

The Helper Who Got Greedy

by Denis Lyle

The sermon warns against the dangers of covetousness and the consequences of allowing greed to dominate one's life.

Scripture: Luke 16:13

Topics: "Covetousness", "Spiritual Integrity"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about Gehazi, the helper who got greedy, using the story of a mouse transformed into a tiger to illustrate how covetousness can distort values, destroy ministry, and rob one of their destiny. Gehazi's lust for gold led him to deceive and mislead, ultimately resulting in devastating losses of integrity, vitality, and destiny. The sermon emphasizes the dangers of serving both God and money, highlighting the biblical warnings against covetousness and the tragic examples of those who fell due to greed.

Transcript

2 Kings 5: 20-27 THE HELPER WHO GOT GREEDY There is a legend from India concerning a mouse, which was terrified of cats. A magician agreed to help him and transformed the mouse into a cat. That seemed to resolve his fears until he came face to face with a dog. He took his case to the magician who changed him this time into a dog. The mouse - turned cat - turned dog was very content until he met a tiger, Crippled with fear, he persuaded the magician to turn him into what he now feared most and so he became a tiger.

It wasn't long, however, before he came back to the magician in his new guise as a tiger with his brand new phobia... he had met a hunter! The magician adamantly refused to help this time. He said, "I will turn you back into a mouse, for though you have the body of a tiger, you still have the heart of a mouse." Now in spite of months and years of association with Elisha, (4:18) his servant Gehazi remained in essence the same man... unspiritual, hard - hearted and mercenary... the exact opposite of Elisha!

The remarkable thing is that Elisha waited so long in order to deal with him! My, God gave Gehazi every opportunity to change. He exposed the twisted soul of Elisha's servant to many life - changing circumstances: hardships certainly, but hardships touched again and again with the miraculous power of God . The story of Gehazi is a frightening show - case for the power of covetousness, and its ability to shrivel a man's soul, distorting his values, destroying his ministry, and eventually robbing him of his destiny!

When we look at Gehazi we are reminded of the saying that "the man who lives for man alone, lives for the meanest mortal known." Gehazi is a man we want to forget, yet we can't for there is a potential Gehazi in all of our hearts! Have we not often heard the saying, "He's in it for the money!" Its certainly a dangerous condition when the servants of God or the people of God are in the grip of covetousness! Great losses are always incurred when men and women fall into this trap.

Achan caused Israel to experience defeat in a crucial battle, and Ananias and Sapphira forfeited their earthly lives. The news media regularly reveal the shocking news that another outstanding pastor, preacher or evangelist has fallen because of his lust for gold, girls, or glory! My, the Lord Jesus did not say, "Its a little difficult to serve God and Money". He said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon". (Lk 16:13) And not one of us here this... is immune from the seductive approaches of the lure of money!

Indeed Gehazi found this lure to be so strong that desiring to be rich he thereby fell "into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drawn men in destruction and perdition". (1 Tim 6:9) I want to talk to you this... about THE HELPER WHO GOT GREEDY! (1) THE LUST THAT DOMINATED HIM James says, that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed". (James 1:14) Without doubt Gehazi's "own lust", his particular and powerful lust (excessive desire) was his greed for gold, his thirst for things!

Essentially, greed is covetousness, an inordinate desire to acquire more and more! Covetousness is the excessive desire for what one does not have, especially what belongs to another! This lust for more usually shows up in four main areas of life. (1) There is the Greed for Money: I mean people will sacrifice friends, family, and health to draw that big salary and turn that higher profit. (2) There is the Greed for Things: Money buys toys and the one with the most toys wins... something... noone knows what! (3) There is the Greed for Fame: To be known and quoted, popular and influential are the goals of this greed. (4) There is the Greed for Pleasure: It can be any sensual pleasure... sex: food: or comforts in life!

Now what was (1) His greed for gold! My, this lust, this greed is: (a) REVEALED IN THE SERVANT: Can you hear Gehazi reasoning with himself in (5:20) " Naaman just wanted to say thank you. To refuse him would be discourteous: after all, he insisted that we take it... The man has millions! This is pocket change. And he did bring it all this way: no sense in his lugging it back... God provides in surprising ways, doesn't He Who would have imagined our needs being met by a Syrian...

