

Lesson 171: Walking With Jesus - Part 3

Scripture: Joshua 7 & 1 Kings 17:8-14 (& Philippians 4)

Memory Verse: "God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Jesus Christ." Philippians 4:19

The 8th commandment tells us not to steal. Stealing is to **selfishly** take something that belongs to someone else without permission. Anyone who steals is reflecting the selfish sinfulness that is part of their old way of living without Jesus being Lord of their life.

Those who claim to follow Jesus must understand that NOTHING belongs to us, it ALL belongs to God. This is what being a steward means – God calls us to take care of whatever He entrusts to us. So if we steal, we are stealing from God.

God does not steal. His nature is the exact opposite; He **gives generously**. He may not give us the new toy or game we want, but the Bible promises that God gives the most important gift – forgiveness from Sin through Jesus – for ANYONE who asks! Anyone who is generous reflects God's Good Nature which becomes their nature as the Holy Spirit works in their heart.

Consider Achan. He had a selfish heart. Remember the battle of Jericho when God gave favor and victory to the Israelites over His enemies so the Israelites could receive the Promised Land? Achan was one of the men who was there when Jericho was defeated. The Israelites had been told to destroy everything in the city, with the exception of Rahab and her family, as well as the city's gold, silver, bronze, and iron. The metals were to go into the tabernacle treasury; they were "sacred to the Lord" (Joshua 6:19).

Even though Achan lived in a time of abundance and was well fed and taken care of, he wanted more. So when he was helping the Israelite army carry away the riches of the city that were meant for God, Achan kept some for himself. God revealed Achan's sin and punished him and his family severely [with death].

Now consider Achan's story in relation to the poor widow who lived during a time when there was a famine (brought on by wicked king Ahab's sinful disobedience), and food was VERY scarce. She had almost nothing but trusted God enough to share what little she had with Elijah the prophet. This is how it happened:

God told Elijah to go to Zarephath where he would be provided with food. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her to bring him some water and a piece of bread. When she told him that she didn't have enough to feed herself or her son, Elijah assured, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'" The woman trusted God and gave Elijah the last little bit of food that she had. God then blessed her tremendously for her faithfulness.

Hundreds of years later the Apostle Paul expressed this same sentiment to the Christians in Philippi who shared with him when he was in need. He writes "You Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News... Your gifts are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus!"

Without God's guidance, our own hearts can be easily swayed just as Achan's heart. But with God's good nature in us by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have desire and strength that lets us live generously like the widow in Zerephath. Those who walk with Jesus don't need to steal. Whether they have much or very little, they understand that spiritually, they are RICH beyond all measure and there is nothing they can take for themselves to improve their situation beyond that!