

Guidelines to Freedom Part 7 - I Was Only Borrowing It

by Alistair Begg

Stealing is wrong because it offends against our God, disregards his law, and devalues his creation.

Duration: 40:54

Scripture: Exodus 20:15, Exodus 22:1-2, Exodus 22:10, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Eighth Commandment, 'You shall not steal.' He explains that stealing is wrong and explores different ways in which people can steal. The preacher then highlights the positive side of the commandment by sharing the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who repented and decided to restore four times the amount he had stolen and give half of his possessions to the poor. Jesus commended Zacchaeus and declared salvation had come to his house. The preacher concludes by urging the audience to reflect on their own lives and consider if they have experienced a transformation like Zacchaeus, emphasizing the importance of obeying the Eighth Commandment.

Transcript

Exodus chapter 20 then in verse 15, you shall not steal. In our visitors book at home there is an entry for the 19th of June 1978 and against the names of the couple who signed it there is the inscription next Sunday maybe you should preach on Exodus 20 verse 15. Now anybody taking that visitors book and looking through it would be surprised by that cryptic note.

If you knew what Exodus 20 verse 15 was, you would realize that something must have happened to this couple to suggest that it was necessary for the people in our community to hear a sermon on the Eighth Commandment and the problem of stealing. What had happened was that this young couple, I say couple, they were an engaged couple, they were on their way to Africa where they were going to be married. They were both children of missionary parents.

They were en route from America to Africa and stopped to see us in Scotland. Thinking of things that they might like to do, we dispatched them on the Saturday afternoon to the Dr. David Livingstone Memorial Museum, which is in Lanarkshire just a few miles from our home. After all, Dr. David Livingstone was the missionary explorer, they were children of missionary parents in Africa, there seemed to be some connection, and plus there was precious little else to do.

And so they went off to explore the museum, and while they were exploring the museum, somebody decided to explore their car, and took a brick and threw it through one of the windows and removed most of their contents, including the girl's wedding dress. For all of you ladies, she did find her wedding dress. Later on, lying in a ditch somewhere, she was able to salvage it, but all the other saleable items were never returned.

Now, the fact is that that incident is duplicated thousands upon thousands of times every single day in our world. With alarming frequency in our cities every day, thieves make off with millions of dollars tax-free. The reported figures, which are absolutely astronomical, for the most part don't even include the kind of theft which takes away the most money, namely fraud and forgery, embezzlement, bribery, and extortion--high-level, big business, bilking of profits, etc.

But suffice it to say that from petty larceny to multimillion-dollar fraud, there has never been a time in the history of the United States of America when people have stolen more than right now today. That is factual, and it is sad. And since personal property is at the very heart of society in which we live, and respect for personal property is a foundational element of it, here we are confronted again with another sorry example of the erosion of our foundations and the crumbling of the moral fabric of our culture.

It seems like we have set a gramophone record, to coin a phrase from the past, in a groove, and the groove goes round and round, and we find ourselves saying every Sunday morning, now here we are at the next commandment, and boy, are we good at breaking this one. And the fact is, we are. And what is happening in terms of the theft of marriages in relationship to adultery, as we saw last time, is more than matched by the amount of thieving that is taking place in multiple areas of our society.

Now, all of that would be bad enough if there was a shared conviction in the hearts of men and women concerning the fact that stealing is wrong. I mean, it would be bad if we were able at least to get together and say, we have a dreadful problem with stealing in our country, and we all know that stealing is wrong, and so we need to do something about it. But unfortunately, we can't make that assumption.

The relativistic ethic which is pervasive in our culture, which says that certain things may be right in some circumstances while wrong in another, that something may be right for you while at the same time being wrong for me, has so filtered into so much that in relationship to the whole question of personal property, and whether we have any right to maintaining it, whether we have any prerogative to be able to go and take somebody else's for our own, it's mass confusion. And Robin Hood is a greater hero today than ever he was in Sherwood Forest all those years ago. And the Robin Hood principle--or lack of principle, if I may call it that--is trotted out in defense of theft all over the place.

People say, well, I know it's not right to take my sister's something, but I don't think it's wrong to steal from an institution. After all, institutions have got so much money in any case, and they're great faceless bureaucracies, and frankly, it would do them good to have some stuff removed. It may shape them up a little bit.

