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# OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE

# COVETOUSNESS

COLOSSIANS 3:5

AFEKOLU, CHRIS (BISHOP)

## PREAMBLE

*“Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5 NKJV) Here the Apostle Paul exhorts the Colossians Christians and by extension to us as Children of God to the mortification of sin, the great hindrance to seeking the things which are above.*

## OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"

We are here advised to kill (not try to kill) the corrupt affections of the mind, the various workings of the carnal appetites and fleshly impurities which lead us to earthly things that are contrary to our faith and the heavenly hope. The apostle specifies here the lust of the flesh - fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and the love of the world - covetousness, which is idolatry. Today our focus area is “Covetousness”.

## OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"

Covetousness means: A greedy spirit which will break all the barriers of God to secure the object of its desire. A selfish hoarding to the neglect of the needs of others. Misuse of the blessings of life on temporary and selfish pleasures.

It is an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments, which proceeds from too high a value in the mind, puts upon too eager a pursuit, hinders the proper use and enjoyment of them. (Matthew Henry commentary)

We are told two truths in Colossians 3:5. First, a covetous man is an idolater. He may not worship a graven image, but he worships some material object. Second, a covetous man will never enter heaven. Why? A covetous man has set his heart upon earthly things, and in order to be saved, the heart must be set upon heavenly things.

## OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"

Coveting is a form of greed, a burning desire to have someone or something for satisfaction. It is wanting what does not belong to us or we cannot or should not have. Seeing other with “more” {or even “better”} lights a fire in us. Uncontrolled, this envy blazes into obsession, uncontrolled passion, and lust. It tempts us to thoughts like: why can’t I have a home like that? A spouse like that? A bank account like that? A job like that? Coveting is terrible sin because it causes us to seek contentment in other things than God. Money and possessions don’t bring contentment. It is ironic that we so wholeheartedly pursue them anyway.

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

The Difference Between “Wanting” and “Coveting” The difference between wanting and coveting is motivation. Wanting something is not always bad. You want to love your children and provide food and shelter and best training/education for them. You want to please your Spouse. You want the desire to obey God. You want to enjoy the life God has given you... these are noble wants!

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

But when wanting becomes selfish or self-serving, it turns to coveting. You can tell if you are beginning to covet something by asking yourself why you want it and what feeling you have when you think about it.

If you want something and you can’t stop thinking about it, if you want something just to have it or hoard it. If you want something because someone else has it, if you want something that makes you better than someone else – you are probably beginning to covet it. If you are tempted to do wrong to get something, if you feel unhappy not having it, or if you are jealous that someone else has it – then you are **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL  
IMBALANCE** coveting “COVETOUSNESS”. -

"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 7:21-23 NKJV) If you are spending more and more time thinking about things, or if you are spending any time thinking about what someone else has, then you are coveting.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (Psalms 139:23 RSV)

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

A man is covetous when his heart is so set on the world that he will do anything to get it. He looks upon something and greatly desires it, his mouth waters for it, and the time comes when he is willing to do anything to get it. Examples in the Bible - Ahab and Naboth’s vineyard in the Old Testament. Ahab wanted

that vineyard and offered to buy it. But Naboth could not sell it. Ahab's response was quite disappointing and unhappy. When Jezebel saw this, she got it for him. Oh, what a covetous person will do to get the things of this world! There is also the story of David, the man after God's own heart. He coveted the beautiful wife of one of his soldiers.

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

David's covetousness led to his stealing her and placing her husband in the front line of the battle so he would meet death. He was guilty of both murder and adultery. A great sin was born out of a covetous eye. But God did not allow this sin to go unpunished. Other Bible characters that were guilty of covetousness: Adam and Eve coveted the forbidden fruit. Cain coveted the acceptance which God gave Abel. Lot coveted the best land and lost everything. Achan coveted gold, stealing the forbidden treasures. Judas coveted the money bag and sold Jesus for money. In every case, covetousness brought suffering and sometimes death.

