When Is A Thief No Longer A Thief?

Is sin only a matter of behavior?

One of our operational falsehoods "is that sin is simply a matter of bad behavior. Maybe we want to hold on to this idea because sin seems less sinful if it isn't some dark defect in our character. Or perhaps, if sin is just behavior, it seems that we have more independent power to free ourselves from it. All we need to do is give ourselves with discipline to systems of behavior reformation and we can free ourselves from sinful acts. But sin is not just a matter of behavior"

(Paul Tripp, *New Morning Mercies*, entry for Sept 4)

A thief is no longer a thief
when he is transformed into a
hard-working giver

Ephesians 4:28

I. **Put off stealing**

- *"You shall not steal"* (Ex 20:15)
- Greek: kleptō (to steal)
- Believers must put off the old habits of getting without working

Ephesians 4:28

II. Put on hard work

- "Labor" = to grow weary
- Work is important for the believer (2 Thess 3:10)

- "Performing" = working
- Stands "in contrast to idleness or useless busyness" (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 626)
- Acts 20:34; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 4:11

Ephesians 4:28

III. Hard work will enable you to help those in need

- Acts 2:45; 4:35
- Focus is on needs of believers (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; Eph 4:25)

Transformed into the image of Christ

"none but Christ can transform a burglar into a benefactor!"

(John Stott, *Ephesians*, p. 188)

A redeemed thief goes from being covetous to generous!