

TO COVET OR NOT TO COVET

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:2-4).

Note, through the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ we have been given (past tense) two things; (1) all things that pertain to life and godliness, and (2) exceedingly great and precious promises. And these two things have been supplied by His divine power so that we may be partakers of the divine nature. God wants us to have a nature just like His - to be of an identical type. To act the way He acts and be intrinsically the same. For that reason, He has provided everything we need to enjoy an abundant and godly life. The Lord has put at our disposal divine operating assets - whether or not we utilise them, whether or not we are aware of them.

The New Testament often uses **“life”** in relation to the ‘life of God’. God has absolute fullness of life, both the essence of life and the ethics that flow from that life. His life is a noble life, the highest and best life. This is life in the absolute sense. It is more than dignity and power. It is life as God has it; it is life in the fullest sense. **“Godliness”** on the other hand, carries a more practical meaning; it has the idea that we must function effectively in God’s divine plan. It is our devotion to God based on the provisions of God for our lives. Therefore, godliness cherishes the will of God and involves everything God expects of us as Christians. The idea is that we can be fulfilled people with abundant and godly lives.

In other words, in our pursuit of happiness everything has already been taken care of. God has already provided whatever is necessary for us to enjoy a fulfilled and contented life. However, our opening passage ends with this notification, “...**Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**” Lust is at the centre of all that can corrupt us. As godliness displays a devotion to God, lust exhibits a devotion to the world. And while we’re on the subject of lust (in the context of pursuing happiness), there is a word that comes to mind which is almost extinct. That is “covet.” It’s a clumsy word now, but it was used for centuries before this generation discarded it. Think about it. When is the last time you heard someone in the pop culture use the term, covet? You probably can’t remember. The English Dictionary says that, “to covet” is ‘to yearn to possess something, and especially something belonging to another’.

When the Bible uses the word “covet”, it speaks of an intense craving for something; and it can be used in the positive or the negative:

1 Corinthians 14 says, “**Covet earnestly the best gifts.**” This means we should passionately desire for God’s spiritual gifts to operate in us. We should be passionate about this because when the Holy Spirit operates His gifts in us, others are truly blessed. But when the Bible uses covet in a negative sense, it speaks of craving something inappropriate or something apart from God’s divine will. That thing we covet could be something that belongs to somebody else and to take it from that person is a sin. Here is the essence of covetousness. It is a selfish and greedy desire to have our way - no matter what! That means greed and covetousness are contrary to God’s will. And this type of craving (or lust) never satisfies us. That’s because it detracts from our affection and devotion toward God; who should be the focus of our heartfelt desires.

It's not wrong to want material things that are necessary or even convenient for everyday living. Modernism is wonderful! 2 Peter 1:3 says: ***"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness."*** God has given us these things to enjoy! But greed emerges when we covet material possessions more than we desire God. It manifests when we become obsessed with acquiring things rather than seeking Christ and His kingdom. In today's fast and furious society it's easy to let the world distract us.

The psychologist Eric Fromm said this: *"Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction."* I say a big amen to that! The life we should be living "in Christ" brings about real contentment and satisfaction. Listen to David words in Psalm 17:15, ***"As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake."*** There are two tables at which we can dine - God's table or the world's table; and the table we choose also determines the company we keep. When we feast on God's Word and delight in His commands, He will fellowship with us and help us accomplish His will. But if we choose to feast and fellowship at the world's table there is no way we can enjoy the company of our Lord and accomplish His will.

Here is the world's strategy. It allures and then overpowers; it seduces and then suppresses; it entices and then controls. The design of every work of satan culminates in bondage! When people first pursue happiness apart from Christ they don't realise this. Satan's ultimate goal is to capture your soul. So be vigilant. For when we make things of the world the object of our pursuit, we are susceptible to being taken captive. Remember, it is knowledge of the truth that will set us free and enable us to live in the abundance that Jesus gave up His life to secure for us.

There is a law of gravity that discloses an amazing principle. It is this: The greater an object's mass, the greater its power to attract. Or, the greater the volume of an object the greater its magnetism. This explains why huge planets like Jupiter and Neptune can attract the orbit of many satellites and smaller planets like Venus and Pluto aren't large enough to attract any satellites. The greater the mass the greater the attraction! So what does this law of gravity teach us? It teaches us to carefully determine what enlarges our being (the human soul). Because when your life is enlarged with unspiritual things of the world, it will attract deadly forces. However, if your life is being enlarged "day by day" with spiritual things, it will attract divine forces. It's your life, it's your choice!

Remember our opening passage? God wants us to have a nature just like His - to be of an identical type. To act the way He acts and be intrinsically the same; with the same power and authority! For that reason, He has provided everything we need to enjoy an abundant and godly life. God has put at our disposal powerful operating assets, whether or not we utilise them, whether or not we are aware of them. But they are ours! Let these divine assets enlarge our souls so that we can attract the Holy Spirit and His awesome Gifts. This is what we should be coveting! This is what we should have a passion for! Imagine how much more attractive (and effective) the church will be when the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are operating in greater and greater measure!

Some people think they will be happy if they get the perfect partner, the perfect job, or the perfectly platinum-padded bank account. But we have to remember something. Happiness begins in the centre of our soul! And the only One capable of filling the soul with gladness is the One who made the soul - God Himself. When we crave things contrary to God's will, they don't leave room for God to satisfy us. And God, in all His fulness (and goodness), is what we need to be satisfied.

So don't ever settle for second best, allow the exceedingly great and precious promises of God to equip you to be a "partaker" of the divine nature - escaping the lust of the world system! It is noteworthy that the root of the Greek word "partaker" is the word 'koinos' which means "to become one with" as in communion. If you have any desire in your heart right now, let it be to be just like Him, to become one with Him! You can do it because God has given you everything that pertains to life and godliness! A life that is exactly like the divine life He manifests, with all its power and might. It is a life where the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are evident whenever there is a need; and where the miraculous is the norm!

Christ is calling His church to turn from kissing and courting the world and cling to Him alone. Christ is the target we must aim for, the goal we must run toward, the prize we must seek to capture, and nothing less (yes, nothing) will make us more happy. Start desiring spiritual things, start coveting the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and you will start to see miracle after miracle manifest in your life. Why? Because you have truly partaken of (become one with) the divine nature, and therefore, you are just like Jesus (made of the same substance). ***"The works that I do you will do also, and even greater works than these because I go to be with My Father."***