

Takers and Givers Stop Stealing, Start Giving

by Tim Conway

This sermon based on Ephesians 4:28 emphasizes the importance of ceasing from stealing and transitioning to honest work to be able to give generously to those in need. It delves into the significance of putting on the new man, characterized by truthfulness, hard work, and a spirit of giving, in contrast to the old man's tendencies towards lying, anger, and stealing. The message highlights the need for Christians to actively work, give, and serve others, following the example of Christ who selflessly gave His life for us.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:28, Ephesians 4:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:11, Philippians 2:5, Luke 6:38, Malachi 3:8

Topics: "Honesty", "Generosity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Ephesians 4. If you want to open your Bibles to where we're going to be this morning, very specifically, looking at Ephesians 4.28. David and I did not conspire. There's work in this passage. If you hear a thought or two that David had to share with you that sounds similar to something I say, it's not because we were talking ahead of time.

It's simply because the Scripture has something to say about work. And if two different preachers are going to talk about it, they likely are going to say some of the same things. Brethren, Ephesians 4.28. Now, we're going to read this, and I recognize, like at first glance, this isn't going to touch most of you.

Not if you walked in here and you're visiting the church and you come from a rough background and this characterizes your life right now, maybe you can hear it. Most of us don't consider ourselves to be thieves. It's not going to touch us at first.

We have to let this thing simmer a little bit. Unpack it. So hold on.

"...Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." Now, brethren, context. We are to no longer live like the Gentiles do because the way they live is not the way we learn Christ, assuming that we have heard

Him. And the way we learn Christ is to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man.

Now, here's what's interesting to me. The Apostle Paul, when he wants to talk about putting on the new man, he gets specific. We remember v. 22, 23, 24, our general put off the old man, renewed spirit of mind, put on the new man.

But when he gets specific, see, that's very interesting to me. Apostolic. He's inspired.

He's dealing with real people at Ephesus. What's he going to say? Where's he going to go first? First, the Gentiles are liars. Yes, and that describes the stock we come from.

Liars. The second thing is angry. Be angry.

We talked about righteous anger, but then not letting your son go down on anger. Bad anger. We talked about that.

I find that very interesting. Truthfulness first. Anger second.

Stealing third. Now, listen, if I were writing the script here, I would have thought sexual immorality would have been like number one. Now, it's coming.

But I find this extremely interesting. Because in the Apostle's mind, yes, he's being led by the Spirit, but he's also being led by his own experience. He's being led by what he knows to be problematic in churches at that time.

Wow! Stealing. And I'm thinking a lot of us, it's like we don't even need that one. Maybe we do.

Verb tenses are so critical. If there's one thing that really I guess I have issues with when it comes to translations, it's when they don't bring across the proper verb tense. To me, that is inexcusable.

Consider how other translations put this. Now the King James Version says, let him that stole steal no more. New American Standard.

Now notice this. Let him who steals steal no longer. One of my favorites, Young's literal translation.

Listen to how he puts it. Now this is literal. Who so is stealing? Let him no more steal.

I like that. It's not much different than the New American Standard. Let him who steals.

Currently, this is a present active participle. Just this portion of the verse. Let whoever steals, or him who steals, that's a present participle.

That is a present active participle. And then it's followed, let him steal no more, that is a present active imperative. It's a command.

You need to stop. Now notice, he's not dealing with the Gentiles here. He's talking to Ephesian Christians.

And he's saying this, he's saying any Christian who is in any way stealing now, stop doing it immediately. That's the sense of this. Now, I want to just make a comment about stealing Christians.

Because if you really read what Paul's saying here, that's where he's coming from. I trust we're all clear about the nature of regeneration. Listen, my experience doesn't define regeneration.

Regeneration and the biblical doctrine of regeneration needs to define me. But I do remember, I'm just going to throw this out, you can ask the question whether this lines up with the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration and I think you'll recognize it does. When I got saved, there were certain things that stopped immediately, almost seemingly without a whole lot of effort.

My mouth, I ran around with a rough crowd. I embarrassed my friends with my mouth. It was so wicked.

