

## **Covetousness is Greed**

Men and women come and go. The Ten Commandments will remain. They do not get wrinkled in the course of time. They are always new and absolute. These commandments have always played a significant part in the history of our Western civilization by the way of "their penetration in the hearts and lives of untold many.

Advocates of the new morality may think otherwise, but God will not change his original intentions and standards for moral living. The Ten Commandments are climaxed in Exodus 20:17: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's."

This commandment not to covet is an entirely inward thing. It is an attitude of the heart. Coveting, wanting something that is not properly yours, is the basis of much wrong doing.

"Beware of covetousness," Jesus said. He stressed that this attitude is one of the root sins, equal in its potential for evil to pride; it is the forerunner to other sins that at their first appearance seem to be far worse. Devastating has been the destruction caused by coveting. Numerous crimes have been committed through coveting somebody else's property. Great misery has been brought upon mankind because world leaders didn't obey the Tenth Commandment.

Judas Iscariot coveted money and this led him to betray Jesus. Greed is no less sin today, although it is often shrouded in terms such as "getting ahead in business" and "moving up in the world." So much poverty in the world is caused by greed. Covetous desire, the acts of cheating, violence and oppression which stem from it are strictly forbidden by the Lord. This idea was developed already by the ancient prophet Micah:

Woe to them that devise wrong,  
And work out wickedness upon their beds,  
In the morning light they do it,  
Because it is in their power.  
They covet fields and seize them,  
And houses, and carry them off.  
So they crush a yeoman and his house,  
A man and his possessions.

Millions are still being exploited for the sake of extravagant profits. The love for profits in many cases is more powerful than the love for fellowman.

Advertising, like any other form of propaganda, can be used for good or ill. Much mass media advertising is pitched at the level of covetousness. According to Henryk Skolimowski, the images of advertising "are projected to be psychologically

appealing. Psychologically appealing images are those which appeal to our seven deadly sins; sexual urges, vanity, snobbery, gluttony, greed, etc ...

So much advertising tries to create within people the desire for things they can quite do without. The impression is left that happiness consists solely in the abundance of things a man possesses. The more you have the happier you are supposed to be – bigger cars, more luxurious homes, more extensive wardrobes, longer filter tips, etc.

In this secular advertising philosophy, the world looks in a rather tolerable shape. The progress towards happiness is through the requiring of a number of comforts. You are peacefully maturing through this all. Yet in this world of advertising, no man seems to grow older than thirty-five and no woman ever reaches the age of thirty. The youthful look remains.

The furniture never wears out. The cars never have mechanical failures. The only pains people get are a touch of arthritis or a headache and these speedily disappear through the use of the right pills.

Vance Packard in his bestseller *The Hidden Persuaders* gives numerous examples of how minds are being manipulated for the benefit of profits. The book itself is advertised as "a revealing, often shocking, explanation of new techniques of research and methods of persuasion." When greed takes the place of love, a man is looked upon as a consumer, as a buyer, but not as a real person, a creature of God, with specific needs, problems, interests and ideals.

The apostle James reminds us that war is often caused by covetousness. He writes, "What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war."

It may be the desire to get from another nation territory or natural resources that the aggressor wants or thinks he needs. Or it may be the power he covets, the ability to oppress and dominate weaker groups or nations.

Queen Semiramis, queen of Assyria, built a magnificent monument to herself on which she had inscribed: "Whatever king wants treasure, if he opens this tomb he may be satisfied." When King Darius saw these words he opened the tomb, only to discover another inscription: "If thou were not a wicked person and of insatiable covetousness, thou wouldst not disturb the mansions of the dead."

Jesus warns, in the parable of the rich fool, against covetousness. The man, already rich, was greedy for more and more. That very night God required his soul of him, and he found that he had to leave the world the same way as he had come in – with nothing.

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