

A GREAT SIN OF OUR TIME (Luke 12:15)

I. Covetousness steals devotion to God.

- A. In two passages, Paul equates covetousness with idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5).
 - 1. Idolatry is putting something in the place of God.
 - 2. God demands first place but idolatry puts something else there (Exodus 20:3; 1 John 5:21).
- B. If our greatest desire is to please God, things won't be allowed to take His place.
- C. When God is in His proper place, things will have their proper place.
- D. The theologian Augustine wrote long ago, "Let not these occupy my soul; let God rather occupy it."
 - 1. We are commanded to seek the kingdom first.
 - 2. We are commanded to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind.
 - 3. Covetousness keeps this from happening.
- E. A dime is the smallest coin in size, but when placed in front of the eye, it can block out the sun.
- F. When one is covetous, he loses his sight of God in his desire to get more things.

II. Covetousness murders desire for Christ.

- A. Jesus met a young man that wanted to know how to get to heaven (Matthew 19:16-22).
 - 1. He lived a life according to the scriptures in many ways.
 - 2. However, there was a roadblock in his path to heaven and it murdered his desire for the Savior.
- B. The word "covetousness" is not used anywhere in this passage but it is seen throughout.
 - 1. He wanted Jesus but not more than he wanted his riches.
 - 2. Jesus clearly taught the power that this world's goods have to choke the word out of our lives (Matthew 13:22).
- C. The word choke has many definitions, but in this parable it means to choke.
 - 1. The thorns that murder one's desire for Christ do so by suffocating the word out of one's life.
 - 2. This takes away any desire for Jesus and murders one's soul in the process.

III. Covetousness destroys proper priorities.

- A. The rich farmer in the parable of Jesus lost all sense of priority in his life.
 - 1. His crops went from being his means of making a living to his life.
 - 2. They occupied his mind and his business and removed any thoughts of using his blessings for good.
 - 3. This is why Jesus introduced this parable with the admonition to be on guard for covetousness.

- B. We do realize and understand that the acquiring of things is necessary for life.
 - 1. It is by the proper acquisition of those necessary things that we take of ourselves and those that depend on us.
 - 2. Without work we become lazy and sinful (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10).
 - 3. However, when acquiring things gets out of proportion it becomes covetousness (Luke 12:21).

IV. Covetousness counterfeits happiness.

- A. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
 - 1. The heart of covetousness is the idea that things bring happiness.
 - 2. It says, "If I had this thing, I would be happy."
 - 3. Epicurus once said, "If you want to make someone happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires."
 - 4. If possession of things brought happiness, this would be the happiest age in history and the happiest nation in history.
- B. This is not to say that things don't matter.
 - 1. To have enough to eat, a place in which to live and reasonable comforts are the things for which we all strive (1 Timothy 5:8).
 - 2. If we don't have, we can't help others (Luke 19:8; Ephesians 4:28).
- C. What we are saying is that happiness is not wrapped up in these things (Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5).

Outline from an article by Dennis Gullledge.