

Heidelberg Catechism 113 –You are Rich; Be Contented!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Let's define covetousness. Covetousness is an insatiable desire for that which doesn't belong to you.

Now this is the last command. Does it mean it is less important? No. Covetousness is sometimes called the mother command.

Covetousness is rightly called the mother command as it is at the root of breaking all other commands.

So if you covet someone's life, you will hate or kill him.

If you covet someone's wife, you will want to take her.

If you covet the Lord's Day, you will ignore worshipping God and do what you want.

So it is important to properly understand this command. We will do this today.

Our headings are:

Prohibited Things in Law 10

Prescribed Things in Law 10.

Our goals are: **That seeing how rich you are in Jesus, you will ask the Savior to make you satisfied with what you have and stifle covetousness in your heart.**

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet **your neighbor's house**; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Q&A 113 Q. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US IN THE TENTH COMMANDMENT?

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart. Rather, with all my heart I should always hate sin and take pleasure in whatever is right.

Prohibited Things in Law 10

1. There is something quite notable about this 10th command: Roman Catholics divide this 10th law into 2 laws: Don't covet your neighbor's wife and don't covet your neighbor's goods as if they were two different sins.

They did this because they wanted to join commands 1 & 2 together so they could *excuse their idolatry but still have 10.*

2. This 10th command forbids you from lusting after that which does not belong to you.

God knows that **lusting leads to sin, shame, and death**, but because of man's fall into sin, lusting and covetousness became normal in man's life.

Consider some examples:

Solomon pointed out that covetousness (lust) leads to **adultery**.

Proverbs 6:25 Do not **lust after her beauty in your heart**, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. 26 For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

Apostle Paul illustrated his frustration with his own sinful desires that led to **other sins in his life**.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. **For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."** 8 **But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire...**

The Scriptures are full of examples of **lust for food** (Garden of Eden, etc.) that led to **rebellion** and severe punishment.

Lust for riches often led to **stealing** and is today the seedbed for socialism.

A man lusting for his own pleasure and profit becomes self-absorbed **and doesn't care for others. He becomes cruel.**

James 3:14 But if you have **bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts**, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

3. God forbids you from murmuring about what you have or don't have, like Israel murmured and lusted for foods of Egypt.

Remember the anger of God at their murmuring!

Numbers 11:4 Now the mixed multitude who were among them **yielded to intense craving** so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? 5 "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;

God forbids you from **complaining when others advance in life** and you don't.

4. Are there specific actions God prohibits in this law?

a. Law 10 forbids things like lotteries with large prizes which cause (usually poor) men to lust.

b. Law 10 forbids pornography which titillates and evoke covetous thoughts in men's hearts.

c. Law 10 forbids holding tightly to this world's possessions. You must hold loosely because you recognize all of this world's possessions will burn. Bugs and washing machines will destroy your best clothes.

If you don't hold tightly you won't have to go to therapy if you lose everything.

And if you don't hold tightly to things, you will have time to use your hands to work for heavenly possessions.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed **all was vanity and grasping for the wind**. There was no profit under the sun.

Gold is like the horse leech that never stops sucking when attached to a horse's vein.

5. What are consequences of covetousness?

Covetousness brought deadly plagues on Israel.

Covetousness cost Eve and Jezebel their lives.

Covetousness cost Rehoboam his throne.

Covetousness cost David a child.

Then there are eternal consequences – which are much worse than physical death.

Covetousness will eat you alive.

Prescribed Things in Law 10

1. God requires you have a **right heart** to keep all his laws.

a. If your heart isn't right with God, you won't desire the better things in life but you will covet earthly things like wealth, women, and entertainment. You will see those things as superior to anything else.

In Psalm 19, the Psalmist, knowing his own weakness, reminded himself of God's laws – the better things in life. He desired God's law more than gold and the best foods.

So when your heart desires better things, you will learn to bar the gates of your mind so that selfishness does not sneak in.

Surely it is not wrong to desire to earn enough to provide comfortably for your family; God commands this.

It is not wrong to have money and it is not wrong to have delicious food, but these things must be in their proper place.

You must not have an insatiable desire for earthly things.

2. God requires you learn contentment...with an emphasis on learn – as it is unnatural to be contented.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

How do you learn this: Know that you have Christ!

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Psalms 16:5-O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. 6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant

places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.

You must be contented because you know how much you really have.

Yes, you must work hard, but you **balance it with inward “satisfaction with what you have.”**

Christ gave you salvation, his Holy Spirit, his Word, and his Sacraments!

What wealth!

3. God prescribes you covet spiritual things.

God is your eternal reward, not a beautiful wife, deposits in the bank, or expensive vacations!

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

It is not sufficient to simply stifle a lustful desire for another's possessions and pretend it isn't there– as Roman Catholics believe. You have to stop those sinful desires from coming into your mind!

You do this by *filling your mind with good desires*. When desires are proper, they should be allowed, sometimes even encouraged.

Good desires are from God. When you are sad, you cry. When you are hungry you want to eat. When you feel pain, you moan. Apostle Paul had a good desire to die and go to heaven. **He kept working, but he wanted to go to heaven.**

So don't kill feelings altogether and become a monk.

4. (Words) God prescribes that you use your mouth to keep law 10. How?

a. Speak words that show thankfulness for what you and others have from you covenant God. **This is insulation against covetousness.** When you are insulated

against covetousness you will be safe from its consequences.

b. Don't complain. Nothing good ever comes from God because of your complaining.

c. Rejoice when others prosper. This is most difficult. But you can learn it.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

5. (Action) Law 10 requires you make more effort for heavenly things than for earthly things.

The tendency is to overload yourself with worldly things and tasks that your life loses true meaning. But learn that truly good works follow you into heaven.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and **their works follow them.**"

Every obedience to the 10 laws goes with you to heaven!

So do you have enough?

Do you **share some of your possessions with your neighbor?**

Do you hoard?

Do you covet the time God calls you to worship on Sundays or do you covet the time when God calls you to do something for a stranger?

6. What is the solution to covetousness?

Have a strong, rock solid, faith in Christ so you won't worry about the future!

Remember Christ's words of encouragement in this:

Matthew 6: 26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "**So why do you worry about clothing?** Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

Conclusion:

Christians can have good desires – physical desires for steak, emotional desires for companionship, or even a desire to have more so you can provide for yourself and your family.

The 10th law deals with inordinate desires-for things which belong to someone else—a person's wealth, his wife, his position, his reputation, etc.

God forbids all inordinate desires and threatens severe consequences – eternal death – to those who covet.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Remind yourself of what you already have in Jesus now and remind yourself of your eternal reward in heaven. You are already sitting in heavenly places. Your ticket to heaven has been paid for. You have that assurance in your heart. You are rich. Don't be enamored with the shiny things of this world.

2. Add to those rewards in heaven when you give to the needy, when you work hard, and when you give to God's work.

3. Stay away from people who are enamored with stuff! Don't marry them. They will pull you down to run after the shiny things...that are only filled with sugar...that provide a temporary high, but are not good for your souls – and have no benefit in the future. You don't have to have the new iPhone as they have. Those people are blights on your soul.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, hear this. Covetousness will destroy your soul faster than any sickness. Ask God to change you and he will, if you ask. Why? Because Jesus suffered and took the punishment for sinners to satisfy God's anger. He will make you his child. His salvation will then lead to your heart's satisfaction with better things...things that truly matter.