

## ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

May 2, 2003

### Characteristics of the Righteous Walk [Part 3]

#### Ephesians 4:25-32

*25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one [of you] with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry, and [yet] do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity. 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need. 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such [a word] as is good for edification according to the need [of the moment], so that it will give grace to those who hear. 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

Remember that in Ephesians 4:25-32 Paul is emphasizing the characteristics of the righteous walk. Since the old nature has been removed and we have been given a new nature, then we are to respond by walking in righteousness and holiness in truth (cf. Ephesians 4:17-24).

- ***What are the characteristics of the righteous walk that Paul highlights in Ephesians 4:25-32?***

Vs. 25, **Lay aside falsehood and speak truth.**

Vs. 26-27, **Never stop being angry with your sin.**

Vs. 28, **No longer steal, but work and share.**

Vs. 29-30, **No unwholesome words, but words of edification.**

Vs. 31-32, **Put away bitterness, wrath, anger and clamor and be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving to one another.**

Remember that we are in the midst of examining each one of these characteristics and attempting to apply them to our lives. Our focus this evening will be on verse 28 and the topic of **stealing**.

#### Verse 28:

*He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have [something] to share with one who has need.*

- ***What is the sin that needs corrected according to verse 28?***

Stealing/Theft—"He who steals must steal no longer."

- ***What does it mean to steal? How would you define stealing?***

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U> Webster—"To take another's money, possessions or ideas without permission, dishonestly or unlawfully, especially in a secret or surreptitious (stealth) manner.

The Greek term for *steal* is KLEPTO where we get the English term Kleptomaniac (one who compulsively steals). The term is the general one for stealing and comprises every kind of fraud. It is in the present participle, which makes it milder than the noun *thief*, but stronger than a one-time or particular theft. The idea is one, who occupies himself with stealing. It marks out the act or action of stealing rather than the character of the one stealing.

- ***What are some examples of stealing?***

Stealing from Individuals:

- Grand larceny
- petty theft
- taking some of your dad's money off the dresser
- not paying fair wages

Stealing from Businesses:

- shoplifting especially by employees. (1/3 of price of some products to cover shoplifting losses).
- pocketing what a clerk overpays you

Stealing from Employers:

- overestimating
- falsified cost overruns
- outright embezzlement
- padding expense accounts
- reporting more hours than worked

Stealing from the Government:

- failing to report income to the IRS

Stealing from God:

- failing to give to the church for the Lord's work

- failing to serve in the church
- not spending time in God's Word or prayer
- wasting time, which could be put to better use

- ***What do the following verses have to say in regards to stealing?***

Jeremiah 7:9-10—Stealing is an abomination to the Lord.

Exodus 20:15—Stealing is clearly forbidden (one of the ten commandments).

Leviticus 19:13—Stealing involves cheating or exploiting wage earners (cf. Mal. 3:5/James 5:4)

Matthew 15:19—Stealing proceeds out of the heart.

Matthew 15:20—Stealing defiles a man.

Revelation 9:21 along with previous verses—Stealing is closely connected with other vile sins.

Jeremiah 2:26—those who steal are ashamed when they are found out.

Ezekiel 22:29-31—Stealing brings God's wrath.

1 Corinthians 6:10—Those whose lives are characterized by theft rather than fruit are excluded from heaven.

Proverbs 29:24—Those who are companions with hate their own souls.

- ***What is the correction that Paul gives the Ephesians here?***

Those who steal should stop! They should steal no longer! Those who are tempted to steal and are participating in the act of stealing must no longer steal because the old nature has been put off and they have a new nature. This new nature unlike the old is not characterized by stealing. Stealing is sin and has no part in the righteous walk of the new man in Christ. In fact Paul's instruction here is once again in the imperative emphasizing a command.

- ***What is the alternative or solution to stealing in verse 28?***

The alternative to stealing is to labor/work. It is God's plan for everyone to work who is able to do so.

- ***What do the following verses teach in regards to labor/work?***

2 Thessalonians 3:10-11—If anyone will not work, then he should not eat. Not working or laboring is characterized as an undisciplined life.

1 Timothy 5:8—The Christian who refuses to provide for his own household has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

- ***What type of work should the believer be involved in?***

The believer should labor *performing with his own hands*... This stresses the truth that the norm is for believers to be responsible for their own provision rather than on relying on others.

The believer should labor *in what is good*... Our labor should be in work that is honest, honorable and productive. The term good emphasizes good in quality. It likely refers to God-honoring employment. [MacArthur, p. 186]

John MacArthur says, "A Christian should never be involved in a job, profession, work, or business that demands compromise of God's standards, that dishonors Him, violates His holy commands, or misleads or harms others in any way.

- ***Why is labor/work the alternative or solution to stealing according to verse 28?***

So that we might share with those who are in need. As Dale has often taught... "It is more blessed to give than to receive!" (Acts 20:33-35) Our labor/work should not only provide for our needs, but it should be used to give to the church and to those who are in need. Our desire to earn more should be for the purpose of giving more and helping more.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

- ***What ways, if any, have you now realized that you have been guilty of stealing?***
- ***What things have you been tempted to covet recently?***
- ***What can you do to change in light of this lesson?***