Sure, Elisha can perform a miracle and God provides for him, but I have nothing. I have scrubbed his floors too long. I need the money, and I deserve it." All of Gehazi's rationalisations sound so convincing don't they But this is simple covetousness! Its behind-the-back-while-no-one-is-looking greed! Do you know anything about it Do you ever have that hungry look when your friend shows you her new carpet How do you feel girls when you see your best friends wardrobe filled with new clothes And men, when your neighbour pulls into the drive with his new BMW do you have that longing gaze Illus: An unusual advert appeared in England in 1836 offering a prize of 100 guineas to the author of the best essay on "The Sin of Covetousness".

The ad began, " many of the wisest and best of men are of the opinion that there is no sin so prevalent among professing Christians as the love of money and yet there is no subject on which so little has been written". The winning essay was entitled "Covetousness the sin of the Christian church". My, this greed is (a) The Servant who Experienced the Right Company: For Gehazi had been in the presence and in the service of Elisha the man of God". (5:20) He had seen the sanctified and sacrificial life of Elisha but

fellowship with God's saints and servants does not necessarily produce holiness of heart and purity of life!

My, because a man is in leadership it does not necessarily mean that he is delivered from grasping covetousness! The Servant who Expressed the Right Phraseology: Look at (5:20) This is the name Gehazi drags into the dirt in order to have a front for his dirty business! Could it be that like Gehazi you're using the right terminology but the reality is missing My, is greed, covetousness your besetting sin This lust, greed (a) (b) **REBUKED IN THE SCRIPTURE**: For when we examine the character of this sin, in the light of the Word of God we discover how hideous it really is!

Do you recall what the Lord Jesus said "Beware of covetousness". (Lk 12:15) In (Rom 1) Paul classifies the covetous man with those who are "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness". (Rom 1:29) In (Col 3:5) Paul describes covetousness as idolatry and in (1 Tim 6:10) it is described as "the root of all evil", for it exposes the soul to various temptations! My, do you recognise that covetousness is only a step removed from theft Do you realise that it's generally associated with falsehood And that it often leads to murder! (1 Kings 21:2) My, the Bible is full of examples of once great servants of God who chose slavery to mammon!

Esau sold his birthright: Lot chose to live in Sodom, Samson became blind and imprisoned, Solomon decayed into debauchery and excess, Demas forsook Paul... because in each case these men lusted covetously after that which God had not chosen to give them! For Gehazi there was (1) But look again and notice: (2) **THE LIES THAT DENIGRATED HIM** The Bible says that the Lord hates the "feet that be swift in running to mischief". (Prov 6:18) And surely the Lord was angry with Gehazi that day as he sped down the road to overtake the homeward bound Naaman!

Do you see his first lie "My master hath sent me". Do you see his second lie "There be come two young men". Do you see his third lie "My master hath sent me saying". Do you see his fourth lie When Elisha questioned him he said, "Thy servant went no whither". (5:25) I want you to notice here that Gehazi: (a) **MISSTATED HIS CONDITION**: For in response to Naaman's question he said, "All is well". (5:22) But My, all was not well. The snare of the devil was even then entrapping his soul.

He was a victim of covetousness. He was even then bowing down at the gilded altar of mammon! He pictured himself coming back home with a bag full of bank notes and a self-satisfied leer on his face. And why not "Leprosy cures don't come cheap these days do they We deserve remuneration. Besides, Naaman can afford it." My, to Gehazi religion was big business, just as it is to many healing evangelists today. Illus: Bishop Hall said of Gehazi, "His heart was packed up in Naaman's suitcases and he must run after him to fetch it".

One thing is sure all was not well! And all is not well in the life of the believer who is attempting to serve two masters! Listen again to the Saviour's words: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Lk 16:13) If we choose to serve money, then we cannot serve God. If we choose to serve God, then we will not serve money. My, if God is our Master, then money will be our servant, and we will use our resources in the will of God, but if God is not our Master then we will become the servants of money and money is a terrible master!

Illus: Harry Fielding wrote: " Make money your god and it will plague you like the devil". My, is money your god Are you attempting to serve two masters (a) (b) **MISREPRESENTED HIS MASTER**: " Salvation is free", Elisha had declared (5:16) "Oh, no, it isn't", said Gehazi! My, to the generous and grateful Naaman Gehazi spun a web of lies. "My master hath sent me saying... garments". (5:22) Do you see what Gehazi

did He misrepresented his masters mind: Elisha had not changed his attitude to Naaman and his wealth: he misrepresented his masters motive: Elisha did not want Naaman to assume responsibility for two young theological students: he misrepresented his masters message: Elisha did not want the free grace of God to be tagged with a price!

