

Evil Desires and You

The Ten Commandments

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It's always a reverent time when we come to the word of God. It's a particularly reverent time today as we finish a very lengthy series on the 10 Commandments that we've been doing for nearly the past 12 months. This is the 35th message in the series and what I want to do to kind of refresh your mind on the 10 Commandments and to set us up for the conclusion of it, is to read the entire section of the 10 Commandments one final time in this series beginning in Exodus 20:1 and I invite you to turn there with me. Exodus 20,

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. 12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 You shall not murder. 14 You shall not commit adultery. 15 You shall not steal. 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Now I just want to point out as we kind of anticipate saying goodbye to the 10 Commandments as the regular part of our Sunday morning preaching for now, just to point out to you the nature of the 10 Commandments and how very searching they are. The first table of the law, the first four commandments are vertical in their scope and they search us in our attitudes toward God and towards worship. The second table deals more with horizontal matters and horizontal relationships dealing with father and mother, and murder, and adultery, and stealing, and false witness, these crimes and these sins that we commit against our neighbor; these things are crimes and sins against God, of course, but they are immediately sins against our neighbor. And so there's this vertical dimension to the 10 Commandments that is utterly searching and crushing, there is this horizontal nature to the 10 Commandments that we have spent much time on but when you come to the 10th commandment you find that there is even another dimension to them in that the 10 Commandments are internal, they address our heart desires. When it tells us not to covet, God is regulating our very heart and our very inner man in the way that our inner man shall be, and in some ways the 10th commandment is the most painful one, not that they can be compared in that way but there is a particular kind of pain that the 10th commandment brings to us because it shows us who we really are. It shows who we are. The Bible says that as a man thinks within himself so he is, and the 10th commandment shows us by exposing our inner man, it shows us who we really are. As you know, we can put on shows for the people around us and we can even hide ourselves from our family and live double lives if we choose to do so, but the 10th commandment, as it were, does surgery on our heart and exposes us all for who we really are and it's painful to see that and to recognize, especially as those who profess the name of Christ and say that we belong to him and that we love him and that we've been born again and we are his and he is ours, it's painful to see what the reality is compared to our aspirations.

The 10th commandment also, beloved, shows you your danger and it shows the great danger of self-deception as we are going to see in the time ahead. This command exposes the evil that is in our hearts and it also exposes our absence of virtue considering ourselves. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says this at Questions 80 and 81 about the 10th commandment. Question 80 says, "What is required in the 10th commandment?" And the answer is this, "The 10th commandment requires full contentment with our own condition with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor and all that is his." Question 81, "What is forbidden in the 10th commandment? The 10th commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his." The 10th commandment requires us to be content with the life that God has given to us and it forbids us from being discontent with it, it forbids us from wishing that our lives were somehow like our neighbor's, or that our neighbor's things were ours and all things that are connected with that. You know, beloved, if you think about it, in the nature of the world in which we live, advertising succeeds because humanity violates this command consistently, and advertising appeals to that greed and that discontent, "There must be more for me. I must have something more. You deserve a break today." On and on it goes, and all of that appealing to the wickedness of our hearts and we find that our hearts are only too glad to respond to appeals to the very thing that God forbids. This is a great crisis of manner.

What we're going to find is that it's very unsettling to consider it all and to see how seriously God takes this commandment. God takes this commandment so seriously and deals with it so earnestly that you find these matters written throughout the pages of Scripture. Compared to us, we are, you know, by comparison we all tend to just be content as long as people think, as long as man thinks that we're relatively righteous, we're content to live with the facade, the mirage, rather than the reality, and so we need to come to grips with this command as the capstone to the 10 Commandments. This is the capstone and the 10th commandment informs all of the others. It's not simply that the 10 Commandments say, "You shall not murder," the command against coveting and the command against wrong desires forbids even anger with your brother; the command against adultery isn't simply about the physical act, it's about the lust that leads to the act. God regulates your heart. God commands the realm of your heart as a moral imperative in which we are all to respond, and as we understand these things and as we search them out, we realize that we say so easily, "Oh, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," beloved, the 10 Commandments show us how far short we fall, how impossible the standard of God's righteousness is, and leaves us with no other alternative if we are to be saved than to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ. The law is designed to be our tutor to lead us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what I want to do today in this final message titled "Evil Desires and You," I could have titled it "A Command Against Discontentment," is to just walk you through a number of Scriptures without really even a whole lot of commentary necessarily, to just lay this before you and to draw out some matters of eternal consequence and of eternal danger for us in the room here even today. So let's start with this first point and just make this simple point that Scripture condemns a discontented heart. Scripture condemns a discontented heart or a covetous heart, you might say. This command forbids us from being discontent with our lot in life and the rest of Scripture does also. Let's spend some time in the New Testament and let the Bible interpret this commandment for us.

