

**THE RESULTS OF THE ITCH FOR MORE
EXODUS 20:17**

INTRODUCTION:

There is nothing more common in human nature than covetousness. It was the presence of covetousness in his heart that convicted the famous Apostle Paul of his sin. He shared in a letter to the Romans about his experience.

"Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.' But sin ceasing the opportunity afforded by the commandment produced in me every kind of covetous desire" (Romans 7:7-8).

It was when Paul heard this 10th commandment that he became aware of the corruption of his heart. Instead of bowing before God in humble recognition of God's rightful place in his life, the commandment actually stirred up within him unlawful desires.

Yet, we live in a society that seems to think the stirring of desires is the proper thing to do. Nothing could more adequately characterize our consumer society than "the itch for more." The advertising industry works on us in every waking moment to stir within us a discontentment with the things that we have and a desire for the things that we do not have. If those of you who are my age or older would make a list of the necessities of life today and compare it with a list that would have come out of your youth, you would be

amazed at how many things that have become necessities. Once they were undreamed of luxuries and now they are absolute necessities for life itself. Covetousness has a way of finding its ways into every heart. We need to hear this 10th commandment that declares, "You shall not covet."

The word that is translated in our New Testament "greedy" or "covetous" comes from a Greek word that refers to the vice of self-assertion and unbridled concern for the satisfaction of one's own impulses, ruthless disregard for the rights of others.

Maurice Sendak once wrote a story of a pampered dog which is a parable of this vice of greediness, dressed up in modern terms. The dog had her own pillows, comb and brush, a red wool sweater, two windows to look out of, two bowls to eat from, and a master who loved her. Despite this, she left home, explaining, "I am discontented. I want something I do not have. There must be more to life than having everything." Isn't that a parable of where we are? We have so much and yet we are still looking for something else!

Let us explore together this covetousness that is found in so many hearts.

I. COVETOUSNESS CORRUPTS THE DESIRES.

Most of the Ten Commandments deal with deeds, but the tenth deals with desires. The Hebrew word translated "covet" refers to that inner thirst or desire for something one

does not have. In the case of the commandment it specifically refers to something you do not have, but your neighbor has it, and you are determined to have it if possible. So, to discuss this commandment you must consider the desires of the heart.

1. It encourages a love of the world rather than a love of God.

The thirst of covetousness is focusing upon this world and the things it has to offer. It has houses, land, money, things! Covetousness draws the attention of the soul to these things and causes a person to give to these things the value that ought to be given to God alone. Because of this the human soul cannot be full of covetousness and a love for God at the same time. Covetousness makes things a competitor for the place that rightly belongs to God in the life.

2. It directs the desires toward things that can never satisfy.

This is a reminder to us of human nature itself. When God created us as humans He so made us that we will never be satisfied until we find a right relationship with Him. The sin of covetousness is the sin of seeking that ultimate satisfaction in other persons or things. The person begins to reason when they are covetous. "If I just had ..." and then you can fill in the blank. They just know on the inside that if they just had this person or thing, their life would be complete. There was a time in your life when it was probably a bicycle, a new basketball, or a new dress. A little later it was a certain girl as a girlfriend, or a certain car, or to get into a certain school. A little later it was a certain person to be your marriage partner, or a certain job, or a certain salary increase. A little later it becomes a certain house, or a certain promotion, or a place on the lake. A little later it

becomes something else but the reality is that when you come to the end of life, you have never found that thing that satisfies. The reason you have never found it is you followed those inner desires of covetousness. You focused those desires on the people and things of this world, rather than upon the living God Himself.

3. It demonstrates a wrong attitude toward others.

Covetousness changes your inner attitude toward others. Love would say that you rejoice that a man has the possessions he has. But covetousness takes away from you any joy you might have in the prosperity of another. Covetousness replaces love with an insatiable desire to take in whatever way you can whatever the other person has that you want. It will be devastating to human relations. It can be devastating in a family, in a business place, in a community, in a church, or in any place in society. The attitudes engendered by covetousness are corrupt and destructive.

II. COVETOUSNESS BIRTHS OTHER SINS.

Thomas Watson, the great Puritan expositor, describes covetousness as "the mother sin." This is in agreement with the statement of the Apostle Paul, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (I Timothy 6:10). In his exposition of the Ten Commandments Watson proceeds to demonstrate how covetousness is the mother sin. It will lead to the breaking of all of the other nine commandments. You will never adequately deal with your violation of the other commandments until you deal with the desires condemned in the last commandment.

