

## EXODUS 20:17      YOU SHALL NOT COVET

Have you ever wanted something that belonged to someone else? If we are truthful, we would have to say yes. Stay tuned, for this is for us.

We now find ourselves at the last commandment of the decalogue. With all the conviction that each commandment brings, we might be somewhat relieved to finish this section. These commandments are very challenging and we know that we fall short on each one. There is much more than meets the eye in the short one liners. There is the negative statement, but the implication is very strong in the positive aspect. Not only are we to not do something in the thou shalt nots, but we are to do something positive also. In this 10<sup>th</sup> commandment dealing with coveting, we get to the heart attitude more than any other commandment. It deals with the inward man only. It expressly forbids evil thoughts. If you thought the other commandments made you guilty, this one is even more startling. As we have seen so far, the thoughts themselves are sinful, not just the actions. This time its even more pronounced. People may not even know or see when we break this commandment but God does. God knows full well that we have hearts that are governed by passions. He sees that out of the heart proceeds evil. When we understand the law, we see that it shows our sin. Coveting actually shows our lack of contentment and we are doubting that God meets our needs. We are having gods before Him and we take His name in vain when we covet. In fact this commandment is connected with both tables of the law and each commandment.

Let's take a look at this final commandment and see how it relates to all the other commandments. Hopefully God's Word will refresh us this morning and make us more content with what God has given us.

### 1. THE MEANING OF COVET

#### A. DESIRE

When we covet something, we are desiring something. When we see the word, desire, in the Bible, it can have a good meaning or a bad one. It depends on the context, in how we interpret it.

1. It can mean a good desire---Genesis 2:9, Psalm 73:25

We are only to desire what God desires for us.

2. It can mean an evil desire---Psalm 73:2-5, 1 Timothy 6:9, James 4:1-3, Rom 7:7-8

Basically it means to want something that belongs to another. In our context, it is a bad desire. By our nature, we don't desire the things of God. Even as regenerated Christians, we still are tempted by evil desires. While we are incarcerated in this body of flesh, we can't completely subdue the desires and sinful habits.

*Jealousy and envy* are included in the idea of covetousness. This may include the neighbor's green grass, clothes, social status, and athletic ability.

*Discontent* we are not content with what God has given us.

A desire for something you are not supposed to have

Coveting is anything that makes you discontent with what God has given you. This thought, itself, is a sin.

Genesis 3:6

To see something that somebody else owns and wish it was yours There is a difference between appreciating what your neighbor has and wanting what your neighbor has. The natural man does not like the fact that somebody has it and we don't.

You might buy an ice cream cone for a child and he might be grateful for it until he sees another kid who has a bigger cone with all the works on it. Now, what he has is not good enough. He wants what the other kid has.

*A restless greed* ---It's not just eyes moving around and desiring it's a restless greed.

If you see somebody's Lexus and you wish it was yours instead, you have just coveted. Or, maybe you saw new furniture in someone's new house and you wished you had that.

Coveting can lead to murder and theft. 1 Kings 21:1-16

Coveting resents success and causes bitterness. It makes one belittle another person. When I used to play basketball in school, I always had to fight for a position. Sometimes I would win a starting position but later lose that position to another player.

That could go on like that through the season. I hated it when that other player got my position. I especially didn't like it when he played well and scored a lot of points. I resented his success and I became embittered and in my heart I belittled that person. That joker doesn't belong there, I do. He is absolutely no good. Those would be my thoughts. Sometimes when our neighbor is doing well, we resent his car, we resent his income, the addition to his house. We want those things, but we don't want them for the neighbor.

*Hankering after the wrong things.* We want stuff sometimes that God hasn't blessed us with and He never will bless us with. It is a matter of greed. God, in fact, knows what is good for us.

This command is so easy to break. It is not a cheap sin, but it is an exceedingly sinful sin.

## B. INNER ATTITUDE

Everything comes from the heart. The problem is in us. This commandment goes to the root of the matter.

Matthew 19:21-22

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In the case of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21, Jesus tells him "okay, if you have kept the 10 commandments, sell what you have and give it to the poor." He thought he had followed all of the law but Jesus just exposed his heart and showed him something that revealed his sin. We see where his heart really was. He would not get rid of his possessions. By this show of his heart, he breaks the first commandment and his whole life was dominated by greed. This commandment is designed to make us hopeless. It convicts us in a most thorough way.