Turn in your Bible to the gospel of Mark 7 as we just ask the Lord to clear our minds from all distraction, from all resistance to his word, and just ask the Lord to instruct us, to make the meditations of our heart and the desires of our mind pleasing and acceptable in his sight, we need to let the word of God speak to us here this morning, above all mornings in some ways because this goes to the very core of who we are. Scripture condemns a covetous heart. Mark 7:21, Jesus says...let's start in verse 20, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries," it reads like a summary of the 10 Commandments, doesn't it, "deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." That verse, that text teaches us that God equates coveting as being as much a violation of his law as fornication, theft, murders and adulteries, it's classed in that same way. God does not make the nice classifications the difference of inner sins versus external sins that we like to make in our minds, and because I haven't committed this particular act in my flesh therefore I must be righteous, God has nothing to do with that. Christ warns us, Christ condemns us, Christ tells us that

evil things come out of the heart of men and all of our hearts are deceitful, Jeremiah says, Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all else and is desperately wicked. Who can understand it?" So God is not impressed with the righteousness of man, far to the contrary, God shows us in his word what he thinks about the hearts of men.

Now keeping focused on the sin of covetousness in particular, turn over to 1 Corinthians 6, just after the book of Romans if some of you are still getting acquainted with your Bible, maybe you're a new believer, that's all right. Romans and then 1 Corinthians 6. The Bible says, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" Unrighteous people don't go to heaven, they go to hell as the just punishment for their sin. And so Paul warns us, given the gravity of the danger of not inheriting the kingdom of God, he warns us about the possibility of self-deception and the practice of sin that shows that one does not belong to the kingdom. So he says there in the middle of verse 9, "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous," nor the covetous, "nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." A covetous heart is equated with an unrighteous heart. It is equated and a covetous person is identified as someone who is not going to heaven in that state. And so covetousness is equated with unrighteousness.

Turn to the right in your Bibles a little further to the book of Ephesians as well, Ephesians 5:3. The Apostle Paul again writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit leaving us thus with the very word of God says, "immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty," this is a matter of absolute truth that cannot be denied, Paul writes and says this is a matter that you should know, that you should understand and that you should not contest, "that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." Covetousness is placed as that, is equated with idolatry. It is a covetous man who is marked by greed, who is marked by discontent, is marked out as one who is not in the kingdom, and that an unrepentant covetous man is no better than an idolater violating the first four commandments, and a covetous man is identified as one who does not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. He has no hope of heaven before him if he is unrepentant in his greedy discontented heart. Wow. I mean, wow. In a materialistic society like ours, do any of us think that we're just automatically immune and safe from this?

As you read on in Scripture, you find that coveting is the source of many other sins as well. I could say this without fear of contradiction: if you look at a man, and we'll talk about Christians who have strayed more in a few moments, but if you look at a man whose life seems to have started well in Christ and suddenly veered off-course, if you trace it back you will trace it back eventually and find the sin of coveting being at the root of it all. It was covetous desires and discontentment that led him away from Christ. That's undeniable in Scripture as you will see forthwith.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money." 1 Timothy 6 says this in verses 9 and 10, it says, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." By longing for the money, not by having it. By longing for it. By wanting it. By being discontent and saying, "I must have more." Paul says they've wandered away from the faith and their lives bear the wounds of having pierced themselves with many griefs. They did it to themselves because they did not watch over their covetous heart and repent of it.

