



**MT. ROSE REFORMED**  
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Let the Thief No Longer Steal

*Reverend Scott Johnson | February 22, 2026 | Exodus 22:1-15*

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## Old Testament Reading

The Old Testament reading is Exodus chapter 22, verses one through 15. Exodus 22, one through 15. This is God's word, his inspired, his infallible, his inerrant word. So let's give our attention to the reading of the word of God.

Exodus 22, one through 15. If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no blood guilt for him. But if the sun has risen on him, there shall be blood guilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard. If fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then if the thief is found, he shall pay double. If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing of which one says, this is it, the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.

If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe and it dies or is injured or is driven away without anyone seeing it, an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath and he shall not make restitution. But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.

If a man borrows anything of his neighbor and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution. If it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.

## **New Testament Reading**

That is our passage this morning, but we will also hear from the New Testament. So you can keep your place there in Exodus and turn to Luke chapter 19, a very familiar passage from the Gospels of Zacchaeus, the wee little man who came to faith in Jesus. Luke 19, verses 1 through 10. Luke 19, verses 1 through 10.

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was. But on account of the crowd, he could not because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. He has gone in to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

## **A Personal Illustration of Theft and Consequence**

We all have things in our past that we are not too proud of. And as I was thinking of our passage that we're looking at today, one thing from my past came to mind that I'm not too proud of, but I share it with you today because it illustrates, at least indirectly, it illustrates the wisdom and the goodness of these laws that the Lord gave to his people Israel.

When I was in college, my fraternity decided to build this huge tree house in front of our fraternity house. We were planning to have a party and we wanted to have a tree house for our party. And of course, to build a big treehouse, you need wood. You need a lot of wood. And since I had a pickup truck, I was asked, along with a couple of other friends, to acquire the wood that we would need for the treehouse.

And our idea for obtaining the wood was not to go to the lumberyard or Lowe's and actually purchase a bunch of lumber. Rather, we decided we'd visit a home construction site late at night and help ourselves to the piles of lumber that were stacked up in front of the homes that were being built. And so my two friends and I drove out to this neighborhood where houses were under construction and in the darkness of night, the cover of darkness, we loaded up the back of the truck with as much lumber as we possibly could.

And then we started our drive back to campus. And when we were just a few blocks away from campus, I saw the red and blue lights in my rear view mirror. I was not really excited to see that. So we got pulled over by a police officer. Somehow the sight of three young guys driving in the middle of the night with a truck full of lumber looked suspicious to him. Rightfully so.

And so he pulled us over and before he came to my car window, my friends and I concocted a story that we would tell him to explain what we were doing. I told the policeman that we were students at the college, which was true enough. And then I told him that we were just getting back from Nashville, which was a few hours away, and we had bought the lumber there and we were driving all day and we were just coming home, which was definitely not true.

The policeman looked at my license, and he looked at the three of us and he was not at all happy. And he said in words that I will not repeat now that my story was not believable at all. But for some reason he gave me my license back and he let us go on our way. And the result of all that was that my two friends and I were the heroes of our fraternity. We had stolen the lumber for our tree house. The party was a great success. We lied to a policeman. And I got to tell the story over and over to my admiring friends.

I wasn't a Christian at that time, just so you know. And I look back at that now, and I'm very ashamed of what I did. It was a terrible thing to do. But I learned all the wrong lessons from it. I got away with stealing and lying. And in the process, strangely enough, I gained the respect of my friends. And so, in a small way, at least for me at that one time, crime did pay.

But as I think about it, particularly in the light of God's word in this passage, how much better for me it would have been if I and my friends had been arrested by the policemen, and if we had been forced not only to return all the lumber that we had stolen from the construction company, but also if we had been forced to pay back double to the company of what we had taken in order to compensate for the time and trouble that no doubt we had caused them. In that case, I would have learned all the right lessons from that whole episode.

