

# **20100905\_BFF+\_bj sermon\_The Evil Secret of Covetousness**

## **Call to Worship**

## **Message**

Our message today is on the subject of covetousness. This would be a merely theological debate, were it not so serious, serious as death. The Evil Secret of Covetousness is that it is the foundation of sin and is the operative vehicle through which sin is conceived in our hearts. Thus, it is the opposite and alternative to God and righteousness. Yet the existence and force of covetousness is necessary in life as God has ordained it, because God's system for us is a system of free will and choice and such options, sin and righteousness, are inherent in free will and choice. So covetousness and righteousness and choice are as bound together as, as I call it, the coin of sin/righteousness/judgment of ***John 16: 8***. Indeed the Holy Spirit works in us because of our privilege of choice, otherwise, there would be nothing for the Holy Spirit to do in us – we would be abject, eternal failures in sin, or we would be robotically perfect Christians.

But, we were made in the image of the Trinity, the Godhead, ***Genesis 1:26***, and it was not necessary that we shall have been created, but our Creator chose, in His free will, that we be created,

and that element of choice is one of the characteristics of the image of God in which we are made. Choice is indelible in us, but lest God specifically bind our heart as he did Pharaoh, our choice is as open to us as it was to Abraham on God's call for him to leave all he knew and, merely, go. And so, as that choice was a test for Abraham, our choices are Godly tests for us. To pass the tests, we must understand the secret, the evil secret of covetousness.

So, I believe (maybe altogether in too much vanity), that we are interesting to God, and not just because He loves us, but because it is interesting to Him to see what choices we make and how we make them, even though He knows what we are going to do before we make up our minds as to what we are going to do. In other words, even though He knows us better than we do!

The first recorded choice occurred of course in the Garden of Eden, where God planted a tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and, **Genesis 2: 17**, and commanded of Adam that he should not eat of that tree, for in that day he would surely die. Adam and Eve became one, **Genesis 2: 24**, and, **Genesis 3:6**, both ate of the fruit of that tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then, death came to the Garden of Eden, **Genesis 3: 21**, as God made clothes for the naked Adam and Eve from animal skin, and Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, **Genesis 3:**

**23-24**, and we have not found it since on this earth, where, now, on earth, it is appointed unto all men once to die, **Hebrews 9: 27**.

Indeed, **I Corinthians 15: 21-22**, Paul explains, “*For since by man came death, by Man (Jesus) also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*” In other words, there were, and today are, consequences of choices we make, and not just whether we get what we thought we really wanted in our choosing. There are temporal and eternal consequences of our choices!

The Ten Commandments make it clear to us that covetousness, defined as “I want . . . .”, is the foundation of sin, of unrighteousness, of violation of God’s commandments to mankind, his creation. Exodus: 20: 1-17 expresses those Ten Commandments. There are two categories, the division of 4 and 6, as the first four commandments provide instruction for our relationship with God, and the last six provide instruction for our relationship with other people, but the common denominator is covetousness. Let’s see:, in the first four, we are commanded (1) to have no other God above God; (2) to have no carved image of another god that we worship and not to bow down to or serve any god but God; (3) not to take the name of the Lord God in vain; and (4) to honor God by keeping the Sabbath. Foundationally, if we choose to do anything different from these four things, we are

choosing the “I want” pathway, which elevates our choice above God’s choice for us, and that is coveting His position in the authority structure of life, and is sin leading to death.

Now, in our relations with other people, we are commanded: (1) honor our parents; (2) not to murder, (3) not to commit adultery; (4) not to steal; (5) not to lie; and (6) not to covet (even if you don’t actually steal it) someone else’s house, wife, or anything else of his.. Obviously, these six commandments are all based on the “I want” pathway of life, in which we would covet someone else’s property or spouse, or covet the protection of our pride, even in murder, a very explicit “I want” pathway to the exclusion of the life of another. And the parent thing, honor thy father and mother, is the same covetousness, in valuing our “I want” pathway, valuing our traditions, maybe our generational differences from our parents, more than the pathway of Godliness commanded by God.

In the Gospel of Mark, we learn more about this sin in regard to honoring our parents, **Mark 7: 9-13**, “*He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and mother’, and ‘he who curses father or mother let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, ‘whatever profit you*

*might have received from me is Corban – that is, a gift to God, then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.’”*

So, we see that all sin is based on our covetousness in displacing God with our pride and ego, or with the traditions of men in our generation, or in just plain following the path of “I want” instead of the path of righteous obedience and submission to the commandments of God.

If this is so, then how do we develop and learn a sufficient understanding of it that we can overcome it and maintain righteousness in our lives. Here are a few things:

1. You can't do it without Christ, to wash away your guilt and your sins, and even to be able to approach God. No man cometh unto the Father except through Jesus.  
***(John 14: 6b)***
2. Understand that the capacity and power of sin is fully vested in you. ***Mark 7: 14-23***, “*When he had called all the multitude to Himself, He (Jesus) said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand. There is nothing*

*that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, these are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, ‘Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?’ And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’”*

Mark is telling us that this capacity for sin resides in us and therefore is capable of being turned into conduct by our choices. Indeed, as Jesus explained that lusting after another is adulterous, **Matthew 5: 28**, so it was noted in **Exodus 20: 17**, where the covetousness of a neighbor’s house, wife, property violates God’s Ten

Commandments – same thing Jesus was talking about in the New Testament, but often treated as a New Testament expansion of the Ten Commandments, which it was not.

3. So, if we understand what is in our hearts, that capacity to choose both, or either in a given situation of temptation, that is, righteousness and/or sin, then how do we manage this duality of possibility, of sin and righteousness? The secret of covetousness is unlocked first in knowing what it is, and its universality, and second in knowing how temptation works in us and in how God guards and protects those who love.
4. How temptation works in us is laid out in ***James 1: 13-16***, “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’, for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived (and that is the critical turning point for sin to occur), it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*”
5. But God guards and protects us ***I Corinthians 10: 13***, “*No temptation has overtaken you except such as is*

*common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you (the Church—here, in Corinth), to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* God is the guardian and protector, and limiter of the extent of temptation for those in His Church, those are believers in Jesus Christ!

6. And, when we fail, and failure is universal, we have rescue in ***I John 1: 9***, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” And in ***Romans 8: 28***, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” So God as guardian and protector is there to protect us and turn our bad into good, if we love Him and are called according to His purposes in life. Although he does admonish us, ***Romans 6: 1-2***, not to continue in sin just because grace is available, but to stop allowing sin to come to conception in our hearts, asap!!

Conclusion

To understand Righteousness, we must also understand Sin. To understand both, we must understand their foundations: The foundation of Righteousness is God and His sinlessness; the foundation of Sin is Covetousness and our sinfulness. So follow this foundational principle, and understand and apply daily in your lives the six points outlined above to understand them Scripturally, so you can be wise, discern the difference between good and evil, and walk before God and Man in spiritual maturity!

God bless you+