It was like when God saved me, it was like a faucet. He turned it off. And with regeneration, that kind of thing happens.

There are certain sins in people's lives when they get saved, it's just almost effortlessly gone. But then there are other things, that's not the case at all. And we full well know that.

There's a battle. We're not instantly ushered into perfection. There are some things that we really have to fight.

We are new creations in Christ. Old things are passed away. All things become new, but that doesn't mean that all sin has been eradicated entirely and at once.

If that were the case, Paul would not need to admonish these Ephesian Christians the way he does. He has to deal with them about honesty. He has to deal with them about anger.

He has to deal with them about stealing. Why? Because they were enough of a present reality in some of their lives that he had to put his finger on this. And these are the three first things he deals with when it comes to wanting to eradicate Gentile-ish, old man-ish ways from among God's people.

Regeneration doesn't automatically deliver us from every single sin and render us immune to every conceivable temptation. Yes, some sins get stripped away from us with hardly any effort, but the fact is there is a fierce warfare. And some of them, it's fierce.

You know what regeneration does? Regeneration gives us life to respond. You say, what do you mean? I mean when an apostle comes along and says if you are in any way stealing right now, you need to stop immediately. You know what regeneration does? It gives us the ability.

It gives us the power of the Spirit. Remember, if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. It gives us Spirit power to say and face our sins and say no more.

And you know the reality is that if you don't respond to injunctions like this, then you're not real. If I can preach this message and some of you are guilty of this and you are unfazed, you know the same apostle says this. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

And he goes through a list. Sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers. Nor thieves.

If there's no response to the Word of God, if you're a hearer only and not a doer, you're deceived. Nor thieves will inherit the Kingdom of God. A man who persists in stealing, a woman who persists in stealing is proclaiming by their very life and actions that no matter what else may be true of them, they're not Christians.

Ephesians 4.28 shows that Paul really believes in the power of the Gospel. That it's able to transform thieves and robbers. He rightly believes that these Ephesian Christians can by the Spirit of God put off the old man and put on the new.

Paul isn't talking about putting off the old man, putting on the new, as though it's just some possibility, some theoretical reality that some may achieve and others... No, he's assuming if you're genuinely a Christian, this is reality. This is going to take place. Yes, some of them may still be stealing, but he assumes they can stop and must stop.

Let him no longer steal. Okay, let's think of stealing. The most basic definition is to take that which is not yours to take.

To take something without the owner's permission. And you can see from the text, the Apostle puts a specific emphasis on the hands. And that ought not to amaze us, but you can see it.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands. I mean, what's the assumption? You're doing honest work with your own hands. The assumption here is hands.

The thief primarily uses hands. You know, when we moved to the east side, I guess I just assumed we were going to be robbed. Well, that assumption has come to reality repeatedly.

And one of the latest incidents is my wife has wicker furniture on the front porch. And that isn't even the latest, I don't think. But she had two wicker chairs which are big and hard to cart down the road.

She had a little wicker stool and it disappeared. Well, I didn't see it happen. We don't have any camera out there.

But you can imagine how it happened. Somebody was walking by. Somebody was driving by.

And I like that. And they went up and what did they do? They used their hand and they grabbed hold of it. And they ran down the sidewalk or they ran back to their car.

That's one of the most basic ways that people steal. But you know thievery does not stop there. Now, even though David didn't call what he was doing at work thievery when he was studying those verses, that's exactly what he was doing.

He was stealing his boss' time. We can steal time. Somebody says, I'm a Christian.

You're at work and you're evangelizing. And your boss is sitting there thinking what a lazy loafer this guy is. You're not impressing him by your Christianity while you're sitting there evangelizing people while you're supposed to be working.

Now, I don't remember who it is and if this happens to be you, you don't have to crawl under your seat because I don't remember what the name was. But I remember Mark, Brother Mark Outing, at his restaurant, he was talking about somebody I think who went to church here that he hired who he'd come out and he'd find them there at the counter reading their Bible. Is that godly? That's not godly.

That's stealing. That's being a thief. There are many ways that we can take what isn't ours to take.