I would have learned that stealing is wrong, that it's disgraceful, that it hurts other people, and the penalty of paying double for what we had stolen would have not only driven those lessons home in a painful but good way, but it also would have compensated the company from whom we stole that lumber for the trouble that we had put them through. And in that case, if that had been the outcome of that, in that case there would have been a true restitution for our crime. That is, the wrongs that we did to our victims would have been righted. What they lost, the trouble that they suffered, would have been compensated by us who caused all the trouble for them.

## **The Principle of Restitution and Equality in God's Law**

And that is God's concern behind the various laws that we have heard this morning from this passage in Exodus. God's justice demands that there be restitution for the victim, a restitution that must be paid by the one who is guilty of the crime. And as we've done in the last couple of weeks, as we've been looking at this section in Exodus with these various civil laws, we'll first consider what the laws meant for the people of Israel at that time. And then next we'll consider the significance of these laws in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What do these laws mean for us or what can we learn from them as Christians today?

But before we look at the laws in more detail, I want to make a couple of comments concerning these laws that all have to do with property, or the theft of property, or the destruction of property. One thing to note about these laws is that they were to be applied to all people in the same way. There is no special conditions carved out here for the rich, the powerful, the

influential. This was not the case in other law codes of the ancient Near East. Often people of high social standing had a privileged status in the eyes of the law. But people of a high social standing do not have a privileged status in the eyes of God. God is no respecter of persons. And that truth is enshrined in the laws that he gave to the people of Israel. All people were to be treated equally in the sight of the law.

And of course that ought to apply to our laws today. Any just and fair legal system today will not show favor to the rich, the powerful, the influential, but a just law with just penalties will apply equally to all people, just as God's moral commandments, just as his moral law applies equally to all people, regardless of social standing or power in the society.

A second thing to note is that the punishments are proportionate to the crime. Other ancient law codes that existed around this time often had penalties that were draconian and totally disproportionate to the offense. For example, the Hammurabi Code made theft a capital punishment. And so if you stole something, you were put to death. In some parts of the world today, if you are guilty of theft, especially in Islamic, at least some Islamic places, if you are guilty of theft, you get your hand chopped off.

But here in God's laws, you see the principle of equity. That is the principle that we looked at last Sunday. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, the penalty must be proportionate to the crime, not more extreme than the crime, not less in severity than the crime. And so this law then, these laws that we have seen show God's concern that the penalty match the crime. It also shows God's concern or his priority of human life over property. Even the thief who steals something does not deserve to have his life taken away for that crime. And so God values human life even over human property.

## **Detailed Explanation of the Exodus Laws**

And so with all that in mind then, let's look at these laws to understand what they meant to the people of Israel, to whom they were given. The first four verses deal with two different situations. Verses one and four are concerned with the theft of an animal, an ox or a sheep or a donkey. And as you can imagine in that society, that was a primary, if not the primary, source of wealth for people. Animals were very valuable because they were so vital to that economy, the livelihood of people then.

And so if a man steals another person's animal and then he goes to kill it or to sell it, his penalty was that he would have to give back to the victim not only one animal to replace the one that he stole, but that he would have to give back four or five additional animals depending on the kind of animal that he stole. In verse 4, however, if the thief was caught with the animal alive, he had not killed it, he had not sold it, he'd only have to pay back the owner double for what he stole. So he would have to give the owner back his original animal, and then he would have to provide one more just like it to the owner.

And that was a way in which the law treats this crime of or the previous crime of killing the stolen animal or selling the stolen animal, that was a much more severe, that was a much more serious crime. And so he had to pay back fourfold or fivefold. But if the thief could return the original animal, he had to pay back double. And of course, this could have given the thief some pause to consider after he had stolen the animal, before he killed it, before he sold it. Perhaps he would think that it would be better not to do that because if I'm caught, then I will probably, I will have to pay back fourfold. And so perhaps this law was something of a deterrent.