Paul gives a practical example of it in the last letter he wrote shortly before his execution when he said Demas, who used to be a trusted confidante of his, a trusted helper of Paul's, "Demas, having loved this present world has deserted me." Paul. Paul, can you imagine, can you imagine a man at the right hand of Paul having access to that great apostle, that great person, that great man of Christ, that great pillar of God's purpose, and you walk away from him, you walk away from the Apostle Paul for the sake of something in this present world because your covetous heart desired that? Demas isn't the only one, beloved. Judas did the same thing, 30 pieces of silver for which he betrayed Christ. And Jesus warned us during his earthly ministry again and again and again against lusting after prominence before men and in the eyes of men and lusting after worldly things. He says with no qualification that you cannot serve him and that, the two cannot co-exist side-by-side.

Let's turn to Matthew 6 so you can see these passages again, we've covered them in the past, so you can see these sins as Jesus describes them. And beloved, what I want you to see, I mean, I'm kind of, I feel kind of desperate before you this morning with what I'm saying because I know how hard and dull the human heart is and how resistant it is to anything that challenges its priorities and affections. God's word is challenging our priorities and affections today in the context of warning us that a heart that is given over to coveting after these things is one that does not belong to the kingdom of God at all. So Jesus says in Matthew 6:19, look at it with me. He says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth," do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, "where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What is it that you love? What is it that is your priority? What is it that you are seeking out of life, I mean really and truly? Forget the fact, forget Sunday morning, okay? We can all play the game on Sunday morning, the question is what is it that your heart longs after Monday through Saturday? What is it that your heart longs for Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening after you walk away from this place? What is it that your life is built on? What is it that you are seeking after? Where do you find your highest contentment? What is the thing without which you cannot live? That's what we're talking about here.

And Jesus goes on to say in verse 24, he warns us just as we have already seen in Scripture elsewhere, he says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the

one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." He doesn't say it's difficult, he says it's impossible to do. You cannot have two masters in your heart. You can't be greedy for the things of the world and also be one who is longing after communion with Christ. These two things are mutually exclusive, he says. So he warns us about it. He warns us to watch our heart, to look at our heart that we're not preoccupied with the things of this world.

He goes on, look over, well, you don't need to turn there. I'll just say this, you remember the parable of the sower? He sowed some seed. He went out sowing seed, some of it fell on the hard path, birds ate it up; some of it fell in the weeds, got choked out; others fell on rocky soil, sprung up quickly but, you know, quickly withered away; and then some fell on the good soil and brought forth fruit 30, 60, 100 fold. You remember that in Matthew 13. Well, in the midst of that in Matthew 13, Jesus explained the parable and he said, "the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." The deceitful illusion of pursuing the good life now, your best life now, Jesus says that chokes out the word and actually proves someone not to be a disciple at all.

James 4:4 says in very blunt language, if you think I'm being blunt, read the book of James, you'll see I'm holding back. James 4:4 says, "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." That's James 4:4.

Now beloved, let me say this and answer an important question. Why would a covetous heart be so wicked in the sight of God? Why is that such a gross sin against him? Well, let's just think through this a little bit, you know, that relentless desire for more, "I've got to have more. I want what he has. I wish I had his marriage. I wish I had her house. I wish I had this or that and it's not mine." And you agitate over that, "Why doesn't God give me what He gave to others? Why doesn't God give me the things in ministry that I want? Why doesn't God give me the job I want?" And all of these things become wicked accusations against God simply because a man or a woman is not content with what God has given them and so it values worldly things and often worldly relationships over God's most holy word which reveals the most holy Triune God. If you are content in Christ, then why are you discontent over the things in the world? A covetous heart expresses ingratitude for what God has given to you and thus it is an assault against his providence.