You can take software. Anybody been there? I mean, the Internet is a place where things get stolen all the time. People steal electricity.

James was telling me that when he lived over here on the east side, I think you'd see the neighbor climbing the pole, right? Stealing Internet service. People steal all sorts of things. You take personal calls at work while you're supposed to be working.

Or you use paper or envelopes from sources like your work. They don't belong to you. Or you can steal a person's reputation.

You slander somebody. You take from them that which is not yours to take. We talk about stealing a look or something.

You look at a man's wife. That wasn't your look to take. Or you try to draw the affections of a person of the opposite sex away who's married.

That's not yours to take. That's their spouse's. You get a credit card.

You run up a bill and you don't pay it. Anybody that runs up bills and they don't pay their bills, that's just another way of stealing. You default.

You don't pay. You have a college term paper due. Instead of doing the work yourself, you go online, you find somebody else's work, and you copy it.

I've heard of a pastor who was preaching all John Piper's sermons. And his church found out and they fired him. I remember there was a weatherman, I think in San Antonio, found out that he was plagiarizing somebody else's weather work and they fired him.

Stealing. There's many ways. You get somebody to pay for something more than it's worth.

Or there's extortion. You basically put pressure on people. You can imagine the mobsters coming to businesses in New York City and they're saying, you know, you need to pay us so much or somebody's likely going to burn your store or break in.

We'll protect that from happening. There's borrowing without returning. That happens.

You borrow a book. You borrow a movie. Oh, but somebody took it from me.

Yeah, but you were responsible for it. Or, you go visit somebody and your kids smash something. You don't make restitution for it.

That's a very convenient way. Well, it's not so convenient, but you basically took something from those people that wasn't yours to take. You took it by destroying it.

Your kids destroyed it. They're part of you. They represent you.

And you just walk away like, oh, they're Christians. Or, I don't know, you were brought up in a family where you just never did that and it doesn't even occur to you that you should do that. Begging when you're able to work.

Finding something that you have an idea of who it belongs to, but you don't return it. Not making restitution for something that you did steal or destroy, or you came to recognize that you owe. Using welfare programs when you don't need to.

Not paying your taxes. Just consider this. Our Lord says this.

He looked at those spiritual leaders in His day. You remember when He was purging the temple. And He said, you have made My Father's house what? A den of robbers.

How were they robbers? Well, you know what? The people had to bring their sacrifices. You've read under the Mosaic Law, it was permissible for people if they lived too far away to basically sell their goods, get the money, go to Jerusalem, and then buy their sacrifice and offer it. If they lived closer, they could bring their own.

But you know what had to be true of the sacrifices? They had to be without blemish. And so if you were one of the spiritual leaders, it didn't matter how far away people lived. You just got into the place where it's like, oh, there's problems with your lamb here.

We can't accept your ox isn't going to cut it. You've got to buy one of ours. And they got a premium price.

It basically became, you can't bring one of yours. Do you remember when Jesus purged the temple and He said, den of robbers? Do you remember the kind of animals that He cleared out of there? Ox. Pigeons.

You remember that. Sheep. Why? Because that's what they were selling.

That's what the money changers were doing. They were taking people's money and selling off these animals. It was a racket.

That's robbery. Or how about this? Isaiah says this, Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees and the writers who keep writing oppression to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of My people of their right. You can rob people of their rights.

That's stealing. Simply not giving people what is their right to have is robbing them. And you know the verse that comes to my mind immediately when I hear that is Romans 1, the Apostle Paul says, I concerning the Gospel, I have an obligation to both Greeks and barbarians, to both wise and to foolish.

He has an obligation. In other words, He owes them the Gospel. Have you ever thought about you can rob people of their right? If you're a Christian, people around you have a right to hear the truth.

Have you considered not evangelizing people to be a form of robbing somebody of a right? Or you have this. You remember God comes along, this very well-known passage in Malachi. He says, well, a man robbed God.

And they say, how are we robbing you? We're not thieves. We're not going and taking the wicker stool from Ruby's front porch. And he says this, he says if there is a way that I have told you you need to use your money and you don't use it that way, you're robbing me.

