

Exodus Chapter 20 v 15

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to those of you who are surviving. I think probably about 90% of the church has had cold or flu in the last week or two. I've got man flu, which as you know is much, much, much worse than anything else that anybody else has. So I've dragged my living corpse up to this morning. But the Lord is good and faithful and gracious.

So we can come and worship him and rejoice in him. We've got lots of folk away as well. Please come in, as well as folk down with colds and flus too. But we're here to worship and to thank God for his goodness. And the verse on the screen there comes from 2 Corinthians and chapter 9, where Paul, after he's been thinking about the generosity and the goodness of God's people, he says, thanks be to God for his indescribable gift. His indescribable gift. There's no words really that can explain, no words that can describe the love of God to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift is quite, leaves us quite speechless and astounded.

And yet we're to give thanks to God for all that Christ has done for us. And our first hymn is going to come up on the screen behind me. My heart is filled with thankfulness for him who bore the pain. As we come to worship the Lord Jesus, I hope that in our hearts we have that wonderful sense, thank you God, that you love me so much that you gave your son to be the Saviour and my Lord. So let's stand and sing as the words come up on the screen.

My heart is filled with thankfulness. Let's bring our thankfulness to God in prayer. Let us pray together.

O Lord our God, we have so much to thank you for. Even our very being here this morning is because you've given us health and strength. And though we may have aches and pains and coughs and colds and all sorts of bugs and allergies, yet Lord we thank you that you give us strength to wake each day, to live each day. You give us breath. And O Lord we want to thank you. We thank you that we have come from homes with beds and we've got clothes to wear and food to eat, things that we often take so easily for granted, yet many others have not. These are gifts of your love and grace and care to all people, to all men, to all women, to all boys and girls. And yet Lord we thank you for your greatest gift, that gift that Paul spoke about as the indescribable gift, that gift which is beyond words, that gift, that gift, O Lord, which really we just can't fully comprehend and understand, the gift of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, who came into this world to live amongst us, to know the aches and pains, to know the suffering and the difficulties and the trials of life, to know what it is to feel pain and to be rejected, who knew and knows what it is particularly to bear our sin upon the cross and suffer and die for us. Lord, what amazing love there must be in your heart, Lord Jesus, that you are willing to go to such lengths to win for us forgiveness for our sins, to bring us into a right relationship with God, to cause us to become his children, loved and precious in his sight.

[3 : 42] Lord, what love there must be in your heart, Father God, to give so willingly of the most precious possession that you have, the one that you love the most for us. Lord, and what have we done to deserve that love? Nothing. We've done everything, in fact, to deserve your anger and your rejection.

We've been sinful and selfish and proud and greedy. We've been so concerned with ourselves, we've given no thought of concern for you. We've broken your commandments. We've acted, Lord, in ways which really deserve that punishment, that everlasting punishment of separation from you in hell.

And yet, Lord, because your love is so great and you, because you were not willing, not willing that we should have to suffer such separation from you, you gave Christ that he should suffer that separation in our place, that on the very cross which he died, that there he endured not just the pain, the physical awful pain, but there he endured that very real emotional and spiritual pain of your punishment against our sin, your anger against our wickedness, your justice against our crimes. And we thank you that, Lord Jesus, you did that. And Father, you did that. Such is your love for us. And Lord, we want to say thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. That simply by receiving the gift, receiving that wonderful gift of Jesus as our saviour and our sin bearer, Lord, you forgive us and you receive us and you pour out your spirit into our hearts and you make us, Lord, to be new creations. And we come, Lord, to give you thanks that Jesus is the one who has conquered death for us and who is the one who is alive today and is the one who walks besides us as we've sung, the one who gives us strength in our weakness, the one who indeed we shall, we look forward to being within the presence of in heaven one day. Oh, Lord, we thank you that this is your gift of love to us. And we want to bring our love to you. We want to respond to your love with love ourselves in our hearts. We want to love you, oh Lord, with our life, with all that we are. We want to live for you and show others, Lord, the wonder of the transformation you've done in us. We want, Lord, to worship you and praise you. We want to delight in you as you delight in us. We want, Lord, to live those lives set free from the power and the guilt and the shame and the sorrow of sin. We want to live those lives in the freedom of the love of God, the freedom to do what is right and just, to live those lives, oh Lord, which truly are the lives that you created us for, the lives of love. Be with us then and help us this morning. Speak to us, encourage us, strengthen us. Oh, Lord, bless us and do us good for we ask these things in and through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Now from our Bibles, and if you do have a Bible to hand, then turn with me to Malachi and chapter 3. Malachi is the very last of the books in the Old Testament and if you've got one of our church Bibles, that's page 961. So if you've got one of the red church

