

The Desire for More

by Thomas Reade

Thomas Reade's sermon emphasizes the dangers of covetousness and the importance of finding contentment in God rather than in material wealth.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 5:10, Isaiah 2:7, Habakkuk 3:17, Matthew 6:19, Mark 10:24, Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:6, 1 Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5, James 4:3

Topics: "Covetousness", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the dangers of covetousness and the insatiable desire for more, warning that the pursuit of wealth can lead to destruction and idolatry. He emphasizes the importance of godliness with contentment as a remedy for covetousness, citing Paul's teachings on finding joy and strength in Christ regardless of circumstances. Reade highlights the contrast between worldly riches and spiritual blessings, urging believers to seek heavenly treasures and trust in God's provision. He cautions against the love of money, drawing examples from Scripture of those who fell into sin due to their desire for more, and encourages a holy desire for spiritual growth and dependence on God.

Transcript

64. THE DESIRE FOR MORE

"He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance with increase. This is also vanity." Eccles. 5:10

Covetousness, in the language of inspiration, is the desire of having more. If we are habitually desirous of riches, for their own sake, we are, in the estimation of heaven, covetous people, idolaters, the servants of mammon. Our station may be exalted; our profession of religion may be outwardly strict, but still our destruction is sure; for Jesus has pronounced the sentence, "How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Man is a restless thing; still vain and wild,

Lives beyond sixty, nor outgrows the child;

His hurrying lusts still break the sacred bound,

To seek new pleasures on forbidden ground,
And buy them all too dear. Unthinking fool,
For a short dying joy to sell a deathless soul!
'Tis but a grain of sweetness they can sow,
And reap the long sad harvest of immortal woe.
Another tribe toil in a different strife,
And banish all the lawful sweets of life,
To sweat and dig for gold, to hoard the ore,
Hide the dear dust yet darker than before,
And never dare to use a grain of all the store.
Happy the man that knows the value just
Of earthly things, nor is enslaved to dust.
'Tis a rich gift the skies but rarely send
To favorite souls.

Riches and destruction are not necessarily connected together, for we read that "Abram was very rich, in cattle, in silver, and in gold." But riches have a tendency to draw away the heart from God, by opening the door to all earthly gratifications, as in the case of Solomon; by leading the possessor to the summit of power; by throwing around the rich, the splendid appendages of grandeur. Riches and humility, much wealth and great self-denial, are seldom found together. As "money answers all things," in the estimation of the worldly, so it is sought after, above all things spiritual and eternal. Nothing can be more opposed to each other than covetousness and contentment. Thousands labor to be rich, hoping thereby to enjoy the sweets of quietude, but when they have reached the object of their wishes, the desire of more, like "the horse-leach," which cries, "Give, give," urges them onwards, until, not infrequently, like the ponderous avalanche, they roll down the precipice, and are shivered to pieces in the valley below.

In this commercial country, where Satan has set up his golden image, instances are not lacking to exemplify this truth. "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." How many families have to mourn over the desire for more- that insatiable thirst for wealth, which brings its own curse along with it; for "those who will be rich," at all hazards, and by all means, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

The remedy for this evil is given us by Paul, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, let us be therewith content." How precious is "godliness with contentment;" an efficacious antidote to the evil of covetousness.

The advice of the Apostle is equally valuable, "Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" The example of Paul was in unison with his precept; "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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." And then, he lets us into the secret of all this elevation above the changing varieties of time- "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." This is the great secret, which is hidden from the rich formalist, as well as from the rich worldling.

The grace of Christ in the hearts of his people, is the strengthening remedy against the covetous desire of more. He can give the blessing of peace in the absence of plenty. He can impart contentment, yes, even rejoicing, in a time of famine. "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation. The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He will make me as surefooted as a deer and bring me safely over the mountains."

Can the world, with all its promises, confer such blessedness on its votaries? In the season of privation, do we find the worldly, calm, patient, and thankful? Is no repining word allowed to escape their lips? No hard thoughts of God permitted to invade their hearts? This fruit of contentment is not found on nature's ground. It is the product of godliness; the work of Christ in the soul.

To those who are observant of the signs of the times, and of the sins of the nation, it must be apparent that the love of money, like a fatal worm, is gnawing at the root of our prosperity. The men of the world behold the withering process, and ascribe it to natural causes, though evidently baffled to discover the true one. The believer in Jesus, with the Bible in his hand, sees with unclouded clearness the source of all the evil. Covetousness, or the desire of more, eating, like a canker, upon the vitals of our religion, is the crying evil of the Church and of the world. The love of money insinuates itself into every heart, under every form.

Economy, prudence, foresight, and forethought, claim a place in the judgment and conduct. They approach us as friends, as auxiliaries to our comforts, while they are, too often, enemies in disguise. Thus Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, more effectually to deceive. Had he come to Eve in his proper character, as a fallen spirit, she would have dreaded his approach; but he came under a guise which caused her no alarm, and thus the poison stole into her heart. She was deceived- and fell! She believed the lying spirit in the serpent, instead of the God of Truth and Love. Her sin was a compound of unbelief and rebellion.

