



The Seven Deadly Sins: Greed | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | March 27, 2022

OLD TESTAMENT READING

Genesis 19

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." 3 But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate... 15 As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." 16 But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."... 26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Acts 4:32-5:4

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it

Summary:

Greed or avarice: over or inordinate attachment to money or possessions and what those money or possessions can do.

Where It's From

Greed includes all our behavioral patterns of possession—hoarding, spending, grasping, and acquiring—and has both an interior and exterior component.

Acquinas called interior greed an excessive love for the world and the things in it. This inordinate attachment can wear a groove or pattern in the desires of our hearts and results in exterior greed. Referring to exterior greed, Rebecca Young says "Greed wears many faces" and follows the statement with examples of greed in life. She then continues, "In all its varied expressions of gain and grasping, it is a perverted love." The disordered (out of proper priority) love of things and what they can do interacts synergistically with the vices of sloth and gluttony and illustrates the nature of exterior greed. Lot's greed had fatal consequences. In Gen. 19:16 Lot "lingered." Lot had not only become an inhabitant of Sodom, but he was sitting in the gate among the leaders of the city. Lot's unwillingness to leave what he valued and loved resulted from his unwillingness to submit to God as a sojourner bound for a better, heavenly country. He had violated the injunction in Psalm 1 not to "walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers." Lot even tries to bargain with the angels for a lesser separation, a move to another village, rather than the mountains. The attempt to mitigate the sentence almost kills him. It turns his wife to a pillar of salt.

What Greed Does

First, it makes us lie. The greed of Ananias and Sapphira is intertwined with deceit, and the deceit is the greater issue, a deeper step into sin. Verse 4 indicates that the greed could have been avoided, but "the lie" bookends Peter's words to Ananias. Greed got him there, but lying killed him. The application for us is to confess right now. Follow the confession to the vice and confess both. Second, greed strengthens the Greater Lie, the myth of ownership. CS Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* speaks from the viewpoint of Screwtape, a veteran demon advising a lesser temptor about how to trap a human soul in the great lie of human possession.

was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 6:19-24 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

"The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged...."my dog," "my servant," "my father," "my master," and "my country," to "my God." They can be taught to reduce all these senses to that of "my boots," the "my" of ownership.... And all the time the joke is that the word "mine" in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either Our Father (*Satan in Lewis's story*) or the Enemy (*God in this story*) will say "mine" of each thing that exists, and specially of each man. They will find out in the end, never fear, to whom their time, their souls, and their bodies really belong—certainly not to *them*, whatever happens."

Italic insertions mine, *Screwtape Letters*, chapter 21.

Lewis emphases that nothing is mine or yours, only God's—the body, possessions, relationships, and ultimately not even our souls. . The great lie turns us into black holes, sucking everything into ourselves and never giving out. Love for anything can become greed, gluttony, or lust.

How Greed Is Undone

Generosity originates, first and foremost, with God's generosity. God doesn't need anything we have, but he will give everything in order to ransom our souls from sin. Jesus never referred to any object as "mine," only to souls. He gave up his body to claim our sins as his own. Can that melt our hearts? Make us want to love him back? Nothing in the world, the flesh, and the devil loves us. It all wants to use us. But Jesus loves us. If we will love Him, we will be changed and we will become generous like him. As we experience God's generosity and practice generosity ourselves, we become even more generous; and we will be changed. Ultimately, we will let go of grasping, and we will learn to give.

Discussion:

1. Where do we linger? Over what? What can we do to forsake this disordered love?
2. What does our attention say about what we value? Think prayerfully about the kinds of things, material and emotional, that occupy our attention, and then look for patterns. How can we learn to open our hands and give up the things we grasp at?
3. Is there something for which we would try to make a deal with God, rather than give it up? Follow this to its conclusion and give it up now.
4. Is there something about which you are tempted to lie? Something about which you have already lied or deceived someone? Follow it to find your vice and confess. Consider how to turn from this vice, and ask in prayer for God's help.