Bibles, 961, otherwise listen as we read from verse 6. We'll read from verse 6 of Malachi chapter 3, page 961 through to the end of the chapter. Again, if you want to try and find Malachi, very last book of the Old Testament just before we come into the New Testament.

Reading from verse 6 of chapter 3. I, the Lord, do not change, so you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors, you've turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty. But you ask, how are we to return? Will a mere mortal rob God, yet you rob me? But you ask, how are we robbing you? In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse, the whole nation, because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will be, there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe, says the Lord Almighty. Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land, says the Lord Almighty.

[8 : 51] You have spoken arrogantly against me, says the Lord. Yet you ask, what have we said against you? You have said, it is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements, and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed.

Certainly, evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it. Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name. On the day when I act, says the Lord Almighty, they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.

We thank God for his faithful word. In spite of speaking to the children about the seventh commandment, we're actually looking now at the eighth commandment this morning, and that is simply, you shall not steal. You shall not steal.

Two men were on trial for armed robbery, and an eyewitness took the stand in the court to give her evidence. The prosecuting lawyer began to question her. So, you say you were at the scene where the robbery took place.

Yes, she said. You saw a vehicle leave at high speed. Yes. And there were two men, added the lawyer.

[10 : 47] Yes. Yes. They were inside the car. Turning to the rest of the, or to the jury, that's it, and the rest of the court.

The lawyer said, and are these two men present in the court today? At that moment, the two men in the dock sealed their fate, for before the witness could answer, they raised their hands.

That didn't come across all that well, but you get the idea. Not everyone is either that stupid, or that honest, to admit that they have broken this eighth commandment, you shall not steal.

In fact, if we were to go around and ask most people, they would say, no, I've never stolen anything, I'm not a thief. But as with each of the commandments we've looked at, every one of them has been broken by every one of us in the spirit of those commandments as God intended them to be kept, not just in the outward.

If you think I'm being a little bit harsh in saying that each one of us is a thief, then think about these activities and similar ones to them. Borrowing something that you've never returned.

[12 : 04] Exaggerating a tax return. Taking an extra ten minutes for your lunch hour. Using the firm's telephone to make calls.

Paying cash to a tradesman to avoid paying VAT. Moving a garden fence just a few inches further from your house. Driving your car the day after the tax has expired.

These and countless others are acceptable, socially acceptable practices. But really they're all variations of stealing in one way or another. The reality is that we live in a materialistic world where greed permeates every area of our lives in all sorts of different ways.

And so we recognize that God giving this commandment is a commandment for all people at all time, including us today. It's bang up to date. It speaks into our present lives.

We think about all the throuser that went on just a few years ago about the expenses claims of MPs. About the bankers and their greed.

[13 : 16] We realize that do not steal is something which we need to hear as a society again and again and again. And of course when we look at these commandments what we've been seeing is that they are not simply a bare negative which forbids something wrong.

The commandment that God gives us actually promotes and encourages us to do something good. We see in this commandment a reflection of God's character. The sort of person he is.

We see something of Jesus, the one who came to fulfill all the commandments of God. The only person who's ever lived that sinful, perfect life. And we see as well how we are to live as Christians in today.