We are assaulted daily with what we see on tv shows, and even commercials. The billboards seem to leap out at us. We feel the

weight of the command.

Martin Luther said that this command is addressed not to those the world considers wicked rogues, but to the upright, to people who want to be commended as honest and virtuous because they have not offended against previous commands. The seductive power of coveting affects those who otherwise look morally upright, those who go to church, those who preach and teach the Word.

### C. DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES

The weed that infests the garden---Matthew 13:22

The big lie---Rom 7:11

How many times do you go to a convenience store to pay for your gasoline and there are people in line ahead of you and each one of them, besides paying for what they are buying, buys a lottery ticket? They are all thinking, "perhaps this is the day I hit the jackpot."

They want to get rich quick. They are deceived to think they have a good chance of winning. The truth be made known is that they just gambled their money away. They will do this every time they go to the convenience store. Coveting knows no self-control.

The desiring after the riches becomes an idol. People can become consumed and obsessed with greed. Man always needs more, and then more. Riches are a trap that can destroy a person.

The statistics prove the deceitfulness of riches and how they don't make people happy. 75% of the winners of a big lottery go broke after five years. Most say they wish they hadn't even won.

Easy credit today allows people to leap frog the waiting. High salaries actually can be detrimental, because people who have more money tend to be more self-sufficient. Today, we just get it, and we don't wait. That certainly is coveting.

Consumerism and materialism are as much a threat to our churches as any other heresy we might envision. (Mohler)

## 2. THE EFFECTS OF COVETING

We need to regard coveting as a deadly enemy. Sins come to us as promises, but actually are false.

John Chrysostom-"Even more dangerous than sins of the flesh is the sin of covetousness.

### A. SPOILS RELATIONSHIPS

Coveting lies behind many disagreements.

### B. BREAKS THE COMMAND OF LOVING NEIGHBORS

All commands linked to this 10<sup>th</sup> commandment

We should tell the neighbor that is nice and compliment him, but we say, I can't believe he got that.

### C. SELFISHNESS

### D. MATERIAL POSSESSIONS AND CONSUMERISM

Matthew 6:19-20, Luke 12:15

The world is just for awhile, so we should wean ourselves from it.

A man's life doesn't consist in his possessions. Many think power and influence are tied to possessions.

### E. ALWAYS WANT MORE

Someone asked Nelson Rockefeller how much money it would take  
To make one happy. He said a little bit more.  
Heroin addicts never have enough. It is the same for the materialist.  
He shoots up big time.  
Many just work, work, work, and never rest, because they are living  
for their retirement which many times those people never live long  
enough to retire.

**F. A VIRUS WITHIN**

Calvin: For if by law, covetousness is not dragged from its lair, it  
destroys wretched men so secretly, that they don't even feel its  
fatal stab.

**G. ROBS US OF CONTENTMENT**

It robs us of contentment in God's will

**H. ROBS US OF PEACE**

**3. THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE COMMANDMENT**

**A. WESTMINSTER CONFESSION**—Full contentment and  
right spirit toward neighbor

**B. DESIRING GOD**-----Psalm 73:25-28

**C. CONTENTMENT IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES**

True contentment is hard to find in our culture.

Heb 13:5, 1 Tim 6:6

We are to enjoy the homes we live in. we are to accept the limitations  
we have. We are to thank God for what others have.

**D. BY GOD'S GRACE**

Enjoy the gifts God has given you, such as your marriage partner,  
or for the partner you don't have.

None can live up to this command. It is too demanding.

Jesus never broke the law. He fulfilled it. He represents us to  
the Father. We are not condemned. We can now be focused on  
the right direction and we have the grace to desire to follow God's  
law.

A covetous heart can only be driven out by the heart of a new  
affection. Thank the Lord for a new heart for that is the only way  
we satisfy this commandment and all the others. Our guilt is taken  
away. We are to be thankful and content for what Christ has done.  
Contentment and godliness is great gain. He is our portion. He is  
with us always.

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