

Covetousness

by Wayne Goff

“Covetousness” (Greek, **pleonexia**) is defined as “inordinate desire of riches,” or “greedy desire to have more” which by implication includes “fraud” and “extortion.” Jesus warned us to beware of it because a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of *things* — riches will not make one happy, **Luke 12:15**.

Unfortunately for Judas Iscariot, the lesson was not taken to heart. And while covetousness *destroys* a man, it does not destroy him *immediately*. It is a slow, permeating moral cancer that destroys at the last. It is one form of “*idolatry*” (**Col. 3:5**) — the worship of *things*. The **irony** here is that while *things* do not make one happy, a covetous person tries to build up more and more *things*, and becomes more and more miserable. Many TV evangelists and religious frauds fulfill **2 Peter 2:3** — “*By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; ...*” An example of this is the “health and wealth doctrine.”

Christians are well aware of the fact that we are not to be covetous. But in America there is a great wealth of *things*, which is not wrong in and of itself. But we must ever be careful not to let it become our *master*. In Jeremiah’s day, shortly before Judah’s destruction, God warned of their despicable covetous practices:

- ▶ “*Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely*” **Jeremiah 6:13**.
- ▶ “*Therefore I will give their wives to others, and their fields to those who will inherit them; because from the least even to the greatest everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely*” **Jeremiah 8:10**.
- ▶ “*Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, for shedding innocent blood, and practicing oppression and violence*” **Jeremiah 22:17**.

When people are willing to lie, cheat, steal and murder to obtain things, then they are moral reprobates! God could do nothing with such people except destroy them and give their nation to people who had better character.

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