

Covetousness is a Grave Sin

Mark 7:21-23 indicates that covetousness is a wrong of the heart, and that it contaminates man. At times, people put little emphasis on the evil of covetousness, as if it is not so important that one avoids this desire to obtain and retain money, goods, and luxuries. But **1 Corinthians 6:10** says “*Nor thieves, nor covetous... shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” In other words, covetousness is idolatry that will detain one from going to heaven if that is an integral part of your character. In **Matthew 19:23-24**, Jesus said, “*a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” If this is the way things are, why would you want to make it more difficult for you to enter heaven? God wants the Christian to use money and goods for the kingdom of God, and not for making them idols in competition against God. **Luke 16:9** “*Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations... No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” God tells us that we should use riches for His glory and work, and that we should not esteem them such that they become an idol. Solomon says in **Ecc. 5:13** “*There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.*”
God gives so that we have what to give.

What is Covetousness?

Covetousness is a priority that one puts on money, good, and luxuries. This priority of obtaining and keeping them becomes something that drives the life of the person. **1 Timothy 6:10** “*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*”

We must understand that contrary to popular opinion, money and goods do not provide us with stability nor happiness, but rather they introduce serious dangers in our lives.

What should be our Attitude?

Jesus said it best, **Matthew 10:38** “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*” God conditions our salvation with us having to give up everything in our lives to obtain it. In other words, we need to surrender whatever is necessary (our idols), and we should do this readily if God asks us to give up a particular thing. A cross is something very difficult and disagreeable, painful and extreme, and we have to accept this cross in order “to be worthy” of eternal life. We turn from this idol to God. Jesus illustrated this point with the parable of the Sower. Among the types of soil that there is (different types of people), he identified one that had thorns and thistles. This person let riches enter into competition with God for the priority of his life. “*When they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*” **Luke 8:14** In this parable, those that did not bring fruit to maturity are not really saved, even though they had knowledge and dealings with the true salvation of God. These worldly priorities take such a strong place in our lives that they pull us out of the road of salvation. Jesus warns us against them.

Cares: This is the care and worry over mundane things instead of eternal things.

Riches: This is more than just possessions, being the abundance or over abundance of possessions or good that are extreme, expensive, or very luxurious.

Pleasures of this life: This is the state of pleasure, delight, or the enjoying of something for whatever reason. Having this experience or sensation is something highly desired, agreeable, and pleasant. It is not just enjoying something, but making the enjoyment of these things and having these experiences as an idol in your life, where **you arrange your life around them, placing high priority on them, looking for them with all your heart and energy, which you should only do towards God.** Another parable here is **Luke 12:15-21**, where Jesus told

about the man who had many possessions and worried about a safe building to house all of them. His attitude was to gather as many things as he could that would supply his needs for years, and he said to his soul, “*take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*” **Luke 12:19.** “*But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*” **Luke 12:20** It is sad that he did not prepare himself for eternity, nor did he see what was upon him. Everything he accumulated was left for other people he didn’t really care about. Paul says in **1 Timothy 6:6-7** “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*” Riches are really our enemies, not the goal of every child of God. **1 Timothy 6:9** “*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*”

Preachers who Preach Covetousness

Today there are preachers that actually defend covetousness as a lifestyle that has the blessing of God upon it. They say that riches are the natural and normal product of a correctly executed Christian life. They present themselves as examples of the “blessing of God,” and this supposes that they have the permission of God to live in extreme luxury without embarrassment or sin. The norm of the Bible is that all of God’s servants had lives WITHOUT luxuries, and that they were humble in their manner of living. **Psa 10:3** “*For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.*” The wicked say that they take without restriction what they want and think that God HAS TO GIVE THEM all in their covetous hearts. But this is nothing new. Likewise in Jeremiah, “*For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.*” **Jer. 6:13.** The mark of a false prophet is this lustful covetousness, the strong desire for money, goods, luxury, or in other words avarice.

Solutions for Avarice

Psa 119:36 *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

Heb 13:5 Let your conversation (conduct) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. **6** So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The point here is that we have NO security and stability except in our Lord and Saviour. Nothing can help us obtain and keep safety, security, and peace in this life. Only God can protect us, provide for us, and replace anything that we might lose, and judge and punish those that do evil towards us. If you relegate God to a minor priority, God will not protect you. Part of the solution to this avarice is to realize that riches are not what they appear to be (a god that can give you all you want), and that our Lord is this God that can give us all we want and is good for us.

Pro 23:4-5 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

Riches are like steam does not remain nor does it have substance. The solution of God is that you surrender all to Him. In **Matthew 19:16-23**, a young man came to Jesus looking for something. He said that he kept the commandments of God. But Jesus perceived his soul, and told him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (**19:21-22**) Jesus touched the issue of his idolatry, his possessions and riches. **Nobody is so talented and intelligent that they can manage riches and not get tripped up so that it causes the loss of their soul.** Jesus solved his problem very easily, sell everything and give the money to the poor. Rich people find this impossible to do. God presents them with needs in God's work or with needy brethren, but

the rich man's idolatry makes his giving away his riches as God has ordered him impossible, so he only gives an insignificant fraction.

In James 2:5, Christians were esteeming the rich and humiliating the poor. Notice that the comment that God makes here "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom...?"

James 5:1-5 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. **Your riches** are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them **shall be a witness against you**, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. **Ye have heaped treasure together** for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. **Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.**

Riches are a testimony against us. In what way? God has given you them so that you use them for the work of God, which is in reaching the world with the gospel, and the converts forming local churches, and in helping needy brethren. Do not these just and holy causes need your money? Of course they do. But you use what God loans you for your own luxury and pleasure, confident that God will always give you more, and it is totally yours to do what you please with it.

Proverbs 30:7-9 *Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: **give me neither poverty nor riches:** feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Our attitude should be one of seeking neither poverty nor riches. We should work hard, and learn to be content with what God gives us.

Luke 12:15 *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

The Covetous that Hordes Idolizing Possessions and Riches

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Definition of Avarice – This is somebody who desires or presumes is his right to have abundance and live in luxury and pleasure, especially speaking of material things. Contrary to the principles of proportion and the Christian living aware of others (**Eph 4:28** *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*), he lets other suffer while he lives enjoying his goods and riches, enjoying the pleasures of life.