Beloved, I've said so many times each one of you have the life that God has given to you. I know for some of you it's really hard but it is the life that God has given you. He works all things after the counsel of his own will. To be in an ongoing way as a habitual frame of mind discontent and dissatisfied with life is to look at God and say, "I see what You've given me and I don't like it." Well, what is that except rebellion against the first four commandments of God, those that call us to think about and to not take his name in vain and to have no other god before him? Coveting is wicked also because it expresses distrust that God will work all things together for good to those who love him. You see, and what we have to remember, what we need to keep in mind at this point is this, look

over at Mark 12:28-31. Let me just remind you at this point that the moral law of God, that the 10 Commandments are first and foremost teaching you, teaching us, requiring us to love God. To love him. To give our highest affections and our deepest aspirations over to him and to know him and to love him.

Mark 12:28, "One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that [Jesus] had answered them well, asked Him, 'What commandment is the foremost of all?' Jesus answered, 'The foremost is, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'" That's the first and foremost commandment, Jesus says. The law is designed to teach you to prize God, in New Testament days to prize his revelation in Christ, to trust and to treasure the person of Christ above all else and the covetous heart says, "It's not enough. I want more and I want more from this life than what I have." Coveting is wicked because it shows a heart that is not content with God himself, with Christ himself, with a crucified and risen and ascended Lord who set his love on us, who set us on a path that leads to heaven and say, "That's not enough! I must have this world." Do you see how grossly wicked that is? Can you imagine a wife married to a husband that has lavished affection and material things on her and given her the utter devotion and loyalty of his heart and has catered to her every need, and then like Hosea's wife, goes out and commits adultery and goes out and places herself and just prostitutes herself because she's dissatisfied with that husband's love? It's not just the act of adultery, it's the violation of love. It's the violation of grace. It's the refusal to acknowledge God with thankfulness. "For this is the will of God, that you give thanks in all things," 1 Thessalonians 5. Covetous hearts are utterly opposed to the gratitude and the thanksgiving that God calls us to. There's no getting around this.

Coveting is wicked because it shows that our hearts are set on earth, not on the things of heaven. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said, I'll just read it to you from Philippians 3. Paul says in verse 17, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." Then he goes on to say, "For many walk," many start on the path, "of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things." They wanted more out of this life and Paul says they are enemies of the cross. That's how serious this is, enemies of the Lord who saved them, enemies of the cross which is the, you know, shorthand for the totality of God's plan of salvation and his mercy to sinful men. They're enemies of that because they've set their mind on earthly things.

Beloved, I don't get emotional in the pulpit, it's one of the great defects of my preaching, emotional in the sense of manifesting the grief that I feel and the concern that I feel over people that are deluded and deceived about the state of their own souls, so I can only say this, I say what I'm about to say with grief in my heart even without tears on my cheek. Hell will be well-populated with church people who hardened their hearts on precisely this point and hardened their hearts against what God says in his word against coveting on precisely this point. Hell will be full of people like that. Just think about Scripture from God's perspective. Why do you think God warns against this so much in his word

and tells people to take note, pay attention, beware, place of danger here, why does he do that except for the fact that men are prone to great self-deception on precisely this point, precisely on the way that they love the world, content with an external form of religion that is devoid of a preeminent love for Christ and a searching after him and a serving him with life, content with the husk, having nothing to do with the corn that's inside it, and God says and warns again and again and again that men like that, women like that will have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. These warnings are found in the letters that are written to the churches. He's not even addressing this to the world so much as warning people inside the church.

So I'll say it again: hell will be well-populated with church people who hardened their hearts on precisely this point. And beloved, here's where my grief comes out in full display: only a fool would think that that does not apply to Truth Community Church. Only a fool would think being in this room excludes us from that risk and danger, which means that some of you, if not many of you, are in risk of danger and of eternal damnation on precisely this point. Precisely this point. And what, am I supposed to just talk about this and paper it over because it might be offensive to people, you know, that I'm close to? Am I supposed to just paper this over because we're, you know, we're in polite company here? Do you think that it would be good that I'm polite when you're standing on the brink of judgment? These things are too serious to be polite about. We need to be direct and to be earnest about the nature of the truth that God has stated here.

