

Delighting in Contentment

Heidelberg Catechism #54

Exodus 20:17 | Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 113–1151

YOU **shall not covet**. If there ever was any commandment so needed yet so rejected in our culture, it's this one! “You have to learn to love yourself.” “Have it your way.” These are phrases common to us. We talk about “impulse buys” at checkout. Our children learn to say, “I want” and not, “I need.”

You shall not covet is the last of God's Ten Commandments. And like seven other commandments, God's will is stated negatively. God longs for us to reject the vice of coveting. Do you? God longs for us to embrace the virtue of contentment. Do you?

It's also a microcosm of all God's commandments. Notice that's the focus of Heidelberg Q&A 113, which says God's will is **that not even the slightest desire or thought contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in our hearts**. That word translated *desire* is the same German word in the second part of the answer: **we should always...delight in all righteousness**. The German word is *lust*, which speaks of *desire*. We are not to covet any other god, any other way of worshipping God, any other way of speaking of God, and any other desires

on the day of God than he has commanded. We are not to covet our own honor over those in authority over us, any desire to hate let alone kill our neighbor, any sexual desire other than within the bounds of God's law, any things that belong to our neighbors, and any other words to serve ourselves more than our neighbors. In a word, we are not to covet our own desires and wants more than God or more than what our neighbors need.

Tonight, though, I want to explain the commandment itself and what it teaches us about hating the sin of coveting and delighting in the righteousness of contentment. Let's turn to 1 Timothy 6:3–10.

LOATHING COVETING

The context of what Paul says here is the false teaching of false teachers. The contrast is between **different doctrine** and **the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness** (v. 3). Doctrine and godliness must go hand in hand! Amen?

*Look at how Paul describes these false teachers: they are **puffed up with conceit**. A conceited man must take a seat! False teachers want to be teachers but have no idea what they're doing: they **understand[...]** **nothing**. As one translation puts these two phrases together: the false teacher is a "pompous ignoramus" (NEB). They have **an unhealthy craving***

for controversy. In our terms, they sit on their computers all day and comment on blogs and Facebook. They have **an unhealthy craving...for quarrels about words** (v. 4). Don't even get me started at how we are prone to that in the Reformed community.

Look at how *describes what false doctrine produce[s]:* **envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind** (their minds are sick and this is the result) **and deprived of the truth** (vv. 4-5). But have you noticed something missing up to this point? What's the **different doctrine**? Look at the end of verse 5: **imagining that godliness is a means of gain.** One commentator said it like this: "The fleece has become more important than the flock! Fleecing the flock is now a measure of professional competence."¹ When we turn the ministry into a means of gain it's just one form of coveting and discontentment. As Ecclesiastes says, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity" (5:10). We sang this morning in our song of the month, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee in find." Brothers and sisters: fight with all your Spirit-produced might to LOATH COVETING!

LOVING CONTENTMENT

Instead LOVE CONTENTMENT. **But**—verse 6 goes on to contrast—**godliness with contentment is great gain**. Listen again to the contrast. The false teachers said **godliness is a means of gain** (v. 6). The apostle says **godliness with contentment is great gain**. Did you hear that? There's *more* gain when you're content and not greedy! What an irony! Look at the explanation of this: **for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world** (v. 7). Do you remember what Job said? "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return" (Job 1:21). He continues: **But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content** (v. 8). Love the Lord's provision, not what he hasn't provided. Then he contrasts again: **but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction** (v. 9). The reason is that **the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils** (v. 10).

Brothers and sisters, I have Jesus and ultimately I need to learn to be content with him alone. Everything else, as they say, is just gravy. Let's loath coveting; let's love contentment. Amen.

Notes

¹ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 147.