

The Forgotten Sin

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

- A. God has a high standard of moral character He expects of His children
 - 1. Phil 2:15; 2Peter 1:4; 1John 4:4; 1Peter 4:1-4
- B. "Thou shalt not covet" is the forgotten commandment," and covetousness is the forgotten sin - Ex. 20:17; Eph. 5:3, 5
 - 1. It is the rare commandment regarding an attitude that is difficult to discern and prove by actions; it is a sin that is more about attitude than behavior and deeds
 - 2. One can be guilty of covetousness without saying or doing a thing
 - 3. Abraham Lincoln was walking with his two sons, and both the boys were crying. A passerby asked the President what was wrong with his boys. "Exactly what's wrong with the whole world," said Lincoln, "I have three walnuts and each boy wants two."
 - 4. Dr. Ken Trivette relates the following story: "On the night of November 16, 1930, Mrs. Henrietta Garret, a lonely 81 year old widow died in her home in Philadelphia, and, unwillingly, started the most fantastic case of inheritance litigation in history. She had failed to leave a will, or no will was found to her \$17,000,000.00 estate; a mystery still unsolved. She had expertly handled her financial affairs since her husband's death in 1895, and therefore, many felt that she must have realized that without an will, her fortune would become involved in legal battles. Although, Mrs. Garret, at the time of her death, had only one known relative, a second cousin, and less than a dozen friends; attempts to prove relationship to her and claim a part of her estate was made by more than 26,000 persons from 47 states and 29 foreign countries, represented by more than 3,000 lawyers. In their efforts to obtain her estate, there were those that committed perjury, faked family records, changed their own names, altered data in Family Bibles and concocted absurd tales of illegitimacy. As result, 12 were confined, 10 received jail sentences, 2 committed suicide, and 3 were murdered. I wonder how many would have admitted they were guilty of covetousness?"
- C. There are few who would admit a covetous heart. But there are many who have fallen because of it.
 - 1. Eve coveted the forbidden fruit and brought sin and death into the world
 - 2. At Ai, Achen coveted a wedge of gold, some silver, and a Babylonian garment, bringing defeat to Israel and death to himself and his family.
 - 3. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard and committed murder to get it
 - 4. David coveted Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and as a result brought the sword of God into his household for generations.
 - 5. Judas was motivated by a covetous heart and sold Jesus for silver.
 - 6. Annanias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost to cover covetousness.
 - 7. Even apostle Paul remembered dealing with covetousness - Rom. 7:7.
 - 8. 2Tim. 3:1-2; Luke 12:15

I. COVETOUSNESS DISEASES ALL OF LIFE

- A. It makes one greedy of gain
 - 1. A covetous heart forces one to be never satisfied with what he has.

2. Covet means "To desire greatly."
3. The covetous man has a heart for things instead of a heart for the Lord.
4. Always hungry for more, always reaching for more, never happy with some, ungrateful for the blessings God bestows on him

B. It makes one grab another's blessings

1. "Your neighbor's..." Does the covetous man apply the golden rule?
2. The toddlers' philosophy: "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine, too."

3. When archeologists were unearthing the ancient city of Pompeii where 20,000 died during the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, they uncovered the bodies of many well preserved bodies of people who were caught totally off guard by the explosion of the volcano. People were found sitting at their dinner tables, food still on their plates. Others were found in their beds sleeping. One woman, however, stands out from among all the victims of Pompeii. When the scientists uncovered her body, they found clutched in her hands tens of thousands of dollars' worth of precious stones. It seems that as death rained down from the mountain above, she risked her life trying to save a couple of handfuls of her wealth. Ironically, 2,000 years later, those things she tried so hard to hold onto are the property of others.