And whatever your views are on tithing, I'll tell you this, in the New Testament, you can equally rob God just like they could in the Old. And you know how you know that? Because of the teachings of the New Testament. You remember the rich fool.

He was not rich towards God. It's still possible to rob God in that fashion. Bottom line, at the root of stealing is this, I selfishly want something.

And you can see, stealing is the opposite of two things. Working and giving. You see it in the passage.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Stealing. Think about where it comes from.

It comes from a desire to have. And to have it no matter how it hurts you or how it affects you. Whoever that was that walked up there and took that, you know, obviously, if we had something that was so valuable to us, we would not have left it unsecured on the front porch.

But if that had belonged to Ruby's grandmother, the person taking it didn't care. No thought at all. Simply doesn't matter.

That's the way it is with thieves. They don't care about anybody else. They don't care how it hurts others.

I don't care if your grandmother gave you that watch or that ring. I want it. That's all that matters.

That's how a thief thinks. It doesn't matter if it's special to you. Totally selfish.

And it isn't just the desire to have what I want with total disregard to others. It's the desire to have it without putting forth much effort to get it. I don't want to work.

I just want it. I want as much as I can get with minimal effort. Minimum expenditure, maximum return.

That's the idea behind the thief. We all know what a parasite is. A leech.

A bloodsucker. It takes and gives nothing back. And you know what's happening here in this verse? Paul is calling Christians to stop being takers and start being givers.

That's the issue. You just think about the ugliness of this in the church. The eye cares nothing for the foot.

It just tries to get everything out of it that it possibly can. How ugly is that? You have a church full of people, members, where that's the mindset. And I recognize this.

As I'm thinking through this, I recognize there are two sorts of people in the church. There are takers and givers. And I see this.

Pastorally, you don't have to be a pastor for very long. You don't have to squint too hard where you come to recognize that. And I recognize this.

You've got these two categories. Takers, givers. But if we come over to the taker category, we can break that into two groups as well.

There are takers first. Takers who know not the Lord, who get into the church. They loiter out there around the fringes of the church and they take what they can.

They're takers. And we see this. Now some of them make it into the church.

Some of them even make it into the membership. But you know over the years, that's been one of the hard things as we've tried to reach the inner city. People come to us.

You'll see people. Sometimes you'll see people, they're not here for the service. They've got it timed pretty perfect.

They show up at the door when the service is over. We used to try to give meals over there in Hackberry. We'd invite the crack addicts, the drug addicts, the prostitutes.

We'd invite them in. The drug dealers invite them in to feed them. We tried to give this little evangelistic spiel before we fed them.

But they all had it down. They knew exactly how to time it to come in just to get. And we recognize that.

We recognize that there are those, they take the food, there are those that come into the church and they like the social benefits. Truth is, outside the church, they don't have many friends. They don't have much family.

And they find friends here. They find a social network here. And they take it.

They take the kindness of God's people. But they're not real. Entitlement is their banner.

They won't give, at least not much. Sometimes they'll give a little bit, but it's to those who maybe are close friends, family. But the Gentiles do that.

That's what Jesus said. You love those who love you. The Gentiles do that.

They might get a friend that's close that they do. But it's not sacrificial. The needs of others, it doesn't move them.

They don't rejoice when the needs of others are met. I mean, you can get people, we can help needy people somewhere else, but they don't care. It's like, they're just put off because they didn't get part of that.

Don't expect them to bring food for fellowship meals. Why? Don't expect them to offer to clean a bathroom or clean the floor. Serving others, it's like, what's that? They're drawn to the church mainly because it offers them a number of desirable benefits.

And like leeches, they cry, give and give. And some more boldly and brashly than others. But, okay, then there is another group.

There's another sort of taker in the church. And we know that because Paul is specifically addressing them in this verse. They're real.

They're genuine Christians. These are the ones Paul's speaking to in Ephesians 4.28. Real Christians. But what? They have way too much of the taking old man in them.

Way too much of the old Gentilish nature about them. Way too much. There they are.

Paul says, you're the ones I'm talking to. And he says, stop it at once. You who are real, stop being a taker.

