

Exodus 20:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Analysis

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The tenth command is internal—"lo tachmod" (לֹא תָּחִמֹּד, do not covet) addresses desire, not action. All previous commands concerned deeds; this penetrates the heart. 'Covet' means inordinate desire, greed that leads to grasping. The comprehensive list (house, wife, servants, animals, anything) covers all neighbor's possessions. Wife listed among property reflects ancient culture, but she's not 'thing'—she's covenant partner. Paul identifies coveting as idolatry (Colossians 3:5)—craving replaces God with stuff. Coveting sparked the first sin (Eve coveted forbidden fruit) and will mark the last days ('lovers of self, lovers of money,' 2 Timothy 3:2). Christ's contentment counters covetousness; gratitude defeats greed.

Historical Context

The tenth commandment uniquely addresses internal disposition rather than external action. This internalization reveals law's spiritual nature—God judges heart, not just hands. Paul says this command convicted him of sin (Romans 7:7).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why does God command about desires (coveting) and not just actions—what does this teach about law's spiritual nature?
2. How does gratitude for God's provision combat covetousness for neighbor's possessions?

Interlinear Text

לֹא תְּחַנֵּן דְּבַר יְהָוָה בְּבֵיתךְ לְרַעֲבָנִים
H3808 Thou shalt not covet house nor any thing that is thy neighbour's H3808
H2530 H1004 H7453

לְרַעֲבָנִים אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתךְ תְּחַנֵּן
Thou shalt not covet wife nor any thing that is thy neighbour's
H2530 H802 H7453

אֲשֶׁר יְהָוָה יְעַבֵּד וְאֶתְמָתוֹ וְאֶתְשָׁוֵר וְאֶתְמָרֵן
nor his manservant nor his maidservant nor his ox nor his ass H3605 H834
H5650 H519 H7794 H2543

לְרַעֲבָנִים
nor any thing that is thy neighbour's
H7453

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:9 (Parallel theme): For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not

covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Luke 12:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Hebrews 13:5 (Parallel theme): Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Colossians 3:5 (Parallel theme): Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

Ephesians 5:5 (Parallel theme): For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Romans 7:7 (Parallel theme): What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

Ephesians 5:3 (Parallel theme): But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

Matthew 5:28 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Job 31:9 (Parallel theme): If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;

Jeremiah 5:8 (Parallel theme): They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.