26-1101p Transcript

26-1101p - *Covetousness, Steve Cain*

Bible Reader: Mike Mathis

See a detailed summary: Detailed Summary HTML - Detailed Summary PDF

Covetousness

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 0:52): Mike Mathis **Romans 7:7-12**: (0:04) The scripture reading for tonight is taken from Romans 7, verses 7 through 12. (0:14) I'm reading from the New King James Version. (0:19) What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not. On the contrary, (0:29) I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness (0:42) unless the law had said, you shall not covet. But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, (0:54) produced in me all manner of evil	***Continued*** desire. For apart from the law, sin was dead. (1:07) But I was alive once without the law. But when the commandment came, (1:13) sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. (1:29) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me. (1:41) Therefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. That completes the reading. (1:53)

Transcript (0:04 - 29:11), Preacher: Steve Cain

(1:58) It's my desire to talk a little bit about covetousness. And of course, covetousness is (2:05) introduced to us, the evil of it, in the Ten Commandments where it says, thou shall not covet.

(2:13) And Paul's alluding to that particular command, thou shall not covet, in the passage that was (2:21) just read to us. He said that he would not have known what covetousness was if it had not been (2:28) for the law. He would have not known that it was wrong to covet and that it was a bad habit to do, (2:39) bad thing to do.

So as we reflect upon covetousness, what is covetousness? (2:47) The Webster Dictionary says it's a desire for wealth or possessions. (2:55) And as we reflect upon covetousness, I would like to add that it is one of those things that (3:02) challenge your Christianity and your desire to remain faithful to God. Covetousness (3:13) fosters distrust, not only in the individual, but also in God himself.

(3:23) We've shared with what covetousness does and the wrongness of it in James. If you'd like to refer (3:32) to James, the fourth chapter, and we'll look at verses one through four, he points out that (3:48) covetousness is one of the reasons why God does not want us to covet, period. (3:56) It says, James points out, and I'm reading from the New International Version, (4:00) What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? (4:10) You desire but do not have, so you kill, you covet, but you cannot get what you want, (4:19) so you quarrel and fight.

You do not have because you do not ask God, and when you ask, (4:26) you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on (4:36) your pleasures. Basically,

when we're looking at covetousness, we are concerning ourselves with (4:45) what we have or don't have and what we would like to have. Those are our desires, and so as we look (4:52) about, we see our neighbors, and we want to try to keep up with the Joneses, so we look at the (4:58) things that they have, and we say to ourselves, oh, wouldn't that be nice to have? But not only that, (5:06) there are times when we don't have what we need, and we are complaining to God about the fact that (5:15) how come all my money is going out to doctor's bills? Why are all my money going out to repairs (5:22) on my car or on my house? Why is my money going out? And so we're starting to think in terms of (5:30) what we don't have, and so we start comparing ourselves with one another and our neighbors, (5:36) and especially the Joneses, and we want to make sure that we're not going to have to deal with (5:43) them, aren't we? So as we reflect upon that, I'm referring to the Wednesday night class.

(5:51) We've got to deal with the Joneses once in a while, but as we reflect upon it, it is something that (5:59) we need to stop and think in terms of. I know that, sure, I think that, boy, wouldn't it be nice (6:09) if my kids were just beyond the medical stage, when they're from birth to, say, like age six, (6:19) they're constantly getting sick, and you're constantly taking them to the doctor's office, (6:24) and you're having to shell out not only to the pediatrician, [but] you're constantly buying (6:33) this or that for your child, and it's draining your money. And so you stop and think, boy, (6:40) wouldn't it be nice? And then you look at your neighbors, and you see that they perhaps have (6:45) better jobs than you do, or they're living in a better house than you, and they seemingly are (6:53) doing much better than you.

And so the proverb writer points out one thing that was something (7:02) very interesting to me, and that is that sometimes we have a tendency to make decisions based on (7:09) whether or not we're going to make money, whether or not it's going to help us, (7:12) and it falls flat, and it doesn't materialize. And the proverb writer says, we blame God for it. (7:22) When it was our decision, more than God's decision, it was our decision to do it based on (7:30) covetousness.

I want that money, and I have the need to have it. There is a psalm that I would (7:38) like for us to take a look at, and if you have your Bibles ready, let's take a look at Psalm 73. (7:46) And Psalm 73 is a very interesting thing.

(7:55) [The] writer is talking about how he almost gave up. He almost went to Satan's side, (8:08) almost gave up God, his faith in God, because of his covetousness. (8:15) And so take a look at this, and let's read the complete Psalm.

(8:21) This is going to be comprising most of my lesson this evening. The psalmist starts out by saying, (8:32) surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, (8:42) my feet had almost slipped.

I had nearly lost my foothold, for I envied the arrogant (8:51) when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. He's looking and he's coveting, isn't he? He's looking (8:59) there and he's seeing how much better their household is, how much better their living is, (9:05) how much better they have it than he and his family. So he goes on and he says why he struggled (9:15) and why he saw the prosperity of the wicked and why he almost lost his foothold because of his, (9:22) he envied the arrogant.