II. COVETOUSNESS DISREGARDS GOD'S LAW

A. Covetousness has the power to lead men to break other commandments.

1. Ex. 20:3 - How many have placed money and things ahead of God?
2. Vs. 4-6 - How many have spent worship services bowed at the altars of materialism instead of coming to commune at the table of the Lord?
3. Vs. 7 - How many have sacrificed the Lord's Name in their efforts to acquire things? A life that is lived in a manner inconsistent with the clear teachings of Scripture is a form of blasphemy - Titus 2:5
4. Vs. 9-11 - How many have abandoned regular assembly for exhortation in an effort to raise their standard of living? Many who do so, do it not for necessity, but out of desire to maintain an arbitrary level of affluence
5. Vs. 12 - How many kinfolk are treated poorly and cast aside because they are too great a financial burden on family? What if mom and dad had done that to them when they were helpless?
6. Vs. 13 - How many are dead tonight physically and some even spiritually because someone was covetous?
7. Vs. 14 - Many marriages are in shambles because people have been so caught up in earning their salt, that they have neglected their sugar. Others have had their head turned by another man or woman and they have allowed a covetous heart to destroy their home.
8. Vs. 15 - It goes without saying that stealing is the end result of a covetous spirit that has gone too far.
9. Vs. 16 - Often, people will lie about another and spread gossip that can destroy their lives because they are envious and covetous of that person's life, status, or walk with the Lord. Many people have had their lives totally ruined by the covetous heart of another.

B. Flee covetousness - Psalm 10:3; Mark 7:21-23

III. COVETOUSNESS DENIES THE LORD

A. It demonstrates a lack of faith - Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5-6; Matt. 6:25-34

B. An ancient Persian legend tells of a wealthy man by the name of Al Haffed who owned a large farm. One evening a visitor related to him tales of fabulous amounts of diamonds that could be found in other parts of the world, and of the great riches they could bring him. The vision of all this wealth made him feel poor by comparison. So instead of caring for his own prosperous farm, he sold it and set out to find the treasures. But the search proved to be fruitless. Finally, penniless and in despair, he committed suicide by jumping into the sea. Meanwhile, the man who had purchased his farm noticed one day the glint of an unusual stone in a shallow stream on the property. He reached into the water, and to his amazement he pulled out a large diamond. Later, when working in his garden, he uncovered many more valuable gems. Poor Al Haffed had spent his life traveling to distant lands seeking jewels, when on the farm he had left behind were all the precious stones his heart could have ever desired. In our greed for more, we often lose the great blessings we already have.

C. It demonstrates a lack of faithfulness

1. Living only for a bigger and better salary, home, car, or vacation doesn't satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.
2. It may seem as if happiness and satisfaction will increase as we gain more and more possessions, but it doesn't work that way. Often we lose what is of greater importance along the way.
3. A man that worked hard to give his kids everything, had to allow their spiritual guidance to wait until he retired. Now he has a great material inheritance to leave to his spiritually impoverished, sinful and unbelieving children. Which legacy should he have focused on first?
4. When we are guilty of possessing a covetous heart, we can be sure that the level of our devotion to Jesus Christ will suffer.
5. According to zoologists, two snakes will sometimes grab different ends of the same food. Eventually, their struggle for that last bite brings them nose to nose. The snake with the widest bite will keep right on going and actually swallow the other.
6. One may think he can control his covetous urges, but he will quickly find that they will swallow him alive and will destroy his usefulness for the Lord. He can never be faithful to the Lord as long as he is consumed by other things.

Conclusion:

A. When it comes to possessing things, many of us are like the maid of a certain wealthy man. One day as he descended the stairs, he overheard the girl say, "Oh if I just had five dollars, I would be so contented." Wondering what would happen, he pulled a five from his wallet and as he passed by he handed it to her. She stammered a thank you and the man walked out of the room. Just before he passed out of earshot he heard her mutter in disgust, "Now, why didn't I ask for 10?"

B. Our problem is not that we have too little, nor is it that we possess too much. Our problem is that we want more than we need.

C. Epicurus wrote, "If you want to make a man happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires" - 1Tim. 6:6-11.