It encourages the breaking of the commandments related to God.

You will remember that the first four commandments address our relationship with God.

If you begin to evaluate what causes a man to put something above God, you will discover behind it covetousness and greed. This is the reason that the Apostle Paul refers to covetousness as idolatry. That insatiable desire, that itch for more, will make a God out of this world and the things of this world.

It will also cause us to violate the second commandment which prohibits the making of images in the likeness of God. We will begin to attribute to things the honor and the worship that goes to God alone. It would also cause us to blaspheme the name of God. It will amaze you how many deceitful and ugly things have been done in the name of God by covetous people. They cloak their greed under religious language.

Without questions it is covetousness that causes us to most often desecrate the day of God and not keep the Sabbath Day holy. It was covetousness that causes our society to do away with our "blue laws" which prohibited certain business practices on the Lord's Day. There is no question about it; covetousness is the mother of all kinds of sins against God.

2. It encourages the breaking of the commandments related to others.

When you begin to look behind the breaking of the other five commandments you will often find covetousness. It will cause children to neglect and dishonor their parents. I remember a specific case some years ago where a son refused to speak to his mother

because of his disappointment with his father's will. He did not get as much from his father's will as he thought he ought to get so he blamed his mother. When you unveil that for what it really is, it is covetousness.

Covetousness can lead to murder. You may remember the Old Testament story of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard. You will recall that Ahab so coveted the vineyard of this good man of Israel that he became ill when Naboth refused to sell it to him. But his evil wife, Jezebel, would not take Naboth's answer as final. She worked out a plan with some worthless characters in the community to bring about the death of Naboth so Ahab could have his vineyard. The blood of Naboth was shed because of the covetousness of Ahab.

You will also remember the commandment that says, "Thou shalt commit adultery." You will remember that it was a covetousness that caused David to steal the affection of Bathsheba and to plot the death of her husband, Uriah. Indeed the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil! It is obviously covetousness that prompts people to steal. It will also prompt them to lie in courts of law and in other circumstances. The itch for more give birth to all kinds of ugly violations of the law of God..

III. COVETOUSNESS SHUTS THE SOUL OUT OF HEAVEN.

If there is any message in the Bible concerning covetousness it is this -- covetousness will destroy your soul.

1. God abhors the covetousness.

There is an interesting reference in the prophecy of Isaiah where God speaks: "I was angered by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his sinful ways" (Isaiah 57:17). Without question, God abhors the covetous! When He sees the hurt and the ruin it brings to human relationships He abhors it. There is no way that you can nurture in your heart desires of covetousness and seek to fulfill those desires without incurring the wrath of holy God upon your life. Covetousness is the opposite of everything that pleases God in the human heart and in the human life.

2. God excludes the covetous.

God says it not once, but many times — the covetousness has no part in His eternal plans. Listen to the word that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters or adulators, nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanders, nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 6:9-10). This puts the covetous in some terrible company. All of those listed in that company will be excluded from the Kingdom of God. They have no place in what God has planned for His people. The only place for those who constantly have "the itch for more" is in hell. The tragic reality of that is that they will find nothing in hell that will satisfy that itch for more. The basic desires of covetousness will continue to burn in their hearts for all of eternity.

If this be true, what can we do? If covetousness in my heart will keep me out of the Kingdom of God, what can I do?

1. Repent.

This is what the law of God caused Paul to do. When Paul realized the depth of covetousness in his heart, he turned to God with a broken heart and sought mercy and grace. If you will turn from the sin of covetousness to the Savior, you can be saved.

2. Seek the Lord with all your heart.

You need to realize and acknowledge that the only place you will ever find complete satisfaction for your heart and contentment for your life is in a relationship with God. There is no other water that can satisfy the thirst of the human heart except the water of life. Seek the Lord! Seek Him with all your heart! Seek Him until you find Him!

3. Set your affections on things above.

This is an important admonition that comes from the Apostle. If the Lord Jesus is the hope of our lives and He is seated at the right hand of the Father, then all of our desires and affections must be directed toward Him. As you set your affection on things above, you will find that the things of earth begin to grow strangely dim. They look less and less attractive as your heart becomes captivated with Him.

May God grant to you salvation from the sin of covetousness!