Stop being the kind of Christian who sucks everything out of others. Stop being the kind of person who never gives anything back. Put on the new man! That's what he's saying.

And if you're regenerate, you can do that. And you need to face this. You need to examine your own life and face the reality of this thing.

What does it mean to steal? You know, it's the word klepto. Yeah, kleptomaniac. Do you know what Paul recognizes? There are spiritual pickpockets in the church.

He recognizes that there are kleptomaniacs in the church. Those who come into the church and feel overly entitled to what others have. And they're ready to take from others the moment there's an opportunity.

We call people like that users. They use people. And there can be genuine Christians.

You know what Jesus says? He says we're not to walk like Gentiles because that isn't the way you have learned of Christ. Sometimes it's a matter of teaching. That's what Paul's doing.

He's teaching them. Sometimes we need to be like Peter even though we've been taught it before. We need to bring ourselves into remembrance of these things.

And there are people in the church who are like this. They feel entitled. They use people for their own benefit.

They still rob God. They don't give. That offering box back there can identify some of the kleptomaniacs in the church.

And I don't mean because you've been dipping your hand in it. It's because your hand hasn't come close to it. You don't care about the needs of others.

It doesn't matter that God tells you that we need to reach the nations or that there is a proper place for supporting pastors. Definitely widows and orphans and the needy. And you all know we don't hide this.

You know what we do with the money here. But giving to you? Uh-uh. Why? Because your needs are always greater.

That's a sign of a taker. My needs trump that of others. In other words, you're not even thinking about the needs of others.

The fact that there are illustrations in Scripture about a widow who doesn't have anything and comes with her two mites. Why do you think she put that in there? She was seeking to give even though she had nothing. What do you think about those Macedonians? They were in a tremendous, ridiculous, extreme poverty, and yet they were generous beyond measure.

What happens? These examples get ignored. And you know what? What Paul recognizes is this. If you look at those people generally, there's another thing that accompanies that.

Laziness. There's a lazy aspect that's companion to this. Work? It's like David said.

Somebody on the radio said it's a curse. And so you basically look at it like work is a curse! I don't like it. And so what's happening is you're trying to get as much as you can without having to put forth much of an effort.

Lazy people don't want to share. They want to get. They're not thinking about others.

These folks are all too ready to take. Takers and givers. And I want us to really examine where are you at? Because Paul anticipates some of you need this Word.

Paul says, I see you there. You're real. He has every reason to believe you're real.

You do know the Lord. You've been saved for real. But you need to be taught this.

You need to be reminded of this. You carry around way too much of the attitude that you alone matter. That's where the taker is at.

The thief. The taker. He who depletes others.

He's just concerned about himself. It's a massively selfish approach to the church. You lack respect for others.

That's the mindset of the thief. And here's the thing. The massive difference between the taker who knows not the Lord and the taker who does is that when Paul comes along and says, stop, that resonates with you.

That's a wake-up call. And it leads to change. It leads to you putting on the new man and putting off the old.

And those who are unshaken by it, oh, even if you feel a little bit of conviction, but you can kind of brush it away and go on with your own selfish life, you're not real. Thieves do not inherit the kingdom. Lay that down.

Paul says to you who know the Lord, stop this at once. As I've said in these previous messages, you don't need to pray about it. Stealing is every man for himself.

It's all-out selfishness. It's getting all I can get. It's taking.

It's not giving. And he says stop doing it. And he assumes if you're regenerate, you not only can, but you will put off these old mannish ways of being a taker.

Stop building up your own life on the labors and exertions of others. Stop trying to get as much as you can for nothing. And you recognize the flow of this passage.

We need to appreciate the fullness of what it is we are to put on. It's not enough to say stop stealing. It's never Christian to stop at the negative.

But it's not even that he goes one step into the positive. He actually takes us further. It's not Christian to simply stop at saying stop stealing and get a job.

That's not the fullness of the Christian message. It goes further. It's not sufficient to describe the new man created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness just that way.

There's more. The new man works with one of the greatest motives of all and it's to give. And I think of, I don't know why, I was thinking of like a steel mill in Pennsylvania and all the fire and the heat and the man's all sweat and dirt and grime.

