***Lights in the World - PH50-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:14-15***

Please open your Bibles to Exodus 20 once more as we continue to explore the Philippian requirement of Christians being lights in the world. The arrogance of the old sin nature in the human soul is so monumental that people think that they can reject the biblical rules of morality which we've been studying, and that God can't do a thing about it. Christians, however, who are oriented to Bible doctrine, know that this is both false and a very dangerous delusion.

God is never mocked. The time comes when his judgments are imposed. He warns in grace, and he gives opportunity for us to change our minds on these moral issues. But sooner or later, He lowers the boom. You and I, as believers, therefore, are called upon to be lights in a society engulfed in moral darkness and headed for destruction. We, in other words, are the preserving salt.

The code of the Ten Commandments has been given to guide the nation of Israel in matters of morality with these ten basic moral principles. These principles are applicable in every dispensation, and they have been restated, as we pointed out, in the New Testament. So while God is graciously patient toward sinful humanity, He will not be mocked by human arrogance relative to these moral principles. Immorality results in the loss of freedom, and in divine judgment, as well as great unhappiness. The point of biblical morality is to preserve your freedom.

We have noted that the last six commandments of this code deal with right relationships between people. We have thus far studied three of these six. The first one was honor or respect for parents. The second was not to be guilty of murder homicide. Thirdly, we have looked at the command of not to commit adultery–sexual immorality.

**The Eighth Commandment**

Now, in this session, we take up the eighth moral principle, which is stated in Exodus 20:15 in four English words, "Thou shalt not steal." These four English words are actually a translation of but two Hebrew words. The Hebrew word for "steal" is "ganav." "Ganav" simply means taking the property of another person without that individual's consent. Grammatically, it is in the "Qal" stem, which means it is a simple statement of a biblical principle. It is in the active voice which means that a person has the choice to steal or not to steal. It is in the imperfect which means at no time in the future, under any condition, is a person to do this. It also has a second word, the word "not," which is the Hebrew word "lo." This is the negative in Hebrew which is the strong absolute negative. It's like in the Greek, the little Greek word "ou" which is the absolute negative. There are no options left and no questions left on the fact that this is not to be done.

**Stealing**

So with these two Hebrew words, God has made a very dramatic declaration about a very key feature of morality which is widely and very subtly violated in our society today. Each of us struggles not to be guilty of this in ways that never even occurred to us that we are being guilty of violating this moral principle. What this principle is prohibiting is taking another's property by coercion; by fraud; or, without his free consent. The Bible indicates that theft includes damaging another person's property. If you back into somebody's car and leave a dent and then drive off, you've been guilty of stealing. You have damaged his property.

It also includes denying the person the use of his possessions. If you go out and hire a person to do something for you, or you secure some kind of service or a product, and then fail to pay for that product or that service, what you have done is tied up that person's money, and you are denying him the use of his money. That also is stealing. It is also destroying the value of a person's property. If a person has a piece of land with beautiful trees on it, which is going to make a lovely residence for a piece of residential property, and you decide to set up your tent there and build a campfire and burn down his trees, you have now damaged the value of his property. You are a thief.

Stealing is not determined by whether it is willful or accidental either. It doesn't matter that it was an accidental running into his car. You have still been guilty of robbing him of something that was his in that act. Stealing, remember, can be done not only illegally, which we all understand, but the United States government has discovered a very fantastic truism, and that is that you can steal legally if you're the government. We'll be looking at that, because this is one of the most monumental thefts which is taking place in this nation, and for which nations historically have been destroyed by God.

Furthermore, stealing is not determined by the value of the object taken. You may say, "Well, this is just a pencil. You can't call that stealing. As a matter of fact, this is just a paper clip. You can't call that stealing." We've got to reduce this to biblical concepts; to biblical frame of reference; and, to biblical meanings. It doesn't matter who the victim is. Some people think that if the victim is some kind of a no-good character, a gangster, or a hood, then it's OK to steal from him. The concept is that you don't steal from honest people, but it is alright to steal from thieves. That is not so. It matters not whether the person is rich; whether it's an institution like the government; or, whatever it is. That doesn't change the picture on whether it is stealing or not.

