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Teaching Notes

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The Tenth Commandment: You Shall Not Covet

Exodus 20:16

The Japanese Stonecutter: A Story of Discontent

I. Definition & Symptoms of Coveting

A. Definition

1. Words: strong, abiding desire so that there is yearning, lusting, desiring, heartsickness
2. Covetousness = Discontent (with earthly circumstances) + Ambition (for someone else's earthly circumstances)

B. Examples of Coveting

1. Achan in Jericho

Joshua 7:21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

2. David & Bathsheba

2 Samuel 11:2-4 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her.

3. Ahab & Naboth's Vineyard

1 Kings 21:1 Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth." 3 But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." 4 So

Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. 5 His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?" 6 He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

4. Disciples vs. James & John

Matthew 20:20-24 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." 22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." 24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

B. Thomas Watson on Occasions of Covetousness

1. Thoughts wholly taken up with the world
2. Taking more pains for getting earth than getting heaven

Bill Gates & Church: In a cover story for the January 13, 1996 issue of *Time* magazine, Gates was asked if there isn't something divine about the human soul. Gates replied tonelessly, "I don't have any evidence on that. ... I don't have any evidence of that." He later added, "Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning."

3. Constant conversation about the world
4. Exchanging heavenly things for earthly
5. Overloaded with worldly business
6. Willing to use unlawful means to get it

C. The Command Described

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

1. Coveting in specific
 - a. house

- b. wife
- c. manservant / maidservant
- d. ox or donkey

2. Coveting in general

“anything that belongs to your neighbor”

Includes anything pertaining to his earthly circumstances

- Good looks
- Intellectual ability
- Job situation... promotions
- Athletic skill
- Rare art
- Piece of real estate
- Being in the President’s inner-circle
- Children: Many or successful, good-looking, well-mannered children

II. Root Issue: “The Heart is a Desire Factory”

Deuteronomy 5:21 "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Isaiah 26:9 At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently

the desires of the heart are a good barometer of the soul

Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. “The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its desire.”

John Piper: “**The heart is a desire factory.** The human heart produces desires as fire produces heat. As surely as the sparks fly upward, the heart pumps out desire after desire for a happier future. The condition of the heart is appraised by the kinds of desires that hold sway. Or, to put it another way, the state of the heart is shown by the things that satisfy its desires. If it is satisfied with mean and ugly things, it is a mean and ugly heart. If it is satisfied with God, it is a godly heart.” (*Future Grace*, p. 277-278)

Covetousness is what our hearts do when they are no longer satisfied with God

B. God Gives or Doesn't Give... Covetousness is Murmuring Against God

1. If you have it, don't boast... for God gave it

1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

2. If you don't have it, don't covet... for God gave it to someone else

III. The Great Danger of Covetousness

A. Individually: It leads to idolatry and every evil practice

1. Covetousness is idolatry
2. Covetousness = greed, a "root of all sorts of evil"

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

3. Coveting your neighbor's possessions can lead to theft, hostile takeovers, even to murder... at very least, it can lead to a strained relationship
4. Coveting your neighbor's wife can lead to lust, adultery, murder... at the very least a strain in your own marriage

B. Corporately or Nationally: it leads to invasion, conquest, domination

Habakkuk 2:4-5 "See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright-- but the righteous will live by his faith-- 5 indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.

C. Ultimately, God Judges It

Ephesians 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

IV. Paul's Insights on Coveting

A. God Looks at the Heart

1. This Commandment shows God looks at the heart

Deuteronomy 6:5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Murder, theft, false testimony, honoring parents, Sabbath-keeping, idolatry, taking the name of the Lord, adultery... these are all done with the BODY... there are external actions involved

BUT coveting done 100% in the heart

No state could ever make such a law, because it would be unenforceable

God DOES make a law that scours the inner recesses of your hearts, that tests your every motive and inclination of the heart... He stares at what makes you tick, what you want, what you desire, what you are ambitious for... and He will judge every covetous man and woman

2. Use this in witnessing!!! Many may be able to say, "I've never murdered" but who can say, "I've never coveted?"

B. Paul: The Commandment Produced the Sin

Romans 7:7-12 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Paul found it impossible to defeat the sin of covetousness...

He was ambitious, wanted what the leaders had, was zealous, a ladder-climber... the law spoke against covetousness, but the more he understood it, the more he coveted

V. The Opposite of Coveting: Godly Contentment

A. Contentment in God-Ordained Boundaries

Psalm 16:5-6 LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. 6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

B. Contentment in Future Inheritance

1 Corinthians 3:21 So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

C. Contentment in Christ

Philippians 4:10-13 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

VI. What the Godly Seek [See handout]

- #1) God Himself above all things... and Jesus Christ whom He sent
- #2) God's glory, name, renown
- #3) Christ's Kingdom
- #4) Righteousness
- #5) Wisdom & Understanding
- #6) Refuge and protection
- #7) The "Face of the Lord" in prayer
- #8) Heaven, "Things above"
- #9) God's word
- #10) God's will
- #11) What pleases God
- #12) The good of their brothers and sisters
- #13) The lost
- #14) Peace
- #15) Glory, honor, immortality
- #16) Justice and relief for the oppressed and needy

VII. Steps to Conquer a Covetous Heart

A. Faith in Christ

1 John 5:4 This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

- B. Renew Your Mind with the Word of God
- C. Embrace the Doctrine of God's Providence
- D. Set Your Hearts on Things Above
- E. Repent When You Catch Yourself Coveting
- F. Understand: The More You Have, the More You Must Account For!