**TENTH COMMANDMENT**

*You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor’s.*

Exodus 20:17

Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian writer (d.1910), tells of a rich farmer who was never satisfied. He was greedy, always wanting more than he owned. He heard of a chance to acquire some more land. For a thousand rubles (primary Russian coin), he could have all the land he could walk around in one day.

He rose early and began to walk, the hours passed. He thought,

I must get back where I started walking to claim the land.

He began to run, coming within sight of the starting place,

he exerted his last ounce of energy. As he plunged over the line, he fell to the ground and collapse. Blood ran from his mouth

as he lay – dead. A peasant took a spade and dug a grave.

He made it just long enough and wide enough to bury the man. That was all the ground the farmer needed.

**Our society thrives on materialism that results in covetousness.**

The goal is to create within our hearts a longing for things we do not have, but think we need which will make us happy.

This last commandment warns us against wanting more and more.

A.W. Pink – “What is here prohibited is the unlawful lusting

after what belongs to another. The best way to keep us from committing sin in action is to keep us from desiring it in our heart.”

I John 2:16 *All that is in the world – the desires of the flesh*

*and the desires of the eyes and the pride in possessions –*

*is not from the Father but is from the world.*

*Desires* Gk. *an intense desire* (which can be for good or for evil).

**Defined**

*Covet* – Heb. *to delight in, desire, long after or take pleasure in.*

It is to find something that you like so you want it for yourself.

It could be an idol, land, person, property or treasure.

**To covet something means you seek to acquire it for yourself.**

It leads to others sins such as: discontentment, stealing or murder.

Philippians 4:11-12 *I have learned in whatever situation I am*

*to be content. I know how to be brought low and how to abound.*

**The cause of covetousness is wanting more than you have.**

Augustine – “It is to desire more than enough.”

Proverbs 30:15 *The leech has two daughters: “Give, give,” they cry. Three things are never satisfied; four never say, “Enough.”*

Gill – “They never have enough and are not satisfied . . .

always craving and asking for more.”

**The result of covetousness is wanting what someone else has.**

I Timothy 6:6 *Godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into this world and we cannot take anything out.*

**Stages**

**1. A wrong desire springs up in our heart.**

It usually is something that we see with our eyes.

But it can be something which we hear about.

**2. When this happens, we have a choice to make.**

We can either cultivate that desire or ask God to remove it

from our heart and mind so we don’t continue to think about it.

**3. We may begin to devise a plan to satisfy our desire.**

If we focus and nourish the desire, we will begin to make a plan

on how we are going to satisfy our desire.

**4. We will act out our plan to satisfy our desire.**

When a plan has been conceived, if we don’t repent of our sinful attitude, we will carry out the plan we have thought about. It may mean stealing what does not belong to us or committing adultery.

The result is we break more than just the Tenth Commandment.

James 1:14-15 *Each person is tempted when he is lured*

*and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has*

*conceived gives birth to sin.*

*Desire* (KJB *lust*) – Gk. *craving or desire for what is forbidden.*

Note: of the 38 times it occurs in the NT 35 times it is used of sin.

**Examples**

1. Genesis 3:6 *When Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate and she gave some to Adam.*

Gill – She had “an eager desire of more wisdom and knowledge; though there was nothing she could see in the tree, and the fruit

of it, which promised this; only she perceived in her mind.”

2. Deut. 7:25 *Burn their idols with fire, do not desire the silver*

*or gold that is on them.* Adam Clark – “God knew that the value of the metal might be an inducement to *preserve* them.”

3. Joshua 7:21 Achan said, “*I saw a beautiful Babylonian garment and 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold then I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the earth inside my tent.*”

Gill – “It began with his eyes, which were caught with the goodliness (beauty) of the garments, and the riches he saw;

these affected his heart and stirred up covetous desires,

which influenced and directed his hands to take them.”

4. Proverbs 6:25 *Lust not after a woman’s beauty in your heart*.

Gill – “Do not (continue to) look at her with your eyes,

nor dwell upon her beauty in your thoughts.”

5. Micah 2:1-2 *Woe to those who devise wickedness . . . they*

*covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them away*.

Gill – “They wish those things were theirs, and they contrive ways to get them into their possession.” The Mosaic Law stated that

the land was to remain within the family of the tribe.

**Specific examples**

Four specific examples are given:

1. *House* – Heb. *household* meaning that which belongs to your neighbor. I Kings 19:2 King Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard because it was near his palace. His covetousness led to anger

over not getting it so his wife Jezebel had Naboth killed

2. *Wife* – is the primary thing that belongs in the neighbor’s household and listed first in Deut. 5:21. The husband and wife made a marriage covenant before God that is not to be broken.

Coveting her would lead to breaking the 7th commandment – committing adultery.

Why would a man covet his neighbor’s wife?