He's working. It's hard work. And he's thinking, yeah, paycheck Friday.

I'll be able to make my truck payment. And I go down to the John Deere dealer and look at that new tractor or that lawnmower. Love to buy a new gun.

And you know what Paul says? Paul says you need to put that off as well. That's what he's saying. If that's all your life is.

He's not saying you can't use money to support yourself and your family. But he's saying if that's all the further you go, then you need to put that off as well. You know what? The thief is selfish.

But the reality is, a working man can be just as selfish if he doesn't think about other people. He just thinks about what he can get from his efforts. A hard worker can work hard just for themselves.

Paul says put all that off. You think how precious givers are. I think giving people are the most... who was it? McShane? We sang one of his songs.

I think it was he that said that you should so live your life so as to be missed when you are gone. And there is nobody who is so missed as the giver. And you think of Dorcas, Tabitha, when she died.

You know what's sad to say? There are some people within these four walls that if you were to die right now, you wouldn't be missed a whole lot because you're a taker. You're a depleter. And your life is not heavily characterized by being a giver.

Givers are missed. Givers impact this world more than anyone else. Givers, how precious they are to the church.

Yes, we need to work for our own needs. But that isn't the fullness of the new man that we're to put on. It starts with stop stealing.

It progresses to work. But it goes further. But, let's just talk about work for a second.

I don't think David exhausted the subject. Years ago, a young man came to be in Carlos. And he described his desperate financial situation.

We were at Fatty's in those days. He was having a hard time. And I can laugh because Carlos has told me repeatedly about young men that are having hard times as he has tried to employ them over the years.

I remember him telling me about a certain time frame in his life where these young men were having hard times and they were packing up and going home. And Carlos is telling them, well, I'm having a hard time too, but I don't go home. But, we had this guy, this young man, and he wanted money.

He was coming to us because he was wanting us to bail him out of his situation. I think he lived with his mom or something and they hadn't paid rent and he was behind on other bills and he was self-employed and he was having problems with his job and he was behind. And Carlos said to him, the way out of debt? Work.

And you know, we simply did some numbers with him. I think it was something like even if you work a minimum wage job and you work so many hours a day, maybe it was even two jobs in three months, you are entirely out of the red and in the black. Just three months.

Now something tells me that he probably didn't take our counsel or didn't follow through with that. I mean, maybe I'm just making a bad assumption with regards to that. Brethren, the reality is that Christianity always stresses a very positive work ethic.

We hear of the Puritan work ethic. Have you ever heard of that? And that's right. I mean, we look at history and you look at times when revival has come, when God's Word has moved in a nation and people work hard.

And one of the reasons that Europe and the United States have had such a good work ethic for so long over against other places in the world has to do with the great awakenings that we've had, the revivals that we've had. You know what? Christianity dignifies work. And listen, listen to the Apostle Paul.

You'll remember this. He's speaking to the Thessalonians. He says this, keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness.

Wow! He says you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us. In other words, Paul set himself forth as an example of a hard worker. He says we were not idle when we were with you.

In other words, you know what? When he visited a church, he wasn't a leech. Just the opposite. He says we were not idle when we were with you.

We didn't eat anyone's bread without paying for it. With toil and labor, we worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you. Wow! He says even when we were with you, we would give you this command.

If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies. Such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person and have nothing to do with him that he may be ashamed. When he's dealing with the Ephesian elders, he says this, he says you yourselves know that these hands, again, he's bringing attention to the hands, he says these hands ministered to my necessities and to the necessities of those who were with me.

In all things, I have shown you that by working hard in this way, listen to this, we must help the weak. And he says this, you remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He Himself said it's more blessed to give than to receive. You see what Paul's saying? He's saying I didn't take from you.

I worked and I worked to be able to give. And that is exactly consistent with what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught. The taker doesn't believe this.

The taker doesn't hear this. Young men who come to the deacons looking for financial help or go to their parents, in many cases, it's just a way to rob them. Why? Because you're young, you're healthy, and you're capable.

