



The Seven Sins Series: ENVY—Is it Evil?

Matthew 27:18

TO: NEBRASKA STATE SENATORS

FROM: REV. PERRY M. GAUTHIER

DATE: April 09, 2014 (Week 13)

“Of the seven deadly sins, only envy is no fun at all.”¹ The Bible speaks of the “pleasures of sin for a season.”² There are passing pleasures in greed, lust, anger, sloth, pride and gluttony. However, the jaundice-eyed stares of envy, coming from a pinched and covetous soul, are really just “no fun at all.” Envy is not enjoyable, but how can we tell whether it is evil? We can be sure it is evil if the Bible tells us so. Legislators must make morally based laws regarding hundreds of areas to which the Bible speaks: drunkenness, child abuse, sex trafficking, rape, violence, theft, and treason. Wise is the lawmaker who uses not his own opinions but the Bible as his determinative guide in the tough task of legislating morality.

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW

Last week we touched on a helpful formula to simplify our thinking about politics. The formula simplified, “Politics: Easy as P. I. E.,” meaning that Politics = Integrity + Economics.³ Let us conclude our study of envy by plugging the sin of envy into those two categories.

1. ECONOMIC ENVY

Last week we saw that the Tenth Commandment prohibits envying the possessions of your neighbor—either his private property or his personal relationships. The Lord is a deep scholar of the human heart and knows that all fallen people covet.

A. DOLLARS AND CENTS: ENVY’S NONSENSE

The first use of the word “envious” in the New Testament is from the first Gospel and was last week’s theme verse. It showed us that the green-eyed monster is miserable. The property owner had asked:

Matthew 20:15b *“Is your eye envious because I am generous?”*

The whining workers were fine with their wages until they snooped sideways into the commercial business of the other temp-help workers with economic envy.

It is difficult to be content and keep things in perspective. Over three billion people live on less than \$2/day, half of those living on less than \$1/day.⁴ The poorest Americans sit, like kings of the hill, on top of 95 percent of the world’s wealth. Not just in church services, but every day, every American should truly be singing, “Count your blessings, count them one by one. Count your many blessings; see what God has done.” When friends ask, “How are you doing?” I often say, “I am well. I shouldn’t complain, but sometimes I do.” I should not complain. I should:

COUNT MY MANY BLESSINGS, AND COUNT THEM TON BY TON!

➤ We are often envious of our fellow workers’ salaries and benefits—what one talent search agency calls “pension envy.” The grass seems always greener...Donna Summer set a record for the largest viewing audience in Grammy history in 1984 with her hit “She Works Hard for the Money.” In 2013, the record was still unbroken, I believe, because all humans inherently know they were created to work as stated in Genesis 1:28’s Dominion Mandate. God also made all humans to value wealth since it is good—very good. The problem comes when we become resentful of the wealth *others* earn through *their* work. Then we whine, which is no fun at all.

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SENATORS WEDNESDAY STUDY: 7 AM, ROOM 1422

CAPITOL MINISTRIES, NEBRASKA WWW.CAPMIN.ORG

STAFF THURSDAY STUDY TIME: 12 NOON, ROOM 1022

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Matthew 27:18

The grass always *seems* greener because the neighbor spies from the other side of the proverbial fence, wearing green-tinted glasses. Envy juts its lower lip and pouts, “Why not me?” Television, the Internet, and social media do not make the deadly sin of envy any easier to manage. Society does better when we do not flaunt our successes. It is an evidence of good mental hygiene when we can look, without envy, at a major-league pitcher who earns more than \$46,000 per inning. Some Americans earn \$46,000 per year. It is evidence of God’s grace when we can be content with our paycheck when we hear that a pop singer just earned \$6 million in a night.

God is sovereign; all economic things are relative.

**BEGGARS DO NOT ENVY
BILLIONAIRES; BEGGARS ENVY
BETTER BEGGARS!**

B. WORLDWIDE ENVY—NOT JUST AMERICAN

God created race. God never condemns race, for the Bible tells us so. All the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve have been encoded with the same fallen nature and are subject to sins of envy no matter when or where they live on God’s green earth.

