

Sick of Greed
Allen Power
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2 Kings 5:14-16, 20-22, 24-27

Opening: Anyone watch the reality TV shows **HORDERS** and **BURIED ALIVE**? It's a little like a car accident...you know you should look away but you just can't! What controls these people's lives? **STUFF...STUFF** they can't let go of.

Compulsive hoarding (or pathological hoarding or disposophobia)[1] is the excessive acquisition of possessions (and failure to use or discard them), even if the items are worthless, hazardous, or unsanitary. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compulsive_hoarding

It's an **ILLNESS** and thankfully most of us are not **AFFLICTED**. However, we **DO** have to ask ourselves the question: "To what extent is my life controlled by **STUFF**?"

Today we're talking about **GREED**.

Remember the scene from the **FIRST** movie **WALL STREET**? Michael Douglas playing **GORDON GEKKO** takes the microphone and strolls to the front of the room to utter the most **FAMOUS** line of the movie. Remember what it was? **GREED IS GOOD!**

GREED is **NOT** ambition to have a savings account or the money to provide for family.

GREED: IS excessive desire to possess wealth or goods with the intention to keep it for one's self. Wealth, status, and power. Desire to acquire or possess more than one needs or deserves, especially with respect to material wealth. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greed>

Baptists and Catholics don't agree on a lot of things. *But "The Medieval Roman Catholic Church identified greed as one of the seven deadly sins, sins which impair grace in the soul. Baptists would not agree with some aspects of this Catholic teaching, but we would certainly affirm the grave danger of this terrible sin."*

<http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/ss/explore/012311.htm>

It's not surprising that a **PAGAN...an UNBELIEVER...**would think **GREED IS GOOD**. But, before you **CHECK OUT AND THINK THIS LESSON IS NOT FOR YOU** consider this question: What happens when a **PROFESSING BELIEVER** has a **GREEDY STREAK**? That's our **TOPIC TODAY**.

First, the "back story":

- You've heard of the prophet Elijah...the prophet who took on the prophets of **BAAL**...
- Remember, he had them pour water on the altar and yet, God sent down fire!

- When Elijah went to heaven he DIDN'T DIE...he went up to heaven in a WHIRLWIND.
- His "right hand man" was Elisha
- When Elijah was taken up to heaven...Elisha asked Elijah for a DOUBLE PORTION of Elijah's spirit.
- Before today's story Elisha had parted the Jordan river; purified a poisoned spring; and raised a woman's son from the dead. This was Elisha.
- Elisha had a number two guy as well...Gehazi (gih-HAY-zigh) (More in a minute)
- The other character in this account: Naaman (NAY-uh-muhn) the GREAT GENERAL
- We're talking FAMOUS WARRIOR – Like Schwartzkopf; Collin Powell; Patton.
- A GREAT WARRIOR with a BIG PERSONAL PROBLEM...a skin disease...form of LEPROSY. NOT just UNCOMFORTABLE, IRRITATING, but UNCLEAN!
- Naaman's wife had a SLAVE GIRL...an ISRAELITE
- She said: "I know a prophet in Israel!" "He's been doing MIRACLES."
- Naaman did what a man of his stature would: Got his KING to write to ISRAEL'S KING
- ISRAEL'S KING thought they were trying to pick a FIGHT...
- ELISHA heard about it and said...SEND HIM TO ME
- Naaman came with ALL HIS ENTOURAGE to ELISHA's house
- ELISHA wouldn't see him...he instead sent a messenger Gehazi (gih-HAY-zigh) out to say: DIP SEVEN TIMES IN THE JORDAN
- Naaman was TICKED! The Jordan was DIRTY. This would be humiliating.
- We have BETTER RIVERS in DAMASCUS...
- NO, THE MAN SAYS THE JORDAN...SEVEN TIMES!
- Naaman LEFT MAD...but his servants PERSUADED HIM
- This is where we pick up the story:

2 Kings 5:14-16

14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."

16 The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

- Question: Why do you think ELISHA refused to SEE Naaman; LAY HANDS on him?
- Thought: To prove that GOD DID THE MIRACLE...NOT... Elisha!

- Question: When ELISHA told Naaman to go to the Jordan what did Naaman TRY TO DO? NEGOTIATE WITH GOD’S PLAN.
- What did he EVENTUALLY DO that gave him his MIRACLE? OBEY
- Thought: Dipping in the Jordan probably seemed TOO EASY! Kind of like the reaction people have to God’s offer of FORGIVENESS. JUST BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST? THAT’S ALL? Don’t I have to DO SOMETHING BIGGER?
- Question: Why do you think ELISHA REFUSED gifts?
- Follow up question: What do we call it when we’re GIVEN SOMETHING THAT WE DON’T DESERVE that CAN’T BE PURCHASED? G R A C E !
- God’s FAVOR can’t be purchased. God’s MAN wasn’t IN IT FOR THE MONEY! At least GOD’s man ELISHA wasn’t...but THEN THERE WAS GEHAZI (gih-HAY-zigh)

2 Kings 5:20-22

20 Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, “My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

21 So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. “Is everything all right?” he asked.

22 “Everything is all right,” Gehazi answered. “My master sent me to say, ‘Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent[a] of silver and two sets of clothing.’”

