

## Envy

This is the second lesson in the series on the “Seven Deadly Sins” on Envy.

From the introduction to the series and on the subject of Pride:

### **The Seven Deadly Sins never occur as a formal list in the Bible.**

Briefly the “seven deadly sins” are:

Pride is excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as Vanity.

Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.

Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.

Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as Wrath.

Greed is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.

Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

### **Where did the “seven deadly sins” originate?**

According to *Sacred Origins of Profound Things*, by Charles Panati, Greek monastic theologian Evagrius of Pontus first drew up a list of eight offenses and wicked human passions:.. They were, in order of increasing seriousness: gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride. Evagrius saw the escalating severity as representing increasing fixation with the self, with pride as the most egregious of the sins. Acedia (from the Greek "akedia," or "not to care") denoted "spiritual sloth." In the late 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great reduced the list to seven items, folding vainglory into pride, acedia into sadness, and adding envy. His ranking of the Sins' seriousness was based on the degree from which they offended against love. It was, from most serious to least: pride, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Later theologians, including St. Thomas Aquinas, would contradict the notion that the seriousness of the sins could be ranked in this way. The term "covetousness" has historically been used interchangeably with "avarice" in accounts of the Deadly Sins. In the seventeenth century, the Church replaced the vague sin of "sadness" with sloth.

Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

Envy is also known as jealousy.

Some examples of Envy from the Bible:

There is a sense that the sin of Adam and Eve had an element of envy; they wanted to be as gods, determining for themselves right and wrong.

Another early example of envy, as well as other sin, is the account of Cain and Abel. The apostle Jude [11] calls this the "way of Cain."

Gen 4:1-8

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." <sup>2</sup> And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, <sup>4</sup> and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. <sup>6</sup> The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? <sup>7</sup> If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

<sup>8</sup> Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Thus we have the first murder because of the sin of envy.

And we have the first man to go to heaven

**Envy.** Sin of jealousy over the blessings and achievements of others, especially the spiritual enjoyment and advance of the kingdom of Christ freely and graciously bestowed upon the people of God. Old Testament examples of the sin of jealousy include the rivalry of Joseph's brothers over the favor that Joseph received at the hand of God (Gen 37:12-36; Acts 7:9), and Saul's animosity toward David for his physical and spiritual prowess (1 Sam 18).

## 1 Sam 18:1-9

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. <sup>2</sup> And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. <sup>4</sup> And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. <sup>5</sup> And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

<sup>6</sup> As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. <sup>7</sup> And the women sang to one another as they celebrated,

"Saul has struck down his thousands,  
and David his ten thousands."

<sup>8</sup> And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" <sup>9</sup> And Saul eyed David from that day on.

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Envy inevitably leads to personal harm and debilitation, affecting one's physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being (Job 5:2; Prov 14:30). Unchecked, it gradually leads to a destructive and remorseful way of life (Prov 27:4), and ultimately, to estrangement from God (Rom 1:28-32).

## Job 5:1-2

"Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?  
To which of the holy ones will you turn?  
<sup>2</sup> Surely vexation kills the fool,  
and jealousy slays the simple.

## Prov 14:30

<sup>30</sup> A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh,  
but envy makes the bones rot.

## Prov 27:4

<sup>4</sup> Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,  
but who can stand before jealousy?

## Rom 1:28-32

<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

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Envy manifests the insidiousness of sin and human depravity apart from the intervention of God's redeeming grace. As a sin of the flesh, envy characterizes the lives of the unregenerate. Envy is one of the traits of the Christian's *former* way of life (Rom 13:8-14; Titus 3:3). Those who practice envy and strife are barred from the kingdom of heaven (Gal 5:19-26). Indeed, the unregenerate nature ever tends toward envy, manifesting the unbeliever's rejection of God, his truth, and his will for human conduct (James 3:14,16).

## Titus 3:1-7

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. <sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

## Gal 5:19-21

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

### James 3:13-18

<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

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The way of true wisdom counsels the faithful to avoid the company of such godless people (Prov 24:1). Envy is listed among the sins of the flesh that must be conquered through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20; 1 Peter 2:1). "Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord" (Prov 23:17). Love is to have mastery over envy (1 Cor 13:4).

### Prov 24:1-2

Be not envious of evil men,  
nor desire to be with them,  
<sup>2</sup> for their hearts devise violence,  
and their lips talk of trouble.

### 1 Peter 2:1-3

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. <sup>2</sup> Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation— <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As an example from former days, the righteous judgment of Yahweh against Edom was measured out in accordance with the measure of Edom's jealousy toward the people of God (Ezek 35:11). But the mercy of God brought about the healing of animosity between Ephraim and Judah by means of God's righteous act of salvation (Isa 11:13). In the time of Messiah's earthly ministry it was the envy of the Jews that led to the rejection and betrayal of Jesus into the hands of Pilate for crucifixion (Matt 27:18). Nevertheless, in the providence and foreordination of God, what the wicked intended for evil was destined to be the instrument of God's redemption of his elect through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Paul points out how the good news of the gospel was preached at times out of envy and strife (Phil 1:15). Yet in spite of the envious motives of the false apostles, Paul rejoiced that Christ was being proclaimed. Like Christ, the apostle in his ministry of the gospel experienced the hatred and jealousy of the Jews (Acts 13:45). This did not deter him from his divinely ordained mission. There were other times, however, that false teaching led to controversy and envy among the people of God (1 Tim 6:4). Genuine, unfeigned love for God and his word prompts the disciples of Christ to proclaim and defend the full counsel of God's truth. Loving and consecrated devotion to Christ and his kingdom dissipates the sins of envy and jealousy.

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One of the prime examples of envy is in the Book of Esther.

No writer of a suspense novel will ever come up with a more exciting story than is recorded in the Book of Esther. Esther is a wonderful story of God's providence.

Recall the story of Mordecai who was Esther's uncle who overheard a plot to kill the king. Mordecai reported the plot and the king was spared but Mordecai was not recognized. One night when the king could not go to sleep, he had the chronicles of the kingdom read to him and when he heard of Mordecai's deed the king asked if he had been rewarded. Well, when the king was informed that Mordecai had not been properly recognized he asked Haman, a trusted official how such a person should be rewarded. Haman thought the king meant Haman and so Haman said that the person should ride on the king's donkey and have all the people bow before him. When Haman realized it was Mordecai who was to be honored, he was outraged and overcome with envy. The story ends with Haman being hanged on the gallows he had built on which to hang Mordecai.

If you want to see the power of the sin of envy just watch the current political scene and see how the envy of other peoples' wealth is being exploited. A man earns a lot of money and because he is rich you are supposed to despise him.

Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

When the Lord affords me another opportunity to teach on Wednesday Bible Study we will consider the sin of Gluttony.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.