”
 - Saying of Christ Himself
 - The world’s philosophy is quite different
 - The world says take whatever you can get
 - Christ says that true blessing come in giving
 - The world will always prop up the lie that you need more
 - Christ challenges you to give more
 - Christ is the ultimate example of giving
 - 2 Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”
 - This is sacrificial giving
 - Christ is our example of how we must give our life away to find it in the end

- If you have not lost your own life of pursuits and ambitions for the sake of finding Christ as your perfect sacrifice on the cross, giving will remain a most elusive and confusing concept to you
 - If you have lost all that you once were and wanted for the sake of finding eternal life in Christ, then you will be a generous person
- Principles of generous giving
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7 “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
 - Attitude is everything
 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 “We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints”
 - Amount is irrelevant