- Let’s TRACK the SINS Gehazi begins to commit:
- Verse 20: What SIN do you see there? GREED
- Back in verse 16 ELISHA said “as surely as the Lord lives...” SO DID GEHAZI ...an OATH for the WRONG REASONS. Lord’s name in VAIN.
- Verse 22: What SIN do you see there? LYING and USING MINISTRY FOR GAIN! (Example: Salem’s meetings this week)

2 Kings 5:24-26

24 When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left.

25 When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?”

“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.

26 But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you?”

- Let’s keep TALLYING up Gehazi’s sin:
- Verse 25: What sin? MORE LIES. LIES ALWAYS LEAD TO MORE LIES.

Sir Walter Scott, in his poem Marmion wrote:

*Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!
Marmion, Canto vi. Stanza 17.*

Aside from being a SIN, I’ve always said I avoid lying BECAUSE I DON’T HAVE A GOOD ENOUGH MEMORY to start LYING. LIES ALWAYS LEAD TO MORE LIES.

- Verse 26: What did Gehazi FORGET that ALL BELIEVERS KNOW? GOD sees EVERYTHING.

Proverbs 15:11

11 Death and Destruction[a] lie open before the LORD—
how much more do human hearts!

Jeremiah 23:23-24

23 “Am I only a God nearby,”

declares the LORD,

“and not a God far away?”

24 Who can hide in secret places

so that I cannot see them?”

declares the LORD.

“Do not I fill heaven and earth?”

declares the LORD.

Proverbs 17:3

3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold,
but the LORD tests the heart.

Revelation 2:23 Jesus said of the churches...

23 ...Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Proverbs 24:12

12 If you say, “But we knew nothing about this,”

does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?

Does not he who guards your life know it?

Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?

1 Samuel 16:7

7 ... The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

- In the second part of verse 26 ELISHA spells out the problem:

Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?

- “We don’t do MINISTRY FOR MONEY!” “Don’t you trust God to provide what we’re supposed to have?” “THIS IS NOT THE TIME for our REWARD!”
- Then in verse 27 THE HAMMER DROPS! ELISHA says...

27 Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow. Warren Wiersbe again:

God judged Gehazi by giving him leprosy and promising that at least one of his descendants in each generation would be a leper. The covetousness that ate away at his heart became leprosy eating away at his body. Gehazi had hoped to leave great wealth to his descendants, but instead, he left great shame and sorrow for years to come.

We said earlier WE CAN EXPECT GREEDINESS AMONG PAGANS, UNBELIEVERS. What about BELIEVERS?

Question: If a PROFESSING CHRISTIAN has a GREEDY STREAK, what does that say about their FAITH?

It’ says they don’t believe: Philippians 4:19

19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 15:27

27 The greedy bring ruin to their households,
but the one who hates bribes will live.

- Just look at the Madoffs! How many TRUST FUND KIDS in rich families do you know whose lives have been RUINED because of the FAMILY FORTUNE?

Proverbs 28:25

25 The greedy stir up conflict,
but those who trust in the LORD will prosper.

- What do most spouses argue about? Money!
- What causes rifts in families when the parents die? Money and stuff!

In The Parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus said:

Luke 12:15

15 ... “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

Ephesians 5:5

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[a]

- It’s not wrong to be wealthy “*if that’s God’s will for your life, for Abraham and Isaac were wealthy and so was David. But it is wrong to get that wealth through deceit and to make that wealth your god.*” (Wiersbe OT Commentary P. 687)
- DID YOU GET THAT? Making WEALTH YOUR GOD.
- “I would never do that?” “I don’t LIE to get money...I don’t CHEAT to get money.”
- Get ready, I’m about to stop TEACHING and GO TO MEDDLING.

Malachi 3:8-10

8 “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’

“In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

A Thought:

If a Christian focuses on material accumulation minus obedience to God we may be more like Madoff than we’d like to admit!

We think GREED is CHEATING PEOPLE and having a YACHT and a ROLLS. It may be CHEATING GOD and having the latest (you fill in the blank).

So What’s The TAKEAWAY?

- GREED is a subtle SIN that can sneak into a Christian’s life more easily than we think. It can be disguised as just LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM.
- It isn’t WRONG TO BE WEALTHY. It’s when MATERIAL THINGS become IDOLS that we’ve stepped into dangerous territory.
- Material accumulation MINUS OBEDIENCE to God EQUALS TROUBLE.