

Exposing Enemies Within the Church: A 7-Session Bible Study Series
Session 1: Social Justice Versus Biblical Justice, Part 1

Four Bible Passages that Uphold Private Property Ownership and Other Property Rights

Exodus 20:15

You shall not steal.

Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

Matthew 20:1-16, especially verse 15

20 ¹ "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. ⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

⁸ "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' ⁹ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. ¹⁰ But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. ¹¹ And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, ¹² saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' ¹³ But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Ephesians 4:28

²⁸ Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need..

Discuss

1. How do the Eighth and Tenth Commandments uphold property rights?
2. How may possessive nouns and pronouns are in this English translation of Exodus 20:17? What principle is represented by all these possessive nouns and pronouns?
3. Although the primary point of Matthew 20:1-16 is not a about the free enterprise economic system (of which property rights are an essential part), divine affirmation of property rights is present nonetheless, in 20:15. What are some principles behind what Jesus said in this verse?
4. List several of the ideals, rights, and/or principles affirmed in Ephesians 4:28.