

## Sin 101

### Lesson 2 Covetousness

#### **PART I EXPLANATION**

**Introduction:** The sin of covetousness is a sin that is considered to be socially acceptable today. The primary reasons that it is so accepted are that it is so prevalent and that it is an internal sin that is easily hidden. The thoughts and intents of the heart are only known by God and revealed by the Word of God. The Bible exposes this sin, telling us that coveting is the root of all sin. I Timothy 6:10

For example, what is it that would cause someone to steal or commit adultery? It is the coveting of their neighbors wife or possessions. In fact, you can go through all of the ten commandments and find an example in the Bible of how every one of the commandments was broken because of the sin of covetousness.

Covetousness is the driving force behind the materialistic society in which we live. The economy of our country is driven by feeding the covetous desires of man. The consequence of feeding this sinful desire is realized by inflation. When the people of a society are driven by covetousness, they are willing to pay more for something than it is really worth, driving up or inflating the price.

The only solution that man has been able to find to curb inflation has been for the government to raise interest rates in order to discourage excessive buying. However, even high interest rates are unable to prevent overspending and quench the desire to accumulate possessions. Credit cards are a great example. Despite interest rates as high as thirty percent, covetous man will continue to buy, to their own destruction. Paying higher interest rates only leads to further debt and bondage because they are unable to quench the desire.

The Bible answer to conquering covetousness is not to attempt to keep it within safe limits, it is to put it to death entirely. The Bible tells us that we are to mortify our sinful desires such as covetousness. Mortification is the process of killing something. The way to kill covetousness in the life of the Christian is to starve that desire by not feeding it. What a novel idea.

What serves to illustrate the deceitfulness of sin is that the average person does not even consider coveting to be a sin. A popular statement made by unbelievers when referring to lusting after a woman is: “you can look but you can’t touch.” Jesus said if you look on a woman to lust after her you have committed adultery with her already in your heart. He was illustrating the fact that the true source of sin is in the desire. If there were no desire there would be no danger of committing the act. If a man has sexual desires for another man, even though he doesn’t commit the physical act, he is still a pervert.

What the sin of covetousness reveals is how the soul of man is hungering and thirsting to be satisfied (content). The inability of possessions to fill that void is illustrated by the fact that the wealthy are equally as covetous, if not more than, the poor. If material possessions could satisfy, there should be a definitive line where the desire subsides. One of the wealthiest men our country has ever known, J.P. Rockefeller was asked how much money would be enough to make him happy. His response was, “a little bit more”. What man is unable to realize however, is that the only thing that can fill that void in their life is a relationship with their Creator.

That is why the Christian should be a source of hope to the unbeliever. As they live a life of contentment without the accumulation of material possessions, it reveals that there is the

possibility of true happiness without wealth. What is devastating is when a Christian is equally as covetous as a lost person. That sends the message that Christianity cannot fill that void. A Christian should never be identified as a covetous person. (Ephesians 5:3)

Not only is a covetous Christian a disturbing concept as far as a testimony to the power of the gospel, it is also raises a great concern concerning the validity of a person's profession. The Bible states emphatically that the covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. The inability to conquer covetousness is an indication that the void of their soul may never have been filled in the first place. Because of this we should give serious attention to mortifying this sinful desire.

**Definitions:** *For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Covet** -

**Covetousness** -

Greek: (1937) **epithumeo** *ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o*

(2206) **zeloo** *dzay-lo'-o*

(4124) **pleonexia** *pleh-on-ex-ee'-ah*

Hebrew: (183) **'avah** *aw-vaw'*

(1215) **betsa** *beh'-tsah*

(2530) **chamad** *khaw-mad'* .

**Quotation:**

“Covetousness is dry drunkenness.” Thomas Watson

“He is not a covetous man, who lays up something providentially; but he is a covetous man, who gives out nothing willingly.” William Secker

“A ship may be overladen with silver, even unto sinking, and yet space enough be left to hold ten times more. So a covetous man, though he have enough to sink him, yet never hath he enough to satisfy him. ...a circle cannot fill a triangle, so neither can the whole world the heart of man; a man may as easily fill a chest with grace, as the heart with gold.” John Trapp

“A poor man doth want many things, a rich miser wants everything.” John Boys

“It is the love, not the lack of money, that makes men churls.” John Trapp

“It is a common saying that a hog is good for nothing whilst he is alive: not good to bear or carry, as the horse; nor to draw, as the ox; nor to clothe, as the sheep; nor to give milk, as the cow; nor to keep the house, as the dog; but fed only to the slaughter.

