

“The Cure for Covetousness”
Exodus 20:17
(Preached at Trinity, February 3, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last week we began to examine the Tenth Commandment. There are a couple misconceptions concerning this Commandment.
 - A. First, that it is a sin that is a sin of the heart only – that it only manifests itself in the mind – that we can be guilty of this sin and no one else will know. The truth is that while it is a sin of the heart the evidence of covetousness cannot be concealed. We are told to disfellowship with anyone who professes to be a Christian but whose life is characterized by covetousness.
1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.
 - B. The other misconception is that this is a minor sin. It doesn’t hurt anyone. It isn’t nearly as evil as many other sins.
 1. The truth is, the Bible sees it as great wickedness. Covetousness is nothing less than idolatry. The Ten Commandments begin and end with the sin of idolatry.
 2. This sin is seen as so evil that it is listed among the sins that characterize those who will fill the chambers of hell.
1 Corinthians 6:9-10 – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”
 3. The great danger for us is this sin is so easy for us to dismiss.
 - a. If you steal from someone your conscience immediately steps in and you fall under severe conviction until you make restoration.
 - b. We can be guilty of covetousness, however, and not even consider the wickedness.
2. As I pointed out last time, to covet is to have an inordinate desire for something.
 - A. Covetousness involves setting of our affections upon something apart from God. You may not think you are doing this but if you find yourself thinking upon worldly matters more than upon God and His kingdom covetousness has creped into your life.
 - B. Covetousness means having our affections more upon the things of this world than upon Christ. It demonstrates a person’s dissatisfaction with Christ
 - C. The covetous man thinks upon worldly things. Speaks about worldly things. He lusts after the things of this world.

3. Obviously, if the sin of covetousness is considered such wickedness in the sight of God it should be the great desire of every believer to flee from this sin. Tonight I want to set before you the cure for covetousness.
- I. First, if the ultimate cause of covetousness is dissatisfaction with Christ the only cure is to be satisfied with Christ.
 - A. Covetousness draws our mind from Christ
 1. It is seeking happiness and fulfillment apart from Christ
 2. It ultimately is a declaration that Christ is not enough – there is something else that has a greater capacity to bring me joy.
 3. Covetousness is a failure to see the value of Christ
 - a. The new car become more precious than Christ
 - b. The new house, the acreage in the country becomes more precious than Christ.
 - c. The beautiful body, the admiration of men becomes more precious than Christ
 - B. For the Christian, our true contentment on earth must be in Christ

Hebrews 13:5 – “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*”

 1. This is a wonderful verse because Jesus seems to be saying, “Be content because you have Me.”
 2. If you have Christ is there anything else you are lacking?
The man who has found Christ has found everything
Where the lost man sees no value in Christ – the saved man sees true value in nothing else
 3. When we find contentment in Christ this world takes on a whole new meaning
 - a. The things on earth are seen only in a utilitarian sense
 - b. We begin to see the things on earth as temporary
 4. As the Christian sets his heart upon Christ he finds peace and contentment in every situation.
2 Corinthians 1:5 – “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”
Philippians 4:6-7 – “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
 5. As we find our contentment in Christ He becomes the great object of our joy.
John 15:11 – “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.”
 - a. Jesus increases our capacity to enjoy Him.
 - b. The more our lives are filled with Christ the less significant this life’s events become
 - C. Few discover the great value in owning this contentment – they are too consumed in their covetousness.
 1. The American life has been described as buying things we do not need, with money we do not have, in order to impress people we do not know

2. It is a terrible treadmill with no end
3. There is endless value in finding precious contentment in Christ
4. Listen to the Apostle Paul

1 Timothy 6:6-8 – “But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”

 - a. What was the source of Paul’s contentment?

Philippians 4:11-13 – “. . . I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”
 - b. The more our lives are filled with Christ the less significant this life’s events become
 - c. Jesus increases our capacity to enjoy Him. This is our true joy—our true happiness

II. Second, if covetousness is caused by following the things of this world then the cure must be to follow after the things of God

- A. People pursue the things that have captivated their heart.

Matthew 6:21 – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

 1. People always pursue the things they love
 2. Covetousness always has an eye on this world’s possessions. It results in a hot pursuit of these things.
- B. For the Christian our pursuit should be much different

1 Timothy 6:10-11 – “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. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and **follow after** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

 1. This passage speaks of fleeing some things and pursuing hard after others.
 - a. We are to flee the love of money, the love of this world’s goods
 - b. We are to follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness
 - c. The word here means to pursue eagerly, to run swiftly.
 2. We must be Kingdom seekers.
 - a. This means to have a greater interest in our Lord’s work than in heaping up for ourselves earthly treasures.

- b. Listen to our Lord's words
Matthew 6:31-33 – "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. "

III. Third, if covetousness is giving license to our lusts, the cure is to discipline ourselves unto holiness

- A. The Christian life demands much discipline
 - 1. You must be able to govern yourself – you must gain mastery over your flesh
 - 2. Paul said he made his flesh his slave
NAU **1 Corinthians 9:27** – “but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”
 - 3. Can you say no to your passions?
 - a. Can you deny yourself the snack between meals when you know you must lose weight?
 - b. Can you deny yourself that new object when your flesh is crying out so greatly to obtain it?
- B. Too often we give ourselves over to unbridled passions
 - 1. We see that new car and begin to covet it – we begin to lust after it
 We make every excuse to justify our need of it. I'm not saying you shouldn't ever buy a new car. I'm saying that when you do it is simply a utilitarian decision.
 - 2. Too often the object of our desire becomes the passion of our life
 - a. We can't get our minds off of it, it begins to consume our heart
 - b. Rachel, Jacob's wife, was barren.
 She wanted children desperately. It became her consuming passion, her lust – her heart was filled with covetousness.
Genesis 30:1 – “And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.”
- C. How do you gain mastery over your flesh?
 - 1. By dying to the flesh
Colossians 3:5 – “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
 - 2. For the Christian our life must transcend this world
Colossians 3:1-3 – “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
 - 3. You must learn to find contentment in Christ.
Philippians 4:11 NAU - "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

- a. The word for “learn” is μαθηάω – it refers to an increase of knowledge.
 - b. How do you learn to be content? By finding fulfillment in Christ. This comes through knowing Him, walking with Him, communing with Him, finding joy in Him.
4. We must rest content in our lot as assigned by Divine Providence.
- a. Contentment is a trusting in God’s Sovereign Purpose
If God wanted you to have more than you do He’d give it to you
 - b. Are you happy and satisfied with your appointment from God?
Philippians 4:11 – “. . . I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.”

Conclusion:

1. Are you content with what God has supplied you with because you have found fulfillment in Christ?
Jeremiah Burroughs wrote in *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*
“I find a sufficiency of satisfaction in my own heart, through the grace of Christ that is in me. Though I have not outward comforts and worldly conveniences to supply my necessities, yet I have a sufficient portion between Christ and my soul abundantly to satisfy me in every condition.”
2. Is this the position of your heart?
Paul said, **Philippians 4:11** – “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.”
Where there is contentment there will not be covetousness.
3. Can you trust God to supply your needs?
Philippians 4:19 – “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”