Keeping God's commandments. Applying the truth of his word in a way which guides, directs, protects and blesses us. So what does this commandment, do not steal, tell us about God?

Well it reminds us of the truth that everything that we possess is given by God. Everything that we have has come from God. That's why he has the authority to tell us how we can use our own gifts and finances and possessions.

[14 : 35] And how we are to treat the possessions of others. God has that authority because he's the one who gives it. The Bible teaches us again and again that everything in this world and everything that exists, exists because God made it.

Even in heaven, one of the songs that God's people sing in the worship of him is a song about God's creation. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.

For you created all things and by your will they were created. Everything was made by God. And therefore if you and I possess things it's because God has given them to us.

And that doesn't just mean our houses or our homes or our possessions or our money in the bank. It means even the skills that we have, the intellect we have, the abilities we have.

Everything comes from God. For James writes this, So you and I and all that we are is God given.

[15 : 44] Belongs to him. That's what this commandment tells us first of all. But therefore it also tells us that God must be the most generous giver in the whole universe.

For God to have given us all these things shows just what a generous God he is. John writes in his first, in John chapter 1, From the fullness of God's grace we have all received one blessing after another.

Now of course God has no limit to his possession. God has no limit to his wealth. God has no limit. He is infinite. He has all things and all things he has. He's created simply by his word.

So when God gives and gives and gives, He doesn't diminish his reserve, As when we pay bills at the bank, the bank balance goes down. God's bank balance doesn't go down.

But that doesn't mean that God is any less generous in giving. It doesn't diminish how generous he is. It's a very characteristic of God to give.

[16 : 52] Some people have that idea that somehow God is stingy and tight. That God withholds good things from people. That God doesn't want us to enjoy life. Or want us to have blessing.

That's quite the opposite. And even this commandment and all through the Bible teach us, God loves to give. God delights to give. God created the world that he might be seen as a giver.

And it's from that very characteristic of God that we understand What God wants us to be when he says do not steal. He doesn't just mean he doesn't want us to take away from others.

Rather he wants us to give from what we have to others. There's one gift above all all, above all else that God has given which proves the greatness of his generosity.

One gift beyond the physical gifts that we have, beyond the health gifts, the material gifts we have that show that God is wonderful in his generosity. In Romans and chapter 8 the Apostle Paul writes, He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all.

[18 : 01] The greatness of the generosity of God can only begin to be grasped when we realize that God did not hold back the giving of his most precious possession, his one and only son, but gave him freely, willingly for us sinful people.

Even as Christians, you know, we do fail to grasp that or forget that truth that God has given to us his son. We talk so often about it that there can be a time when as Christians we can find that familiarity breeds contempt.

We don't actually really sit down and meditate and think upon the wonderful generosity of God. He should have given Christ his son.

There's no comparison in human history that comes close to illustrating the enormity of the generosity of the sacrifice of God the Father. That most famous of verses in the Bible, John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

That verse should never lose its bite. We should never be able to say, dear friends, For God so loved the world he gave his one and only son.

[19 : 23] We should never be able to think of that verse or speak that verse without us Christians having a sense of being moved. For me.

God gave his son for me. He loved the world so much that he should come and lay down his life for me. So this commandment, do not steal, tells us God is the giver of all things.

That's why he has the authority to tell us not to take. He's the one who's given us, especially in Jesus, treasures and blessings and good things. We've got everything from God.

In one sense, that's why we do not need to steal. Because God is our provider. God is the giver of good things. We see as well, as I want us to think about, the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly about him, the one who said, I have not come to dismiss or get rid of God's law, I've come to fulfill God's law.

How did Jesus keep this commandment, you shall not steal? Well, he never stole. He never took anything that did not belong to him. Now we could say, of course, everything belonged to him because he is God.