Scripture condemns a covetous heart. It's in God's word. I'm not making this up. I'm not making this up. This is not my mind that is being expressed here. This is God expressing his mind to you through his word. What shall we do in light of the way that Scripture condemns a covetous heart in light of our being prone to self-deception on this very point, knowing that our own hearts can be our own worst enemies because they are so deceitful, knowing that our own hearts flatter us and tell us how good we are when God says the exact opposite? What are we to do? Well, look over at Psalm 19:12. The thing that you do, the thing that you do is that you cry out vertically to God for mercy for God to help you; the answer is not to try harder but to realize that your condition and your danger is so great that the only thing to do is to cry out to God for mercy and help and for deliverance and salvation from the wickedness that's inside your own heart that you don't even have the capacity to recognize on your own.

Look at Psalm 19:12. David says with poignant brevity, he says, "Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults." "God, in light of all that Your word says, who can figure themselves out? Who can see this for the way that it really is? And so God, have mercy on me and acquit me, forgive me of the faults that I don't recognize in myself." And he goes on and he continues to pray asking God to purify and to direct the very thoughts and intentions of his heart. Just as we read in Hebrews 4:12, the word of God is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart, here David is praying that God would help him with the thoughts and intentions of his heart when he says in Psalm 19:13, "Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression." O God, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O

LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." "God, help my heart. Help my heart. Look at what I've loved, look at what I've served over the course of my decades, Lord. Look on me and have mercy on me! My whole life has been a violation of the 10th commandment," some might say. Do you know what? It is precisely at this point that the Apostle Paul himself was converted. Read it in Romans 7, he said, "I thought I was righteous until I realized the implications of what the law meant when it said, 'You shall not covet.' Then I was undone. Then I knew I was ruined." This very commandment that we are considering here today is the commandment that pierced the heart of an apostle. Do we think we're better than him? Do we think we're more discerning than Paul was? Are we so clear on our own condition that this is not a threat to us, to you, to me?

In like manner, in similar manner Jesus Christ taught us to pray in Matthew 6:13, "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "God, look at my heart, look at the warnings in Your own word about a covetous heart, O God, look at Your word which says my heart is deceitful and is capable of great acts of self-deception. Look at the eternal state of my soul. Father, look at Your own appointment of hell as the just condemnation of the guilty. Look at my guilty soul. Look at my self-deception and, God, how am I every to find my way out of this if You don't help me?" And you flee to Christ for mercy and you beg him with a sense of great urgency, "Help me! Your word frightens me. My own life frightens me. My self-deception frightens me. God, I need help!"

And with David in Psalm 139 you say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any way of pain in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." "God, I need You to be my shepherd. I need You to lead me. I need You to guide me. I need You to guard me. I need You to help me in light of what I see of what Scripture says about a covetous heart."

All you can do in a pulpit is lay it forth to the best of your ability and trust the Spirit of God to do the work that you can't do on your own. That's the point that we're at here, beloved. This commandment against coveting exposes our helplessness. A. W. Pink says this in his book on the 10 Commandments, listen closely. "God has given His holy law to us in order that we might see the utter hopelessness of our case if we are left to ourselves. This He has done in order to shut us up to Christ and the magnitude of His grace toward repentant sinners who will believe on His beloved Son, the Son who perfectly obeyed the law and in whom the Father is well-pleased."

This commandment is given to us to expose to us our corruption, to show us our hopelessness, and to cause us to cry out to Christ for help and deliverance. God's not bluffing, the apostles weren't bluffing when they made these warnings. Only a fool would dismiss these things from God's word and say, "That doesn't concern me." Beloved, it concerns you whether you're concerned about it or not. That leads us to our second point this morning, it's this, it's that Christ can redeem the covetous heart. Christ can redeem the covetous heart. The commandment condemns us all, condemns us in our greed and in our discontent, but in the midst of it, to people that have rejected the wholehearted love of God with their heart, soul, strength and mind, who are broken and guilty beyond remedy, God sends the gospel of Jesus Christ as good news as a message of hope, a message of

salvation, a message of deliverance from this helpless, hopeless condition in which we find ourselves.

Turn to Galatians 3 with me, Galatians 3 where we read this, where we see the condemnation of the law of God and we see his provision for an answer to be delivered from the guilt and condemnation that his law imposes upon us. Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'" Beloved, apart from Christ we're cursed. God has cursed us for our disobedience to his law. He's not messing around. This is not a joke. This is not seeker sensitive.