Or after all, who are these rich people, and how did they get to be so rich? There's surely no problem about removing some of their benefits. I recently read of a schoolteacher who, in seeking to impress upon her class the importance of honesty, asked the class this question. Suppose you found a briefcase with half a million dollars in it.

What would you do? One boy raised his hand immediately and replied, if it belonged to a poor family, I'd return it. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if from the lips of that wee boy, he didn't say essentially the kind of idea that is there in relationship to stealing. So eroded is our thinking.

I just have a few straightforward questions as we study this this morning, and the first is obvious. Why is it wrong to steal? Why is it wrong to steal? Important question, because if we're going to affirm that it's wrong to steal, we better know why it's wrong to steal, rather than it's wrong to steal because it's wrong to steal. The fact is that despite what we're saying about this morning, by and large, stealing has been generally accepted as something which is unacceptable in the human race.

But outside of biblical truth, people are hard-pressed to answer just why it is that we shouldn't do it, especially those who teach relativism. They can suggest to their students that they don't want them to steal, but they don't have any real reason to tell them why they shouldn't. They just don't think it's a good idea.

Two principles underpin the answer to this question, and both these principles are biblical. The first is the right to private property. And the second is the sovereign ownership of God over all that he has made.

Okay? Obviously, the command not to steal presumes the right of personal private possessions. If all were everyone's in some kind of collective consciousness, then that would be very different. In fact, in the Garden of Eden, there would be no reason for a command not to steal.

Only after sin has entered into the world is this command necessary. And when we find--and maybe you should turn back to Genesis for just a moment. If you turn back to the very first chapter of your Bible, in Genesis 1, when we find Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we realize that they were placed there not as owners, but as stewards.

Genesis 1, 28, God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Verse 15, clarifying the mandate that God has given to man. The Lord God--verse 15 of chapter 2--the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it, reminding us that our ownership of stuff is never ultimate. But the only ownership that we have as human beings is a derived ownership.

It is there as a result of God's kind permission. It is the same God of whom James writes when he says, Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow due to turning. James chapter 1, verse 17.

And if you think about it, all that we have in terms of stuff is derived. And it is ultimately not that significant because it is all going in a garage sale, or it's going to be burned up. And most of the stuff that we're most concerned about, that we regard as our prized possessions, is a derived situation in any case, because God has given us the ability to get wealth, or he has given us the family background whereby we receive this beautiful piece of furniture which we're most concerned about, that nobody busts it or breaks it or topples it over or whatever it is.

But when we're gone, it'll go somewhere, and it'll be irrelevant in any case. The fact is this, though. When you or I are tempted to steal from somebody else, we do not simply sin against that individual, but we sin

against God.

Because if we take something that isn't ours from another, we harm the person, potentially by taking away that which they need. Interestingly enough, in the context of Genesis and Exodus, to remove possessions from people was so important, given the nature of their lives and lifestyle, that God commanded that death should be the result of such intrusions into their property. But we harm them, we disregard them, we devalue them.

When we take somebody else's--take that which is somebody else's, we introduce harm to their lives. We're saying we don't care who they are, and we're saying that we don't really think they matter that much. But that we matter more, therefore we can take what we want from them.

And in doing that, we sin against God, because it is God who has given value to the person that we now disregard and devalue and harm, as a result of our taking their stuff. Now, think of this in relationship to David, when he sinned against Bathsheba. When David sinned against Bathsheba, he stole from her.

He stole from her her own purity. He stole from her her reputation. He stole from her her husband's life.

And when he had put it all together and finally come in confession before God--you remember how he prays in Psalm 51 verse 4--he says, against you and you only have I sinned. And when he understood the nature of his offense in stealing, he had stolen from God, because God gave to Bathsheba her personality and her purity and her husband. And all that she had was derived ownership.

It was given to her for a wee while, and it was given to her as an expression of God's goodness. And so when he went in and took what he shouldn't have, he sinned against Almighty God. Now, the fact of the matter is that we should not steal because it offends against our God, it disregards his law, and it devalues his creation.

Why should we not steal? Because it offends a holy God, it disregards his law, and it devalues his creation. You see, loved ones, why it is so important, as I've tried to say to you all along, that we have to engage our culture at the level of their worldview. Because so much of what is posited in our upholding these Ten Commandments is based on convictions concerning the nature of our world--the fact that there is a personal Creator God.

