

## Paraklēsis: Resentment

I remember when I was a child in grade school, not having grown up in or been involved with any church, I heard that “**God is everywhere all the time.**” This was such a strange concept to me, that I can still remember; on one sunny day, some girl told that to me on the playground at school. Today, I still ponder the concept of God being infinite in nature. I will return to this idea later.

For now, I’d like to start off with the 10 Commandments – Exodus 20:1-17. If you have a minute now, you should read the whole thing. But I am going to focus on v.17:

*“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:17)*

Notice that the command does not say: “You shall not covet your neighbor because of the love he has for God and people, nor shall you covet the love he receives from them.” Obviously, that is not part of the Commandments – God did not write that. But, is it ok to covet someone else’s love? **Covet is intrinsically a bad word – it requires some level of resentment** toward the person who has the thing being coveted. I think it is accurate and correct that often people write the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment as simply “Do not Covet.” Covet contains resent.

I think we can all agree resentment is bad. We are regularly encouraged and instructed in scripture to lift each other up. How can we do that when we see that our neighbor has something that we want or feel that we need – even if that something is good and righteous?

Let’s say I notice someone in my life whom is greatly blessed. This person is clearly well loved by God and others around them and they are “really good” at loving God and others around them. When I notice that someone is exhibiting human traits that I feel are better than mine, **I have two responsibilities.** The first is to not covet (it is a Commandment, right?) and the second is to lift that person up; in a sense, the opposite of resentment... Here are a few of the many scriptures that say this:

*Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (1Thes 5:11)*

*So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Rom 14:19)*

And my favorite:

*...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (Heb 10:24)*

By communicating to them that I noticed the good thing they do and how great it is, **I empower them and encourage them and to some extent validate them.** This is one way to show love. It is also not an easy thing to do, as it takes humility.

Those are my two responsibilities, “don’t covet, instead encourage.” But **there is also a third thing that I will definitely want to do** for my own benefit. Can you guess what that third thing is? Here is a hint:

*“Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, “Because I bore him with pain.” Now **Jabez called on the God of Israel,** saying, “Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!” And God granted him what he requested.” (1 Chronicles 4:9-10)*

I have been talking about coveting here and I have emphasized that coveting anything is a bad idea. Do you agree? But, let’s go back to my parody of Exodus 20:17. “You shall not covet anyone's house; you shall not covet anyone's wife (or husband,) you shall not covet their male or female servant, you shall not covet the

love that they have for their neighbor or the love that they receive from their neighbor or anything that belongs to anyone."

No, we should not covet someone's love. Remember, to covet is to resent the person, which is bad. *Desiring* the love you see in someone else is not bad, but if it leads to resentment, then it is a sin. Here's some good news. For those who know about it, **love has a unique characteristic that makes it covet-proof.**

The Adversary did not know about this characteristic, or he forgot about it, or most likely, he just didn't care, when he accused Job. It sounds to me like **Satan coveted Job's status of being blameless** in the eyes of God. In Job 1:9-11, he said to God: Of course Job is blameless... you bless Him so much, why wouldn't he be? "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." That is what resentment looks and sounds like.

In this case, God's perfect and infinite patience kind of irritates me! If I were God, when Satan wagged his finger in my face like that, I would have chained him up and thrown him into the pit right then and there!

Good thing I am not God. **His plan is perfect:**

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)*

Anyway, it isn't only love that has this characteristic. I'll venture that **all the fruits of the spirit have this covet-proof aspect.** The characteristic I am getting at here is that these things, especially love, all have God as their source and therefore are an infinite resource. **There can never be a shortage.** Those things are always available. They are always abundantly available to us regardless of what our neighbor has.

Here's an analogy... You're driving in your car and all of a sudden, the engine sputters and dies and your car coasts to a stop. You realize that your gas tank is empty! Ah-Ha. What is the problem? Is there a shortage of gas? Well, in your tank, yes! But how many gas stations did you pass recently? The real problem is that you didn't stop to buy gas! And, as the other cars drive by you, do you covet the gas in their tanks? Maybe you covet the drivers' forethought and preparedness... Remember Jabez and his prayer? **The solution is simple.**

*This is the confidence which we have before God, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15)*

So, all you need to do is ask and you will receive. The Kingdom of Heaven is a rare pearl, a hidden treasure, and getting there is like a camel passing thorough an eye of a needle. Narrow is the gate, and few are chosen. This sounds like quite the challenge. But never forget this: **Love is an infinite resource that flows from God, available to all.** He does love us and wants us to love one another. That is how we show our love for Him, by keeping His commandments and by loving each other – our brethren, our neighbors, and our enemies.

*"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4)*

*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)*

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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