

Do Not Covet – Be Contented

Text : **Exod. 20:18** / **Matthew 6: 19-34**

INTRODUCTION :

A. When Americans were asked what was needed for a person to be saved :

1. #1 Answer = Obey the 10 Commandments
2. # 2 Answer = Lead a good life

B. The truth is, NO ONE can successfully do either of those.

1. No one can keep the 10 Commandments perfectly. (**James 2:10 ... break one = all**)
2. As defined by God, it's impossible for a man to lead a good life.
 - a. Men say, if one does more good things than evil, he's a good man. (**tenor of life**)
 - b. God says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul, and love you neighbor as yourself and in so doing one must obey all of the 10 Commandments.

C. You and I have all broken every command, in heart if not in practice.

1. Jesus taught the commands were about more than just the things we do. (**hearts**)
 - a. We have all been unfaithful to God, to our mates and to our friends in our hearts.
 - b. We've all felt such strong negative emotions in our hearts that we are murders. **etc.**
2. The prophet warned us that there is wickedness deep within every heart.
**Jer. 17: 9- The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?**

D. The last command, “Thou shalt not covet.” is totally about peoples heart.

1. It is about accepting the sovereignty of God in one's life,
 - a. about accepting the life God has assigned to us
 - b. and being content.
2. It is about centering our focus on God and spiritual things rather than on earthly things.
3. It is about trusting God to provide for our needs and to sustain us.

As we study this last command, we do so cognizant of the fact that this may well be the most difficult command for American Christians to keep.

- a. It runs directly counter to our culture.
- b. Every day .. every form of media urges us to break this command.
* **Merchants put impulse counter right by checkout line. (Milk at back of store)**
- c. American credit card debt exceeds **400 BILLION** dollars and grows daily. (14 cards)

I. Thou shalt not covet is the soil from which most other sins grow.

A. People covet before committing other sins. (Part of temptation process .. Jas. 1:14)

1. No one steals before first coveting.
2. Before committing adultery a person has a strong desire to possess another. (David)
3. It is the desire for freedom from authority that causes people disrespect their parents.

B. Covetousness is built into the fabric of our society.

1. As young people we are trained to desire more and better things.
2. Western people equate receiving with love. (Standards of living require too much)
- * 3. Commercial television is designed to make people desire what they don't have.
 - a. We are conditioned to think we can't be happy if we don't have
 - b. Remember King Ahab. (I King 21) He owned much land, but refused happiness until he possessed a small plot of ground to use as a vegetable garden.

C. Covetousness is such a grievous sin that :

1. It's a fellowship issue. Christians may not eat with another Christian who is covetous.

I Cor. 5: 10-11 - *I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.* ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

2. Covetousness will defile a person's heart.

Mark 7: 20-23 - *And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.* ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

* **Notice covetousness manifests itself in deeds. (lifestyle)**

3. Covetousness is a matter of life and death eternally ... **The covetous are lost.**

I Cor. 6: 9-10 - *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.*

**** Those whose hearts are centered on the earth are destined to remain with the earthly.**

II. Covetousness reflects earthbound priorities. (“You are yet carnal” ... I Cor. 3: 1-3)

A. When our treasures are here on earth, our hearts are here as well.

1. Refer to text ... **Matt. 6: 20-21**
2. **I John 2: 15-17** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

B. The mind of the Christian must be set on spiritual things.

- Col. 3: 1-3** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

C. When our desires are earthbound, our relationship with God is destroyed.

1. **Text ... Matt. 6: 24** ... No one can serve two masters ... love or hate.
2. **James 4: 3-5** You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ 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. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

D. God views man’s desire to have things of this world as unfaithfulness to Him.

1. Refer to **ibid** :
 - a. **Vs.- 4** ... One cannot identify with the world and with God at the same time.
 - b. **Vs.- 5** ... It causes one’s **spirit** to be lost to God.
2. God classifies covetousness as idolatry.

Eph. 5: 5 - For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

III. To long for more than one has is to reject God's plan for His life. (Sovereignty)

A. God has the ability to make us anything He wants us to be ... rich or poor.

1. Refer to Text

Matt. 6: 32 - For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

- a. God knows what and how much we need before we ask.
- b. The Christian's attitude toward things distinguishes him from those in the world.

2. Refer to Text

Matt. 6: 33 - But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- a. God promises to provide for all our needs. (**not all our wants**)
- b. IF ... His promise of care is provisional ... IF we seek him above all else.

B. As Christians we are commanded to be contented with what God has give to us.

1. READ & exeget ... I Tim. 6: 6-10

- a. We have a direct command ... **be contented** ... don't desire wealth.
- b. It is not a sin to be rich ... only to desire to be so.
- c. The contented person has faith that God is in charge and that God will sustain him.
"Godliness with contentment" is to accept God's sovereignty in our lives.

2. **Phil. 4: 11-13** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² 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.
¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

3. READ & exeget ... Heb. 13: 5-6

* **Being concerned about earthly things is a clear indication of lack of faith.**

C. Many a congregation has died on the vine while its members spent their time seeking the things of this world.

1. When God purchased us, He purchased us to serve Him as kingdom builders.
2. We work to survive so we can serve Him, not so we can enjoy this world.
 * **Jesus died to save us and to purchase us, not to make us happy on the earth.**
3. Retirement is a time in life when one can spend all of our time harvesting for Christ, **not kicking back to enjoy ourselves while we wait for eternity.**

D. God is not impressed by man’s riches or his earthly accomplishments.

1. **Luke 12: 15-** Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”
2. **Luke 16: 25-** But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.
3. Refer to Text ... **Matt. 6: 20** ... Don’t lay up treasures on earth , send them on ahead.

CONCLUSION :**A. The fruits of covetousness are always negative and destructive.**

1. Covetousness captures one’s heart. (**There is never enough.**)
 - * **There’s two men over there; one guy with 12 kids and the other with 12 million dollars. He’ll never say enough.**
2. Coveting destroys commitment.
 - a. Geo. Barna Survey :
 - 1) >7 out of 10 “Christians” said nothing is more important than happiness.
 - 2) Many say, “God wants us to be happy doesn’t He.” ... then justify sin.
 - b. Causes ingratitude. (**desire for more instead of gratitude**)
3. Coveting causes contention.
 - a. Destroys relationship ... jealousy, rivalry
 - b. Destroys carriers

B. Love is the solution.

1. Love seeks the benefit of others above self.
 - a. When we love other people we are not thinking of self-interest.
 - b. When we love God, we are seeking His benefit, not our own.
2. When we love, we can sincerely rejoice with those who rejoice. (**Rom. 12: 15**)

C. The commands all teach us how to love. (1st four love God .. 2nd six love others)

1. They lead us to Christ.
 - a. We can’t keep them so we feel the need for Christ.
 - b. We see them demonstrated in the life of the Christ.
2. We live in a world dominated by self interest. (**That’s the way of the world.**)
3. In Christ we learn to overcome the world, not be conformed. (**Rom. 12:2**)

Jesus came to fulfill the law .. He taught us what it really means ... love God & others