My, can you imagine this Here was a man who knew what was right resorting to falsehood to line his own pockets! Do Christians tell lies Do you tell lies Would you tell a lie to bolster your own pride To justify some rash action To get your own way Would you business men tell a lie to secure some business contract Paul says: "Putting away lying and speak every man truth with his neighbour". (Eph 4:25 Ps 119:29) There was something Gehazi did. He: (c) MISLED HIS BENEFACTOR: He deliberately deceived Naaman.

He shamelessly appealed to the general's sense of gratitude, and sinfully exploited the generous officer. Naaman instantly responded to Gehazi's request, "Be content, take two talents". And then of all things Gehazi appeared as if he were reluctant to accept anything from the hand of Naaman! So we read that Naaman "urged him". (5:23) My, here was a man who only recently had come to know Jehovah as the God of all grace. Can you imagine the effect that Gehazi's dishonesty would have had upon him if only he had known about it I wonder do other believers know about you My, is your life a stumbling block to some babe in Christ One thing is sure "none of us liveth to himself...

"(Rom 14:7) We're making an impact for good or evil. We're either a help or a hindrance to the babes in Christ! (Matt 18:6) Did Gehazi get away with it Well look not only (1) (2) (3) THE LOSS THAT DEVASTATED HIM Gehazi proved the fact that you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool God any of the time! Gehazi imagined that he could deceive the prophet as easily as he had deceived the Syrian general. But Elisha, who dwelt in the secret place of the Most High was thoroughly acquainted with all of Gehazi's attitudes and activities!

Elisha boldly challenged Gehazi, called him to repentance, and upon seeing his cold response to this word, then pronounced judgment upon him! My, think of the high hopes that Elisha entertained regarding "this spirited and evidently gifted young man". But Gehazi lost it all! I wonder was Gehazi in Paul's mind when he wrote to young Timothy, " For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows". (1 Tim 6:10) Gehazi lost three things!

He lost: (a) HIS INTEGRITY: He went downhill Morally: Morally, we saw Gehazi fall into thieving and deceit! Are you, like Gehazi guilty of deception My, this is such a serious matter... please deal with it before the roof comes crashing down around you. Its so vital to clear your conscience before God, and perhaps also, before the ones you've been deceiving: Dad: Mom: sons: daughters: employers: employees: church friends... whoever! (a) (b) HIS VITALITY: He went downhill PHYSICALLY: Look at (5:27) There is a kind of "poetic justice", about it all.

Naaman the leper, became the servant, and Gehazi the servant became the leper. Naaman's loose change became Gehazi's leprous curse! Illus: Someone has said, "Those who covet the world's treasure often have to share the world's uncleanness". My, live for things that perish and you will perish along with them! (c) HIS DESTINY: He went downhill SPIRITUALLY: Gehazi, who was undoubtedly being groomed as Elisha's successor as God's prophet, narrowed his vision dramatically! Elisha summed it up: it shrank only to include "clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds,... menservants and maidservants".

Evidently this is what Gehazi planned to spend his ill-gotten gains upon! What a poor trade-off! He sold out his rich plans for a life dominated by money: fashion: property and position. Elisha rebuked him, not because his vision was too large but because it was too small. My, you and I have only one life to live, and its too valuable to be squandered frivolously on lesser things. (c) This life is the only you have... the all-important question is this: What does God want you to do with it What is your destiny Illus: Some time ago a journalist paid a visit to the former world heavy weight boxing champion.

Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay) was world famous. His face appeared regularly on sport's magazine covers: T.V. chat shows: award ceremonies and even presidential dinners. He fought at sell-out fights. He had a slogan, he had a slogan: he would "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee". And then Muhammad disappeared from view. Sports writer Gary Smith eventually traced him down to his secluded private dwelling! He showed the reporter some old mementos in the barn adjacent to the house.

There were photographs and portraits of the champion boxer, posing in his perfectly shaped body... pictures which included the moment he won the world championship! Then Smith noticed a very poignant thing. On the photograph of the champ were pigeon droppings dribbled in white streaks which had fallen from the birds high up in the rafters of the barn. Ali walked over to the row of pictures, turned them face down and mumbled something. Smith asked him to repeat it", I had the world", he said "and it was nothing...

Nothing... Look now", and Ali pointed to the pigeon droppings adorning the record of his greatest moment! The cob-webbed, bird-limed trophies and the fading, soiled pictures were all the proof one needed: visible evidence of the emptiness, fickleness, and forgetfulness of worldly fame and worldly acclaim! My, don't repeat Gehazi's foolish choice! Don't miss your destiny!

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