He goes on in verse 11 and says, "Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident," no one is declared righteous by the terms of the law because, The righteous man shall live by faith." Your obedience cannot get you into heaven. It's too late for that. Only something outside of you can deliver you. Only one who has obeyed this law and paid its penalty, only one like that can deliver you and that person is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 12, "the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.'" Verse 13, but "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The greatness of God is seen in the majestic holiness of his law but then somehow in an even more surpassing way, the glory of God is seen in the revelation of the gospel that he sent Christ to redeem guilty sinners like us, that Christ became flesh in order to bear our sin at the cross in order to fulfill the law on our behalf in his earthly life, in an utter act of love and grace that no human mind will ever be able to measure, Christ in love did that for guilty ones like you and me. There is a way out, there is a way of deliverance from your covetous heart, it's in Christ. It's freely offered as a gift but, beloved, that gift is received through a repentant faith that rejects the world, that confesses sin, that acknowledges, "Lord, I have coveted everything but You. Have mercy on me, the sinner," Luke 18, the tax gatherer pounding his chest, "Have mercy on me."

Jesus Christ kept God's law with perfect inward obedience. He never coveted once. He kept it with perfect outward obedience and Christ kept the law for those that would come to him. He paid for transgressions with his blood on the cross. Beloved, it's this simple, it's this simple: if you are not in Christ truly, you're condemned, you are under a curse, and your covetous heart is part of the condemnation. If you turn to Christ, if you are in Christ, God takes the curse that was on you and it was applied to Christ at the cross for he bore that curse on our behalf so that we could be delivered from it, brought out from underneath it, and have the blessing, the position of blessing that Abraham himself enjoyed instead. A curse for a blessing. God in exchange for your covetous heart, Christ in exchange for your covetous heart, what will it be? Answer carefully, beloved. Answer well. Your eternal destiny is right before you.

If you are in Christ today, do you see, do you see what profound gratitude ought to mark you no matter what your earthly circumstances might be? To be delivered from so great a corruption as your covetous heart, to be delivered from so great a peril as death and hell, to be delivered from that and to be in him? "Lord, put me in a corner with a piece of bread, that's far more blessing than I deserve. I want no else but Christ," you say. And if you are in Christ, beloved, there is a way forward. The path of obedience is laid forth before you in God's word.

Turn to 1 Timothy 6. It starts with a whole mindset toward life on the simplest of terms. 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." You were born naked from your mother's womb without anything, you'll go out in similar manner. Didn't bring anything in, not taking anything out. I've buried a lot of people.

So verse 8, you recognize that, you recognize the passing nature of this world and that it is not something to be lived for, "Do not love the world or the things in the world," 1 John 2 says. So you recognize it's passing, you recognize you can't keep it, and so you adopt a different mindset that is completely countercultural, completely against the spirit of the age. Verse 8, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." It doesn't matter what my brother has. It doesn't matter what I thought I wanted. Do you know what? Today I've got food and a roof over my head, praise the Lord, that's what I need.

To depart from that, verse 9, "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

Hebrews 13:5, turn there with me as well. Hebrews 13:5, "Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,' so that we confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'"

So final point here as we finish this yearlong series. Final point here: true Christians cultivate contentment. True Christians cultivate contentment. We've seen that Scripture condemns a covetous heart, we've seen that Christ can redeem a covetous heart, and we see that true Christians cultivate contentment. Here's what you need to do, if you're a Christian this is the path forward out of the conviction that this message has brought to your heart. This is what you commit yourself to going forward. I am going to be content with what I have. I am going to give thanks to God for his goodness to me in Christ and I'm going to set my heart on things that are above, not on the things that are below.

