

The Last But Not Least Of God's Commandments

Exodus 20:17 [New King James] *“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour’s.”*

The English word covet in the Christian Bible is translated by different Hebrew and Greek words that illustrate the different forms coveting may take.

The Hebrew word used in this scripture is “châmad” meaning to desire or lust after what is not ours.

Exodus 34:24 [New King James] *“For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.”*

An interesting example of the use of this word is when God promises to protect His people’s property from the greed of their neighbours if they obey Him and keep His festivals and Holy days.

When Israel did **not** keep His festivals and Holy days God did **not** protect them from this basic form of human covetousness, [**Judges 2:11-23**].

Dishonest gain –

Habakkuk 2:9 [New King James] *“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster!”*

The Hebrew word used here is “*betsa*” which is translated “*covet*” but also means to plunder. That is wanting something but not being willing to pay the price for it.

It is not necessarily that the object of desire could not be rightfully ours but we want it by dishonest means.

Ezekiel 22:27 [New King James] *“Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain.”*

The same word “*betsa*” is used to describe the covetous attitude of the leaders who are only interested in personal profit.

Gambling in its various forms, reflects this kind of coveting when it is based on the human desire to get and yet avoid paying the price.

Wanting for the wrong reason –

Amos 5:18 [New King James] *“Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is the day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness, and not light.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*desire*” is “*âvâh*” meaning to lust after.

But this was spoken to those who referred to the “*days of the Lord*” in a derogatory way. They had been blinded by Satan into worshipping false gods, yet expected to be blessed by the True Creator God.

The return of Jesus Christ to rule this world is a good thing and we should pray that that day will be soon, [2 Peter 3:12-13].

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will not be a good thing for those who are worshipping false gods, as was Israel in the days of Amos.

2 Peter 3:1-4 [New King James] *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”*

The vast majority of people will scoff at the true Christian’s desire for Jesus Christ’s return and will ignore human history [verse 5-6] and the words of Jesus Christ [Matthew 24:3-31].

James 4:1-3 [New King James] *“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*

The Greek word translated “desires” is “*hēdōnē*” meaning sensual delight.

Prayer to the Creator God is a good thing essential for our salvation but must **not** be directed to selfish desires, but for the good of other human beings, [Philippians 2:3-4].

Overvaluing of physical things –

Acts 20:33-35 [New King James] *“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

Paul’s example was not to covet after riches, even working to pay for his own physical needs, instead of receiving wages for the spiritual work he was doing among them, [1 Timothy 5:17-18].

Philippians 4:11-13 [New King James] *“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

Physical things were of little value to Paul, he had learnt contentment.

In contrast, [Philippians 3:10-14] Paul was never content with his spiritual state.

Esau’s desire for physical food caused him to place it above his birthright, referring to his spiritual future, [Genesis 25:29-34].

Hebrews 12:16 [New King James] *“lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.”*

The inspired writer of Hebrews warned against such wrongly directed desires. The Greek word translated “*profane*” is “*bēbēlōs*” meaning a lack of all relationship or affinity to the Creator God.

Matthew 6:31-33 [New King James] *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*

If our main focus is on the spiritual things in life then our Creator God knows our physical needs and will provide them.

Wanting more and more –

Colossians 3:5 [New King James] *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”*

The Greek word translated “covetousness” is “*plēōnēxia*” meaning avarice or fraudulency extortion, the practice of being greedy.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 [New King James] *“Now 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, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*

Such an attitude of mind is considered to be idolatry by the Creator God, as we have just read in **Colossians 3:5**, because it is worshipping physical gain instead of our Creator God.

Luke 12:16-21 [New King James] *“Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Jesus Christ personally warned us against this attitude of always wanting more.

Envious desire –

Acts 17:5 [New King James] *“But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.”*

Envy and jealousy are almost always the result of a covetous attitude of mind. The Jews did **not** like Paul’s success. The Greek word translated “envious” is “*zēlōō*” meaning jealous, this is the negative attitude of the word which can refer to a zealous attitude of mind that the Creator God has for His plan for all humanity, [**Exodus 34:14** – Hebrew word “*qânâ*” meaning zealous or jealous according to context].

Romans 10:2 [New King James] *“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”*

This powerful desire can be misguided unless directed towards fulfilling God’s Word, His desire for our existence as human beings.

In this situation it was **not** understanding where true righteousness is found, [**Romans 10:3**].

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 [New King James] *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”*

A covetous attitude always begins in our mind.

When we have any such feeling in our mind we should be aware of what danger we are in and seek the Holy Spirit's help to reject them.

The truth is that to the degree we seek to reflect the character of the Creator God [**Galatians 5:22-23**] He will supply not only our physical needs and our emotional desires along with our highest spiritual aspirations [**Psalms 37:3-6**].

So there will be **no** desire in our minds to covet after anything that we see that other human beings have.