

May 14th of 2023

Proverbs

Sayings of the Wise



7th Commandment & Proverbs?

In the 7th Commandment we are told not to steal. In other words, we should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

There is much said about riches and property in the Bible. And so, first, it must be asserted that money and riches are not sin but rather it is the 'love' of money that is a root of sin (See 1 Timothy 6:10). Secondly, the 7th Commandment shows us clearly that God's Word presupposes personal property. That is to say; the Bible does not promote a socialistic or communistic economic system, otherwise, there would be no such thing as the stealing. If there is no personal property - everything belongs to the common good - then there is no such thing as stealing.

And so, within this framework (what was stated above), Proverbs speaks about money, wealth, and one's neighbor.

STUDY 8

7TH COMMANDMENT &
PROVERBS?

OMISSION AND
COMMISSION?

CAUSES OF POVERTY?

MAJOR OF CAUSE OF
POVERTY IN AMERICA?

UNDERSTANDING
PROPERTY

Omission and Commission?

We sin when we steal our neighbor's property. We call this a sin of commission (a sin of action). However, in the 7th Commandment we also sin when we do not help our neighbor improve their possessions and income. We call this a sin of omission (a sin of inaction). And so, when we do not take the property of others, we do well. However, we are also to help those in need as well. But how are we to help; how are we to help the poor?

Causes of Poverty?

There are three causes of poverty. First, poverty can happen when people exploit each other. For example, Proverbs 22:7 states that "the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." (See also 22:16 & 22:22-23) Indeed, wealth can grant power, and many times people with wealth will use their power to enslave others with their financial power leading them to poverty. Secondly, poverty can come about through bad circumstances out of one's control (i.e., cancer, loss of job, death of a spouse, etc.). Thirdly, poverty comes about through slothfulness. For example, Proverbs 10:4 says, "a slack hand causes poverty." And Proverbs 13:4 says, "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing." And Proverbs 14:23 states, "mere talk tends only to poverty." And finally, Proverbs 20:13, "Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty."

Major Cause of American Poverty?

A recent study by the Brookings Institution found that poverty in America can be avoided if the following criteria are met: First, get at least a high-school diploma, then get a job, then get married, and only have children after marriage. Focusing on those 28-34 years old, only 3% of those who followed the above sequence were poor. That is to say; 97% of poverty in America is tied to behavioral issues, whereas 3% are due to extenuating circumstances.

Understanding Property

It is important to understand that we eat to live and do not live to eat. That is to say, whether one is rich or poor, there is a proper understanding that must be had with respect to property and possessions. Proverbs 13:25 teaches us that "the righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want." And so, there is a great amount of rich and poor people alike that foolishly devour possessions. They find honey and do not only eat enough for themselves but have their fill and then vomit it up (Proverbs 25:16). Property and possessions are tools to be used in this life; they are not the end of satisfaction.

Summary

While it is fairly self-evident that stealing is wrong, Christians also - in loving care - should help their neighbor improve their wealth. If a neighbor is unjustly economically oppressed, attempts to resolve this are needed through possible petitions, court proceedings, etc. If a neighbor has a disaster or cancer or death, perhaps financial gifts of money necessary for one's neighbor. However, if a neighbor is slothful, the gift of money would not help the neighbor but only perpetuate their sluggish games. Instead, the common proverb of "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" would be more applicable.

A 7th Commandment Prayer

Lord God, giver of every good and perfect gift, teach us to rejoice in the bounty of your gifts give to our neighbors and curb our appetite to claim for ourselves by theft or dishonesty the money or possessions You have bestowed on them. Instead, give us cheerful hearts and willing hands to help our neighbors improve and protect their livelihood; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.