[20 : 34] He could have taken whatever he wanted, but he never did. He never stole. In fact, when it comes to the law of the land, when he stood before Pilate to be tried as a criminal, Pilate was able to say to those who accused him, I find no basis of a charge against him.

He's broken no laws. Whether it be robbing or stealing or murder or anything. Even Judas, the man who betrayed the Lord Jesus, when he realized what a wicked and evil thing he did, spoke about Jesus' innocence as he threw the money back to the religious leaders.

And that hardened centurion, that soldier who stood guard over Jesus as he suffered and died, saw him and said, surely this was a righteous man.

A man who never broke a law or a commandment. So the testimony of the people who met with Jesus was, he never broke this commandment. He never took. In fact, quite the opposite.

When you read the life of Jesus, what do you find? Rather than taking, he's always giving. He's always giving to those who are in need. Remember how he sat down, he got the 5,000 people who were hungry to sit down, and he fed them.

[21 : 49] We're told that he did that with another 4,000 on a separate occasion. But it was giving those things which money cannot buy, which shows the generosity of Jesus, shows Jesus fulfilling this command.

When they came to him who had no sight, he gave them sight. When he came to them and they had no strength to walk, he gave them strength to walk. When they came to him because their loved ones had had their life ripped from them, he gave them life and raised them from the dead.

When he stood before those who were kidnapped and ensnared and trapped by demons, he gave them freedom. Sin robs humanity.

Sin takes away from us those things which God wants us to enjoy. But Christ again and again in his life repaid and gave back to people those things that sin had robbed from them.

But of course again, it's in the very life of Jesus, in his mission, that we see how generous he is. We see how he gave. When we think of the price that he paid, the cost that it was to him to come from heaven, to take on our humanity, to go to the cross, to suffer in our place, then we, only then, can we realize just what a heart of generous giving is in our Lord Jesus.

[23 : 19] We sang there that hymn, it comes from these words of Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he was God, all things were his.

Yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. We just can't even begin to grasp.

Even if someone like President Trump, the man who now holds this position of great authority, and we understand billions of dollars, for him to come down and to strip himself of all those assets, strip himself of that title, to become as a refugee and a beggar on the streets, is nowhere near the comparison for Christ, the Son of God, to come and be the Savior of sinners.

But he did it willingly. He did it knowingly. He did it purposefully. He wasn't forced to do it. And especially Jesus keeps this commandment, do not steal, in the greatest way.

Because stealing is not only the taking from someone, something that belongs to them, but surely stealing is also the refusal to give to somebody that which they need.

[24 : 44] Think of a doctor. A doctor who has, within his possession, a medication, a cure, for a person who is dying of a terminal illness.

And that doctor has the power, has the medication, has the cure, for that person, that they might live. But he withholds that, and will not give it. Then surely that doctor has become not only a thief, but a murderer.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, while he was in heaven, as the eternal, and everlasting son of God, held within his power, the only way of salvation, for humanity.

The only way of forgiveness. The only way of peace with God. The only way to escape, eternal hell. And because of his great love, and because he is so faithful, he would not keep that to himself, but came and gave it willingly.

When our Lord Jesus Christ came, to give himself as our saviour, he didn't have to do that. It wasn't that we deserve it. We don't deserve, God's gift of salvation.

[25 : 55] We don't deserve, that Jesus should come, and suffer, a great loss to himself, to rescue us. We don't deserve, any of those things. We deserve God's, anger. We deserve, God's punishment.

We deserve, God's judgment. We've lost all right, to God's goodness, by our own rebellion, against God, by our own sinfulness, and selfishness. But Jesus, in giving himself, in the way that he did, so completely, and fully, for you, and for me, and accomplishing, that wonderful, rescue plan, and deliverance, from death, has perfectly fulfilled, God's commandment, in its most positive, and beautiful form.

And he did that all, in spite, of the truth, that we are, thieves, of God. We are thieves, of God.

