



Deut 5:21

“With these shall we be content?”

21 ' You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.'

This commandment which comes at the end of the Decalogue is in one sense a summarizing statement that gets to the heart of the matter, and as the saying goes, ***the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart***. Think of it, there is no sin that ultimately does not begin with us. The root from which every other sin springs are the illicit or wrong desires that take root in our hearts.

As the apostle James had said in summarizing the reasons men fall into sin puts the responsibility firmly on the desires of our own hearts: ***James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.***

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

This illicit desire for those things we ought not to want is covetousness. There are two words in the Greek for covetousness, the more common is *Pleonexia*, which Watson defines as an '*insatiable desire of getting the world.*' Augustine defines covetousness 'to desire more than enough;' The less common word is *Philarguria*, which signifies an '*inordinate love of the world.*' In both cases the idol is the same: the things of the world, it is heart's love and desire for them that is the problem.

In most cases please note that the things that are desired are not wrong in and of themselves, in the list above there is nothing sinful about wives, houses, fields, servants (or in our day, employees) or donkeys. It is the sinful and idolatrous attachment of the heart to them and the inordinate love of them and desire for them that is wrong. To be covetous is one of the hardest kinds of bondage, because it has no end, it takes man who was made to glorify and enjoy his eternal creator, and sets him in a never ending pursuit of things that are in the end dust and cannot satisfy his real needs.

No created thing can give us the peace, happiness, contentment, freedom from sin and the curse of the law that we so desperately need. Solomon who had far more of the material things of this life than most, found that out the hard way, that is why he wrote in Ecclesiastes, which is ultimately an extended meditation on the vanity of seeking peace and satisfaction in anything save God that:

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.

And that is why the World, the Flesh, and the Devil are so happy to generate covetousness, for they know that at root it is idolatry, a love of the creation instead of the creator – that is what Paul calls it in Col. 3:5 "*covetousness, which is idolatry.*" And it puts men in a state of never ending bondage and

discontentment and is the gateway to a myriad of other sins. In that respect its sad how much the world depends on covetousness to generate business.

During the time that I worked in advertising on Madison Avenue in the early 90s, I saw the insanity of that process. I was working for one advertising firm that had the contract for riding lawn-mowers and I was invited to come in and see the pitch for the new campaign. Here was the “perceived problem”, statistics showed that too many members of the riding lawnmower market already owned riding lawn mowers that they had purchased within the last 5 years, so they had actually tailored their new campaign to try to create dissatisfaction with their existing riding lawn-mowers. So all of the ads were, your existing lawn-mower isn’t as good as your neighbors lawn mower, you can’t possibly be happy with your lawn mower because it doesn’t have this new doo-dad you didn’t even know existed, your lawn mowing experience is nowhere near as fulfilling and comfortable as it could be. Why how could you possibly feel any mowing satisfaction riding on something without a drink holder and an extra-springy seat. And hey look at all the incentives we are giving you to upgrade, take 90 years to pay, etc.

And your three great enemies are masters at using that discontent to feed your covetousness and keep you in bondage, and they do it by always dangling an illusory contentment before you. If only you had the drink holder seat you would finally be at peace!

Rearrange your circumstances, and get the new stuff you covet and you’ll finally be happy. The entire world buys into this.

- **If I live in this state, in this house, I am bound to be unhappy, but if I move over here I will be blissfully happy.**
- **If I have this job, I cannot be content, so I have to find the job that will finally cause job satisfaction will ooze out of my pores.**
- **If I have this wife, and these kids I will be sad, but if I upgrade to wife 2.0 I will finally have the happy marriage that has been eluding me.**

And it is not just the out and out unbelievers who can fall prey to this. The world, the flesh, and the devil are experts at ensnaring believers. The bible is full of the stories of the many members of the visible church who were overcome with the desire for the world and the things of the world, allowing it to fill their hearts and lead them to destruction, we can think of Achan, and Gehazi, the rich young ruler, and Ananias and Saphira, and of course Judas. We can even trace the compelling story of one man who seemed to be doing well, who had a wonderful teacher, and yet who at the very end made shipwreck of the faith – lets take a look at that in Chronological Order -

Col. 4:14 Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.

Phil 4:14 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

2 Tim. 4:9 Be diligent to come to me quickly;

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica -- Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

What did Demas gain? He may have gained the world, though I doubt it. But what did he lose? His own soul. What contentment do the covetous gain from anything in Hell. Ask the Rich man what he

would give to go back and change places with the crippled but believing beggar Lazerous who sat at his gate.

What about you, are you covetous, I'm not asking have you ever coveted, because I know you all have. But brothers and sisters are you given over to covetousness. Well take this test with me, that Thomas Watson put together over 300 years ago. It has 6 diagnostic questions, see how you do: He said a man may be said to be given to covetousness: -

(1) When his thoughts are wholly taken up with the world. A good man's thoughts are in heaven; he is thinking of Christ's love and eternal recompense. 'When I awake I am still with thee,' that is, in divine contemplation. Psa 139: 18. A covetous man's thoughts are in the world; his mind is wholly taken up with it; he can think of nothing but his shop or farm.

(2) A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when he takes more pains for getting earth than for getting heaven. He will turn every stone, break his sleep, take many a weary step for the world; but will take no pains for Christ or heaven.

(3) A man may be said to be given to covetousness, when all his discourse is about the world. 'He that is of the earth, speaks of the earth.' John 3: 31. It is a sign of godliness to be speaking of heaven, to have the tongue turned to the language of Canaan. 'The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious;' he speaks as if he had been already in heaven. Eccl. 10: 12. So it is a sign of a man given to covetousness to speak always of secular things.

(4) A man is given to covetousness when he so sets his heart upon worldly things, that for the love of them, he will part with heavenly; for the 'wedge of gold,' he will part with the 'pearl of price.' When Christ said to the young man in the gospel, 'Sell all, and come and follow me;' he went away sorrowful.' Matt 19: 22. He would rather part with Christ than with all his earthly possessions.

(5) A man is given to covetousness when he overloads himself with worldly business. He has many irons in the fire; he is in this sense a pluralist; he takes so much business upon him, that he cannot find time to serve God; he has scarce time to eat his meat, but no time to pray.

(6) He is given to covetousness whose heart is so set upon the world, that, to get it, he cares not what unlawful means he uses. He will have the world by fair means or foul

If you find that any of those described you, then you to repent and not let the dust of this world be that which robs you of eternal life. You need two critical things and they are intimately related, the first is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Contentment that flows from that faith:

Faith. The root of covetousness is distrust of God's providence. Faith believes that God will provide; that he who feeds the birds will feed his children; that he who clothes the lilies will clothe his lambs; and thus faith overcomes the world. Faith is the cure of care. It not only purifies the heart, but satisfies it; it makes God our portion, and in him we have enough. 'The lord is the portion of mine inheritance, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' Psa 16:5, 6. Faith, by a divine chemistry, extracts comfort out of God. A little with God is sweet. Thus faith is a remedy against covetousness; it overcomes, not only the fear of the world, but the love of the world. Faith can say and truly believe that "all things work together for good to those who love God"

Contentment: Wilhelmus A'Brakel defined contentment this way, he said: Contentment is a Christian virtue consisting in a correspondence between the desire of God's children and their present condition—this being true because it is the will of their God in Christ and according to His sovereign determination. In this they rest with delight, in quiet confidence, joyfully, and with gratitude, trusting that the Lord will cause the present and the future to turn out to their advantage. This causes them to utilize their present condition to the advancement of their spiritual life and to the glory of God.

1 Tim. 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.