

COMMANDMENT NUMBER TEN: DO NOT COVET

Exodus 20:17

Introduction: Here is the last of the Ten Commandments. John Wesley said, "Before I can preach grace, I must preach law." Christ is the remedy for every sin we commit and He is always waiting to forgive, save and bless. The Ten Commandments are like a mirror. We hold them up to our face and we see ourselves as sinners since we have broken one or more of these commandments. The true intent of the law is to condemn, to show one's guilty condition before God.

The Tenth Commandment, in a certain way, sums up all the other nine commandments. The other commandments are concerned with visible acts but the tenth is concerned with inward desires. The other commandments forbid the act of sin but this commandment forbids the desire to sin. If we keep this commandment perfectly, we can keep our desires pure and good and it will not be hard to keep the others.

Selfishness is the root of all sin for it springs from our wrong desires. The devil's doctrine is "Get all you can for yourself, no matter who it hurts." Christ's doctrine is "Say no to yourself and follow me."

The trouble is that no person will ever confess to the sin of covetousness. Many confess their many sins and ask God to forgive them, but few ever pray, "Lord forgive me for my covetousness." To covet means to desire that which belongs to someone else. A poet once said, "Be careful what you set your heart upon, for it surely shall be yours." And God, thinking of the sinfulness of the human heart, said in effect, "Don't let your heart get set on anything which belongs to another."

I. THE BIBLICAL MESSAGE ON COVETOUSNESS

1. *Luke 12:15: "And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*
- Ephesians 5:5: "This we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
2. Two things stand out: First, a covetous person is an idolater. He/she may not worship a graven image, but in his/her heart he/she worships some material object. Second, a covetous person will never enter heaven. Why? Because a covetous person has set his/her heart upon earthly things and in order to be saved, the heart must be set upon heavenly things.
3. Just what does the tenth commandment say?
 - We are not to covet our neighbor's house. This means that we are not to covet any real estate which that neighbor owns.
 - We are not to covet our neighbor's wife/husband. In today's time of loose morals, much of this goes on and so often leads to divorces and heart break.
 - We are not to covet our neighbor's servants.
 - We are not to covet our neighbor's ox or any of his/her personal property.

4. This commandment ends by saying that "we are not to covet anything which belongs to anyone else." God does not say that it is wrong for us to wish for the better things in life, but sin comes in when we wish for that which someone else has.
 - ***"For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."***
(1 Timothy 6:10) People will lie, cheat, steal and kill because of the love of money.
5. On the other side we are told "to covet the best gifts." Such as health, a good education, a good name, kindness, a sweet spirit and a Christian character. It is alright to covet the privilege to work. It is alright to covet the opportunity to serve God. It is alright to covet the high and holy privilege of being the best Christian possible, and to covet the chance to help others and to glorify God.

II. THE MARKS OF A COVETOUS PERSON

1. A person is covetous when his/her thoughts are wholly taken up with this world.
 - Our world is filled with such people. People who are continually craving the things which they do not have. Their lives are spent for the things of the flesh. They seemingly never have a spiritual thought and they never think that their soul will live forever.
 - How many come to church services on Sundays but are busy thinking of their business, or are making plans for the upcoming week or are thinking about some trip they are going to make. If the pastor preaches one minute past 12:00 they get impatient and can hardly sit still. God says, ***"I am holy, and I hate covetousness."***
 - The Bible says that in the last days of the Gospel age, they will be like the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. People bought, sold, sowed, reaped, married and were given in marriage. Were those things wrong? Certainly not, but those people were wholly caught up with worldly things. It is the same today. People are so taken up with their businesses, pleasures, amusements, sports and social lives that they have no time for the things of the soul.
2. A person is covetous when his/her conversation is always about the things of this world.
 - Some talk about sports which is alright, but there is something wrong with a person who talks only about such things. A real Christian likes to think and talk about the goodness of God and his/her hope in Christ.
3. A person is covetous when he/she is willing to exchange his/her soul for material things.
 - Remember the story about a young man coming to Jesus. He was very wealthy but he was not satisfied. There was something missing and he was hungry for that which would satisfy him in this world and give him hope for the world to come. Jesus, in effect, said to him, ***"Young man, you must make your choice. You are in love with your money, yet you want to have eternal life. You must choose between your money and God."*** Jesus didn't want the young man to become a pauper. He wanted the young man to transfer his affections from his money to God.
 - There are many today who want to have eternal life, but they love the things of this world too much to give them up in order to inherit eternal life.

4. A person is covetous when his/her heart is so set on the things of the world that he/she will do anything to have all that he/she can get.
 - The Bible tells the story about King Ahab wanting Naboth's vineyard so badly and how steps were taken to get what he wanted, ending up losing all he had.

III. COVETOUSNESS CAUSES US TO BREAK THE OTHER NINE COMMANDMENTS

1. The first commandment tells us not to have other gods before God. Covetousness has other gods.
2. The second commandment tells us that we are not to make any graven images and bow down before them. Outwardly people may not but inwardly their hearts do before material things.
3. The third commandment tells us not to take the name of the Lord in vain. A covetous person does not respect the name of the Lord and therefore uses the Lord's name lightly.
4. The fourth commandment tells us to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Why are the stores and entertainment places open on Sunday? Covetousness.
5. The fifth commandment tells us to honor our fathers and mothers. Covetousness causes people to go against the wishes of their parents and to bring dishonor to them.
6. The sixth commandment tells us not to kill. Judas coveted money. Look at what he did for money. He betrayed the Lord Jesus. Today people kill in order to take what is not theirs.
7. The seventh commandment tells us not to commit adultery. Prostitution, lust, desire, is all from wanting that which belongs to someone else. Families and lives destroyed.
8. The eighth commandment tells us that we are not to steal. Why steal? To get what someone else has. Covetousness, the love to have the things of the world.
9. The ninth commandments tells us to not lie. Covetousness causes a person to SAY things that are not true in order to have that which is not legally his/hers.

CONCLUSION:

1. Covetousness will cause a person to violate every commandment God has given.
2. We must keep our eyes on Christ for He is the antidote, the cure, the remedy, the prevention for every weakness and sin.
3. We do not have the strength within our own selves to avoid coveting wrongly. We have to have help but we must WANT that help first. We find it in God's Word, in prayer, in a close walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and learning to be satisfied with whatever God wants us to have.