Verse four, they, and he's referring to them, the arrogant, (9:30) they have no struggles. Their bodies are healthy and strong compared to mine. (9:38) They are free from common human burdens.

They are not plagued by human ills. (9:47) Therefore, pride is their necklace. He's pointing out to us what their particular problem is, (9:57) but that doesn't deter him because he would like to be able to have that kind of pride himself.

(10:06) They clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity. Their evil (10:16) imaginations have no limits.

And this is why he's recognizing what's wrong with him wanting to have (10:26) what they have. They scoff and speak with malice, verse eight. With arrogance, they threaten (10:34) oppression.

Their mouths lay claim to heaven and their tongues take possession of the earth. (10:42) Therefore, their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, (10:50) how would God know? Does the Most High know anything? So that's what he's observing is the (10:58) fact that they're not concerned about God and they really don't believe in him.

They do not (11:05) give him the time of day. They thumb their nose at the concept that there is a God and that they (11:12) have to answer that. How does he know? Does the Most High know anything? Verse 12, this is what (11:23) the wicked are like.

Always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. Surely in vain I have kept (11:32) my heart pure. So he's saying, look, all the benefits they have by being evil and look at all (11:40) the riches that they're getting and so on.

It's maybe because I am worshiping God and concerned (11:49) about my righteousness in the sight of God. Is it all in vain? Is it worthless? Are they right? (11:56) Could they be right? So surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands (12:03) in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted and every morning brings new punishment[s].

So he (12:11) keeps looking at himself and comparing himself with his neighbors and with those of the community. (12:19) And so he's saying to himself, is it worth it? What I'm doing, is it worth being a God worshiper? (12:29) Is it worth being righteous in the sight of God? Is it worth it? Surely in vain, rereading verse 12 (12:38) or 13, surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. (12:45) All day long I have been afflicted and every morning brings new punishments.

(12:52) Verse 15, if I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to (13:00) understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood (13:08) their final destiny.

So when he came to himself and he realized the benefits of being a Christian (13:16) and being righteous, he realized the benefits outweigh what they have and the discomfort and (13:26) inconvenience that his life has. And so he's questioning, surely I'm being dumb, I'm being (13:35) stupid and considering going and trying to live the way they live. If I had spoken out, verse 15 (13:42) again, if I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.

And when I tried to (13:49) understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood (13:57) their final destiny. Surely you [place] them on slippery ground.

He's talking to God now (14:07) and he's talking about what God has in store for them. Surely you have placed them on slippery (14:14) ground. You cast them down to ruin.

How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by (14:21) terrors. They are like a dream when one wakes. When you arise, Lord, you will despise them as (14:31) fantasies.

When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant. (14:40) I was a brute beast before you. And so he's saying, look at what I considered and how dumb I was.

(14:48) Look at me. I now recognize the fact that when my heart was grieved and my spirit (14:56) embittered, I was senseless and ignorant. I was a brute beast before you.

Yet I am always with you. (15:04) He's now reflecting upon his relationship with God. And we need to reflect our relationship on (15:10) God and realize that God is with us and he's divinely intervening in our lives.

Verse 23. (15:20) Yet I am always with you. You hold me by my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel. (15:28) And afterward, you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing (15:38) I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart (15:47) and my portion forever. This is what you and I will sing when we have our wits about us (15:54) and we realize what is in store for the individual who is anti-God. And so in verse 27, (16:04) because of our righteousness and our desire to be righteous in the sight of God, (16:09) those who are far from you will perish.

You destroy all who are unfaithful to you. (16:16) But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the sovereign Lord my refuge.

I will tell (16:25) of all your deeds. And God desires to be glorified in the way in which he deals with us in our lives. (16:35) When we look at 1 John, John tells us what we are battling when we are dealing with (16:43) this particular thing.

And it's in chapter 2, verse 15, where he's talking about having (16:50) covetousness. He's talking about the fact that we want what we can't have or don't have, (16:58) like James points out to us. So John is pointing out to us about what covetousness (17:05) is really what it's all about.

He says, it's the love of the world. (17:12) And he's telling us, don't have the love of the world. What is the love of the world? (17:18) It is what you see your neighbors doing and how much fun they're having or seemingly having, (17:26) and how they party, and how they're getting away with various things.

And it's a lifestyle (17:34) that is full of covetousness. And it's worldliness. And so John is telling us, (17:42) do not love the world, verse 15, do not love the world or anything in the world.

(17:50) If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world, (17:58) the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life comes not from the Father, (18:05) but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God (18:15) lives forever.

I would like to close with the Galatian letter, chapter 5, (18:23) because he's talking about the fact that we need to be living in the Spirit. (18:29) I like to refer to the fact that whenever, when we became Christians, as Peter would point out to us (18:39) in Acts 2:38, that when we are baptized for the remission of our sins, to rise to walk in the (18:45) newness of life, what is instilled in us? It is

the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given for (18:55) several reasons.

We've talked about that in our class this morning. The Holy Spirit is given by (19:02) God as a guarantee, an earnest, if you will. It guarantees us that we are His child, and it (19:09) guarantees us that He is with us.