The fact of theft is not determined by whether the victim knows that you're ripping him off either. You may steal in such a way that the person that you're stealing from doesn't know anything about it. There are some people who actually think that as long as the victim doesn't know that you're stealing from him, then it's alright. But it is not as per biblical viewpoint.

Nor does necessity remove the fact that when you take something without the owner's consent, it is stealing. You may be starving to death and locked in a grocery store in the middle of a hurricane that has continued for three weeks. You start eating off the shelves of that grocery store. It's a necessity, indeed, to stay alive, but it is stealing. And after the hurricane is over, there will be a restitution that will be in order. So it does not matter, even if it's necessity. Stealing, as per the biblical viewpoint simply means taking what belongs to another without that person's free consent. This can be done in a variety of ways.

This principle is deeply embedded in the Scriptures, and it is repeated in other places. We have this in Leviticus 19:11 and Deuteronomy 5:19 being stressed to the Jewish people. Theft is frequently condemned, as well, in the Old Testament throughout. Zachariah 5:3, Ezekiel 33:15, Ezekiel 18:10, Ezekiel 22:29, Amos 3:10, and Isaiah 1:23 are examples of the Old Testament condemnation of stealing.

**Working**

Stealing is a shortcut to possessions. It bypasses the biblical means for gaining possessions. God wants you to increase your wealth. It is the will of God that you should increase your material possessions in general. For some of you, it may be the will of God that that increase should be bare minimum and bare operational status. Most of you perhaps will recognize that level as perhaps your calling. For other people, it would be considerably beyond it, but it is the will of God for you to possess things. But God has a means by which you are to secure those possessions, and that means is spelled out for us very clearly in the Word of God as being the result of your labors.

In Proverbs 13:11, we read, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished. But he that gathers by labor shall increase." Wealth gotten in a false way will work against you and be diminished. But that which is secured by legitimate labor, God will prosper and bless. Ephesians 4:28 states the same principle in the New Testament where we read, "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, that he may have the thing which is good to give to him that needs it." What this verse indicates to us is not only that we are to gain possessions as the result of our labors, not as the result of somebody's handout to us, but that furthermore, it is God's normative purpose that what we earn will not only be subsistence level, but it will even be more than we need, so we will be in the position to indeed assist those who have genuine needs of poverty.

This is the biblical method for meeting the needs of poor people. The Bible never envisions such a thing as a government or a state welfare program. This is, again, Satan's system moving in under do-goodism and human good concepts to substitute for the divine good provisions which believers should have been making, and which God envisions as the responsibility of Christians. That is to earn more than you need, which is not hard to do in this nation, even under the times economically that we live today, to have to give to those who are in need. So working and stealing are opposite approaches to securing money and property. Working is divine viewpoint. Stealing is human viewpoint.

**Inheritance**

From the Bible's point of view, wealth can also be biblically acquired by inheritance from your parents, and as a gift. It is interesting that the liberal so-called progressive mentalities in our government are now seeking to promote such concepts as disinheritance laws. They are seeking to establish laws that you cannot pass your inheritance on to your children; that every generation has to start off from scratch; and, that anybody's possessions which an individual has earned must be delivered over to the state. Now, that is as satanic a thought as you can find. It is not the will of God for what a parent has earned by his legitimate labors, to have to pass that on to the state. Rather, it is legitimate to pass it on to his children. The Bible recognizes, in so many words, that parents before God are obliged to care for their children.