Oh! my soul, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Beware of the golden bait which covers the fatal hook. To his own people, the Almighty said; "Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver." The heart is seldom refined by the accumulation of wealth. "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." To apostate Judah, Jehovah uttered, by his prophet, words of judgment; "You have forsaken your people, the house of Jacob, because their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses; neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, when he arises to shake terribly the earth."

How true are the words of Solomon; "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Covetousness and idolatry are so closely allied, that Paul declares, "You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or covetous person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a covetous person is really an idolater who worships the things of this world."

The proud city of Tyre, for her covetousness and idolatry, was doomed to destruction; "Tyre has built a strong fortress and has piled up so much silver and gold that it is as common as dust in the streets! But now the Lord will strip away Tyre's possessions and hurl its fortifications into the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre will be set on fire and burned to the ground." "Who has brought this disaster on Tyre, empire builder and chief trader of the world? The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness." Well might the prophet say; "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

A day is fast approaching, when it will be clearly seen, whether Christ or Mammon has swayed our affections. There are, perhaps, few sins which assume so plausible an appearance; and for which so many excuses are made as for that of covetousness. And hence it is that we have need to guard so much the citadel of the heart. Our blessed Lord, who knew what was in man, and who well knew the subtlety of this evil, has given us a double caution; "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." "For what is a man profited, if he gains the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" What advantage did Achan, Gehazi, Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, gain by their desire for more? They reaped shame and death; and now stand as beacons in the word of God to warn us against their soul-destroying sin.

The simple possession of wealth is in itself no evil, because we read that this was promised to Israel as a blessing; "You shall remember the Lord your God; for it is he that gives you power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he swore unto your fathers." It is the desire for riches and the passion for them, which is defiling and sinful. It is making an idol of money, by placing that confidence in it, which is due to God alone. "How hard is it for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" "The difference," observes the excellent Henry Venn, "between possessing wealth put into our hands by the providence of God, and desiring to grow rich, is as great as that between a worthless ambitious intruder into a place of honor, seeking nothing but his own base interest; and a man sought out for his worth, and invested with the same office for the public good. And those, who can see no material, no necessary distinction, in the two cases, are already blinded by the love of money."

There is, however, a holy spirit of desire for more, which we should cultivate continually. Lord give me an increasing desire for more faith and love, more obedience and activity in your service; for more joy and peace, more humility and meekness; for more patience, and resignation to your will. I would covet earnestly the best gifts, and above all, the graces of your Holy Spirit. I cannot ask for these blessings too largely, nor expect them too confidently, if I only ask in reliance on the truth of your promises. You have said; "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." "All things whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

When praying for temporal blessings, may I ever do it with a cheerful acquiescence in Your will, knowing my ignorance in asking. The very denial of my request may be the greatest mercy to my soul. But, Oh! Giver of all good, when I supplicate for spiritual graces, I may ask for showers of blessings; for the outpouring of your Spirit in its richest measure, if I ask in faith, without wavering, pleading the merits of my Savior.

How happy is the true believer, whose heart and hope are in heaven. His treasure is there; and when he leaves this earth, it is only to take possession of it, for God is his portion. For his guidance and support, while journeying heavenward, many sweet precepts and promises are given; "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today." "Seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind." "Seek first the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." "In everything you do, I want you to be free from the concerns of this life." "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

While living in this Christian spirit, we shall experience the truth of Solomon's declaration; that God "has made every thing beautiful in his time." We shall avoid the folly of burdening today, with the cares of tomorrow; or of loading tomorrow, with the work of today. While we work for the food which perishes, according to the will of God; "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return unto the ground;" we shall, above all, "labor for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give us." In this work and labor of love we cannot be too abundant. The most covetous heart may here find ample scope for all its desires.

Oh! that I may ever feel this panting, this longing, this thirsting after God. Lord increase every holy, heavenly desire. While my hands are employed in the duties of my calling, may my heart be ever fixed upon you. Take from me all covetous hankerings after earthly wealth. Give me a contented mind with the allotments of your Providence. Be my present and everlasting portion, and I shall be rich indeed!

As life advances to its close

The silent tomb appears in view;

Soon, where my aged sires repose,

Must I descend, and slumber too.

To dazzling wealth, or splendid name,

Each sparkling joy, the worldling joins,

Though in the midst of mirth and fame,

The soul, in secret languor pines.

That constant thirsting after more,

That torment of the carnal mind,

Creates of grief a plenteous store;

'Tis all the covetous can find.

What solid bliss can I obtain

From earth's most anxious toil and care?

I only forge a heavy chain,
To bind me fast in Satan's snare.
Yes! I have seen the poignant grief,
The torment cleaving close to sin,
Its fatal charms give no relief,
When gall o'erflows the heart within.
The thread of life is almost spun,
I hasten toward the eternal day;
Blessed Savior! before my race is run,
Wash all my sins and guilt away.
O cleanse my soul from VANITY.

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