As long as we are walking in the light, as He is in the light, (19:15) He is with us. And He's assuring us that we will have eternal life. And eternal life (19:24) equates to heaven, being with God eternally in heaven.

And when we're baptized, we are given (19:31) the Spirit to guide us. What does the purpose of the Holy Spirit? He is to give us guidance (19:39) in the way that we should walk. When we see the job description that is given to us, I refer to (19:46) that as the job description found in the Gospel of John, chapter 16.

And Jesus is telling us what (19:55) the job description of the Holy Spirit is. But He's telling us here that this is what (20:02) we need to adopt in our lives. And I'll close with this.

My brothers, in chapter 5, verse 13, (20:13) here's what we need to realize. What is the life in the Spirit? You, my brothers and sisters, (20:22) were called to be free, but did not use your freedom to indulge in the flesh. Rather, serve (20:31) one another humbly in love, for the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command, (20:39) love your neighbor as yourself.

If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be (20:47) destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of (20:57) the flesh. What kind of a lifestyle do we desire? Just stop and think.

Don't you want happiness, (21:06) peace, joy? Don't you want those things? Yes. Paul's pointing that out to us, (21:16) that that's exactly what we have if we will walk by the Spirit and let the Spirit guide us. (21:23) But if we allow the world to have its way, it's going to destroy love, peace, and joy.

(21:31) They cannot coexist. You will have one or the other. You have to make the decision as to (21:38) whether or not you want to gratify the desires of the flesh, or if you want love, joy, and peace, (21:45) with which God wants you to have, and is giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us in this way.

(21:52) Notice what he says. So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh, (21:59) for the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the (22:05) flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

(22:12) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh, and he tells (22:19) us what the acts of the flesh is, and this is what we'll get to if you are coveting. Coveting (22:26) will bring about this particular line of thinking and the walk of life.

The acts of the flesh are (22:34) obvious, and he starts listing them. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, (22:46) witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, (22:56) factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, (23:06) that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

What kind of a lifestyle does a (23:13) drunkard have? What kind of a lifestyle does a drug addict

offer his family? (23:23) What kind of a lifestyle does a person with any of these particular things offer his family? (23:31) It's nothing but sadness and a lot of discord. So he says, but the fruit of the Spirit, (23:42) if you do this and try your level best to eliminate those other things from your life, (23:49) and it gives you the power to do that, the Holy Spirit empowers us to be able to rid our lives of (23:56) those particular acts of the flesh. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, (24:05) kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control against which there is no law.

(24:14) Take a look at the life of the flesh. There are laws that govern those things, aren't they? (24:21) And if you abuse them, you're going to be subject to the law and its penalties. (24:27) But if you do these, there's no law against it, is there? (24:32) That's why he's saying there's no law against being this.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, (24:38) joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (24:45) against such things. There is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh (24:54) and its passions and desires.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (25:03) Let us not become conceited, provoking, and envying each other. Let's turn to Romans 8, (25:13) and what we will see there is that when we become a Christian, we are dying to sin.

(25:27) And I take him literally, and I hope that you do too. We're dying to sin. Sin is what causes us (25:36) to do these particular things.

Paul talks about how he fights that particular urge to do the (25:44) things that he doesn't want to do, and [not] do the things that he does want to do. (25:52) And so he says, what am I fighting? It's sin. And sin, Paul says, we're going to die to it, (26:03) and therefore sin cannot have its effect on us.

I can do what I want to do, (26:10) and I don't have to do what I don't want to do. Why? Because I'm dead to its impulses. I'm dead (26:18) to its way of wanting to encourage me to do those things.

I'm dead to that. So when we became (26:25) Christians, we died to sin, and we have the ability to live a righteous life if we'll just (26:36) exercise it. Sin does not have to keep us from doing what we're wanting to do.

We can control it. (26:45) We can have a mastery over it. So therefore, he says, Romans 8, therefore, there is now (26:55) no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the (27:01) Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law was powerless (27:10) to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of (27:18) sinful flesh to be a sin offering, so he condemned sin in the flesh. He's saying, it's not to be (27:32) done. He's giving us power to be free of it.

He's giving us power to be free from addictions. He's (27:41) giving us power to be free from the lust of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of (27:47) life. He's giving us the ability to die to that.

Sin is dead. He condemned sin in the flesh in (27:56) order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us who do not live (28:03) according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. So I'm suggesting to you that covetousness (28:13) is the very thing that Paul is trying to point out to us.

It has a way of fighting us (28:24) and challenging our faith and whether or not we're going to continue to remain faithful to God (28:30) and continue to worship him and to live our lives the way God wants us to live. (28:37) And we don't have to, and we can die to it. And if you've already been baptized for the (28:42) remission of sins and died with Christ and put Christ on and acknowledged him, you have that (28:48) power.

You have that ability. But if you haven't, you don't have that power. We'd like to extend to (28:58) you the opportunity to have that power because everything is ready.

We can assist you to become (29:04) a Christian, to die to sin, and to put Christ on. Altogether, we stand and sing the song of encouragement. (29:11)