

The Love of Money

Luke 12:13-21

Introduction

1. In His response to a demand to intervene in a dispute over family inheritance Jesus warns against all forms of greed or covetousness; tells the parable of the rich man that became preoccupied with his abundance to the neglect of his relationship with God.
 - a. The Greek word is Pleonexia meaning, “greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice (greed).
 - b. According to Websters, “a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money) than is needed”
2. As all forms of greed, the love of money is insatiable desire for wealth and discontentment with what one has.
 - a. Greed is not sin of owning wealth or its accumulation but the sin of wanting more for the sake of having more and for one’s own benefit.
 - b. We see this in the attitude and words of the rich man in the parable; how he thought nothing of those that might benefit from his wealth. It was only about himself.
3. We see this link demonstrated in the words of James, the brother of Jesus, in warning against greed - James 5:1-6
 - a. This is man that only cares about himself - selfishness is the root of the greed; it’s about how much I can gain for and enjoy for myself.
 - b. The Bible records many examples of people that were led astray by their greed. Let’s notice just a few.

I. Those Led Astray by Greed (Love of Money or Wealth)

A. Achan - Joshua 7:20-21

1. One of the first cities Israel conquered in the land of Canaan was the city of Jericho, about which they were given certain instructions.
 - a. On taking the city, they were to kill every living thing and not to touch anything under ban - but give everything into the Lord’s treasury - Jos.6:17-19
 - b. They captured the city and killed all the people; but Israel sinned in the matter of the things banned, causing them to be defeated at Ai - 7:1, 5
2. Later, when Joshua confronts Achan, he explains what had led him to commit this dreadful act - 7:20-21
 - a. As he went into battle and saw these beautiful articles, greed got the better of Achan and he took what did not belong to him and tried to cover it up.
 - b. He was led astray by greed; as a result, Achan and his entire family were stoned to death, and all his possessions burned.
 - c. This story serves as a powerful reminder of the destructive nature of greed and its consequences.

B. Gehazi - 2 Kings 5:20-27

1. His greed led him to lie to Naaman, a Syrian commander and to Elisha his master.
 - a. Elisha had just healed Naaman of his leprosy by sending him to dip seven times in the Jordan, but had refused gifts offered to him.
 - b. Gehazi filled with greed pursed Naaman after he had left to return home, lied about Elisha, tricked Naaman, lied again to Elisha; leading to him being inflicted with leprosy.

C. Judas - John 12:4-6; Matthew 26:14-16

1. Judas’s actions - what he said regarding the money and being a thief and later as he negotiates a price for betraying Jesus - was motivated by his greed.

D. Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:1-10 (3-4)

1. They had a piece of land which they decided to sell - which they didn’t have to do - and gave part of the proceeds to help the poor saints of Jerusalem, though claiming they had given all of the proceeds. They lied. Their actions and lie was motivated by their greed.

II. What Greed Can Do

A. It robs God of what He is due - Malachi 3:8-10

1. Greed been an acute problem among the generation of Israelites prior to their exile - Jeremiah 6:13
2. It seems as if the situation had not been fully rectified in the generation post exile - Malachi 3:8-10

3. In their greed the Jews were holding back from bringing God the whole tithe - tenth of produce of the land.
4. Are we robbing God through our contributions, by not giving as much as we could?

B. It chokes the Word of God out men's hearts - Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19

1. If we are governed by greed, the word of God is going to be choked out of our hearts and we are not going to grow, developing into the image of Christ - Romans 8:29

C. It neglects those who are needy - 1 John 3:17

1. Selfishness and covetousness can keep us from showing kindness and sympathy to others.
2. Rather than having the love of God in our hearts, this person is demonstrating a love for themselves, with no care for another.

D. It causes men to stray from the faith and pierce themselves with many sorrows - 1 Timothy 6:9-10

1. Greed can lead us away from God and into much sorrow - cf. Proverbs 15:27
2. We saw this in some of the examples just noted - how the pursuit of riches can us away from God and cause much sorrow and suffering - Achan, Gehazi...
3. We also see this today - how an inordinate desire for wealth leads to much sorrow in lives of many people; divorce, broken homes and families, gambling addiction, people losing homes - can be a result of greed.

E. It will cause one to lose his soul - I Corinthians 6:9-10

1. Greed is not just a bad attitude and causes us to behave badly; it will keep us out of heaven:
2. "It is remarkable that the apostle always ranks "the covetous" with the most abandoned classes of people" (Barnes).

III. How to Overcome It

A. Pray to not enter into temptation - Luke 11:4

1. We are to pray not to be lead into the temptation of greed and selfish desires, particularly as we are surrounded by a society in which such attitudes are prevalent.

B. Give generously - 1 Timothy 6:18-19

1. Generosity has a strange way of freeing us from the grip of greed. It teaches us that there's more joy as well as spiritual growth in giving than receiving.
2. The Bible encourages giving to those in need and sharing one's blessings with others. Practicing generosity shifts our focuses from selfish accumulation to selfless giving, helping to tackle the negative effects of greed.

C. Contentment and Gratitude - Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:7; Hebrews 13:5

1. If we are content, then it doesn't matter if we have a lot or if we have little. If we have an attitude of being grateful for what we have, then we are going to be discontented and be led into greed.
2. Contentment, in a biblical sense, is the recognition that we come into the world with nothing and that everything we have is a gift from God's hands.
3. Gratitude. Try to appreciate the good things you already have. Cultivating a sense of gratitude for these positive aspects in your life, both big and small, can counter the desire for more. Practicing gratitude doesn't mean settling for less. It's about recognizing and appreciating the abundance that's already in our lives. This shift in perspective can be a powerful tool in keeping greed at bay.

Conclusion

1. Being rich or even getting richer is not wrong. It's not how much we have but how we view wealth. Gaining this world's riches is not an end in itself, but a way to help and serve others. This enables one to be rich toward God!