In fact, when we compare these laws to those in Leviticus, it appears, when we look at the Levitical laws, that if a thief did repent of his crime, if he did confess his crime, the penalty was that he would have to restore that animal and then add a fifth to it. So he would add a fifth of the value of the animal that he stole. That was quite a bit less than repaying double. And so the law recognized, and again, God, the law giver, was acknowledging that the penalty ought to be less severe for the thief who confesses it, who willingly surrenders the animal, who repents of his sin.

Verses two and three address what we would call a home invasion. If a thief breaks into someone's house and it is at night and the homeowner kills the thief, the homeowner was not guilty of murder. And that's because it was dark. The homeowner, he couldn't tell if the invader was armed. He couldn't tell if his life was a threat. And so he could use deadly force in that situation. It was justified. However, if a thief broke into someone's house during the day, the homeowner could not kill the thief. If he did kill the thief, he would be guilty of that man's blood. He would be guilty of murder.

And the reason for this law was to prevent unnecessary, needless killing. If a thief broke in during the day, and presumably if it was clear that the thief did not present a threat to the homeowner, his life was not a threat, the homeowner did not have the right to kill the thief just

because he had broken into his home. And again, you see God's concern for a fair penalty. Even a thief, though a criminal, in this case, did not deserve to die for his crime.

Verses five and six address cases where one person is careless and negligent and causes damage to another person's property. This can happen by allowing his animals to graze in his neighbor's field or garden, or he sets a fire, he's careless, it gets out of control, it starts to burn up his neighbor's stacked grain. And the penalty in these cases was that the wrongdoer must make full restitution to his neighbor. He must make full restitution from the best of his own field and vineyard.

And note that in these situations, the person who did the wrong, he is not required to pay back double. He is only required to replace what was destroyed or damaged by his animal, by his carelessness. And so the law was more lenient towards those who did not have the intent to steal something, but those who were simply irresponsible or careless and destroyed their neighbor's property by their negligence. But it was still fair. The law was fair. The guilty party still had to make restitution. The victim had to be repaid.

Verses seven through 13 deal with situations in which one person gives to another person his money or possessions or animals for safekeeping while he was away. And if you think about it, this makes sense. This would have been a common practice in those days. They didn't have banks like we have today or modern locks or security systems and so on. And so when you went away on a trip, you might give your valuables to your neighbor for protection. But what happens if your neighbor, while he's keeping them, steals them from you? Or what happens if he just says that they were stolen, but really he is the one who stole them?

Well, these laws address these cases, and again, the guiding principle is restitution. If a thief is found with your goods, then the thief must pay double. But in the case that no thief is found, there are instructions in verses eight and nine to follow a procedure to determine the guilt or innocence of the person to whom you entrusted your goods. Unfortunately, the instructions aren't super clear. The Hebrew is difficult to interpret. Scholars don't know exactly what verses eight and nine are saying, but in some way, it seems, probably involving the authorities with some kind of appeal to God, there is a judgment that determines whether the person you entrusted your possessions to, whether he had stolen them himself or whether they had been stolen from him. And if it turns out that he had stolen them, then he has to pay you back double. And so that's that principle of restitution, even more so because it was theft.

In verses 10 through 12, you give to your neighbor an animal for safekeeping. And if while your animal is in your neighbor's care, it dies or it's injured or it's driven away, your neighbor must swear an oath that he has not stolen it. And that settles the matter. By swearing an oath, that would have deterred at least some people, because an oath is a very serious thing, swearing something to be true in the name of the Lord would have deterred some people, at least, from not lying about what happened to his neighbor's property.

Interestingly, in verse 12, if your animal is in your neighbor's care and it is stolen from him while it is in your neighbor's care, the neighbor himself must make restitution to you. And the idea here seems to be that if you entrust your animal to your neighbor, that he should be extra careful with that animal to make sure that it is not stolen from him while it is in his safekeeping. But according to verse 13, if your neighbor can prove that your animal was torn apart by wild beasts, he can produce the carcass, then he doesn't have to make restitution.

