



Thou shalt not covet... (Ex 20:17)

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's¹. (Ex 20:17)

The whole concept of covetousness² can be fairly summarized by the rejection of all the foregoing Commandments. When man ceases to recognize the God of Heaven as His Sovereign and King, he will turn to covet the ways of those nations round about who have a king other than God. In the days of the Judges, the Children of Israel forgot the miraculous salvation the Lord had afforded them in bringing them out of Egypt with a “strong, outstretched arm” and had fed them in the wilderness and protected them. Now they desired to gain some worldly acceptance by looking, feeling, and acting like all of the other nations round about. So they went to Samuel and pleaded their ungodly cause: *Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.* (1 Sam 8:5-8)

Coveting the tinsel and manners of the world, in abandonment of God's Sovereignty, is never a wise move on the part of any people or individual. Either their failure to keep the First Commandment led them to covet the ways and practices of the worldly nations, or their covetous natures led them to disown the First Commandment. Whichever is the case, it led to a great deal of pain and suffering for them. It is evident in God's counsel to the prophet Samuel that these people had broken other Commandments as well. Firstly, they had rejected God Almighty; secondly they had turned to idolatry (spiritual adultery); thirdly, God says that they had forsaken Him in all the works they had done since leaving Egypt – ALL the works; and fourthly, they have turned to coveting the things of the world and not of God. Perhaps it was this

¹ For you Pharisees out there attempting to justify your actions, consult Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan parable and think who your neighbor might be.

² Coveting requires the rejection of the old saw, *There is no free lunch*. Nothing is free, everything is paid for by someone. If something is truly given to you, it is a gift, it is still not free. The giver paid. If you give something in exchange, it is not a gift, but paid for in some way. If you covet, you want what someone else paid for by taking it, not earning it. To covet requires you to want things bad enough to take them without earning them. Thus, you reject all God asks us to stand for. It is the Summary Sin!

covetous attitude, demonstrated from the moment of leaving Egypt until now, that had led them on to more prolific sins. After dispensing with God as their King and opting for Saul, David, and even men of greater wickedness, they suffered wars, famines, invasions, and finally were turned back into bondage in Assyria and Babylon. Turning from God always results in bondage.

Once God has freed a nation from bondage, they will suffer a return of the chains if they turn away their hearts and minds from the One who was their Benefactor and Mentor in establishing them as a nation among the nations of the earth. A nation whose allegiance is to God will appear always peculiar to other 'more sophisticated-appearing' nations round about whose minds are open to every deviant lifestyle. America was separate and apart from every other nation upon God's green earth for the first 175 years of her founding; but she has turned rebellious to God and sought other sovereigns to rule over her. The promiscuity and disdain for righteousness of Paris, Hong Kong, Rio de Janeiro have appealed more to her taste than the Holy City of God. She has gone on the path to Sodom, and the road to Gomorrah. She has sacrificed her children by allowing them to pass through the fire to Tammuz.

Perhaps before proceeding further, we should define the term, COVET. The term, covet, means more than simple greed, jealousy, or selfishness – it means to eagerly desire that which belongs to another, not something LIKE it, but the possession itself. To covet your neighbor's house is not to desire to have a house LIKE your neighbor's, but to have HIS house only! Covetousness means to desire the wealth of others by taking, and not creating, that wealth. To covet a man's wife is to desire that wife for yourself and to leave the man devoid of wife or family. Believe it or not, there are wealthy men who spend long hours of the night coveting the pittance of the poor. They scheme and conjure up every imaginable plan to plunder the possessions of the rich and poor alike without distinction.