You say, well, perhaps I haven't done, all those things, that you spoke about, fiddling my taxes, or anything like that. I haven't broken, this commandment, you shall not steal, but dear friends, we have.

We've stolen, from God. We've received, from him, everything, but we've given him, nothing. We've taken, from his hand, life, and all earthly, and material blessings, and we have, withheld from him, proper, recompense, proper, repayment.

[27 : 24] Many of us, were brought up, to pray the Lord's Prayer. The first, request after, give us, our daily bread, is this, forgive us, our debts.

Forgive us, our debts. What is it, that we owe God? Well, we owe God, our love. The first, and greatest commandment, says Jesus, is this, love the Lord, your God, with all your mind, and heart, and soul, and strength.

We are to love God, with everything, not just a little bit, on a Sunday morning, not just with a little bit, of money here, and there, not just when we feel like it, but with everything, that we are. We are to worship him, we are to honour him, we are to serve him, we are to give to him, our very lives, and hearts, and all that we are.

But what have we, repaid him with? We've repaid him with hate, with dishonour, we've repaid him, with rebellion, we've repaid him, with breaking his commandments, we've repaid him, with withholding to ourselves, and giving ourselves, the honour and glory, that is his.

We have given him nothing, when he deserves everything. This is the amazing thing, that when our Lord Jesus Christ, went to the cross, he paid off our debts to God.

[28 : 48] Those debts of love, those debts of obedience, those debts of faithfulness, he paid the debt, that hung over us, and he paid that debt, with his own life blood. In 1 Peter, in chapter 1, Peter writes this, For you know, that it was not with perishable things, in other words, things of this world, things that corrupt and rust, it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed, a price paid, redeemed from the empty, way of life, handed down to you, from your forefathers, but with the precious, blood of Christ.

The most precious possession, in the world, is not the, not a great ruby, or a diamond, or all the gold, or Fort Knox, the most precious possession, in the world, is the very life, of the Son of God, and yet the life, of the Son of God, was paid, in full, and given in full, to clear your debt, before God, to wipe the slate clean.

And now it is, through the Lord Jesus Christ, that not only, is our debt repaid, but rather now, we are able to live, those lives, as we were meant to live, of giving to God, what he deserves, of giving him obedience, of giving him love, of giving him faithfulness, of giving him service, not out of, a sense of repayment, not out of, a sense of guilt, not out of, a sense of debt, but out of, genuine love.

Paul writes, to the Christians, in Rome, he reminds them, and says to them, therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in light of God's mercy, in view of all, that God's done for us, to offer your bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, and pleasing to God, this is your true, and proper, worship.

If we fully appreciate, what Jesus has done for us, if we fully understand, the debt he's paid, on our behalf, if we have grasped, the immensity, of his love, poured out into our lives, when he took our sin, then there's only, one way, that we can respond.

[31 : 05] Lord, you've given, everything to me, and therefore, Lord, I give everything to you. All that I am, all that I could be, all that I possess, everything.

How much of, me, belongs to Jesus? How much of, what I am, and who I am, do I count as his?

Is there, perhaps, those little parts, that I think, well, they're mine still.

You know, yes, yes, Lord, I can understand what you're saying, and yes, Lord, I can give you this, and I can give you that, but this is mine.

No, no, this is mine. Then, dear friends, for us to speak, or think in that way, means that we have not even begun, to grasp, what Jesus did for us, and paid for us.

[32 : 18] Because only when we see, that he gave everything, in his riches, he became poor, then only then, can we fully, understand, Lord, everything I am.

Oh, everything I am. And it brings us to, one very, very thorny issue, doesn't it? Do not steal. Remember, we read from Malachi, didn't we, how the people, of the Old Testament, God says, you've robbed me.

He was talking about, a thing called, tithes. In the Old Testament, the law was, that a tenth, of all that we earned, or made, or grew, or had, belonged to God.