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

#### **The Consequences of Covetousness**

Covetousness can cause one to stop thinking rationally and begin to scheme because coveting is selfishly desiring what you cannot or should not have. Left unchecked, you become obsessed with getting

what you want, even if it means taking it from someone else. The consequence of covetousness takes on many forms, but they always damage your relationship with others and **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE with God.**

### **"COVETOUSNESS"**

Coveting brings disorder to relationships. It causes jealousy and promotes selfishness. It is really the opposite of love because coveting wants to take from others while love wants to give to others. Love binds relationships together while coveting rips them apart. Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil upon their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man, and his inheritance. (Micah 2:1-2 RSV).

How terrible it will be for one who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans. You rise at dawn and hurry to carry out any of the wicked schemes you have power to accomplish. When you want a certain piece of land, you find a way to seize it. When you want someone's house, you take it by fraud and violence. No one's family or inheritance is safe with you around!

"You covet things and yet cannot get them; you commit murder; you have passionate desires and yet

cannot gain your end; you begin to fight and make war. You have not, because you do not pray”; (James 4:2) **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE WNT)**

**"COVETOUSNESS"**

Coveting can bring grief to those close to you, for it leads you into sinful behaviour – even against your own family members. Coveting occurs because you are dissatisfied, and dissatisfaction leads disunity in relationships.

Covet can cause you to lose your most important relationships. No one can trust someone who has let their coveting get out of control. In fact, they can literally become dangerous. Coveting alienates you from the very people who can help. “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;” (2 **Peter 2:14-15** NKJV)

Getting more will never satisfy, for when you get what you want you will still want more. The perpetual quest for what you cannot have leaves a growing consuming emptiness that is never filled. Coveting is a cycle of dissatisfaction, a never-ending drive for just one more thing. The consequence is that you will never **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE** be satisfied-

**"COVETOUSNESS"** with what you have. But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners. (Proverbs 1:18-19 NKJV)

They set an ambush for themselves; they pitfall their own lives! Such is the fate of all who are greed for gain. It ends up robbing them of life.

“Those who desire to be rich fall into the snares of temptation and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil; and in their eager desire to be rich some have been led astray from the faith and have pierced themselves with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:9-10 MNT)

Covetousness eats satisfaction out of the heart. “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase” (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Who ever heard of a lover of money content with what he has? Human desires are like rubber bags; they just keep stretching.

Plato likened the desire of man to the sieve or pierced vessel of the Danaids, which they were ever filling, but might never fill. Covetousness is the one sin that furnishes no pleasure. All efforts to satisfy the soul are in vain outside of Christ. He is that living bread (**John 6:51**).

This sin “Covetousness” is very dangerous and deceitful. Just as the grace of giving is the mother of many graces, so covetousness is the mother of many other sins. “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (**1 Timothy 6:10**). This sin will cause one to lie, steal, cheat, or kill.

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

Coveting reorders your priorities. It moves God down the list from His rightful spot at the top. And the less you have your eyes on God, the more you will be tempted to neglect and disobey Him. After a while you won't be able to discern how far you moved away from your Creator! Covetousness steals God from the heart. “For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the LORD”. (**Psalms 10:3 NKJV**).

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

Twice Apostle Paul names the greedy man an idolater (**Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5**). The idolatry of things has made a heathen out of many a Christian. Whatever stands between us and seeking first the kingdom of God, whether work, play, sport, family, houses, or money, it becomes to us an idol, and crowds God out of our hearts. Coveting leads one away from God, for you focus increasing on the sinful attitude of wanting

more while you focus less and less on what God wants for you.

Covetousness eats away all progress from life. A man's spiritual life never advances beyond his attitude toward this world. “They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul”. (**Psalms 106:13-15 NKJV**)

This is a description of Israel lusting exceedingly in the wilderness and an apt description of those who have come to leanness of spiritual life. Attribute of leanness of spiritual life

Prayer and study, meditation, and worship, all become empty to those imprisoned in constant ambition for things. He cannot spend much time with God without anxiously rushing back to the shadows of his earthly pursuits. In the place of joy comes distraction. In the place of love is suspicion. How glorious the spiritual growth and service in the kingdom would be for many Christians, if only we could root out this grasping and greedy spirit from our lives!

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

Covetousness could make security for the future uncertain. “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings, Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven”.

