

The Lost Commandment: Do Not Covet

I. Introduction

- a. Lk. 18:18-23
 - i. The ruler asks Jesus one of the most important questions one can ever ask: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
 - ii. “You know the commandments”, Jesus said, and began reciting the Ten Commandments. The specific commands that he listed were the last six commandments, the ones that deal with man’s relationship to others.
 - iii. The ruler replied “All these things I have kept from my youth.” He had an impressive track record!
 - iv. But I wonder if some of you have noticed a problem with my list of commands. I mentioned that six of the Ten Commandments concern man’s relationship to others, but this list only has five items. Let’s look in the text and see which one I have missed...
- b. Lk 18:20 – “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and mother’” 5 items. So I didn’t leave one out, Jesus did! Which commandment did Jesus leave off? We’ll have to go back to the Old Testament to find out...
- c. Exodus 20:2ff – The Ten Commandments
 - i. Jesus mentioned each of the last six commandments except for the last one, You Shall Not Covet
 - ii. Why did Jesus leave the tenth commandment off His list?
 1. He forgot it?
 - a. Jesus created heaven and earth, and has utter and complete knowledge of every part of it.
 - b. If Jesus knows all of creation intimately, then he knows without a doubt His own laws for man.
 - c. Jesus did not forget the tenth commandment.
 2. It is less important than the other commandments?
 - a. You might draw the conclusion that the command, do not covet, is less important because it is the last commandment.
 - b. But in fact, more is said about coveting in the Ten Commandment than any other of the commandments dealing with human relations.
 - c. Moreover, no part of God’s law is unimportant. All must be kept.
 - d. And finally, even if the command “Do not covet.” was less important to some, it was most important to the ruler, because compliance with that command was the one thing he lacked.
 3. He was trying to avoid a confrontation by bringing up a sin that His hearer was actually guilty of?

- a. This is a pitfall that teachers can fall into. They will teach about anything except the subject the listener most needs to hear.
 - b. Do we ever avoid mentioning something to a friend or neighbor concerning their soul because we wish to avoid an uncomfortable situation or confrontation?
 - c. Is this something Jesus would do? No.
4. The ruler interrupted before Jesus finished His list?
- a. This is a possibility.
 - b. Jesus did not recite the commandments in the exact same order as they were originally given, but He did follow that order fairly close.
 - c. If “Do not covet” was last on Jesus’ list, the ruler may have broken in with his claim to have kept the commands all his life before the critical command was recited.
5. He was trying to teach/help the ruler in the best way possible?
- a. Jesus is the Master Teacher.
 - i. He has ultimate knowledge of all man needs to know.
 - ii. He has ultimate knowledge of exactly what each individual man needs to hear.
 - iii. He has ultimate skill in presenting the truth so that willing hearts will be able to receive and accept it.
 - b. He used all his transcendent abilities and knowledge to address this man’s spiritual needs in the most effective way.
- d. I cannot comprehend, much less duplicate, the ways that Jesus ministered to those who saw and heard Him while He was on earth. But to whatever small degree I can understand and duplicate His teaching, that is my goal. So let us investigate the Lost Commandment, “Do not covet” and how Jesus dealt with the covetous ruler, and see what benefit Jesus teaching might have for us.

II. What is Covetousness?

- a. Exodus 20:17 – The complete command
- b. “I don’t have any desire to take something that belongs to someone else; therefore I have no problem with covetousness.” While Exodus speaks of a strong desire for other people’s things, the concept of covetousness is more general than that...
- c. Vine’s - VERB - covet to fix the desire upon, whether things good or bad; to long for, to lust after, to covet
- d. NOUN –covetousness - A desire to have more, always in a bad sense. Is used in a general way... [also]

- i. of material possessions
 - ii. of sensuality
- e. Thomas Aquinas: “covetousness may be understood in different ways. First, as denoting inordinate desire for riches: and thus it is a special sin. Secondly, as denoting inordinate desire for any temporal good: and thus it is a genus comprising all sins, because every sin includes an inordinate turning to a mutable good ... Thirdly, as denoting an inclination of a corrupt nature to desire corruptible goods inordinately” [Summa Theologica](#) > [First Part of the Second Part](#) > [Question 84](#) > Article 1
- f. He concluded that covetousness is the root of all sins - 1 Tim. 6:10
- g. When Jesus says (Lk. 12:15) “Beware of covetousness, for man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” we may excuse ourselves, but if we just substitute the meaning of the word for the word itself... we perhaps don’t get off the hook so easily.
- h. This is not a sin that the world recognizes –
 - i. Black Friday 2011
 1. Black Friday took an ugly turn at a Los Angeles Wal-Mart when a female shopper -desperate to get her hands on discounted electronics-pepper sprayed a crowd to keep them away from the merchandise she wanted. At least 20 shoppers suffered minor injuries and police are still looking for the woman.
SOURCE: **Black Friday madness**, NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, Friday, November 25 2011, 7:30 AM, Read more: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/black-friday-madness-shopper-pepper-sprays-crowd-deal-a-wal-mart-shootings-ca-sc-article-1.982565#ixzz1eqV4SCpm>
 2. One of the most climactic parts of the day was at Victoria’s Secret, where a hot deal on yoga pants had some women fuming.
“Literally, girls were punching each other,” said shopper Liz Wentling.
SOURCE: Shoppers Pack Monroeville Mall On Black Friday, Victoria’s Secret Deal Leads To Hot Tempers November 25, 2011 1:02 PM
<http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2011/11/25/shoppers-pack-monroeville-mall-on-black-friday/>
 3. SOUTH CHARLESTON, W.Va. (WSAZ) -- A man collapsed while doing some Black Fridayshopping in a crowded store, and people nearby continued to shop. Witnesses tell WSAZ.com some shoppers walked around and even over the man's body.
Family members tell WSAZ.com that Walter Vance, of Logan County, W.Va., passed away after being taken to the hospital.
It happened at Target in the Southridge Shopping Center in

South Charleston about 12:15 a.m. Friday.