And many of our friends and neighbors do not regard these things as sacrosanct in any way at all, because they have no concept whatsoever of living in the context of a broken link between a personal Creator God and the creation which he has made. We need to learn to be thoughtful concerning this. The second question we'll seek to answer is, in what ways do we break this commandment? In what ways do we break this commandment? Well, there are a number of obvious ways, and some perhaps not so obvious.

Let me go through them with you. I'll try and give you a Scripture reference, at least for your consideration as you go along. Let us say, first of all, we break the commandment not to steal when we engage in blatant theft--when we take that which is clearly not ours to have, and we steal from others their possessions.

Exodus 22, verse 1, if a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. Verse 2, if a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed. That's where we have this notion of the protection

of our property.

However, if it happens after sunrise, if it happens in a context where there is no intrusion with the purpose of destruction or harm, then he is guilty of bloodshed. A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft. So if I go in and I steal something, I go and round up a few sheep from somebody, and I take them away, I have to pay that back in multiples of the same.

They come to my back garden and they find out that I don't have any multiples to pay it back, so they will then sell me into slavery to that owner to work for them until I have paid off by way of restitution. We break the commandment by blatant theft. Secondly, we break the commandment when we borrow and fail to return what has been borrowed.

Some people make a career of this. Some of you are smiling because you're already thinking, Oh, goodness, I said I would take that hose back over there, and I never did. Someone else is saying, I must have seventeen books on my shelves that all belong to somebody else.

Well, they're either going back or they're not going back, and if they're not going back, guess what? We just stole them. We may have called it borrowing, but we stole them. They were in the possession of someone else, they are now in our possession, and we're not planning on giving them back.

Or we've decided that so long has elapsed that we won't. Psalm 37, verse 21, the wicked borrow and do not repay. The point being that those who are righteous do borrow and do repay.

Straightforward. Thirdly, we break the eighth commandment when we fail to clear ourselves of debt when we are able to do so. When we fail to clear ourselves of debt when we're able to do so.

There's a wonderful story in 2 Kings 4, the story of the widow and the oil. It's been preached on in all manner of ways through the years, and probably very little attention has been given to the phrase I'd like to draw your attention to. You can find it if you want to look in 2 Kings 4, verse 7, the story of Elisha and the widow and her empty jars of oil, and this miraculous intervention.

It's the story of the provision of the oil, and in verse 5, she left him and afterwards shut the door behind her and her sons, and they brought the jars to her, and she kept pouring. And when all the jars were full, she said to her son, Bring me another one. And he replied, There's not a jar left.

And then the oil stopped flowing. And she went and told the man of God, and he said, Go sell the oil and pay your debts. In other words, don't make a career of this now.

God has dramatically intervened in your life. He has provided for you beyond your expectations. He has put you in a solid position once again.

Now, go and take care of your debts. Do you realize how much, in terms of outstanding indebtedness in this country, is due to an elaborate form of theft? People are stealing from a subsequent generation, banking on the notion that they'll probably kick the bucket before ever they're in a position to pay back the debt, and someone else can deal with it. It's a form of theft when we're in a position to repay, and we choose not to.

Fourthly, we break the Eighth Commandment by using false weights and measures. If you want to turn to a reference, turn to the book of Amos. Amos chapter 8. Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk.

Just to set it in a context, Amos chapter 8 in the Minor Prophets. You remember, we did a series on this which virtually killed the church. Amos chapter 8, verse 5. Verse 4, hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land.

See the context now? Trampling down people who are in need and doing away with the poor. Saying, when will the new moon be over? That we may sell grain and the Sabbath be ended, that we may market wheat. Now, here's the key phrase, skimping the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales.

Skimping the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales. I don't want to get all you businessmen upset this morning, but I have a real problem in my own mind. I don't know about all this NAFTA stuff.

Well, I do know about the NAFTA stuff, but I'm not going to address it from this pulpit. But what I do know is that the workman is worthy of his hire and worthy of his wages. And because a context allows for him to make that which our children carry around in their hip pocket to buy Cokes at McDonald's as his daily or hourly wage, it doesn't make it right.

