

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

December 24, 2013

Issue No. 124 Mark Aites, Editor

Covetousness

"Be thrifty, but not covetous." – George Herbert

"The man who covets is always poor." – Claudian

"Be charitable before wealth makes you covetous." – Thomas Browne

"The curse of covetousness is that it destroys manhood by substituting money for character." – Lucy Larcom

Covetousness seems to abound in our society. People are always wanting what someone else has. Years ago, there was a common thought that people would speak of, the need for keeping up with the Joneses. And it is frightening to see the lengths that people will go to, to obtain something they so desperately want.

Jesus said, "...Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). You wouldn't think that people had ever heard such words as in their holiday shopping they are hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, screaming, fighting, stealing, etc. It is as though people turn into animals with an over-abundance of greed and avarice.

For centuries, God knew that man would struggle with the spirit of covetousness. In the giving of the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, God warned, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exod. 20:17). The prayer of the Psalmist was, "Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119:36). And what of the wisdom of the Proverbs, which admonishes, "But he who hates covetousness will prolong his days" (Prov. 28:16).

One would like to think that covetousness did not trouble the early church; but unfortunately, it did. When Ananias and his wife Sapphira saw the attention which Barnabas had received, along with the accolades, in their covetous spirit they chose to lie to God about the price of land (Acts 5:10-11). Even among the Jewish believers, James noted the contention. "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain..." (James 4:2).

Even today, we want people to think that covetousness is not found in the Lord's church. Think again! We are only deluding ourselves if we think that such a spirit is no longer found. It makes one wonder how people can act like animals in stores and attend church services acting like little angels?

And what of the beautiful words of the Hebrew writer, that stand as a challenge to us all. "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).