What does it look like? Look over at Philippians and we'll end here in Philippians 3 and 4. What does the new direction of a repentant heart look like? You find it in Philippians 3 and 4. Paul forsaking the world in what he is about to say here in verse 7, chapter 3, verse 7, says, "whatever things were gain to me," all of his earthly righteousness that he'd

talked about in the first six verses of that chapter, "those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." What's going on in the heart of a true believer? What's going on in the heart of one who has forsaken the world and is pursuing Christ? What does that look like instead? Listen, we've had our fill of the materialistic spirit of the advertising that's been poured into us from the day of our birth. We've had our fill of the discontented covetous thoughts that our own heart on its own spontaneously produces. Can't we give a couple of minutes to see what the purity of the real thing looks like, of what the heart that pleases God looks like? Can we give our time to that for a change? I think we can.

Verse 8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Paul says, "My heart is set on knowing Christ and knowing Him better. My heart is set on knowing the power of His resurrection and sharing with Him the fellowship of His sufferings. I want to know Christ. I want to be identified with Him." A mind preoccupied with that doesn't have room for the covetous things of this world.

And Paul says he hasn't reached perfection, verse 12, "[It's] not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." "Jesus Christ laid hold of me so that I would seek Him like that. That's the purpose of my life. That's what matters to me now. I've forsaken all the rest and I'm reaching forward to what lies ahead." Contentment in the pursuit of the knowledge of Christ is the only positive remedy for a covetous heart. It's not enough for you to say, "I'm not going to be greedy anymore." You have to replace the sin with the righteous pursuit of Christ and setting your heart on him.

Then Paul rounds it out in Philippians 4:11. He's writing from prison, by the way. Philippians is one of the prison epistles and chained to a Roman soldier he says, "I've forsaken this world. I want to know Christ." And he can say in verse 11, "[It's] not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." And here's the secret, verse 13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." It's not that Paul can do anything earthly that he sets his mind to, it's not that he can lift mountains with a single finger. That's not the point. What Paul is saying here is this and it applies to every one of us who is truly in Christ: satisfaction, contentment, purpose in life comes not through your vocation, not through your family, not through your wealth, not through your health, none of that stuff, not through your boyfriend, your girlfriend, none of that stuff is the ultimate source of contentment, not your parents, not your children, not your grandchildren. We have to forsake all of that as what gives us the ultimate contentment in our hearts because all of that stuff sooner or later, beloved, it's all going to be gone. The children grow up and they

move out. Friends fail me, foes assail me. The stock market collapses, business goes bad. You can't count on any of that and it's foolish to do so. What Paul is saying here when he says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me," he says, "Whether I have a lot or I have lack, whether I've got an abundance or I'm suffering need, it's Christ. It's Christ in me. It's Christ with me. It's Christ for me. And that meets every situation. That's where I find my contentment. My contentment, my identity, everything that I treasure ultimately is in Christ and in Christ alone. If I have Christ, I have everything I need for a time of want. And if I have Christ in a time of abundance, I have something that surpasses the earthly plenty that the Lord has seen fit to bless me with."

Beloved, I ask you, for you is it Christ in you, is it Christ with you, is it Christ for you that meets your every situation? If it's not, you're living in a covetous heart. You are a covetous person if your answer to that is not yes. And if we're in Christ, then we can say with the psalmist in Psalm 23, "I fear no evil for You are with me." We can say with Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 as God spoke to him, God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you." "God, Your grace is sufficient for me. Christ is enough. I'm content. I have Christ, what else could I want?" Beloved, Christ did not save you and Christ does not offer himself to you in order to advance your worldly priorities or to feed the corruption of your greedy discontented heart. Christ came to deliver you, to deliver me from sin that we would find our joy and our deepest satisfaction and contentment in him.

So the 10 Commandments, the past year, 35 messages come down to this zero point, come to ground zero right here, beloved, for each one of us: repent of your covetous heart and be content in Christ. That and that alone is the spirit of the 10 Commandments today.

Let's pray together.

Gracious Father, may the meditations of our heart, the intent of our will, may our thoughts be pleasing to You. May Your Spirit apply this as needed to each heart that comes under the sound of my voice. Forgive us for not being content in Christ. Thank You that Christ is enough. Father, help us to live in the sufficiency of His grace as we go forward. And Father, as the implications of the law settle in our minds over the coming days and weeks and months and even years, Father, for each one of us may the law be a tutor that leads us to Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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