And it doesn't make it right for us to treat people in that way, in the cause of our economic exultations. And skimping a little here and elevating the price a little there and fiddling around with the scales a little here and there is a total violation of the Eighth Commandment. Fifthly, we break the Eighth Commandment when we misuse our employer's property or our employer's time.

Titus chapter 2 and verse 10. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. The principle here is simply that of employer and employee.

Don't get hung up on the slave issue, because it was very different from what we have been propagating in the last 200 years or so. But the issue is, if you work for somebody, then don't steal from them, but rather show that you can be fully trusted. Do you know that in recent surveys, workers around America frankly admit, without shame, in a massive survey, without shame, workers of America admitted that they spend most, more than 20% of their time at work, or within the framework of employment, quotes, goofing off.

20% of time spent goofing off. That amounts to a four-day working week. All right? So, everybody's only working four days a week.

They're showing up at work five days a week, but they're working four days a week. At the same time, people want to introduce a four-day working week, which, on the same principle, well, I'm not going to do the mathematics in my mind. You know that's a great danger for me.

Well, that would be 20% of four, which would be a fifth of four, which is just too dramatic for me to contemplate. It wouldn't be good. And the fact is that in the survey, almost half of us admitted to chronic malingering, calling in sick when we're not sick, and being prepared to do it regularly.

Stealing. We steal our employer's time. We steal by work that is only half done, so that our employer does not get what he paid for or what she paid for, but something less than that.

We steal when we use the telephone either to waste time or to make calls that are not ours to make. We steal when we falsify or fiddle our expense accounts. We steal when we take supplies which were there for the provision of the employment rather than for our own well-being.

You can read all about this in a book entitled *The Day America Told the Truth*. Sixthly, we steal when we waste someone else's possessions. When we waste someone else's possessions.

You borrow somebody's home for a while and you don't look after it, you trash it, you stole from them. You rent a place and you don't keep it up, you stole from the landlord. Luke chapter 16, Jesus told his disciples, verse 1, there was a rich man whose manager was accused of, quotes, wasting his possessions.

Okay? Seventhly, we break the Eighth Commandment when we pay bad wages or when we withhold or delay the payment of wages. Break the Eighth Commandment by paying poor wages or withholding or delaying the payment of the wages. James, who had a lot to say about these sort of things, in James chapter 5 and in verse 4, he says, look, the wages you have failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you.

And eighthly, we fail to keep the Eighth Commandment when, as adult sons or daughters, we do not make some return to our parents when they need our help. Proverbs 28, verse 24, he who robs his father or mother and says, it is not wrong, he is partner to him who destroys. Okay, you got it? The Eighth Commandment, thou shalt not steal.

What does that mean? Well, it means a number of things. It says no to blatant theft, no to borrowing and failing to return it, no to failing to clear ourselves of debt when we're able and should do so. It says no to false weights and measures, no to the misuse of our employer's property or time, no to the wasting of someone else's possessions, no to paying wages or withholding or delaying the payment of the wages, and no to failing as an adult son or daughter to providing for my mom or my dad.

Now, those are all obvious. Let me give you three not so obvious ones. One I've alluded to already.

I want to come back to it, though. We break the Eighth Commandment when we steal the reputation of others by the sin of slander. There's probably not too many of us are prepared to steal the hymn books out of here on the average Sunday.

There are a few, we know that, because they go missing. But I hope they're just singing their little hearts out. Now, there are not too many of us that would be prepared to steal out of the offering plate as it passes by.

But some of us are prepared to steal the reputation of another by a word of slander passed on in the hallway or in a corridor. James chapter 4 and verse 11 tackles this whole question of slander, the stealing of a reputation of another by means of saying that which is derogatory behind the back of another person. It is, if you like, one of the great evangelical sins, one of the great ways in which we are guilty of violating God's commands.

We've made it somewhat respectable because it is so commonplace. Brothers do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.

Interesting. Sets it right in the context of the law. A sixteenth-century preacher faced with a woman who confessed to being a slanderer asked the lady this, Do you frequently fall into this fault? Yes, very often, the lady replied.

Your fault is great, but the mercy of God is still greater, said the preacher. Go to the nearest market and purchase a chicken, just killed and still covered with its feathers. You will then walk a certain distance, plucking the bird as you go along.

