

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Mine!]

Having spent multiple summers helping my mother out at her Preschool, the following Preschool Property Laws bring back memories. “If I like it, it’s mine. If it’s in my hand, it’s mine. If I can take it from you, it’s mine. If I had it a little while ago, it’s mine. It must never appear to be yours in any way, because it is always and forevermore mine!” Let’s be honest. We can all be like the seagulls from Finding Nemo shouting, “Mine, mine!” Deep down, within you and me, there exists an insatiable desire to look at someone’s snow blower or lawnmower, bike or boat, patio or porch, just about anything and everything that belongs to someone else and long for them all to be mine!

We’re in a series on the Book of Exodus. Today we come to one of the most famous part of the book the Ten Commandments. There are two commandments that address the sin of coveting. Not one, but two! What gives? God repeats it because it’s important. The ninth and tenth commandments are incredibly important Commandments. Because every sin begins with coveting. Coveting isn’t just wanting things. It’s natural to want things. Coveting, on the other hand, says, “I’ll do whatever it takes to get that. I’ll break any commandment, any statute, any rule, just to make it mine.”

Coveting is why we worship other gods like our job, our paycheck, and our social status. Coveting is why we fail to honor our parents, kill people with our words, look with lust, lie, cheat and steal. I want it all to be mine! How can we deal with our titanic desire to acquire? How can we become more obedient to God’s Word and will? How can we break the stranglehold of looking at things and people and always thinking, “Mine”?

The fact is, coveting is natural for our sinful nature. Coveting comes with being sinners. Being content, though, doesn't come naturally. Being content is something that is learned. "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil 4:12). Being content conquers coveting—every single time. How does that work?

Realize the Sequence

Usually we rationalize the sequence. "Coveting? No big deal!" instead, you and I need to realize the sequence.

"Then the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, she coveted it for gaining wisdom, then she took and ate it" (Gn 3:6). **See.**

Covet. Take. "I saw among the spoils a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them, and then I took them" (Jo 7:21). **See. Covet. Take.** This sequence appears five more times in the Old Testament. **See. Covet. Take.**

How often do we rationalize our coveting? You and I say, "I'm just lookin'!" Lookin' leads to coveting. Coveting leads to taking. What does taking lead to?

James 1:15, "After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to **death.**"

Realize, don't rationalize, the sequence! **See. Covet. Take. Death!**

When we covet our neighbor's spouse it brings death to marital joy. When we covet each other's skills, intellect, popularity, family connections, you name it; it brings death to inner peace. When we covet our neighbor's BMW, Rolex watch, looks, pick your poison, it brings death to our relationship with Jesus.

Left unchecked, coveting drives a stake into our heart and kills us. Just ask Eve. Just ask Achan. Just ask James. "After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death." Being content conquers coveting. So, here's the first step to being content. Realize, don't rationalize, realize the sequence. **See. Covet. Take. Death.**

Personalize Your Salvation.

You and I have a tendency to generalize our salvation. You might say, "Salvation? No big deal." But we have to stop doing this. Personalize your salvation. In Exodus 20:2 God makes things personal for us saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Not her God; not his God; not their God; not some God; not any God. Yahweh, the LORD, is your God! In verse five your God says, "I, the LORD your God, am a zealous God." Your zealous God will do whatever it takes to save you! He did it for you, but this time, He didn't do it with fleas, flies, and frogs.

There was a Passover lamb. Christ's blood wasn't splattered on the wood of a house, but on the wood of a Roman instrument of death, mingled with sweat, soldier's spit, and cheap wine. It all ended "crucified, dead, and buried. " Watch as Joseph of Arimathea places Christ into the garden tomb. Smell the stench of death. See the confines, the darkness, the sealed stone.

Feel the utter hopelessness.

And then witness the charred marks of a divine explosion to life! There is nothing dead about our Jesus! Jesus blew the rock open from the inside and rolled away the stone. Jesus lives so he can speak these words straight from His heart to yours, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of sin and death, out of the house of slavery. I, the LORD your God, am a zealous God. I will do whatever it takes to save you!"

Being content conquers coveting. The first step to being content is this. Don't rationalize the sequence. Realize where it all leads, death! Step two: Personalize your salvation. Jesus is the Passover Lamb who saved me!

[Internalize Status.]

“Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession“ (Ex 19:5). God’s desire to acquire us is infinitely greater than our desire to get more stuff! From the depths of His loving heart the LORD says, “You are always and forevermore my treasured possession!” God wants us warts and all! This isn’t always the case. There are times in our lives in which we aren’t first choice. You and I experience this in our jobs, friendships, or professional advice. People say, “Well, you weren’t exactly my first choice, but I guess you’ll do.” God always says, “**You** are my first choice!” When you were baptized God made you His first choice. His choice wasn’t obligatory, required, compulsory, forced, or compelled. God chose you because God loves you. God looks at you in great love and says, “You are my prized, priceless possession!” Imagine that! The temptation, though, is to trivialize our status as God’s prized possession. “What’s the big deal?” Don’t trivialize, internalize, you are God’s prized possession. Let it go deep down into your bones, into every fiber of your being! You are God’s prized, priceless possession!

What else tops that?

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.” How can you and I even begin to follow this Commandment? **Realize the sequence**, see, covet, take, death. **Personalize your salvation.** **Internalize status.** Where’s the power to do this? The strength? The “want to”? “I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are always and forevermore lovingly, passionately, eternally mine!”

So Be it.

Amen.

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
