

# Covet

Each year the godlessness of Americans is shamefully displayed to the world by the long season of crass covetousness that follows our national day of thanksgiving. After stuffing their bellies and perhaps muttering a few words of thanks, greedy hoards then race off to the merchants to claw, shove, trample (even stab and shoot) each other for new loot. More shameful still is that many justify this as part of celebrating the birth of Jesus, He, mind you, who was found in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes and in life had no place to lay His head. Coveting is what it is.

Jesus had a thing or two to say about coveting. His law for all men everywhere and in every season is, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, his wife, servants, cattle, or anything that is thy neighbors,” including the I-pads, I-pods, and I-phones on sale in thy neighbor’s store (Ex. 20:17). “Beware of covetousness,” He warned, for, contrary to popular opinion, “man’s life does not consist in the abundance of things” (Luke 12:15). Jesus not only is wroth with the sinful activity of coveting (Is. 57:17), but He abhors the covetous sinner (Ps. 10:3). No covetous one will ever inherit His kingdom (I Cor. 6:10).

Coveting is the characteristic sin of the wicked and godless. Those of reprobate mind are full of covetousness (Rom. 1:29). They covet greedily all the day long (Prov. 21:26). While they may exercise their bodies with weights and treadmills, they exercise their hearts with covetous practices (II Pet. 2:15). They even boast of their heart’s desire and bless the covetous—and often in our day as good saviors of the economy (Ps. 10:3). Truly we see fulfilled the prophecy that at the end of time men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous (II Tim. 3:2).

Coveting is also the characteristic sin of those who trouble the church. It was the sin of Achan, who caused the Lord’s anger to be kindled against Israel (Josh. 7:21). It was the sin of Balaam, who helped teach Israel to fornicate and sacrifice to idols (II Pet. 2:15). It was the sin of Judah in her apostasy from the least unto the greatest (Jer. 6:13). It was the sin of the Pharisees who mocked Jesus and deliv-

ered Him up to death (Luke 16:13). And it remains the sin of many a heretic and false prophet who for covetousness make merchandise of the flock (II Pet. 2:3). No wonder the apostle warned to keep no company with a brother who is covetous (I Cor. 5:11), let covetousness not be once named among you (Eph. 5:3), and let your conversation be without covetousness (Heb. 13:5). Coveting is destructive to the church and hearts of the people of God.

Coveting is the original sin (Gen. 3:6) and the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10). It is the root of all sin against the neighbor—of fornication (Eph. 5:3), dealing falsely (Jer. 8:10), theft and stealing (Mic. 2:2), oppression, violence, and murder (Jer. 22:17). It is the root of all sin against God—of idolatry (Col. 3:5), Sabbath-breaking (Ex. 6:21), erring from the faith (I Tim. 6:10), and rejecting Jesus (Luke 16:14). And covetousness is a stubborn, persistent sin rooted deep within. For out of the heart comes covetousness (Mark 7:22). To covet is to have in our hearts even the smallest inclination or thought contrary to God’s commandments (H.C., Q&A 113). It is the sin that demonstrates conclusively that salvation by works is impossible, for even the holiest of men in this life cannot keep all of God’s commandments perfectly (Q&A 114). Nay, the apostle says, I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet (Rom. 7:7).

The godly, sanctified celebration of Jesus’ birth believes in Him as Savior, who both forgives and delivers us from covetousness. He who gave His life because He coveted no earthly riches or glory imputes to us that righteous contentment of perfect obedience. Then He roots out the powerful, persistent covetousness in our hearts. He provides us with elders not greedy of filthy lucre, nor covetous (I Tim. 3:3), and He gives ministers who preach not using flattering words as a cloak of covetousness (I Thess. 2:5). He inclines our own hearts unto His testimonies and not covetousness (Ps. 119:36), so that we can truly say, “I have coveted no man’s silver, gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33). He causes that, rather than coveting the temporary trinkets and baubles of this world, we covet earnestly the best gifts (I Cor. 12:31). This is the Jesus born in Bethlehem. ☺

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