In The Cancer of Envy, Pastor Alan Strange preached, “Envy is so prevalent that the Germans even have a special word related to it. *Schadenfreude* means ‘taking pleasure in another’s problems.’”⁵

When I first researched “worldwide envy” in 2004, I was surprised to see comments tying the bombing of the Twin Towers on 9-11 to the envy of nations. Further research revealed that many around the world daydream of the U.S., envisioning “the American dream” with Lady Liberty welcoming them to our shores. So, I was surprised to find a widespread sense of *Schadenfreude* coming from these same people, who took a twisted pleasure in our tragedy. Envy is truly a sin—worldwide.

➤ The Bible tells us the source of envy is fallen human “flesh,” which I define as the software program written by living life outside of God’s will, God’s Word, and God’s way. Burning sinful data onto the hard drive of our hearts is a real problem. Listen to Christ’s explanation as to why all peoples in all nations suffer from the sin of envy.

Mark 7:21-23 “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²²deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, **envy**, slander, pride and foolishness. ²³All these **evil things** proceed **from within** and defile the man.”

Is envy evil? Sadly so. Political leaders and elected officials in every nation produce envy from within their hearts. Koreans have a saying “*go so ha da*” meaning “*to smell sesame oil*” which is a very pleasant scent to the Koreans. This phrase is an expression of great pleasure and used *especially* at someone’s *Schadenfreude*. Evil envy. So sad. No fun. Worldwide.

**KOREAN--“GO SO HA DA,”
THE “PLEASANT” SMELL OF ENVY**

➤ **2. ENVY OVER INTEGRITY AND INFLUENCE**

“Politics: Easy as P. I. E.,” means that Politics = **Integrity** + Economics. We have seen how easily all of us envy in economic issues.

However, all humans also envy the integrity and influence that others have. Our 34th president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, had this to say about leadership and integrity:

The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.



➤ People follow leaders who are consistent and solid in their principles. People gladly follow leaders who will influence them through just such integrity. Leadership guru Dr. John Maxwell defines leadership with one word: influence. Citizens are watchful for state leaders and senators whom they can follow, if those leaders display integrity. People long to be led and influenced by leaders with integrity. Leadership and integrity are good—very good.

It is good to have integrity and to want it. It is good to look for people of influence who can lead us. Leadership is integrity and influence.

However, an envious person might stare sourly at the influence a political leader has, even wanting it for himself without working for it. Pure, or raw, envy will even wish that the other person did not possess it at all. The envious leader complains, “Why can’t I have his influence?” The government official with raw envy thinks, “I wish he did not have it!”

A. “ABEL ENVY” & OTHERS’ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Tenth Commandment legislated against the immorality of envy. Several centuries before that came the first premeditated murder. Acting out the envy brewing in his heart, Cain killed Abel. Brothers should love one another, but father Adam passed on envy through his mutated spiritual DNA.

1 John 3:11-12 “For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹²not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because [Cain’s] deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous.”

The first human murder was devilish, loveless, and envious. Cain was envious that his brother’s life, influence, and integrity were better than his were. With the May 13 primary 34 days away, campaign ads might get ugly. How many ads will appear on flat

screen TVs because of insecurity? Which political leaders will sling mud through the Twitterverse because of envy? How many Android and iPhone screens will give pixelated life to election envy? The artwork I handed out to all 49 offices said:

**BLOWING OUT THE OTHER
PERSON’S CANDLE WILL NOT
MAKE YOURS SHINE BRIGHTER**

B. “EINSTEIN ENVY” & OTHERS’ TALENTS

The German-born theoretical physicist Albert Einstein was stopped so much in public that he felt forced to say, “*Pardon me, sorry! Always I am mistaken for Professor Einstein.*” People admired his brilliance as the formulator of the theory of relativity, partially expressed in the equation $E = mc^2$. Undoubtedly, his German colleagues felt the energy of envy travelling at the speed of sin, squared. We often covet the rewards of talent without considering the price it took to get there, like Albert Einstein’s having to deal with public pressure from mobs of admirers.