The Bible says that any man who does not adequately provide for his family is worse in the sight of God than an infidel–than an unbeliever. Now that's strong language. That's any man. It doesn't say any man with the big help of his wife. That is also a notion of our day, and part of the oppression of materialism that has developed. In God's thinking, it is the father's responsibility to provide for his family. Whatever his wife may do is incidental to the picture. But anybody who does not do that, then God says that he condemns it, and you are under His judgment. So what you do earn that is surplus, you have a legitimate right to pass on to your children. That is biblical. The liberal mentality wants to stop inheritance and wants to stop gifts, but it does not care to stop welfare. Instead, it promotes it.

So what we are saying is that the Bible does approve of gaining personal wealth through honest labor. What the Bible does do is warn against forgetting God in your wealth. This is one thing that was spelled out very clearly to the Jewish people. In Deuteronomy 8:17, the Jewish people were told that when they found themselves prospering, they were not to forget that it was God who gave them that wealth. Now, human viewpoint mentality likes to compliment itself with its cleverness, because it knows how to buy on the stock market. It knows how to buy a piece of real estate in the right place that multiplies in value.

But don't you ever forget that the very next breath you take is only by the grace of God. It's only because that muscle called your heart is permitted to keep doing its job for one more second and one more time. It is only because you have the mental capacity to be able to go out and to earn a living. Don't you ever forget that there are people who every day discover that their minds stop functioning; they are crippled in body; or, they become incapacitated in such a way that they cannot further earn a living. The livelihood that was open to them the day before is slammed shut.

So only a fool fails to recognize, however far you may go in material gains, that it is because the grace of God has permitted you the capacity to do that. This same gracious God also closes doors of economic opportunity to you. Don't forget that He's the one that's doing it. Don't forget that in the closing of those doors, He is probably pointing a finger in some direction in order to tell you to do something other than you would have done had that door continued to be open to you. So what the Bible says is that God wants you to move in labor to seek to prosper yourself materially. But it warns you against forgetting who makes it possible for you to gain that wealth.

Scripture also warns against using your wealth to defraud others. James 5:1-6 describe the condition of a person who has economic power, and he uses this as a leverage to take advantage of people who do not have his same economic strength–those who are weak.

The Scripture also warns against the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10). Please never talk in such an ignorant way as we hear many people talk who don't know anything about the Bible, who say, "Well, you know, money is the root of all evil." When they say a stupid thing like that, they are quoting something that they've heard. But the real statement of Scripture is, "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It is the love; the affection; and, the obsession with money, and that, God says, will lead you into all kinds of evils. It will lead you to all kinds of personal sorrows. So it warns against that.

For that reason, this same passage in 1 Timothy 6:6-9 warn us against being obsessed to be rich. You see, you must have a balance while God says, "I want you to labor to provide your material needs and I want you to seek to go as far as, in My plan, I have designed for you to be prospered. But in the process of doing that, you are simply executing My plan, and you are not to become obsessed with wealth as a goal in itself." Do not fall into this very trap of becoming so obsessed with material things and riches that, even though they were once a significant contributing force in God's work, they neutralized themselves and found themselves removed as a functioning effective factor in the Lord's work. Emotional domination of the soul took over, and their mentalities became darkened to God's viewpoint because of their obsession with wealth and with material things.

So while God says it is His plan for you to earn your wealth rather than to use the route of stealing from others, it is also the pattern of God that we should hold our material things lightly. God called each of us to divine service. That's the only reason that you're going to get that next breath of oxygen to keep you going. That divine service requires financing. Therefore, he gives you a means of livelihood so you can finance the exercise of your spiritual gifts. If all you do with your money is to finance your living and increase your standard of living, then the Bible says that you are an unmitigated fool. Like the man who built greater barns, it puts to you the question, who's shall these things be once you have died? The point being, they shall certainly not be yours. But riches could have been yours. You could have walked right into heaven and had wealth there stored as divine good production.