When you finish your work, return to me here. She did as she'd been instructed and returned anxious for an explanation. I said, the preacher, you've been very faithful to the first part of my instructions.

Now retrace your steps and gather up one by one all the feathers you have scattered. But explained the woman, I cast them carelessly on every side. The wind carried them in every direction.

How can I ever recover them? Well, he replied, so it is with your words of slander. Like the feathers, they have been scattered. Call them back if you can.

Go and sin no more. We mentioned David Livingston. When David Livingston was exploring Africa in the early days in order that he might safeguard his wife from some of the hardships that were obviously involved in what he was doing, as he prepared a home for her at Lake Nyassa, he had left her back in Britain.

People began to talk unkindly, suggesting that there was a problem in his relationship, which there never was. They said so many unkind things concerning he and his wife, so troubling to him were they that he sent for his wife. She came prematurely, she became ill, and she died.

By their slanderous tongues, they stole from David Livingston, they stole his reputation, they stole from his ministry, and they stole his wife. You remember the quote from Othello, where one of the characters says, Good name in man and woman, dear my Lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls. Okay? Your name is the jewel of your souls.

The character says, Who steals my purse, steals trash, tis something nothing. Tis mine, tis his, and has been slave to thousands. But he that filches from me my good name, robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed.

Let me give you another one that's not so obvious. We break the eighth commandment not only when we steal the reputation of another by the sin of slander, but when we steal the moral purity of another as a result of fornication. This is a whole message on its own.

I can't descend to it, but I say again to you young people, if you hear it from nowhere else, the Lord knows you've heard it from me with regularity. If you isolate sexual union from every other dimension that God has ordained for it within the context of marriage, you steal. Fellas, you steal from that girl that which she can never ever have back again.

And girls, you do the same from the guy. Third, not so obvious one, is when we steal by making the work of somebody else appear to be our own work. We call this plagiarism.

It's a peculiar snare in the academic world. In the business world too, if we think that something was done somewhere else far away from here and we might be able to present it without it being discovered that it

was done over there or down there in South America, perhaps we'll be able to look good. And then suddenly somebody flies off a plane and says, wasn't this in such and such a journal? Didn't you see my name attached to it? And we look absolutely horrible because we've just stolen.

And fourthly, and in a very similar vein, we steal from another by cheating in the classroom context. If we cheat off other people, we steal the time they put in in study, we steal from their intellect or from their abilities, we disregard them, we devalue them, and we elevate ourselves in the process. Cheating is a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

Now, when you cheat at golf, that's just stupid, especially when you're playing by yourself. You can go home and tell your wife that you're just about ready for the tour as a result of this card that you have in your pocket, but you just cheated your whole way around. Also, we steal when we fail to give to God what we owe God.

Malachi 3.8, will a man rob God? Will a man keep back from God what is due God? Well, what is due God from our lives? Everything. Everything. Our time, our intellect, our wills, our money, our talents, the whole shooting match.

It's all God's. It's Romans 12, 1 and 2. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable offering. In other words, it's all his.

It's all derived ownership. We don't really possess any of it. It's all something that he gave us on trust.

Look after this, he said. Some of us have got a lot, some of us have got not so much, some of us have only got a wee drop, but everything that we've got is his. It's all his.

The total shooting match is his, not ours. It's not that a percentage is his, it is all his. Now, whatever we do with the divvying up of the percentages is a matter of our hearts, it's a matter of generosity, but it's all his.

The breath we breathe is his, the brain we have is his, the hands we have to work are his, the feet that we're able to run fast are the feet he gave us, and so on. It's all his. So the prophet says, will a man rob God? Yet he says, you rob me.

But you ask, how do we rob you? The answer is in tithes and offerings. You're under a curse, the whole nation of you, because you're robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house, and 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 you will not have room enough for it.

He's speaking there in a very theocratic way to the nation of Israel, but the principle remains true. We tend to hold on to that which God would have us let go of, because we believe that only in holding on to it will we be able to provide. And God says, if we let go of it in the purposes of his kingdom, then there's no saying, just the kind of provision that he will make for us.

Okay? Let me just say a couple of things by way of the positive side of this command. Why is it wrong to steal? How do we steal? What then is the positive side of the command? Well, it's straightforward. If the essence of theft is getting, then the essence of obedient Christian living is giving.

