

Subject: *The Tenth Commandment*

Scripture: *Exodus 20:1-17*

The tenth commandment is a warning about wanting what someone else has. It is a reminder to be content with what we have. Contentment is the opposite of coveting. Contentment is a godly virtue, but coveting is a terrible sin.

1. The sin of coveting

The word “covet” means to desire what another person has. Coveting is a form of greed; it’s a sinful desire to have more. God used the tenth commandment to convince Paul of his own sin.

***Romans 7:7** What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*

If you had known Paul before he became a Christian, you would have thought he was a very fine, moral man. He was a Pharisee, a religious man, and outwardly he seemed to be a very godly man, but he was a covetous man. He doesn’t say exactly what he coveted, but it could have been anything. “Lust” in Romans 7:7 simply means evil desire. He may have coveted a higher position and more prestige and power in the Jewish religion.

A. Coveting is a private sin

Many of the things mentioned in the Ten Commandments are openly and obviously sinful. Other commands have to do with an external action (killing, adultery, stealing, lying), but coveting has to do with an internal attitude. If you kill someone, people will find out. If you commit adultery, steal, or lie, people will eventually know it. But coveting is a personal and private sin. No one may ever know it but you and God.

B. Coveting is a progressive sin

This sin of coveting can get a hold on any person. Someone has said the chains of sin are too light to be felt until they are too strong to be broken. Let’s call it the grip of greed. The NT word for greed means “to have more or hold more” the desire to have or hold more things. The Bible warns us about the destructive power of coveting and greed.

***1 Timothy 6:9-10** ⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Coveting can affect even the “good things” we do. A person’s prayers can be influenced by it. ***James 4:2-3** ² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³ Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

People who are in ministry can be motivated by coveting. The Apostle Peter describes false teachers who were covetous.

***2 Peter 2:14** ...an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.*

The word “exercised” is a word that was used to describe athletes training hard for competition. These false teachers trained and prepared their minds to focus on their selfish desires.

We read about an evil king named Ahab who coveted Naboth's vineyard, but he couldn't have it. So his wicked wife Jezebel came up with a plan to kill Naboth (1 Kg. 21).

2. The symptoms of coveting

A. A discontented and unthankful spirit

The covetous person is never contented and grateful. He always wants something more.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

B. A dominant desire for worldly things

2 Timothy 4:10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...

The covetous person is dominated by the world. He puts his time and energy into things of the world. He thinks about things of the world, talks about things of the world, and values things of the world. The covetous person lives for earthly treasure instead of heavenly treasure. It is impossible to be worldly minded and heavenly minded.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

3. The seriousness of coveting

A. Coveting is an enemy to our soul

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

B. The example of Achan (Joshua 7)

Joshua 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

C. The parable of the rich farmer (Luke 12)

Luke 12:15-21 ¹⁵ And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

D. Coveting is listed with other evils

Romans 1:29-30 Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; whisperers,

backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents...

Ephesians 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.*

Ephesians 5:5 *For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is and idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

Where does that leave us? It leaves us guilty and in need of mercy and forgiveness. God's moral law (Ten Commandments) was given to us to restrain sin and to reveal sin. Like Paul, we would not know sin except by the law of God. The law is able to restrain sin and reveal sin, but it can't remove sin and forgive sin. Only God can do that and He will do that if we confess our sin and humbly ask Him to forgive us.

We need a new heart, a regenerate heart.

Psalms 51:10 *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

Psalms 119:36 *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

We need a contented heart, and that comes from knowing God and being right with God.

1 Timothy 6:6 *Now godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Do you know that song "I'd rather have Jesus than anything the world affords today?" It's true.