So what you and I are to have materially, we are to earn. We are not to steal it in subtle ways or in open ways. But at the same time, we are not to be obsessed with material possessions. Every human being, from the Bible's point of view, has the right to private property. You remember that God created man originally with the specific purpose of having private property. In Genesis 1:26, we read the divine statement and purpose in the creation of man. Verses 26-27: "God said, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let him have dominion.'" There's the keyword. "Let him have dominion (possession) over the fish of the sea, over the foul of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image. In the image of God created He him; male and female, created He them." God created mankind, male and female, in order that men and women would dominate (would subdue) the earth.

One of the key features of the earth which they are to subdue is its material factors (its material possessions). While Exodus 9:29 tells us that the earth is the Lord's, we at the same time find from Genesis 1 that it is God's purpose to make man the custodian of His creation. This is our duty–to subdue and to possess the earth that God has made. Satan has perverted that in many ways. Of course, this connotes private property held in trust by individuals under the divine enlightenment of Bible doctrine. God, who designed freedom for man, and who designed man to be free, has also therefore provided him with dominion over creation in the form of private property. So the Bible throughout advocates private ownership of property, but personal possessions are to be used for the Lord's glory as the ground for freedom and happiness.

In other words, the Bible sustains, the economic system of capitalism as God's order. Sometimes you find in the Bible a communal system, such as you find in Acts 2:41-47 or in Acts 5. However, these were voluntary sharing situations, and they were temporary. They did not continue. But the rejection of the sanctity of private property will lead to the loss of personal freedom. What the state controls, the state can dictate in its use. What the state wants to control of material things is for the purpose of creating equality. Remember that private property and freedom go together.

**Government**

The opponents of private property make a great deal over the abuses of rich men and of big business, but they ignore the equal sins of poor men and the horrendous sins of state control such as you have under communism. The government can make laws, and does, to steal from productive and enterprising people in order to try to distribute the wealth. The result is it creates non-productive, indolent people. They do this by excessive taxation. God's way is for the productive, as we pointed out, to use some of their money to aid the genuinely poor. The government can never give what it has not first taken by force from those who are the creators of wealth. That's the only way the United States Treasury is filled. It is by forceful removal from people who create wealth into the United States Treasury. Then a Congress is elected with a certain mentality who determines what to do with the money in the Treasury. They determine how much to put in there, and what to do with it. It is that group that then has power over that property that they have taken from you.

To own your own property means power. That's why socialistic and communistic systems steal private property. They know that if people are permitted to possess their own property, that people have power. In order to remove power from the people, which is the point of communism and socialism, they must therefore take private property from the people, and therefore freedom on the part of the people: freedom of movement; and, freedom of choice. Instead, their property is put in the hands of a so-called elite Politburo Communist Party or something of that sort to make the decisions.

**Restitution**

What happens to a thief in the Old Testament? We can spell out what happened under those conditions if you'll turn to Exodus 22–the penalty for stealing. While this applies to the Jewish theocracy, it should be some indication to us today concerning how we should deal with those who steal. The basic punishment under the Mosaic Law was the principle of restitution. When you took something from somebody, or you damaged his property, or you devalued his property, you had to make it up to him. Not only did you have to make it up to him, but you also had to more than make it up to him. There was a penalty for your having stolen his property. Also, there was taking into account the fact that the man lost something by the fact you've denied him access to his property, or that you have ruined something that would have brought him future economic gain.

So in Exodus 22:1, we read, "If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep and kill it or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." The principle here was to restore to the victim his stolen property per se, but also the future gain that he lost. In the case of sheep here, sheep have other values besides just their meat: their wool; their hides; and, so on. Sheep are fantastically reproductive, practically like rabbits. So when a man has had a sheep taken, and in this case killed, he has lost all the reproductive wealth that would have come from that animal.

Therefore, the thief had to return not only the sheep that he had taken, but he had to return three more. He had to give a total of four for the one he had taken. That would cause a thief to think a second time. In the case of an ox, it was even worse to steal a man's ox, because the ox was an animal trained for labor. It pulled the plow. Therefore, there was the period of training that was involved in this animal which was also lost when somebody stole and killed this ox. For this reason, the price was higher. You had to return a total of five animals to replace the one that you had taken. This is the principle of restitution.

