

Sovereign Grace Church

"Coveting" outline

June 25, 2017

Exodus 20: 15

As we turn again to our study of the Heidelberg Catechism we find ourselves considering the 10th Commandment....the commandment not to envy. This commandment is different from the others in that its focus is deliberately inward. To not murder someone or not steal from them is to not commit an outward act against them. But is not doing something to someone enough to make it moral? One may choose not to steal from someone because one doesn't want to run the risk of getting caught or having their reputations besmirched and still not have any real interest in that persons welfare. It has been said that a thief is not merely someone who steals from you but someone who would steal from you given the right circumstances....viz., that he wouldn't get caught! This truth brings us face-to-face with the commandment not to envy or covet.

If we can keep from coveting against God or our neighbor it would seem that the rest of the commandments would be pretty easy....even automatic. The source of sin is our hearts, and if our hearts are covetous by nature then sin is already present. Our only hope is to have our hearts changed, to not covet, but to honor and uplift. This is God's gracious work of regeneration & it is the necessary foundation for truly moral living. But it is only the beginning! The Christian life is the synergistic work of completing the work that regeneration has begun & to have our envious hearts transformed into Christ-likeness. The struggle with coveting strikes at the heart of obedience to God's law and the transformation of our character into His image.

1. The Inward sin of Coveting

- To not covet we must be content with our condition.
Heb. 13: 5-6; Job 1: 21

- To not covet we must have a kindly disposition to our neighbor & his condition.
I Cor. 13: 4-6; Gal. 5: 26; Rom. 12: 15; Mal. 3: 10

2. Examples of Coveting

3. All desire is not coveting

- **Proper desire becomes improper coveting when accompanied by envy.
Gal. 5: 26; Jms 1: 14-15**

- **Coveting against God
I Cor. 10: 10; I Thess. 5: 18**

4. Our Challenge Job. 1: 21; Rev. 16: 10-11; Rom. 8: 31-39

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- 1. What sorts of things or people make you envious? What is it about them that tends to draw you? Do you suspect that what fires envy and coveting is not the actual possession of the object of your envy but your picture or idea of what possessing that object would be like? How might this help us in our struggle against coveting?**
- 2. How does proper desire turn into improper envy? How can we guard against this negative transformation? Do Schaeffer's tests help? How can we help our neighbor in his struggle against envy and coveting without being intrusive?**
- 3. How have you coveted against God this past week? What can be learned from this in order to keep from repeating it? How can we make use of our failures in our efforts to grow into Christ-likeness?**
- 4. What is the difference between being content with our lives and having a legitimate desire to improve our conditions? How can we advance our conditions without envy or coveting? Is coveting at root idolatrous? (Col. 3: 5).**
- 5. Is it possible to master the problem of envy and still not have attained to true righteousness? How?**