EXAMPLE: When I was in high school, my family had one automobile. If I drove at all, I had to earn the use of that automobile for a short period of driving pleasure. But there was another fellow in my class who wore the best clothes, always had cash in his pockets, and drove a fine new automobile. He was quite enterprising, I learned later. When I asked him how he made all of that money, he told me that he sold vacuum cleaners on the weekend. I marveled that he could make such good money selling vacuum cleaners. He invited me to go with him on the next weekend to see how easy it was. We drove up into the very sparsely populated foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and stopped at many pitiful little Appalachian shacks along the road. The residents of those poor dwellings were humble mountain people who felt obligated to be hospitable and kind to strangers. Their floors, for the most part, were wooden boarding. My friend would dump dust and trash on the floor and then vacuum it up. He would vacuum their worn sofas and arm chairs and gather quite an embarrassing amount of dirt and grime. He would ask these poor people if they really wanted to live in such an unclean environment.

Not wanting to reject his offers to help them live in a 'cleaner house' they agreed to sign a contract for the vacuum cleaner which, if I remember correctly, was about three hundred dollars (late 50' and early 60's) They would obligate themselves to pay \$20/month for just about the rest of their lives. I would estimate that 50% of the houses we stopped at purchased one of these devices whose value was somewhat worthless on wood floors through the cracks of which one could see to the ground.

After the first day's 'work' on Saturday, my friend asked me if I wanted to give it a try. I responded with an emphatic 'NO!' because robbing the poor to provide me with luxury did not meet with even MY OWN minimum standards. I would classify my

'friend' as being covetous of the labors of the poor. He desired to defraud them of what little treasure they had to satisfy his insatiable appetite for luxury and prestige. Sure, he dated the prettiest girls, and was envied by the guys; but his character, unless touched at some future point by the forgiving grace of God, was destined to the fires of Hell.

In the mid-sixties, and quite a time after, a great evil swept across America. No longer were the old values of God, country, and family honor of any consequence. This was the era of Aquarius! Sexual promiscuity, drug use, and disrespect for all polity were promoted. Family and marriage became taboo, and the flower-child mentality spread from Woodstock to Berkeley. Our nation has never fully recovered from that long night of licentious self-gratification³. Those rebellious generations have now become the leaders of modern-day America. Since that day, every urge of the millions has been to satisfy self at all cost to others. GET, and GIVE not!

A deep-seated spirit of covetousness was given birth by prodigious generation the likes of which have pervaded business, industry, academia, and government. Everything must be free to the consuming vagrant, and at all cost to the honest taxpayer. No one is truly held responsible for laziness, lack of self discipline, or failure to seek gainful employment. If one has not, it is because some other has worked and gained a good living. The fault of poverty is placed precisely where the fault should not be ascribed – the productive elements of society. The worthless poor (who are able but unwilling to work) desire the fruits of the labor of those who DO work. They have a vote during elections, and their number has swelled to the point of tipping the balance of power in America. Such a circumstance of covetous greed is a really bad omen for America's future. But that covetousness had a beginning, and that beginning was a rejection of God as Sovereign of the land. The same happened to ancient Israel, and the same is happening to the Israel of the New Testament Church.

From God we gather the sense of Duty, Honor, Country. There is no sense of honor in a covetous heart, but when did that sense of honor escape his notice? It was the moment that he failed to recognize the First Commandment of God as the Beacon Light of his life! Those hearts that covet have no sense of Duty, or of Country. For these values come from a just and Law-Giving God. An evil and adulterous generation has removed the Ancient Landmark of God's Word and replaced the words of the Lord's Prayer, "*Thy will be done*" with the words "Not thy will, but MY will be done."

The last Commandment embraces the sins of all of the others. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness – all spring from a corrupt and wicked heart. The wrong thought admitted nourishes the wrong desire, which in turn gives birth to the wrong behavior. Out of the heart emerge the issues of life. (Prov 4:23) If the vessel itself is unclean, so will be the contents. If the vessel is pure, so may the water it contains be pure.

Remember – In the Final Hour, the answer is the same – Thy Will Be Done. The question is who will say it, you or God? Friend, the answer will be best if printed in black.

³ In point of fact, it appears the current rebellion against God is attempting to go further away from Him, making the 1960s look "ultra-conservative."