* She is able to have children (Genesis 29:31 Leah became pregnant, but Rachel was barren).
* She is beautiful (II Samuel 11:2 Bathsheba was beautiful).
* She is hard working and talented (Proverbs 31:10-27).

3. *Male or female servants* – good servants make life easier and help you be successful. Eliezer, Abraham’s trusted servant, took an oath to find a bride for Isaac (Genesis 24:9).

Watson – “To steal away another’s servant by enticement,

is no better than direct thieving.”

4. *Ox or donkey* – were typical of wealth in a farming society.

Coveting can lead to breaking the 8th commandment – not to steal.

I Samuel 12:3 Samuel in his farewell address to the people as their leader says, “*Testify against me before the Lord. Whose ox have*

*I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken*?”

**Summary – *Anything that is your neighbor’s*.**

God gave it to them and he has given something different to you.

You need to learn to be content with what God has given to you.

Acts 20:33-34 Paul in his address to the Ephesian elders tells them,

“*I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You know that*

*these hands ministered to my needs*.”

Gill – “Covetousness arises from a discontent of mind with respect to one’s own possessions. We should be content with such things

as we have, and not covet another’s, which is sin.”

**Steps which lead to coveting**

**1. Evil desires naturally arise from our sinful nature.**

We see something or hear about something and we want to get it

or to experience it for ourself.

**2. Entertaining or thinking about those evil desires.**

We continue to focus or think about the thing we want.

The more we think about it the more we desire it.

**3. Approving the evil desire in our mind so we accept it.**

The more we think about it we come to want it no matter what.

**4. Allowing our will to determine to do what is wrong.**

We finally give in to our desire even though it is sinful.

James 1:14-15 Each *person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived*

*gives birth to sin . . .*

**Westminster Confession**

The Tenth Commandment forbids “all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor,

and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.”

Covetousness expresses our discontentment with what God has given us. It is loving things more than we love God who has given us everything we need to live. We need to thank God for what

he has given to us instead of what he has given to others.

**How to control covetousness**

**1. Believe God provides all that I need, not all that I want.**

* Learn to be content with what God has given you.
* Focus on God’s blessings to you – health, family.
* Don’t focus on what some else has.

**2. Remember material things are only temporary.**

* All those physical things we want do not last.
* Seek eternal treasure such as your walk with God.

**3. Desire spiritual things instead of material possessions**.

* Develop godly character through the fruits of the Spirit.
* Seek to know God more and more through His Word.

Psalm 119:36 KJB *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,*

*and not to covetousness.*

Watson – “The best remedy is contentment. If we are content

with our own, we shall not covet that which is another’s. If

God had seen fit for us to have more; we should have had it.”

Philippians 4:11-12 *I have learned in whatever situation I am*

*to be content. I know how to be brought low and how to abound.*

**ILLUSTRATION**

In *Pilgrims Progress*, Christian said, “I perceive that is not best to covet things that are in the here and now, but to wait for things to come.” “You speak truly,” said the Interpreter, ‘*for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal*

(II Cor. 4:18).’ But even though this is so yet the things that are present are close neighbors with our fleshly appetites.

Most men will not ignore the present world that they can see in order to make the world they cannot see the object of their desires. Therefore, there is an immediate friendship between this world and a man’s fleshly desires and a corresponding distance between carnal man and eternal things.”

**Physical things will never satisfy our soul as we will**

**always want more than God has graciously given us.**

The prayer, *A Christian’s Prayer*, in the Valley of Vision:

Blessed God . . . When I desire world possessions,

Help me to be rich toward thee;

When the vanities of the world ensnare me,

Let me not plunge into new guilt and ruin.

**CONCLUSION**

The hymn*, Closer Walk* *with Thee*, was written in 1885 and became popular in the 1930’s when African American churches began to sing it at conventions. In 1940 Kenneth Morris arraigned and published the hymn, *Just a Closer Walk with Thee*. The hymn

expresses the attitude we should have to honor God in our life.

*I am weak but Thou are strong;*

*Jesus, keep me from all wrong.*

*I’ll be satisfied as long as I walk,*

*Let me walk close to Thee.*

*Through this world of toil and snares,*

*If I falter, Lord, who cares?*

*Who with me my burden shares?*

*None but Thee, dear Lord, not but Thee.*

*Just a closer walk with Thee, Grant it Jesus, is my plea.*

*Daily walking close to Thee, let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*

**PRAYER**

Oh Lord, You are my shepherd and I should not be in want,

but so often I struggle to be content and do want.

Help me to learn to be content in every situation

so that I will thank you for your provision.

Help me not forget that you have graciously

provided me with every spiritual blessing in Christ,

forgiveness of sins and assurance of eternal life,

that you have given me everything I need

for life here and now along with

everything I need to grow in godliness.