And this is a wonderful thing. And for example, in Ephesians 4:28, if you check, you'll find it. There the Apostle Paul says of the thief, he says, let him who has been stealing, steal no longer, but rather work,

doing something useful with his hands that he may have something to share with those in need.

We should do everything in our power to prosper others. First Corinthians 10, 24, nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. We should strive after honesty in the little things for that sets the pattern for the larger things.

Luke 16, 10, whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with very much. And whoever is dishonest with little will also be dishonest with much. If we are dishonest with pencils and with rulers and with dimes and with quarters, and we are consistently so, we will set a pattern in our lives that just goes to more and more and to bigger and to bigger.

If we are scrupulous about these things, no, no, no, no, no, no. You should have it back. It is yours, please.

Versus, you know, it really doesn't matter. It does matter because it's yours. It's not mine.

I don't want it. It's yours. Then we establish patterns that will be running right through our lives.

Well, let me give you your homework. Luke chapter 19 can be homework. Namely, to look there at the story of one man who was a transformed thief.

Because, you see, one of the things that is becoming very apparent as we study these commandments together is this--that it is showing up the inconsistency of our lives. And many of us are asking, well, let's say I have a real problem with theft. Let's say my income tax returns are so bad that it is only the statute of limitations that has kept me out of jail for many a year.

What are you going to do about it? Is it possible to break it? Sure it is. You read the story of Luke 19. The little man called Zacchaeus.

Really wealthy, and his financial status was gained as a result of being able to skim stuff off the top. He was an extortionist, and he was a traitor. It's the great story of how Jesus is coming to town, and he looks forward to seeing Jesus, and he climbs up a tree, and Jesus stands under the tree.

And then Jesus looks up the tree and says, Zacchaeus, I must come to your house. It's interesting. He didn't say, Zacchaeus, how do you fancy going for a coffee? He says, Zacchaeus, I must come to your house.

Zacchaeus looked down, and he must have said, I know you must. Because, you see, he wasn't happy. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul? What's the point of being up a tree so rich? You've got so much money in your pockets, it's hard to stay on the branch, because you might fall down and bang your head.

And he looked down into the eyes of Jesus. Jesus says, I must come to your house. And Zacchaeus said, that's absolutely true.

If no one else knows it, you and I know it. And some of you are like that this morning. Jesus comes along the road, and he says, you know, I've got to come to your house.

And inside your heart, you say, that's true. Under the law, Zacchaeus, who was a thief, was responsible for returning a fifth of what he had unjustly obtained. He had to return stuff plus a fifth.

Under certain circumstances, he had to give double restitution. What does he do? He walks out of the house, and he says, I am going to restore four times the amount. And then he says, and if I have stolen anything--which, of course, he had.

The phrase in Greek makes it clear that he knew and everybody knew. It was a kind of funny little statement, really. Not so funny, perhaps, but he says, you know, if I've stolen anything--and he said, I'll give half of my possessions away to the poor.

He must have been pretty rich, eh? He can't have been spending it all, either. Because if he'd been spending it all when he got it, he wouldn't have been able to dip into his savings account and repay it four times over. He'd been stealing for a good while.

And what did Jesus say? Jesus said, salvation has come to this house. What do you think happened when they talked to one another? When Jesus went into the house, and Zacchaeus said, well, would you like something to eat? And somebody prepared some stuff, and they sat down. I think Jesus said that.

How about we talk about the Ten Commandments, Zacchaeus? After all, you're a good Jewish boy. Why don't we go through the Ten Commandments and see how you're doing? He might have been doing really good right through the first seven. He got to eight, and the hammer fell on his head.

You shall not steal. He saw in himself the fact that he was a sinner because he knew he was a thief. He saw that Jesus came to save the sinners, and Jesus explained to him the purpose of his coming.

Zacchaeus embraces that and walks out the door, and by his transformation in his lifestyle, he reveals the change within his life. Can I ask you this morning, has there been a today in your life? Can Jesus look at your life and say, it was on this today that salvation came to your house? And if not, then today could be that today. The Eighth Commandment, you shall not steal.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17033.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alistair-begg/guidelines-to-freedom-part-7-i-was-only-borrowing-it/>

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