Finally, in verses 14 and 15, these deal with borrowing or renting things, animals from others. If you, for example, if you borrowed my ax and it broke, you would owe me a new ax. However, if you borrowed my ax and I was with you while you were using it, then I would have to replace the broken ax myself. I'm out of luck. But if you paid me to use my ax, that is, if you rented my ax from me, and then in that case it was understood that the rental agreement that we had, that under that agreement I would be responsible for any damages to the ax while you borrowed it. And so these are the laws then that dealt with, in Exodus, theft and the accidental destruction of others' property.

## **Lesson One: Laws Cannot Cure a Sinful Heart**

So having considered these laws, let's ask the question, what can we as Christians learn from these laws in the lights of the gospel? Well, there are two lessons we can learn from them. First of all, these laws could only limit sinful behavior. They could not cure a sinful heart. These laws could only minimize limits, contain sinful actions on the part of other different people, but they could not address the heart. They could not cure a sinful heart. There is not a word in these laws about the heart of the one who committed theft or the one who damaged his neighbor's property. The sole concern here is what he must do to make things right with his victim.

And of course, that's because these laws were establishing justice and equity, fairness in in the nation of Israel among the Israelites and their dealings with one another. There had to be some

laws to govern their relationships with one another. And so that was important, that was vital. However, that was not God's primary concern for his people when it came to their wealth and possessions. Rather, God's primary concern was for the heart of his people. God's primary concern was what would be my people's heart or their attitude, their orientation towards the wealth, towards the possessions that they would acquire.

Would the Israelites see their wealth and possessions as gifts from God to be used in serving and glorifying Him? Or would the Israelites look to their money or their possessions or their wealth for security, for life, for happiness? That was the chief concern that God had for His people when it came to their wealth or possessions. When we turn to the New Testament, we know what the answer to those questions was, at least for some of the people of Israel, maybe even most of the people of Israel, and that is they had a completely wrong view of their money and goods.

And where the Israelites went wrong in their thinking was this. They thought that as long as they kept these laws, as long as they avoided stealing from their neighbors, as long as they were not guilty of any of the sins described in these laws, then that was all that really mattered to God when it came to their possessions and their wealth. But Jesus, when he came into the world, he revealed what truly matters to God concerning wealth.

In Luke chapter 12, we read of a man who is near Jesus in a crowd and he yells out to Jesus. He says, teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Now, we might think that this man had the right idea, that he was perfectly justified in looking to Jesus, this teacher, this rabbi, to help him arbitrate this dispute that he had with his brother over their father's inheritance. In fact, if you think about it, there's no better person in the world to whom this question could be brought to than Jesus himself. After all, this is Jesus. This is God incarnate, this is the same Lord who gave the law to the people of Israel, the great law giver. He is the one who spoke these laws, delivered them to Moses. And so who else but Jesus could deliver a right verdict in this case? He would be the most impartial, the wisest, the fairest judge of all to decide who was in the right, who was in the wrong.

However, Jesus was not at all interested in arbitrating this dispute between these two brothers. He was not at all interested in being the Judge Judy to figure out which brother was in the wrong. He told the man in verse 14, this is again the gospel of Luke, man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you? And so Jesus' first concern was not to make sure that this man

got his fair share of the inheritance. Rather, Jesus was interested in uncovering the sin that was in the heart of this man. That is his sin of greed, his sin of covetousness, idolatry. And we know that was Jesus's concern because he goes on to say in verse 15, take care and be on your guard against all covetousness for once life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

So again, let's consider this man who came to Jesus with this question, this dispute over their father's inheritance. He could have been in the right. His brother could have been a complete scoundrel. His brother could have been cheating him out of his lawful share of the wealth that they gained from their father. But the man, when he appealed to Jesus, he heard, hopefully he realized that he had a far, far greater problem than simply losing out on some worldly wealth. And that was he had a heart problem. He was driven by greed, by covetousness. And for Jesus, that was the real issue. It wasn't who had the rightful claim to his father's inheritance.

