

Of the Heinousness of Covetousness

by William Gouge

Covetousness is a heinous sin that deceives, ensnares, and ultimately leads to a life of labour, care, and trouble, and ultimately to grief and anguish in parting with wealth.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 5:10

Topics: "Sin And Covetousness", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

William Gouge preaches about the sin of covetousness, highlighting its deceiving nature that blinds individuals to true happiness, its insatiable and galling characteristics that bring continual vexation and sorrow, its ensnaring quality that leads people away from God, and its role as a mother sin that spawns various other evils. He emphasizes how covetousness is a growing and devouring sin that chokes out the Word of God and brings curses from both man and God, ultimately leading to exclusion from the kingdom of God.

Transcript

There are many circumstances concerning covetousness which do much aggravate the heinousness thereof; for,

1. It is a deceiving sin; it blinds the understanding and corrupts the judgment in a main point of happiness: for the covetous man 'maketh gold his hope, and fine gold his confidence,' Job xxxi. 24. This is further manifest by the titles that are usually given to it, as 'substance,' and 'goods.' They who get much wealth, are said to be made for ever; and they who lose much, to be undone for ever. The rich man, when his corn exceedingly increased, thus saith to his soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,' Luke xii. 19. Upon this conceit of happiness, wealth so stealeth away a man's heart, and so inflames his affections, as he maketh it his god. Justly there fore is a covetous person called an idolater, Eph. v. 5; and covetousness idolatry, Col. iii. 5.

2. It is an unsatiable sin. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase,' Eccles. v. 10. In this respect covetousness is like a dropsy, which increaseth thirst by much drinking; and like a fire, which by addition of fuel is the more fierce. The desire of a covetous man ariseth from abundance, and in that respect is unnatural; for nature is satisfied with sufficiency. Hunger and thirst cease when a man hath eaten and drunk that which is sufficient.

3. It is a galling sin; it works a continual vexation, and takes away all the comforts of this life. The apostle saith, that 'they which covet after money, pierce themselves through with many sorrows,' 1 Tim. vi. 10. There is a threefold woe that accompanieth covetousness-1. A woe of labour and toil in getting wealth; 2. A woe of care and trouble in keeping it; 3. A-woe of grief and anguish in parting with it. Nothing makes death more unwelcome than a covetous desire of the things of this world. 4. It is an ensnaring sin. 'They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. Wealth, as it is a bait to allure men to snap thereat, so it is a snare fast to hold them, and a hook to pull them down to perdition. 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God !' Mark x. 23. This snare kept the farmers from the wedding feast, Luke xiv. 18, 19. It keeps many from the word; yea, it steals away the heart of those that come to the word; for 'their heart goeth after their covetousness,' Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

5. It is a mother sin. 'The love of money is the root of all evil,' 1 Tim. vi. 10. Fitly therefore doth the prophet thus style it 'evil covetousness,' Hab. ii. 9. There is no evil which a covetous man will forbear. His covetousness puts him on to all evil. It is a root of impiety. It draws the heart from God, so as there can be no true love nor fear of God in a covetous heart. It makes a man be of that religion which is professed in the place where he liveth, though it be palpable idolatry. A covetous man can swallow all manner of oaths, yea, and perjury itself. For gain he will profane the Sabbath. It makes inferiors purloin from their superiors, and superiors to neglect their inferiors. It is a cause of much rebellion, of many treasons, murders, thefts, robberies, deceit, lying, false witness, breach of promise, and what not.

6. It is a growing sin. The longer men live in the world, the more covetous they use to be after the world. Old men are commonly the most covetous. Herein it differeth from other violent sins, which by age abate in their violence.

7. It is a devouring sin. 'The deceitfulness of riches choke the word,' Mat. xiii. 22. Covetousness is like Pharaoh's lean cows, 'which did eat up the fat cows; and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still as ill-favoured as at the beginning,' Gen. xii. 20, 21.

8. It is a crying sin. 'The cries of them which are oppressed' by covetous persons 'enter into the ears of the Lord.' Hereupon an apostle bids them 'weep and howl,' James v. 1, &c. Covetousness causeth a curse from man and God. 'He that withholdeth corn' (as the covetous man will when he can), 'the people shall curse him.' As for God's curse, 'the wrath of God cometh upon men because of these things,' Eph. v. 5, 6. The apostle reckoneth 'covetous persons' among those that 'shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' 1 Cor. vi. 10.

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