

March 26, 2023

Abounding Grace: The Grace of the Law Desires

Exodus 20:17



For Discussion and Reflection

1. The commandment does not forbid desires but distorted, deceitful desires. There are good desires, like the glory of God, the welfare of others, the kingdom of God, etc. C.S. Lewis famously said, "It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." What should we desire? How does the Holy Spirit foster those desires? What can you do to foster those good desires?
2. The Apostle Paul speaks to the power of the law in Romans 7:7-12. The law says don't covet, but that only excited his covetousness because of what he calls, "sin." What does he mean by sin? Where was this sin? What does this say about the human nature?
3. Paul teaches us that the law is not the problem, as it is holy, righteous, and good, Romans 7:12. The problem is our sin nature and its distorted, deceitful desires. James teaches us that we commit sin because of our desires, James 1:13-16. The current culture treats desires as neutral annoyances. A person can say they desire a same-sex relationship, but they haven't acted on it, so it's ok. Would the Scripture agree with that viewpoint? As followers of Christ, how do we respond to distorted, deceitful desires?
4. Covetousness and its cousin, envy, are serious underlying sins. Paul includes covetousness in his list of Romans 1:28-31, Ephesians 5:3-6. In 1 Timothy 6:10, the love of money is called, "the root of all kinds of evils." Consider David's sin 2 Samuel 11,12. How did his covetousness affect himself, Bathsheba, and the nation? How many of the commandments did he break because of his desire? Do you treat this sin with the seriousness it deserves?
5. One commentator said, "What people wish for (desire) has a major role to play in what kind of society that they will create. Those who want what they cannot properly have undermine a societies moral fiber." (New America Standard Commentary) How do you see this playing out in our society? What about in your life and the life of your family?
6. A heart that covets is like a thirsty person in an ocean of salt water. He has much water available but each time he sips, he becomes thirstier. Once the craving begins, it is never satisfied, no matter what it obtains. Solomon had it all but concluded it was all vanity (empty) and that man's end is to, as he says, "fear God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) How are you combating the desires of your heart?
1. J.I. Packer says, "Worry is the mortal enemy," that leads to envy. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:25-34. What does he say about anxiety? How do anxiety and covetousness partner in the text? How are we to combat worry and covetousness? (We re-evaluate life; we believe something about God; we recognize the futility of worry; we seek something greater.)
2. Scripture directs us to be content with what we have: Proverbs 30:8-9, Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, Hebrews 13:5. How do these texts explain contentment? What truths do the writers employ to combat covetousness and encourage contentment?
3. What did you learn today? What steps can you take to repent of covetousness and foster love for God and your neighbor?