They didn't send people to debtor's prisons. There were no prisons in Israel. You realize that. The system in Israel was if a man committed murder, he was condemned of homicide (first degree murder) in the eyes of two witnesses. He was thereby condemned. The judgment was passed. They took him out and executed the man. That was it. There was no life imprisonment. They didn't need a prison. If a man was taken in one of the other capital crimes such as demonism, or if he was a perennial, incorrigible criminal–just a repeater, he was executed. That finished it. So consequently, in Israel, they didn't face this problem. When a man stole something, he wasn't given imprisonment. He had to make restitution. If he violated certain laws, he paid a certain fine, and it was big. The result was that the criminal element was either discouraged from pursuing its path of crime, or else his life was taken, and he was given the ultimate discouragement.

God has worked all this out. But, of course, we're so enlightened today that we have such a better system such that the whole thing is set up on a human viewpoint system. Well, in this case, the man made good what he stole.

There were some times when it was legitimate to kill a thief in the process of his stealing. Beginning at verse 2: "If a thief be found breaking in and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him." This is a thief coming in the dark of the night. He breaks into your house. They had a legitimate right under the Old Testament to drop him dead on the spot. But if it was a daylight robbery, verse 3: "If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be bloodshed for him, for he should make full restitution. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft." If he is in the daylight, you can identify him, and you are not allowed to kill him. He can be identified, and he can be brought to judgment. He will make full restitution for what he took. If he took something and he cannot restore what he took, then he is sold into slavery for the price of what he took. This gave him a second thought before he was ready to do it in the future.

In verse four, we have a thief caught with the goods: "If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox or ass or sheep, he shall restore double." Here he is caught with a live animal. So the owner gets his animal back plus one more. In this case, the owner has not lost the reproductive wealth from the animal. So it's a different situation. But if a person is caught red-handed with the animal, he must return it, and then he must pay the fine of an extra animal.

**Property Damage**

Now, in verses 5-6, we have the case of, what if I damaged somebody's property? What do I do then? Can I steal from a person by damaging his property? And that is an issue that we have some very definitive moral guidelines for us as believers here in this verse. Verse 5: "If a man will cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution."

Here in verse five, we have a person who deliberately is taking something that belongs to somebody else. Here in this agricultural society, it was turning your own animals loose to feed in another man's field, or even worst of all, to take one of his most valuable products, the fruit of his vines, the grapes from which so much was made, and that was so crucial to that lifestyle and to that culture. Well, if you did that, you had to return, again. The principle is give it back–restitution. But it was not to just give it back. It had to be the best that you had. You didn't give back something that was less in quality than what you took. In fact, it had to be, if anything, a little better than what you took.

Then in verse six, we have another condition of damaging another person's property: "If fire break out and catch in thorns so that the stacks of grain or the standing grain or the field be consumed therewith, he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution." Here you have done something. Again, in this context, you've burned a man's field. A man starts burning the field off on his land. He does it under bad conditions of a high wind. The wind carries it over to his neighbor's field, whose grain is standing there, ready to be brought in, and he burns the man's grain. He has to restore all the grain that he burned through the fire which he started. This is the principle of restitution.

It doesn't matter whether it was intentional or unintentional. The point is that if it were done deliberately or not, you had to restore. You had to return to him the equivalent of what he lost. That could hit you pretty hard. You caught a man's field just before it was time for harvest, which was bringing his maximum wealth in, then you were going to lose your maximum wealth because you would have to return maybe more than you collected from your own field. That was justice in the highest sense of the word.

**Responsible Parties**

This is using up another person's property, and then carelessness that destroyed another person's property. In verses 7-13, we have another interesting case of stealing–when someone makes you responsible for his goods. We have many agencies in our society which act as responsible agencies for the possessions, for the valuables of another person. Notice in verse 7: "If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house, if the thief be found, let him pay double." Here is a situation where something has been stolen from the house of a custodian. If the thief is caught, the principle again is to give it back, and double it.