Now, if we can take that man's attitude towards his wealth as typical of the Israelites in Jesus's day towards their own wealth and possessions, then we can say that as a people, the heart of the Israelites was in the wrong place. Their heart was not set on heavenly treasure. Their heart was set on their own earthly treasure. It's not just the Israelites who went astray in this way, but that's true for all of us. We all do the same thing. When we consider our wealth or our possessions, we think that the most important issues are simply a question of who rightfully owns what, what belongs to whom.

And so our natural way of thinking is all that really matters to God is that I don't steal from others, that I don't defraud others. As long as I avoid those sins, then God must be satisfied with me regarding my wealth and possessions and my attitude towards them. And when we read laws such as these in Exodus chapter 22, when we read the eighth commandment, thou shall not steal, we hear these laws, we feel good about ourselves, we haven't stolen anything from anybody, or maybe we haven't stolen anything in a long time from anybody, and in our sinful thinking we tell ourselves, because I'm not a thief, I might, I must be right before God. My heart must be right before God when it comes to my wealth and possessions.

This is what the rich young ruler thought who came to Jesus asking him how to inherit eternal life. He told Jesus that he had successfully kept all of God's laws from his youth, including the eighth commandment, thou shall not steal. But Jesus said to the rich young ruler, he said, one thing you still lack, sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in

heaven and come follow me. And of course, that was the one thing that the rich young ruler could not do. He could not sell his possessions. He could not part with his wealth. And so instead he parted from Jesus. He walked away from the one who alone could give him that eternal life that he desired and asked for. And he did so because he loved his wealth more than he loved Christ, more than he loved the son of God.

The rich young ruler, he was upstanding. He was moral. He was upright. According to these laws of Exodus, he had kept every one of them to the T. He had kept the 10 commandments, at least in his external behavior. All that he owned, that great wealth that he had, it was all rightfully and properly his. He didn't defraud anyone. He didn't cheat anyone. But his heart wasn't right. He couldn't sell his goods. He couldn't part with his goods. He couldn't follow Jesus because his money, his possessions were his God.

And apart from the grace of God, you and I would do exactly the same thing as a rich young ruler. It's not enough to tell ourselves, well, we haven't stolen the property of anybody, but we need to recognize that by nature, our hearts make an idol out of our wealth, out of our possessions, out of whatever property that God is pleased to give us.

We read of another man in Luke's gospel who was guilty of this as well. Only unlike the just or unlike the rich young ruler, this man, he could make no claim that he was an upright and moral law-keeping Israelite. This man was a thief and he knew he was a thief. And of course, that is Zacchaeus, the passage that we read from Luke's gospel. He was a tax collector. And as a tax collector, he became very wealthy. And he became very wealthy by defrauding those whom he taxed. But when Jesus encountered Zacchaeus and saw him up in the tree, he called him by name. He told him to come down. He told him that he was going to be his house guest that day.

Zacchaeus, he responded to his encounter with Jesus in a completely different way from the rich young ruler. Zacchaeus said in Luke chapter 19, verse eight, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. Probably Zacchaeus was thinking of this passage. He was ready to restore fourfold what he had stolen. And Jesus said this about Zacchaeus. Jesus said what he could not say about the rich young ruler. Jesus said of this tax collector, this thief, he said, today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham.

And the difference between Zacchaeus and the rich young ruler was that by the grace of God, Zacchaeus came to have a radically new attitude towards his wealth and possessions. He was

not only ready to make restitution to those whom he had cheated, but he was ready to part with his wealth, to give half of it to the poor out of his love for his savior. So what Zacchaeus had was a new heart. He was no longer devoted to his money, his possessions, but he was now devoted wholly to Christ.

