

## COMMANDMENT 10: PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS

September 23, 2018

Luke 15:11-32

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

Exodus 20:17

Our natural, sinful disposition views the Ten Commandments as restrictive, as negatives. This sees in reverse, and like the sin that prompts it, works against our wellbeing. Scripture teaches, “The law is good” (I Tim. 1:8). God said, “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD” (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5).

Repeatedly, men faulted Christ for doing good on the Sabbath. He replied “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27). This summarized the purpose for His commandments: the good of mankind. Again, “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal. 5:14). “Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Rom 13:9). Many Scriptures teach that the law is for man’s benefit.

Obviously, “Thou shalt not kill” is for our good. The good in “Thou shalt not covet” is not as obvious. Paul wrote, “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom 7:7). In fact, covetousness is destructive to us. “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:15). Covetousness is a birthing ward for many sins; a sin that brings immense sorrow to mankind. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (Jas. 4:1, 2). “Dearly beloved . . . abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Pet. 2:11). Indeed, covetousness begets theft, false witness, adultery and murder, and is idolatry (Col. 3:5). It begets multiple transgressions of God’s law.

We are not to covet another’s house. This surely includes all of one’s earthly possessions. Nor are we to covet his wife: her beauty, her domestic skills or maternal instincts, her social graces, industry or craftsmanship. Neither are his servants to be coveted: their skill, loyalty, productivity and strength. His livestock, the means by which he prospers, is not to be coveted, nor is any possession of another to be the focus of covetousness.

Covetousness includes greed, envy, jealousy and lust. Covetousness is never satisfied. Always craving another’s condition in life, the jealous person is never happy. “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (I Tim. 6:9). The rich young man who came to Jesus did not hear what he wanted to hear. “Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast,

and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:21-23).