In verse 8: "If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor's goods. Here's another case. You don't find the thief. You go to collect what you have left with this person. The man says, "I don't have it anymore. Somebody came in and stole it." Then you must go to the judges. Israel had a system. Israel had a way of determining whether a person was telling the truth or not. Because in this case, since the thief had not been caught, the person whose property had been taken could not really be sure that the custodian himself had not stolen it. So this provision was made here for a legal process to decide that.

Then verse 9 says, "For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any matter of lost thing, which another challenges to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges, and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor." For any kind of liability that a person may claim (any kind of loss that a person may claim) against another, Israel has a system where you could take it to the judges who sat at the gates, and you could state your claim. They would investigate it. They would pass a judgment against one person or the other. The person who is judged against had to pay double the claims of the loss of the person who had brought the suit.

**Embezzlement**

Verses 10-11: We're still under the category of your having committed your possessions to someone else's care: "If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep and to die or be hurt or driven away, no man seeing it, then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he has not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods, and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good." If a man was given something to be kept, and somehow it was driven away, here again in the agricultural society, it was lost by being driven away, or the thing actually died, then the custodian will again take an oath: "I swear before Almighty God, I did not kill your animal. I did not take it and sell it. I did not misuse your property for my personal benefit." In other words, "I'm not guilty of embezzlement." Then the judges would make a decision according to that oath which was taken, and the person did not have to restore. So, in other words, there are some cases very justly where you might be taking care of something that people have entrusted to you, and it might be lost, and it's not your fault.

Verse 12: "If it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof." If somebody gives you something to take care of and then it is stolen, then you do make restitution. So if somebody leaves his lawnmower with you, and it's stolen, you make restitution because you are responsible for being custodian. If you have agreed to do that, you're responsible to take care of it. You can't say, "Somebody broke into my garage and stole your lawnmower." Then you must make restitution.

Verse 13 gives another variant, here again, in terms of animals: "If it be torn in pieces, then let him bring it for a witness and he shall not make good that which was torn." If, however, it was an act of destructiveness that he had no control over–he had normal care upon the property, and here it was destroyed–then he was not held responsible. All through this, there is great integrity and fairness on the part of these rules of God. Yet it recognizes the number one quality that so evades us in our society day–that we are responsible for what we do with what we have, and particularly with what we have of other people's things entrusted to us. So this was protection against embezzlement. It was protection against the custodian also for a loss which was not his fault.

**Rental and Loan Liabilities**

Then finally, verses 14-15 have to do with rental and loan liabilities: "If a man borrow anything of his neighbor, and it be hurt or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good." If you borrow something from somebody and you damage it, you make it good. If you borrow his car and you bang up the fenders, you replace it. You make it good.

But verse 15, again, in fairness, has another alternative: "But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good. If you see him cutting his lawn, and he's doing it with an old swinging chopper, and you come along and say, "Say, listen. That's the hard way. Here, take my lawnmower and cut your lawn." So he stands there while you're cutting your lawn with his lawnmower, and you hit a rock and break the shaft, you don't have to repay him under biblical law because he chose to have you use that lawnmower. So when you loan things out, you must also be prepared to pay the price of their being destroyed. Or it says, "If it be a hired thing," that is, it came for his hire. If you go and you rent something and then it is damaged in the process of your use as rent, you are not responsible for damage in normal legitimate use. The people who rented the property to you must be prepared to cover that cost. This is the fantastic thing about the people of Israel: God constantly arranged for an orderly economic system for them.

Now let's get to the biggest experience of thievery from which every one of you suffer every day of your life. There is a darkened mentality in this country that has set up a system so horrendous that when God saw it happening to his people, Israel, he sent the prophet Isaiah, and he said, "I'm going to alert you to a thing that's taking place, because historically when this takes place in a nation, I destroy that nation."

