

Covetousness: What's the antidote?

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GLADEWATER, Texas—One of the points of God's Ten Commandments states that "you shall not covet." I think that we all understand what coveting is. And I also think that we all try to stay away from coveting.

If you have a problem with coveting, what's the antidote for this problem?

First, you have to see the problem. The law of God is a spiritual mirror into which one may look to find and see clearly the spiritual dirt—sin—on one's mind and heart. The mirror is not responsible for the presence of the dirt, or for the harm the dirt may cause. The function of the mirror—the law—is to show the dirt so that one may do something about it.

Don't blame the mirror

Modern preachers believe the law of God is done away and therefore useless as a mirror. They blame the *mirror!*

King David had a different perspective from the view modern preachers about God's law. What did he write about?

"Oh, how *I love* Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

David thought and meditated on the benefits of the law of God to mankind. Just think about one of the many benefits. The world would be a better place if we just were to keep universally one point of God's law.

The path

For example: "Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psalm 119:35-36).

As you examine this verse and meditate on it, what do you learn? Do you see anything useful in these verses? Let's see . . .

David begins by a petition. *Make me. Help me.* I want to walk in the right path.

We would all be delighted if we were in the forest lost for a couple of days and an expert guide were to find us and say, "Let me show you the right path to get out of the mess you have gotten yourselves in." We would really be

excited to know that we were on our way back to warmth, comfort, shower and food after a couple of days wandering. We would not think it a burden to follow our guide back to safety. Our thoughts would be of praise and thanksgiving to God that we were found!

Holy heart

David also writes: *Incline my heart.*

The only way to cure a wrong leaning is to have the mind bent in the opposite direction. Holiness of heart is the cure for *covetousness*. What a blessing it is that we may ask the Lord even for an inclination.

One of God's Commandments is that we should *not covet* what is not ours. Our wills are free, and yet, without violating their liberty, grace can incline us in the right direction. This can be done by enlightening the understanding as to the excellence of obedience, by strengthening our habits of virtue, by giving us an experience of the sweetness of *piety*, and by many other ways.

The learning of the heart is the direction the life will lean. David was forceful in his petition: "Incline my heart." It would be wonderful if we were naturally inclined to what is good. But this is not the way a carnal heart ever leans; all its inclinations are in opposition to the divine testimonies.

Feeling miserable

Next we need to take action to get rid of the problem.

David also writes: *And not to covetousness.*

The vice of covetousness is as injurious as it is common. It is as *mean* as it is *miserable*. When you want something you can't have, you feel nothing but misery.

Literature and movies abound with stories of people who "love," actually *lust* for, something they can't or shouldn't have. King David had this very same problem when he lusted after the wife of an innocent soldier in his army.

Covetousness is idolatry for it dethrones God. It is selfishness, and it is *cruel* to all in its power. It is sordid greed that would sell the Lord Himself for 30 pieces of silver. Covetousness is a degrading, cowering, submissive, hardening and deadening sin that withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike.

Blinded by the glitter

The crime of covetousness is common, but few will confess it—for, when a man heaps up gold in his heart, the dust of gold blows into his eyes and he cannot see his own fault.

Our hearts must hold onto some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put the testimonies of the Lord in its place.

The contrast between positive and negative is most striking: There are the divine testimonies on the one hand, and there is "covetousness" on the other. God stands on one side, the world on the other. The renewed man chooses between the two; he does not require long to think, and God is his choice.

A covetous man would have all that all have. A covetous man wants all that you have. He's never satisfied amid his greed and avarice. He wants what you have and what your neighbor has. A *covetous* government run by man would have all that all have—without regards to the means of acquiring it.

You can overcome

Covetousness can be overcome. It takes an earnest request to our Father in heaven to mold our heart in the direction of His testimonies, statutes and commandments. Delight walking in the paths of God's law. *Choose life!*