And the lesson is this, is that when it comes to your wealth and property, you may be the most honest person in the world. You may be upright in all of your dealings with others. You may have cheated and defrauded no one. But if you have made wealth your trust, if you have looked to your property, your wealth, your money, as the way to secure comfort, security, hope for you, then in terms of your standing with God, what you need is a radically new orientation. You need a new heart towards your wealth and your property. And that is only a gift of God's grace.

Only by the grace of God can we come to let go of worldly wealth as a means of our comforts, our hope, our security in this world. Only when you treasure the Lord Jesus Christ more than you treasure your money and your possessions will your heart be right with God. Only when you are ready by the grace of God to part with everything that you have in this world for the sake of following Jesus and knowing Him and finding in Him true treasure. Only then is your heart right and your heart is where God wants it to be. And that is a gift of God's grace by faith in Jesus Christ.

## **Lesson Two: Our Need for a Savior to Make Restitution to God**

The second lesson is this. We need a savior to make restitution for us to God. So all of these laws are addressing the sin of stealing, of mishandling the property, the possessions that people might entrust to us. But when we consider the sin of theft, when we consider the sin of stealing from another person in the light of the truth of who God is, the fact that God is the sovereign creator of heaven and earth, the fact that God is the sovereign Lord that all that he has made, Almighty God is the one who is the rightful owner and possessor of all things.

When we consider the sin of stealing in the light of who God is, we see stealing very differently. We see that when we steal from somebody, we are not just taking something that belongs to them, but ultimately we are taking something that belongs to God. We are robbing God, we are stealing from Him because He is the true Lord and proprietor of all things. And so in the truest

sense of the word, you and I don't really own anything. We are only stewards and trusted by God with whatever wealth and possessions he gives to us in this world. Ultimately, all things are his and his alone. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1.

And so to steal anything is really to steal from God. And not only that, but when we consider that not just our material possessions, but all that we have, all that we are, our gifts, our talents, our time, our lives, our hearts, that all of this belong to God, then we can see that every time we fail to devote all that we have and all that we are to the service and worship of Christ, we are stealing from God. When we sin against God in any way, when we fail to devote everything we have to Him and His worship and service, we are robbing God of the glory, the honor, the praise that is rightfully His that we are to be giving to Him continually.

And so sin is robbing God. And with that in view then, since that is what sin is, stealing from God, His glory, in the light of these laws in Exodus, that raises the question, well, how do we make restitution to God? How do we compensate to Him? How do we repay Him from what we have taken? And the answer is, we cannot. We cannot possibly restore what we have stolen from God by our sin. And that's because God is infinite. He is infinite in holiness and righteousness. And therefore to steal from him in any way, which is to say to sin against him in any way is to be guilty of a crime of infinite proportions. It is to have an infinite amount of guilt.

And so you and I cannot make restitution to God. We cannot repay him for the sin that we have sinned against him. We cannot compensate for our guilt against him or before him. The justice of God demands a restitution of infinite value, infinite worth, and even an eternity under the wrath of God is not sufficient restitution to God for the sin that we have committed against him. Only a restitution of infinite value can satisfy God's justice. And that is exactly what Jesus Christ came to do.

That is exactly why Christ came into the world for sinners like you and me, so that by his suffering, what he suffered upon the cross, the judgment of God, the wrath of God, by his death upon the cross on our behalf, he has repaid the debt that you and I could never repay to God. Jesus Christ is our Savior. He has made a full, a perfect, a final restitution to God through our sins against him. He has paid the debt that you and I owe to him.

And so, as a believer in Jesus Christ, as one who belongs to him by faith, if your trust, your hope is in Jesus, as your savior from sin and death, you have the promise that that debt is paid,

restitution has been made, God's justice is satisfied, so that you can come into his presence now with that joy and freedom of knowing that there is no more guilt. There is no more sin. There is no more justice that needs to be dealt with before God, but that you are right with him, both now and forevermore. And so in the Lord Jesus Christ, your debt to the Lord is paid, your sins are forgiven, and you have received the gift of eternal life. Let's pray.