This is the eighth century B.C. God has declared condemnation upon the people of Israel for their sins. He has warned that the discipline that He is going to bring upon them is going to be in the form of national captivity. In Isaiah 1:21-23, we have declared the sins for which God is going to take this people into captivity. Sandwiched between these sins is what is happening in our country today. Verse 21 says, "How has the faithful city become a harlot?" Immorality was rampant in the capital city of Jerusalem. "It was full of justice, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers." It was a city that was once known for its fairness to people and its justice and its morality, and it is now a city filled with murderers who get away with what they're doing.

Verse 23: "Your princesses are rebellious." The government leaders were spiritual rebels. Furthermore, they were companions of thieves. Everyone loves bribes and follows after rewards." Bribes flowed freely, and government leaders eagerly sought such rewards. "They judged not the fatherless. Neither does the cause of the widow come unto them." The helpless widows and orphans were not cared for by the leaders. They were the victims of the strong.

**Debasing Coinage**

Verse 21 and verse 23 list for us the sins for which God says, "I'm going to destroy and send this nation into captivity." Notice what is sandwiched in between this list of sins in verse 22: "Your silver has become dross; your wine mixed with water." "Your silver has become dross" means that they took their silver ingots, and they didn't use coins at this time in their history. Coins in Israel did not come into operation until after the captivity. Before that, they used silver and gold in transactions, but it was by weight. You weighed out so many units of silver or gold for a certain transaction. But what they were doing was taking these little ingots and mixing them with tin, copper, and other base metals. So they were presenting this as being pure gold, when it was dross in large measure. That is the thing that God is talking about. God says, "I am going to destroy you because your monetary system is fake. It's false.

Do I need to remind you that in 1964, the United States coin was debased in the same manner? It was changed into sandwich money–money which has no value in itself as metal. Gold and silver does not have intrinsic value. We say that sometimes, but that's not really true. Gold and silver have historic value to people. It has value to people because of its rarity and because of its ease of handling. The book of Genesis recognized the value of gold as a precious metal of having economic value. Gold and silver are of value because they are of value to people, not because they have some intrinsic value to themselves. But they do have that value. They always have, and I'm going to tell you something else: they always will. God sent Israel into captivity because it debased its money.

Furthermore, when you start debasing your money, and I haven't used the keyword yet. That's coming in a moment. Along with debasing your money is a debasing of the production of your products: "Your wine mixed with water." God said, "I'm going to condemn you because your products, the wine you sell, is one quart water and the rest of the gallon is wine, and you're selling it as pure wine.

This was an example of the cheapening of products. There are many ways in which you can cheapen a product, and the point of doing that is so you don't have to change the price. How many things have you noticed in the American economy that are no longer of the quality that they once were, but they don't cost more? How many candy bars do you open that have the same size wrapper on the outside, but when you open them, something has happened to the candy inside? It has had an experience of shrinking. What were once sold as little bars are now sold as biggie bars. That is a way of stealing. Gradually it hits you that this package has a lot of empty space in it.

**Inflation**

Who made this necessary? The liberal progressive mentality in the American Congress. They came up with a fantastically marvelous idea on how to make wealth out of nothing. What they created was inflation. That's the keyword. What you have here in Isaiah, for which God is saying, "I'm going to send this nation into captivity, among other sins," is the sin of inflation. You have inflated your money.

What's wrong with inflation? Well, inflation is wrong because it violates moral principles. It steals from people. But the way inflation works is that it's a hidden tax that you don't know anything about. You're going to be paying for it all day tomorrow, and you're not going to know the clever subtle way in which the American Congress has for decades been pulling this off upon the American people.

Isaiah came to Israel and said, "I come to you in God's name. I warn you that violating the principle of stealing will bring you national captivity. Now, stop it. Stop cheapening your products. Stop debasing your money." They refused to do it, and the nation went into slavery. Where do you think we're going to go?

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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