

Subject: God's Moral Law – The Tenth Commandment

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

1. THE SINFULNESS OF COVETING

The word “covet” means to desire what another person has. Coveting is a cousin to greed; it’s a 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.*

Had you known Paul before he was saved, 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 tell us exactly what he coveted, but it could have been anything. “Lust” in Romans 7:7 means evil desire. It may or may not have been of a sexual nature. He may have coveted position and prestige and power in the Jewish religion.

A. Coveting is a secret sin

Unlike some of the other things mentioned in the Ten Commandments, coveting is a matter of the heart. Other commands have to do with an action (killing, adultery, stealing, lying), but coveting has to do with an 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 hidden sin. No one will know but you and God.

B. Coveting is a strong sin

This sin can get a tight grip 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 6:9-10⁹ *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 has a way of affecting everything we do, even our prayers can be motivated by it.

James 4:2-3² *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.*

The Apostle Peter describes false teachers who were covetous and it dominated their lives.

2 Peter 2:14 *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: 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.

Think of King Ahab who coveted Naboth's vineyard, but he couldn't have it. So Ahab's wicked wife, Queen Jezebel came up with a plan to kill Naboth (1 Kg. 21).

2. THE SIGNS OF COVETING

A. A discontented and unthankful attitude

The covetous person is not a contented and grateful person. 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 love 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 forth his energy for the things of the world, things about things of the world, talks about things of the world, and values things of the world.

The covetous person lives for earthly things and not heavenly treasure. One person put it this way: "You may as well expect an elephant to fly, as a covetous man to live by faith." 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

Think of the coveting of Achan and what it cost him and the people of Israel.

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.*

Coveting is a serious sin because it is an enemy to our soul. Jesus told some parables about the power of coveting and how it keeps them from salvation.

Matthew 13:22 *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

Luke 12:13-21 ¹³ *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* ¹⁴ *And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* 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.

Coveting is so serious that God lists it alongside some other sins.

Romans 1:29 *Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers...*

Ephesians 5:3 *But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.*

Colossians 3:5-7 ⁵ *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.*

WHAT IS THE CURE FOR COVETING?

- Conviction by the Holy Spirit and the Law

We are like Paul. We would not know sin except by God's Law.

- Regeneration and a repentant heart

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

- Contentment from knowing God

The opposite of coveting is contentment, and the secret to contentment is knowing that the Lord is our portion.

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

Psalms 84:11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Colossians 3:2 *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*