We were to give a tenth, to him, in the Old Testament, and people didn't do that. And it brings us, to that very thorny issue, which as we said, at the very beginning, really, is the thing, probably that, most people in this world, and if we're honest, as Christians, love more than anything else, it's money.

Even as Christians, aren't we? We're consumed, by this, I must have money, I want to have money, money is the answer, if I had more money, if I win the lottery, make my life happier, if only I could earn this, then I'd be content.

[33 : 26] What about you and I, and our money, Christians and money? Should I give a tenth, of my income to God, as the Old Testament, commanded the Israelites?

Should I be paying, that tithe, each week, each month, from my earnings? Does that mean, before tax, or after tax? I had somebody ask me that, once a Christian.

If you've got to ask, is it before tax, or after tax, you'd ask yourself, what's the attitude, that you're giving? When we turn, to the New Testament, there is no command, given, there is no suggestion, given, that Christians, must pay one tenth, to God.

But there's a lot of talk, about Christians, giving everything to God. Much more than a tenth. Not just a little bit. Remember Jesus, as he stood, by the temple entrance, and he, there were people, rich people, coming with big bags of gold, giving to the temple, and the disciples, were questioning Jesus, who's given the most?

Because there was a widow, two tiny copper coins. All she had, she put in the offering. And Jesus said, she's the one. Not them.

[34 : 44] She's the one. She did it, secretly, in one sense. Not wanting people to see, but she gave all that she had. Remember in Acts, when Barnabas, we're told, the son of encouragement, we're told that he sold a field.

He didn't give a tenth of the money, he got from the field, he gave all the money, he had from the field, to the church, to be distributed, to be shared, to help others. When Paul writes, to the Corinthians, he reminds them, of the churches in Macedonia, who gave, not out of their wealth, he says, they gave, out of their extreme poverty.

When we look at the New Testament, in the life of the Lord Jesus, in the life of God's people, we see a people, we see a group of people, who do not measure their giving.

A people who do not say, well, let me see, let me do the maths, and calculate, how much can I afford, to give God? How much is mine, for my special treats, and how much is for him?

So in this matter of money, what does the Bible teach us? It teaches us, what we've been saying, all the way through, that everything that we have, belongs to God.

[35 : 55] Not just money, time, skill, ability, love, everything that you are, and that I have, belongs to God. Here's what Paul says, to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 6, you are not your own, you were bought, at a price, therefore honour God, with your bodies.

Price has been paid for us. God owns us, because he created us, but God owns us, because he's paid for us, with the very blood of his son, we've been purchased, for God. And everything that we are, and have, comes from him.

We're to give, very careful thought then, about, our finances, how we use our money, how we use our time, how we use our skills.

Again, our motivation is not, what must I do, to keep this commandment, so that I will escape judgment, but rather, we keep the commandment, out of love.

Our motivation is not, to be afraid, of stealing from God, but love for him, who loved us so much. 2 Corinthians, in chapter 8, Paul writes, to the believers, about their giving, he says, since you excel, in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in the love, we have kindled in you, see that you also, excel in the grace, of giving.

[37 : 18] I'm not commanding you, I want, to test the sincerity, of your love. You see, if we come to God's word, and we say, let's, let's find, an equation, which tells us, how much money, we should give, or how much time, we should give, or how much, of our love, we should give, then what will happen?

We will only give, to the limit, to that limit, won't we? We'll only give, just enough, just enough, to scrape through. I mean, how many of us, when we get the tax bill, at the end of the year, and the taxman says, you owe 3,000 pound tax, oh, I'm going to give him 4,000.

I think, they do such a good job, that government, I think I'm going to give him, 4,000 pound in tax this year, of course we don't. We just give enough, and even if it's a penny, we try to round it down.

Is that how we are with God? We would like, you would like me, in one sense, we would like the Bible, to say, right, every one of you, before tax, you must give, one tenth of your income, and you must give, one tenth of your time, and you must do this, and you must do that, and do that.