So a covetous, rich man, just like a hog, doeth no good with his riches whilst he liveth, but when he is dead his riches come to be disposed of. “The riches of a sinner are laid up for the just.” Andrew Willet

“The miser deprives himself of this world and God will deprive him of the next.” Thomas Adams

“Covetousness is called idolatry, which is worse than infidelity, Colossians 3:5; for it is less rebellion not to honour the king than to set up another king against him.” Henry Smith

“Antichrist is mammon’s son.” John Milton

“To dispense our wealth liberally is the best way to preserve it.” Isaac Barrow

“We must be convinced that covetousness, I mean that our covetousness, is a vice; for it holds something of a virtue, of frugality, which is not to waste that which one hath; and this makes us entertain thoughts that it is no vice; and we often say that it is good to be a little worldly; a little covetousness we like well; which shows that we do not indeed and in heart, hold it to be a sin. For if sin be naught, a little of sin cannot be good. As good say, a little poison were good, so it be not too much.” Richard Capel

**Confessions** (Look up and read these articles)

**The London Baptist Confession of 1689**

**Chapter 6 Of the Fall of Man, Of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof -**

paragraphs 1-5

**Spurgeon’s Catechism**

**Q** What is sin?

**A** Sin is any want of conformity to, or transgression of the law of God (1Jo 3:4).

**Q** What is the tenth commandment?

**A** The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, or his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

**Q** What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

**A** The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate (1Co 10:10), envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour (Ga 5:26), and all inordinate emotions and affections to anything that is his (Col 3:5).

## **PART II EXPLORATION**

**Key Questions** (*Answer in writing*)

1. What two reasons are there why covetousness is such a socially acceptable sin?

2. How does the Bible expose the sin of covetousness?
3. Explain how covetousness fuels inflation.
4. How does man attempt to control coveting (inflation)? How does God?
5. What illustrates the deceitfulness of sin in respect to covetousness?
6. What does covetousness reveal about the soul of man?
7. What illustrates the inability of possessions to fill the void?
8. How can a Christian become a source of hope for the unbeliever?
9. Give two reason why covetousness should never be found in a Christian?
10. What is the inability to conquer covetousness an indication of? Why?

**Key Scriptures:**

Exodus 18:21 God had told Moses to select elders from among the people to help him rule. One of the primary characteristics that God required was that they be men known for \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ covetousness.

Exodus 20:17 Four areas are mentioned forbidding the coveting of another man's possessions. You are not to covet his \_\_\_\_\_. You are not to covet his \_\_\_\_\_. You are not to covet his

\_\_\_\_\_. You are not to covet his \_\_\_\_\_ or his \_\_\_\_\_. The final prohibition is to not covet \_\_\_\_\_ that belongs to your neighbor.

Joshua 7:21 When Achan confessed his sin that caused the destruction of the people of God, he correctly identified the source of the problem when he said \_\_\_\_\_.

Psalms 119:36 David's prayer reveals that he understood that covetousness is a matter of the \_\_\_\_\_.

Jeremiah 6:13 In describing the state of the nation prior to destroying them, God's indictment is that from the \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ they were \_\_\_\_\_ to covetousness.

Micah 2:1-2 God pronounces a \_\_\_\_\_ to those who \_\_\_\_\_ fields.

Habakkuk 2:9 God pronounces a woe to him that by covetousness builds his \_\_\_\_\_ and exalts it above others.

Luke 12:15 Jesus issues a clear warning against covetousness by saying \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of covetousness. The reason that He gives is that the measure of success in life is not the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ he possesses.

Romans 7:7 Paul was thankful for the law particularly the tenth commandment because he would not have \_\_\_\_\_ sin or lust without it. He felt he was able to outwardly keep the other nine but he could not deny his evil desires.

Ephesians 5:3 Covetousness is not to be found in our lives \_\_\_\_\_.

Colossians 3:5 We are told the way to deal with covetousness is to \_\_\_\_\_ it or put it to death.

Hebrews 13:5 Our lifestyle is to be \_\_\_\_\_ covetousness. The opposite of covetousness is to be \_\_\_\_\_ with what you \_\_\_\_\_.

**Key Chapter(s)** (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):  
Joshua 7

### **PART III EXPECTATION**

**Memory verse:** I Timothy 6:10

**Personal Definition:** *(Write a definition in your own words)*

Covetousness -

**Personal Application:** Attempt to go one week without buying anything and keep track of how many times you have the desire to buy something.

**Meditation question:** *(be prepared for discussion)* Why does the Bible compare covetousness with idolatry?

**Extra Credit:** See how long you can go without purchasing anything unnecessary, even the smallest item.