

# Of Remedies Against Covetousness

by William Gouge

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*William Gouge's sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding true happiness and relying on God's providence to combat covetousness.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:8, Psalm 4:6, Psalm 55:22, Psalm 119:36, Proverbs 11:4, Proverbs 30:8, Matthew 6:21, John 9:32, Philippians 4:11, Colossians 3:2, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Covetousness", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

William Gouge emphasizes the importance of preventing and addressing covetousness by following specific rules: understanding true happiness and the deceitfulness of riches, setting our hearts on heavenly blessings, placing our confidence in God's providence, moderating our desire for riches, and praying against covetousness as it is a deeply rooted sin that requires divine intervention for healing.

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## Transcript

For preventing or redressing covetousness, these rules following are to be observed:

1. The judgment must rightly be informed in these two points-

(1.) In the nature of true happiness.

(2.) In the vanity and deceitfulness of riches.

Many learned men lack this point of understanding.

It is the blindness of a man's mind that maketh him place a kind of happiness in the things of this world, whereby he is brought even to coat upon them. If therefore we shall be rightly instructed that happiness consisteth in matters of another kind than this world affords, and that the things of this world are so vain as they can afford no solid comfort to a man, especially in spiritual distress, and so uncertain as they may suddenly be taken away from men, or men from them, surely their immoderate desire of riches could not be but much allayed. He that said, 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good O Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,' Ps. iv. 6, well discerned the difference betwixt earthly and heavenly blessings. So did he who said, 'Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death,' Prov. xi. 4.

2. The will and heart of man must follow the judgment well informed, and raise themselves up to that sphere where true happiness resteth. 'Set 'our affection on things above, not on things on the earth,' Col. iii. 2. This will keep the heart from coating on things below; for 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,' Mat. vi. 21. A beast which is feeding in fair and fresh pasture will not stray into a bare and barren heath; much less will an understanding man, that finds the sweetness of spiritual and heavenly blessings, feed upon earthly trash. This made Paul account all outward things but dung, because his heart had tasted of the sweetness of Christ, Phil. iii. 8, &c.

3. A man's confidence must be placed on God and his providence. God's providence is an overflowing and ever-flowing fountain. The richest treasures of men may be exhausted; God's cannot be. Be therefore fully resolved of this, that 'God will provide,' Gen. xxii. 8. This casting of our care on God's providence is much pressed in Scripture, as Ps. lv. 22, 1 Pet. v. 7, Mat. vi. 25, 26, &c. By experience we see how children depend on their parents' providence. Should not we much more on our heavenly Father? This resting upon God's providence is the more to be pressed in this case, because nothing makes men more to misplace their confidence than riches. 'The rich man's wealth is his strong city,' Prov. x. 15.

4. Our appetite or desire of riches must be moderate. Herein be of his mind who thus prayed, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me,' Prov. xxx. 8. This is the main scope of the fourth petition, Matt. vi. 11. Be content, therefore, with that portion which God gives thee, and be persuaded it is best for thee. This lesson had Paul well learned, Phil. iv. 11. Contentedness and covetousness are directly opposite, as light and darkness. The apostle here in this text opposeth them.

5. We must pray against covetousness, as he who said, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,' Ps. cxix. 36. We ought the rather to pray to God against it, because it is a hereditary disease, and in that respect the more hardly cured. It was one of Christ's greatest miracles to cure one that was born blind, John ix. 32.

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