What would happen? We would all, just about, cross the line. What did Jesus say? When asked to go one mile, go, two. When they ask for the shirt, off your back, give them the, coat.

[38 : 40] Because of love. Love makes us generous. What made God generous, to you and me? Love. What did he give his son? God so, loved the world, he gave his son.

Why did Jesus, go to the cross, and die, and bear your sin, and mine? Was it not, was it because he just, wanted to cross the line? He just wanted to do enough. No, he did everything.

He gave himself. Love. Yet there is something, we can do practically, in this matter of giving. It's the very opposite, of stealing.

It's a positive fulfillment. Do not steal, but give. That's the commandment, in one sense. Don't take, but give. Be givers, not takers. It's more blessed, said Paul, to give, than to receive.

And we know that. We even know that just, even when we're not Christians, we know that the joy, of giving a gift, a birthday gift, or a gift at Christmas, or whatever, the joy that there is. So how should we give?

[39 : 42] In matter of our income, dear friends, we need to give, regularly. Here's what Paul has to say, just to, help the Christians, in 1 Corinthians. He says to them, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 16, and verse 2, on the first day of the week, each one of you, should set aside, a sum of money, in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I have come, no collections, will have to be made.

In other words, he's saying this, as you are paid, according to your income, give. Not a tenth, not a fifth, not a half, not all, but, he says, set aside, in keeping with your income.

Think about it, pray about it. Not pray about saying, what can I afford to give, and keep, but what, what do I want to give?

What does God give me, that I want to give? I see, I hear about a need, on the mission field. I hear about a need, within the life of the church, I hear about needs, how much, I want to give, Lord help me, pray about it.

Those of you, who are earning, those of you, who have pensions, those of you, whatever, pray about it, think about it, before the Lord, Lord, what is it, what is it you would like me to give? Give, in such a way, knowing, that God will provide.

[41 : 09] Give cheerfully, because that's what Paul says, to the Corinthians, in his second letter, to God wants us, to give cheerfully. Each of you, should give, what you've decided, in your heart to give, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves, a cheerful giver, and God is able, to bless you, abundantly, so that in all things, at all times, having all you need, you will abound, in every good work.

That's the lovely thing. As Christians, we can give, cheerfully, and give, and give, and give, because why? Because God will provide, our needs. Because God will give us, abundantly.

That's what he was saying, to the people in Malachi's letter. He said, look, give me, give me your tithes, give me your gifts. Why? So I can open, the floodgates of heaven, and bless you with more.

Now we're not preaching, and talking about this, sort of, twisted prosperity teaching, that sometimes, takes hold of the church, which is, oh if you give, you know, if you give a hundred pounds, to God, God will give you a thousand pounds, in return.

So, you know, that appeals to our greed. That's not what God's doing here. He's appealing to our hearts. He's appealing to our love. He's appealing to our faith. Do you trust God to meet all your needs?

[42 : 26] Then you don't need to steal. You don't need to be devious. You don't need to scheme. You don't need to plan, in that sense, in a wrong way, how you can get around the loopholes in the law. Does God meet all your needs, and give you abundantly?

Then, show that you love him. Show that you trust him. And again, let's get this right. This is not just about money and things. It's about who we are.

There's one debt, you see. All of us are debtors. All of us are debtors. And it's one debt. And here's what Paul says in Romans 13.

Let no debt remain. In other words, when we are to pay what we borrow, and give back what we take. Except, except the continuing debt to love one another.

Whoever loves his fellow man, has fulfilled the law. You and I are indebted to one another. I owe you a debt of my love. And you owe one another that debt of love.

[43 : 28] And we shall always be in debt for that. But let us keep up our repayments and not fall behind. Not with money alone. But with time, with care, with compassion, with prayer.

In all ways, fulfilling God's commandment and being like Christ. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty.

And see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Then all the nations will call you blessed.

For yours will be a delightful land, says the Lord Almighty. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.