Envy is simply *sinful seeing*. The Latin word *invidere* literally means, “to look at (with envy).” Dear Senator, have you ever struggled with “office envy” or eyed election results with envy? The pain of loss is one thing; it is normal and not evil. The pinching pain of envy is another; it is no fun at all because envy *is* evil. Have you ever envied the hard-earned political connections that other leaders have? See next, the Lord, good and angry, as He dealt with some political Israelite leaders’ wicked envy of Moses.

Psalms 106:16-18 “They became *envious of Moses in the camp, and of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD.* ¹⁷The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan...¹⁸and a fire blazed up in their company; the flame consumed the wicked.”



Albert Einstein once said, “I want to know God’s thoughts.” God had already revealed this thought:

POLITICAL ENVY IS WICKED!

C. “EASTER ENVY,” RELIGION, & POLITICS

With Good Friday only nine days away, we will close our study of envy by considering the politically perceptive opinion of Governor Pontius Pilate. In the Apostles’ Creed, the church fathers thought it prudent to mention in that short statement of faith, this Roman political leader, saying Christ *“suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again.”*

It is vital to acknowledge that whenever the institution of the state is out of God’s will, it will bring pain and suffering into all of culture, and characteristically into the institution of the church.

Pilate was out of God’s will as he waffled and wobbled in a lack of integrity and solidarity of heart. Inside, he knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong, even saying, “I find no guilt in Him!” (John 18:38) Caving to the pressure of the mob, Pilate authorized an illegal scourging (John 19:1) so severe it was only one lash short of killing Christ.

➤ Pilate hoped his illicit use of power would pacify the mob screaming, “Crucify Him!” His lack of political integrity is forever recorded here:

John 19:4 *“Pilate came out again and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’”*

Pilate never saw guilt in the sinless Son of Man, yet in a disingenuous power play, had Him beaten (far from justice’s *Lex Talionis*) within an inch of His life.

Relative to the evil sin of envy, note Pilate’s private political opinion that surely haunts him to this very day. As a seasoned student of the human heart:

Matthew 27:18 *“[Pilate] knew that because of envy they had handed [Christ] over.”*

➤ Easter Envy—evil indeed. The Pharisees and chief priests led the bloodthirsty mob to demand the death of the innocent Son of God. These men (in Israel’s theocracy) were religious *and* civil (state-level) leaders. What “malice aforethought” motivated this group of political leaders in *world history’s worst premeditated murder*? Envy. Evil envy. The same sin that motivated *world history’s first premeditated murder* in a bloodstained field outside the Garden of Eden.

Easter Envy. Abel Envy. Evil Envy. All rooted in Adam’s envy. Adam desired to have from God “too much stewardship,” desiring to decide for himself what was “good and evil.” Men refusing to live contentedly under God’s will, by God’s Word, and in God’s way committed all these sins of envy. I trust that you see the sin of envy and just how deadly it is.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

Dear Honorable Senator: With Easter 11 days away, I must ask if you have ever knelt at the foot of the cross. As a descendant of Adam, you need cleansing from your sins—all of your sins. Your sins, like mine, are deadly. The good news of Good Friday is that Christ died for all of our sins! Have you received the grace of forgiveness, once for all, through faith in Christ’s loving and sacrificial death on your behalf? I ask most warmly, for your sake and His,

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¹ Joseph Epstein, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Envy* (The New York Public Library: Oxford University Press, © 2006), page 1.

² *Hebrews 11:25* (KJV). All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version 1995 Update unless otherwise noted (**bold** emphases mine).

³ US Congressman Bob McEwen, *Politics: Easy as PIE* (Revised Edition, audio CD/DVD set from FreedomQuest.)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Listened to 5/22/2005 on Sermonaudio.com. Sermon I.D. #5220515836.