

Covetousness

[William Gouge](#)

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Of the Practice of Covetousness in Getting Wealth

Covetousness is practiced three ways:

1. In getting.
2. In keeping.
3. In spending what a man hath.

1. When wealth is gotten unconscionably or immoderately, it is a sign of a covetous heart.

That is said to be unconscionably gotten which is gotten against any duty whereunto conscience is bound, as-

1. Against any particular precept. Therein Achan covetously transgressed, Josh. vii. 21.
2. Against piety; as they which buy and sell on the Sabbath-day for gain, Neh. xiii. 16.
3. Against justice; as Ahab, who by Naboth's unjust death got his vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 19.
4. Against charity; as the rich man that took the poor man's sheep to entertain his friend, 2 Sam. xii. 6.
5. Against equity; as Gehazi, who got that which his master refused, 2 Kings v. 20.

6. Against truth; as Ananias and Sapphira with a lie kept back part of that which was devoted to the church, Acts v. 2.

7. Against all these; which was Judas his sin in betraying his Master for thirty pieces of silver, Mat. xxvi. 15.

Whatsoever is by force or fraud, by stealing, lying, or any other indirect course gotten, is an effect of covetousness. It argueth an over-greedy desire. If it were not so, no means would be used but that which is lawful; and in the use of them men would depend on God, and be content with that portion which he by his providence affords them.

An immoderate getting is, when men spend their wit, pains, and time in getting the goods of this world, and rather than fail, lose their meal's meat, and sleep, and other refreshments, yea, and neglect the means of getting heavenly treasure: they are only and wholly for the things of this world. If spiritual and temporal blessings cannot stand together, temporals shall be preferred and spiritual neglected: as the Gadarenes, for fear of losing more swine, prayed Christ to depart from their coast, Mark v. 17; and they who, for their farm and oxen's sake, refused to come to the Lord's supper, Luke xiv. 18, &c.

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