SOURCE:

http://www.wsaz.com/news/headlines/Man_Dies_on_Black_Friday_Shoppers_Unfazed_134507443.html

- ii. For the world, the question, “Do you want more?” is not a question designed to prompt soul-searching, but the beginning of a sales pitch. –
 - iii. This ruler, like many of us, was never going to become convicted of his covetousness in the world; he had to go to Jesus to learn what his problem was.
- III. Lessons from how Jesus taught:
- a. We can be unaware of major shortcomings in our own spiritual life
 - i. He didn’t realize his condition
 - b. One thing can prevent us from inheriting eternal life
 - i. Jesus said “One thing you lack.”
 - c. Ignoring even one of God’s commands will leave us spiritually unsatisfied
 - i. “What do I still lack?” Mt. 19:20
 - d. The greatest teacher cannot change the hardened heart
 - i. Covetousness, left unchecked is a tremendous danger in the Christian life
 - ii. It kept this man away from Jesus. It can do the same for us.
- IV. Am I Covetous? Luke 12:13-21
- a. Do I have a constant desire for more?
 - i. Luke 12:15
 - ii. Def of covetousness
 - b. Am I discontented with what I have materially?
 - i. Heb 13:5
 - c. Do I find it difficult to give cheerfully?
 - i. 2 Cor. 9:7
 - d. Is my primary consideration when making decisions the effect it will have on my balance sheet?
 - i. Lk. 12:16-21 – Rich fool
 - ii. What will I do?
 - e. Do I lose my temper in disputes over material things?
 - i. Lk. 12:13 – Brothers dispute over inheritance
 - f. Have I succumbed to any of the sins that spring from covetousness?
- V. Sins springing from Covetousness
- a. Lying/fudging about money issues
 - i. 1 Sam. 15:9 – Saul destroyed everything, EXCEPT the best of the flocks and herds, and all that was good
 - ii. We are always prone to human error, but do I always err on the side of benefiting myself and cheating the other guy?
 - iii. Taxes?
 - b. Seeking material gain to the neglect of more important things
 - i. We only have a certain amount of free time in our lives. Do we use it to serve mammon or God? Lk. 16:13

- c. Disobedience to God's commands regarding money/materialism/giving
 - i. God said do not touch any of the treasures in Jericho
 - ii. Achan said, "When I saw [them], I coveted them and took them" Jos. 7:21
 - iii. He disobeyed God to get what he wanted
- d. Cruelty or lack of mercy or unscrupulousness when money is at stake
 - i. 2 Kings 5:20 -
 - ii. In each of these examples – Covetousness caused someone to choose material things over God.
 - 1. This is idolatry!!! Col. 3:5
 - 2. What should we do about it – put it to death!

VI. Defeating Covetousness

- a. Acknowledge the dangers of covetousness –
 - i. Mk. 7 20-23 – comes from the heart and defiles
 - ii. Eph. 5:3 – not named!
 - iii. ANOREXIA vs. PLEONEXIA
- b. Practice liberal giving
 - i. Lk 18:22 – Go, sell, and give to the poor
- c. Practice God-centered planning
 - i. Lk. 16:13 – cannot serve God and mammon
- d. Identify/rebuke covetousness in ourselves and others
 - i. 1 Cor 5:11 – don't keep company w/ a covetous brother
 - ii. When was the last time you heard of a brother or sister in Christ being reproved or withdrawn from because of covetousness
 - iii. Moses Lard – withdrawing from the covetous brother -

VII. Conclusion

- a. Are you obeying these commandments?
 - i. Do not commit adultery
 - ii. Do not murder
 - iii. Do not steal
 - iv. Do not bear false witness
 - v. Honor your father and mother
- b. Will it be said of us that we lacked just one thing?
 - i. Will that one thing be that we fail to remove covetousness, the desire for more, from our lives
 - ii. It doesn't matter what the one thing is. If it keeps us away from God, it is deadly serious
 - iii. Remember
 - 1. We can be unaware of major shortcomings in our own spiritual life
 - a. He didn't realize his condition
 - 2. One thing can prevent us from inheriting eternal life
 - a. Jesus said "One thing you lack."
 - 3. Ignoring even one of God's commands will leave us spiritually unsatisfied
 - a. "What do I still lack?" Mt. 19:20

4. The greatest teacher cannot change the hardened heart
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iv. Invitation

1. Non Christian
 - a. Believe, repent, confess, and be baptized
 - b. Covetousness may be something you have to repent of as you become a redeemed child of God.
2. Christian
 - a. Don't let anything hinder you from walking with God