And when you have a young man like that who stays too long in bed, it is inexcusable. It's one thing if they're working real hard at certain things. Like David would talk about a time when he was working really hard in law school and he had his wife working to take care of the situation.

I can understand if you have somebody that's in college and they're really giving themselves to it and the parents are willing to come alongside and help. But when there's laziness involved, that is a very convenient way to rob people. Young men, your financial struggles are solved one way, and that is work.

But what's especially sad is that sometimes with young men, we're just trying to get them to work. We're just trying to get them to get out of bed. And Paul's saying you're not even but maybe halfway there.

Where's the young man that is thinking while he's laying in his bed? Wow, there are needy people out there. I need to get up and go to work for others. You know, you can talk about being this passive four-ball, but not being passive and being active and taking hold of your own life isn't just so that you can be wealthy and rich.

It's not that. It's so that you can help people who are in need. To many, this idea of sharing is just so foreign.

Don't rob God. God wants you to give. It's more blessed to give than to receive.

But you haven't entered into that blessing. You don't know that. Everything is about how you can survive.

You're not thinking about others. And I'll tell you this, it doesn't matter if you're a single mother with a bunch of kids. That widow found a way to give.

The needs of others. You know, even if you're just a person that just has two tunics. Do you know what John the Baptist said? If you just have that, give one away to the one who doesn't have any.

And I know in this country, maybe you say, well, everybody's got a jacket here. Maybe. Maybe not.

More blessed to give. Have you read that if we give? Luke 6, it will be given to us, pressed down and shaken together and overflowing. I've been absolutely convinced some people perpetuate their poverty for the exact reason that Malachi says.

Because they won't test God in this area and be liberal givers. And so they keep, you remember what the Proverbs says, there are those who don't give what they should and it only tends to poverty. That's a reality.

The main business of the Christian is not to make money in order to become rich. But let me tell you this, we've got a mindset today, there's a certain group in the left, they hate it if people are hard workers and they have something to show for their hard work. And they feel like all the lazy people are entitled to what the hard workers... You know what? If you take a people and you put the Spirit of God in them and they become hard workers, you should expect that you're going to see a result of that.

There's always a result when people are hard workers. You're going to see that suddenly they have money flowing in. You're going to see that they have abilities that other people don't have.

The guy that stays in bed till 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. or whatever, look, he ought not to be surprised or she ought not to be surprised if she doesn't have what the hard worker gets. Even the world speaks about the early bird gets the worm, let alone what Scripture has to say about it. Realizing that there are needs that God wants us to give our earnings to.

There are other people who are entitled to what we have. God really comes down when we don't deal with the poor and the widow and the orphan the way we ought to. Well, during my recent visit to Monterey, this goes back to something that David said.

I was down there in Monterey and we had an evening service. After the service was over, we had a meal. Of course, I eat late.

And so, a bunch of young single guys gathered around me while I was eating and they're asking different questions. And there was a guy sitting to my right. And when we got up and we're all getting ready to leave, he comes over to me.

He didn't speak English, but he had his single guy translator there. And he says he's got a question for you. He said he wants to know when the proper time is to serve God entirely.

Well, you can be surprised by that question. I said, what do you mean? I said, now's the time to serve God entirely. You see, he's a college student.

And so he felt like, well, I can't really do it. His perception was that in order to serve the Lord fully, it must mean not to be a college student. It must mean that you have to do something else.

And we can get folks like that in the church. And David was talking about this. You really can get folks in the church whose mindset is, if I'm not in the ministry, or if I'm not out on the foreign mission field, then somehow I'm not serving the Lord.

But if you look at this verse 28 of Ephesians 4, what you're going to see is Paul is basically indicating you have lived a very good life if you simply will stop stealing, start working, and give. That is a very useful life. I mean, when Paul's talking to the Ephesian elders, he doesn't tell them all, you know what you need to do is pack your bags and all head off to the mission field.

And by the way, when they came to John the Baptist, you'll remember, he was telling them, you need to have fruits that accord with your repentance. And the crowd says, what do we do? And he says, you want to know what to do? He didn't say pack your bags and go to the mission field. Look, we need missionaries to go to the mission field.

