



COVETOUSNESS 15:27; 23:4-5

These **proverbs** deal with the sin and danger of **covetousness** which is *“the desire of wealth or possessions, without due regard to the things of God”* It is *“a craving for possessions”* It is *“a strong controlling desire that exceeds reasonable limits”* **Covetousness** like its opposite **contentment**, is an inward matter of the heart, and actually proceeds from the heart [Mark 7:21-23], and can engross the heart [Ezekiel 33:31], and the heart can even be trained in covetous practices [II Peter 2:14], and one can be given to (enslaved by) *“covetousness”* [Jeremiah 6:13; 8:10]. Sad to say, but we live in a day, when *“covetousness”* is so **engrained** and **intertwined** in the lives of individuals, that it is no longer even recognized for what it is.

Covetousness though approved of by the world, is hated by God [Psalm 10:3], and is an object of His anger [Isaiah 57:17]. The evil of *“covetousness”* is seen by the list of sins that **Paul** mentions with the sin of *“covetousness”* [I Corinthians 5:11]. **Paul** also referred to *“covetousness”* as *“idolatry”* [Colossians 3:5], and referred to the *“covetous man”* as *“an idolater”* [Ephesians 5:5]. *“Idolatry”* is **loving** and **esteeming** anything as much or more than God. This can be love and esteem to **self**, love and esteem to the **world**, or to earthly comforts, or **relations**. *“Idolatry”* is **desiring** anything or anybody as much or more than God. *“Idolatry”* is **delighting** and **rejoicing** in anything or anybody as much or more than God. *“Idolatry”* is **having** as much or more zeal for anything or anybody than God. Whenever something becomes more **important**, more **prominent**, more **preeminent**, more **dominate**, and more **central** in our lives than God, such is *“idolatry”* *“Covetousness”* is sin, and is as the sin of *“idolatry”* and therefore **unbecoming**, **inappropriate**, and **not suitable** for a child of God [Ephesians 5:3]. It is something that should not characterize, or be a distinctive feature in the life of a child of God; and therefore the writer of **Hebrews** wrote *“Let your conversation be without (the absence of) covetousness”* [Hebrews 13:5]. *“Covetousness”* being a sin is dangerous, and **God** warned **Israel** of its dangers [Deuteronomy 8:10-20], and **Christ** warned against it; *“Beware* (be on guard, be careful, be cautious) *of covetousness”* [Luke 12:15]. **Christ’s** warning was followed by the *“Parable Of The Rich Fool”* [Luke 12:16-20]. *“Covetousness”* is a sin that hinders the hearing of the Word of God [Matthew 13:7, 22]. *“Covetousness”* is a sin that will cause one to part with heavenly things for earthly things [II Timothy 4:10], and will lead to murmuring, and bitterness of heart against another, and even a fighting and complaining against the government of God [Matthew 20:1-15]. *“Covetousness”* being a sin is to be prayed against [Psalm 119:36], and is to be subdued [Colossians 3:5].

“Covetousness” has its root in **selfishness**, **pride**, and **unbelief**. *“Covetousness”* is not only a manifestation of these things, but is a manifestation of **wrong values** [Matthew 6:19], **wrong loyalties** [Matthew 6:24], **wrong concerns** [Matthew 6:25-31], **wrong pursuits** [Matthew 6:32], and **wrong priorities** [Matthew 6:33]. *“Covetousness”* shows itself in the manner in which one seeks the material. THE DESIRE FOR THE MATERIAL MUST BE

SUBORDINATED TO THE WILL OF GOD! “*Covetousness*” shows itself in the manner in which the material is enjoyed. THE ENJOYMENT OF THE MATERIAL MUST BE SUBORDINATED TO THE WILL OF GOD! “*Covetousness*” shows itself in how the loss of the material is dealt with [Job 1:21].

The remedy for “*covetousness*” is contentment, which is “*an inward submission and quiet of the heart, taking pleasure in God’s disposal*” [I Timothy 6:6, 8; Hebrews 13:5]. This contentment is learned [Philippians 4:11]. THERE ARE MANY LESSONS THAT MUST BE LEARNED BEFORE CONTENTMENT IS LEARNED! There is the lesson of self-denial [Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:26-27]. There is the lesson of personal unworthiness [Genesis 32:10]. There is the lesson of personal inability [John 15:5]. There is the lesson of the vanity of the world, and what is truly necessary. There is the lesson of the child of God’s relation to the world, and his purpose in the world. There is the lesson of God’s providence [Romans 8:28]. CONTENTMENT IS ABSOLUTE RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD!

“He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live”[15:27].

The “*covetous*” are described by the words “*He that is greedy of gain*” The word “*greedy*” means “*to thirst for having more, always having more and still more*” It is a word that conveys the idea of “*ravenous*” and a “*avid hunger, craving, and longing*” This “*greed of gain*” is “*covetousness*” and is a condition of the heart, which manifests itself in the life. What “*covetousness*” does is described in the phrase “*troubleth his own house*” The sin of “*covetousness*” brings difficulties, worries, concerns, distress, strife, agitation, grief, heartache, and misery to the home. All through the Scripture “*covetousness*” is seen to lead to envy, bitterness, sacrilege, disobedience, adultery, murder, robbery, lying, etc. IT IS A VERY TROUBLESOME THING! There is a contrast drawn in this proverb “*but he that hateth gifts* (bribes, unjust gain) *shall live*” He will escape many of the troubles of “*covetousness*” and enjoy life because he is content.

“Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” [23:4-5].

The warning and command “*Labour not to be rich*” is not a condemnation against labour, but speaks of an attitude toward labour. BEWARE OF BECOMING A SERVANT TO LABOR! This command coincides with “*He that hateth to be rich*” [Proverbs 28:22], and “*they that will be rich*” [I Timothy 6:9]. What feeds this desire to be rich, this desire for material gain is “*the love of money*” [I Timothy 6:10]. THESE PHRASES ARE ALL DESCRIPTIVE OF COVETOUSNESS! Notice what this “*covetousness*” will lead to “*temptation and a snare, and into many foolish* (unwise) *and hurtful* (injurious) *lusts, which drown* (overflow) *men in destruction* (ruin) *and perdition* (curse). “*For the love of money is the root* (the source) *of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced* (punctured) *themselves through with many sorrows*” [I Timothy 6:9-10].

In order to avoid this spirit of “*covetousness*” *Solomon* gives the exhortation “*cease from thine own wisdom*” In order to stress the warning of, and the command against laboring to be rich, he mentions the foolishness and vanity of setting the desires upon the material.

The book of *Ecclesiastes* along with these **proverbs** is the inspired writing of *Solomon*, who in the last part of his reign had forsaken God and began to pursue the things of the world. The book records the results of such a depraved lifestyle. The book records the thoughts of a man who **pursued life without God as his focus**. THE LESSON BEING, THAT SUCH A LIFE IS A LIFE OF VANITY! *Solomon* found out that life is not about education, learning, pleasure, riches, work, or power and prestige. *Solomon* found all of these things without God as his focus to be “*vexation*” a disturbance, an annoyance, and trouble and torment! Heavenly wisdom teaches the child of God that their lives “*be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have*” [Hebrews 13:5].