**(Proverbs 23:5 ASV)**. True riches and real security are found only in Christ. “Make to yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief draws nigh, neither moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” **(Luke 12:33, 34)**. The right use of our possessions can bring a deep sense of security and well-being, but their hoarding will bring uncertainty. **1 Timothy 6:17**: “Charge them that are rich in this present world that they be not high-minded nor have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches.” How can we guard against covetousness?

How can we secure our hearts against the mind of the flesh?

To avoid coveting pursue right choices and trust God with the outcome. Choosing godliness keeps you from choosing worldliness.

**(1 Timothy 6:6-11 NKJV)** – “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be conten

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with

many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” we must learn to be content with such things as we have. “For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content” **(Philippians 4:11)**.

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

To avoid coveting, practice the art and discipline of loving others. When you genuinely love others, it will be difficult to covet because you will want what is best for them, not just what is best for you.

“For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **(Romans 13:9 NKJV)**” “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”.

**(Philippians 2:4 NKJV)**

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"**

To avoid coveting, make a list of what you need vs what you want. Then enjoy watching God satisfy your needs. “But continue to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things

shall be added to you". (**Matthew 6:33 MNT**)

And to the people he said, "Take heed and guard yourselves from all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses." (**Luke 12:15 MNT**)

To avoid coveting, get busy with God people to do God's work. Often helping many; those in the church and those less fortunate will help you keep perspective and be grateful for what you have, and you can share. "*But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*". (**Hebrews 13:16 NKJV**)

And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others. – **Romans 12:5**

### **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE - "COVETOUSNESS"**

To avoid coveting, sometimes it is helpful to practice doing without something important to self, example, fasting from food; even browsing the internet. It strengthens your self-control and gives you the confidence that you can stay away from something you are beginning to covet. What you think most about is what you eventually become. To avoid coveting, don't spend time dwelling on what you can't or shouldn't have. Don't allow your mind to go

there. Do something to get your mind thinking about more worthy and important things.

We can overcome covetousness by making a commitment to Christ. He will give you a new heart. Paul said, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Think of all you have in Christ! Great pity for people who have everything but no Christ. We overcome covetousness by a containment of Christ. Get Jesus in you. Learn to think as He thought and act as He acted. If you keep Him within, you can overcome covetousness. "But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for your earthly nature And the gratification of its lusts". (**Romans 13:14 MNT**) **OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE "COVETOUSNESS"**-

To avoid coveting, make your relationship with God your number one priority. The more you focus on God, the less you will focus on the things of this world that tempt you. The more you see life from God's perspective, the less important material gains will be.

"For his power divine has granted to us everything needful for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue. By these he has granted his promises to us,

precious and splendid; so that through them you may become partners of the divine nature, now that you have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:3-4 MNT) {see also *Philippians 4:12-13*}

To avoid coveting, we need to pray for an eager spirit to study and obey God’s word, for the Word of God gives you the right perspective on money and possessions. “Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness”. (*Psalms 119:36 NKJV*).

We must fight the temptation to think that more money will solve our problems. When you sense that you are starting to covet, run the other way! Quickly get your mind onto something else useful. “Flee from the passions of youth, but run after righteousness, faith, love, and peace, in company with those who out of a pure heart call upon the Lord”. (2 Timothy 2:22 MNT)

We must refrain from fixing our attention on the forbidden {earthly things} but rather set our affection on things above that is the antidote of covetousness.

“If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ abides, seated on the right hand of God. Set your heart on things above, not on earthly things;

for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”.

(*Colossians 3:1-3 MNT*)

### Conclusion

A relaxed attitude lengthens life; jealousy rots it away. Proverbs 14:30. We should learn to take life easy and trust our Creator.

**1 John :16-17** says the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever.

### OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"

“For the things in the world--the cravings of the earthly nature, the cravings of the eyes, the show and pride of life--they all come, not from the Father, but from the world. And the world, with its cravings, is passing away, but he who does God's will continues forever.” (1 John 2:16-17 WNT) Just as the grace of giving is the mother of many graces, so covetousness is the mother of many other sins. “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

### OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL IMBALANCE -"COVETOUSNESS"