

Greed: Good or Bad? (part six of a twelve part study)

Whether lovers of money realize it or not, bondage to greed places an individual into an ever deepening psychological black hole. You know you are in that hole, when you can't stop digging; and no amount of financial affluence is ever enough. This syndrome originally became evident in Greek etymology. There are two words in the text of the Greek New Testament used to convey the concept of greed. The word "epithumeo" speaks of desire or lust, and can apply to any area of life where our cravings extend beyond the boundaries of what is considered to be moral and ethical. However, the second word is more relevant in regard to a predisposition toward accumulating wealth. It is "pleonektes." In its most primitive Greek usage, it simply meant: **"more;"** and came to be understood as an unhealthy desire for more. Have you ever wondered why the mega rich have so many houses, cars and boats? It is due to an out of control and insatiable lust for **"more."**

But why? Why is their acquisition of money and possessions never enough? The Word of God reveals the underlying motivation for their avarice. It is rooted in both anxiety and fear. After Jesus warns about the danger of becoming a servant of wealth in Matthew 6:24, He then says the following in 6:25-27 –

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"

While anxiety is primarily self-centered and emphasizes our inability to control the future; fear involves more of a present tense focus on whatever dangers may await outside the boundaries of our personal bubble. Thus, the mega rich not only have a multitude of possessions which they can control, but also bodyguards to protect them from people they can't control. Together, anxiety and fear can produce this addictive bondage known as greed. In addition to the admonition of Jesus regarding anxiety in Matthew 6:24-27, the author of Hebrews, writing to first century Jewish Christians who were being persecuted for their faith in Christ, provides them and us, with this encouragement about fear, in Hebrews 13:5-6 –

"Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,' so that we may confidently say, 'THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?'"