

***“Holy Labor”***  
***Ephesians 4:28***  
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In the first four and a half chapters of Ephesians Paul taught and reminded Christians of their position in Christ—who they are spiritually in light of what Christ has done for them. Starting in 4:25, and for the rest of the book, Paul exhorts Christians to live accordingly—to act like they have been redeemed. He accomplishes this by giving over forty imperatives (commands) covering every area of daily living. Today we learn that God commands Christians to have a holy work ethic.

1. Quit living selfishly and stop stealing!

*“Let him who steals, steal no longer”*

2. Be self-sufficient and keep working!

*“but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good”*

3. Get your motives right and start sharing!

*“in order that he may have something to share with him who has need”*

## Study Notes:

**“him who steals” (NAS); “He who has been stealing” (NIV)**—*ho kleptone*, present active participle; literally ‘the stealing one’ or ‘the stealer’; this is a participle used as a noun and emphasizes a character trait; the present tense of the participle emphasizes continuous, habitual action; apparently there were professing Christians in Ephesus who carried over a sinful habit or lifestyle of ripping people off from when they were not saved; *kleptone* comes from *klepto* from which we get our English word, ‘kleptomaniac.’

**“no longer”**—*meiketē*; this is an emphatic negative adverb and when used with the imperative verb literally means, “stop doing that, quit it, knock it off!”; Christians may be tempted to sin by stealing, but the church should have a zero-tolerance attitude regarding this very basic nefarious, deceptive, selfish, detrimental behavior; see what radical measures God employed with Achan (Joshua 7) and Ananias (Acts 5) for stealing.

**“let him labor” (NAS); “must work” (NIV)**—*kopiaō*, from which we get our English word ‘copious’; this is the main verb in the verse and is a present imperative (a command) and means “let him labor”; *kopiaō* is used 23 times in the NT and refers to hard work, toilsome labor, growing physically weary (John 4:6), the hard-working farmer (2 Tim 2:6), and even physical exhaustion—this is how Christians are supposed to work, with tireless, physical exertion to the fullest until our energy is spent; it is present tense which means

this is to be an ongoing regular habit—a lifestyle of being a hard worker; there are to be no sluggards in the church: “the desire of the sluggard puts him to death for his hands refuse to work” (Proverbs 21:25).

**“performing with his own hands” (NASB); “doing something useful with his own hands” (NIV)**—“with his own hands” is a common idiom Paul used to emphasize a person being self-sufficient, productive, and not illegitimately pilfering off others—to whatever degree you can work and contribute you must, with your own hands; chip in and don’t be afraid to get your hands dirty; don’t be looking for a free hand-out; Paul was the hardest worker there was and he reminded the churches of his example: Paul told the Corinthians, “to this present hour we are hungry and thirsty, and poorly clothed, and roughly treated and are homeless and we toil, working with our own hands” (1 Corinthians 4:11-12; cf. Acts 20:34).

**“to share”**—part of the Christian work ethic is to bring in income for the purpose of sharing some with others, particularly those who are needy in the local Christian assembly; Jesus said it is more blessed to give than receive; Paul said, “let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (Gal 6:10; cf. Acts 2:45, 4:35).