

### **Greed: Good or Bad? (part four of a twelve part study)**

This segment will not be devoted to examining the secret of overcoming greed. That will be the focus of part five in this study. For now, we will consider the relevance of Paul's conversion and how God used him to expose the connection between covetousness and idolatry. No other writer of the New Testament establishes this nexus between greed and idolatry as directly as Paul. He does so on two separate occasions; in Ephesians 5:5, as well as in Colossians 3:5 –

**“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”**

**“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”**

While it is true that our sinful desires can turn almost anything or anyone into an idol, I am unaware of any other sin being equated so directly with the worship of a false god. It can certainly be attributed, in part, to Paul's personal bondage to covetousness. Nevertheless, the apostle's resulting insight into the serious nature of greed, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, takes us beyond his personal experience, and serves to corroborate an often neglected teaching of our Savior in Matthew 6:24 –

**“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”**

Jesus is warning us about the incompatibility of serving two masters equally; since a love/hate relationship will exist between them. No other sin is portrayed as being so divisive toward our devotion to God than the pursuit of wealth. The clear implication is that greed and its corresponding quest for material gain produces a bondage like no other, so as to render an individual its servant; with wealth becoming an object of worship. This in turn makes devoted service to God impossible. If Matthew 6:24 no longer resonates with your willful ignorance toward the idolatrous aspects of greed, maybe what Jesus says in Luke 16:15 will penetrate your self-imposed blind spot. While acknowledging the Pharisee's love of money as something admired on a human level, He also reminds them and us, that this very same “love of money” is detestable in the sight of God. In its original Greek usage, the word “detestable” described something offensive due to its stench; and came to be understood as synonymous with an abomination.