But that's not what he said to the masses. He said, give. You have two tunics? Give one.

That's what he said. Hey, look, the fact is that the tax collectors, they came and said, teacher, what shall we do? Now, the first injunction there applies. If you have two of something, give.

But he also told them, not go to the mission field. I mean, that would have been great if they had gone to the mission field, but he didn't say to do that. He said to them, collect no more than you're authorized to do.

You notice that? Stop stealing. And if you have two tunics, share one. Soldiers, what do we do? He said to them, do not extort.

Stop stealing by extortion. You're big, you carry weapons, you have authority. Stop using that to your advantage.

And again, the general injunction applies to them. You have two tunics? Give one. You see, isn't that amazing? You want fruit for repentance? Not that you come to church and carry a Bible.

You want true fruit? You know what happens? Jesus at the end says, I was hungry and you did not give. That's the fullness of the new man. I was thirsty and you did not give.

A lot of people in hell were hard workers. But it's that Christ-likeness of living in this world to be a channel to give and bless others. Givers and takers.

And Paul knows, some of you that genuinely have been washed in the blood, you need to hear this. You need this. This is precisely what it means to don the new man.

It means to put on Christ. Christ. Did He steal? Was He lazy? Was He stingy? Was He selfish? You know what Scripture says? Though He was rich, He had a lot.

Though that was the case, yet for your sake, He became poor. You know what it says in Philippians? It says He emptied Himself. He gave.

He not only didn't take what belonged to others, the truth is He didn't even hold on to that which was His own. And He gave it. And He gave and He gave and He gave.

He said, He looked at His disciples, He said, I did not come to be served. I came to serve and to give. My life a ransom for many.

What a different realm that is from being a taker. Paul says, put that on. Christian, put that on.

Off with the other. Put on a consideration for others. Put on self-denial.

Put on serving others. Put on caring for others. Jesus worked.

He came here. He worked. He sweat.

He bled to earn a righteousness for us. He took that righteousness to the cross. He labored for it in obedience.

He learned obedience by what He suffered. He suffered deeply. He gave up His comforts for us.

He gave up His riches. He became poor in order to give us the greatest imaginable gift of all that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And you know what? Paul says that right there.

Right there. You see how he was? Put that on. Stop taking and open up your eyes to the needs of others.

Stop robbing. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ. He gave.

He healed. He fed. Thank-giving.

Others. Sacrifice. Love.

Consideration. Sympathy. Put this on, brethren.

Put this on and put off the other. Put off indifference. And do it at once.

That's what He's saying. Do this. Do this.

Stop with that. Start with these other two. Work.

Hard work. It's really hard labor. Young men.

Yes, David hit it right. Chansky wrote that book specifically to young men because young men... I hear this repeatedly. Young ladies saying, where are the young men? Well, they're there, but where are they? Where are the ones that are like this? Brethren, let us walk in the footsteps of our beloved Savior.

Paul's saying do it. Do it. You must do it.

No one else is going to do it for you. No one else is going to get you out of bed in the morning or get you in bed at the right time. You.

Don't be a sluggard. Don't be a parasite. Men or women, face this.

Face yourselves. Face your sin. Face your stinginess.

Be honest. And ask yourself this, will you be mourned over when you're gone because you gave so much? God saved you to be zealous of good works. Put away that mindset that oh, well, if you're like this, you simply pray about it and you're expecting God to change you and take it out of your life.

This is an imperative. You stop this taking. You work.

And you give. People in hell are full of excuses for all sorts of reasons. But here, if you have ears to hear, hear this.

To work. To war. You have eyes in your head.

You can see Paul's injunction here. Stop doing it, says Paul, who so is stealing. Whoever's a taker, no more.

Let him labor. Impart to him having need. Father, please, I know that there are a lot of brethren here that are such givers and others who very much need to hear such an imperative.

Lord, I pray that it might come like a hammer blow if necessary, or like a still, small voice if that's more persuasive. Change us, Lord. We want to see the new man created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

May that be pervasive. In Christ's name we pray, Amen. You're dismissed.

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