

TAKE AIM, DON'T MISS! DEALING WITH THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

- It's Not Easy (or good) Being Green -



[In an ancient Jewish story, an angel visits a shop-keeper who was EXTREMELY envious of his business rival down the street. "You can have whatever you wish, but whatever you wish for, your rival will receive twice of what you ask for." Shop-keeper, "I wish to be blind in one eye."] & there you have an insight into a certain sin-sickness that's one of the seven deadly sins.

To think of sin in terms of sickness is thinking grounded in the solid soil of Biblical Revelation (*Isaiah 1:5-6; Mark*

2:17). But while all sin can be likened to disease, the Bible often speaks of this particular sin in terms of a disease of the soul.

This sin is mentioned in specifically in *Proverbs 14:30*. What is this sin, and what does it do?

THE SIN IN ENVY, and instead of contributing to a tranquil heart or peace of mind, **ENVY ROTTS THE BONES**. ENVY is emotional / spiritual / physical battery acid which, once swallowed, destroys us from the inside-out. & since ENVY rots the very structure of our lives (which the bones represent), w/a heart full of envy, we become emotionally destabilized.

Here are some observations about this sin ENVY from various Philosophers, Pastors, and theologians:

Jonathan Edwards, "ENVY is a spirit (or attitude) of **OPPOSITION** to the **HAPPINESS** of others **COMPARED** to their own." Envy CANNOT just let someone else be happy, but MUST compare his/her own level of happiness to someone else, and ENVY gets very upset if someone ELSE is MORE HAPPY than THEY are. SOCRATES called ENVY "... the ULCER of the soul ... " Thomas Aquinas, "... ENVY is SORROW for another's good ... " ARISTOTLE, "... a disturbing PAIN excited by the PROSPERITY of others ... "

***Especially insightful is this definition by Frederick Beuchner: "ENVY is the consuming DESIRE to have everyone else as UNSUCCESSFUL as YOU are."** Envy not only resents the success of others, but wishes for their successes to become failures.

How does *Romans 12:15* speak against the impulse of this particular sin? Just flip this verse around, and you have a picture of envy, "REJOICING over those who WEAP, and WEAPING over those who REJOICE." REJOICING at the MISFORTUNES of others and growing sad when others are blessed – especially if WE think they don't DESERVE that blessing.

A COUPLE OF PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS *

- **At its core, this vice is highly COMPETATIVE and has an inflated sense of ENTITLEMENT.** Some insights from Joseph Epstein and Dorothy Sayers . . . Epstein, “The MAJOR QUESTION for the ENVIOUS is, “WHY does HE have it (whatever it is), and I do NOT?” Sayers, “ENVY is the sin which HATES to see others happy.”
- **Examples of this deadly sin / vice are not difficult to find – even in a particular political philosophy!** And this soul sickness is spoken of both in narrative and prescriptive forms in the Bible! Cf *1 Samuel 18:8-9*;

****Consider the political philosophy of SOCIALISM. In this philosophy, if some people are more successful than others and have achieved more, that achievement and success is UNFAIR and just plain WRONG. Therefore, what they have should be TAKEN from them and GIVEN to others. It’s (SOCIALISM) in all its forms is basically punishing ACHIEVEMENT. SOCIALISM is the POLITICS OF ENVY PLAYED OUT!!!*** When you hear terms like “unfair” and “leveling the playing field,” those terms most always point to ENVY. TAX the rich and distribute to those who are NOT rich. WHY? B/C actually you RESENT those who are rich and want them NOT to be as rich as they are, and WHY? B/C you RESENT rich people! [Brandon Jerius playoff . . . it’s unfair NOT to! WHY? They EARNED the right to host every playoff game! // Instead of giving trophies to the best players on any given team, ALL the players get a trophy B/C it would be UNFAIR not some players. **James 3:16**... ENVY leads to all kinds of EVIL practices.

Other examples (of ENVY), and one from the Bible . . . The WICKED QUEEN in Snow White. If SHE could not be the fairest of them all, then she would DESTROY her rival. In the movie AMADEUS, there’s the man who ENVIED Mozart. & of course in The Brady Bunch, there’s JAN BRADY lamenting, “@ School, all I hear is how great Marcia is @ this or wonderful Marcia did @ that! Marcia! Martia! Martia!”

FROM THE BIBLE, KING SAUL & DAVID. @ first Saul was friendly toward David (“ . . . play your harp & soothe me!”)When David killed Goliath, Saul hears the women of Israel singing “SAUL has struck down his 1,000’s and DAVID his 10’s of 1,000,” & according to 1 Samuel 18:8-9, Saul was giving DAVID the “stink-eye” of ENVY. Envy → Suspicion → Hate → attempts to murder David.

1. What are the SYMPTOMS of this sickness?

Here’s how you spot envy in others AND yourself:

- **The first symptom is COMPARISON.**

We see this symptom spoken of as foolishness in 2nd Corinthians 10:12, and addressed by Jesus in *John 21:21-22*. *We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

THE INCIDENT IN JOHN 21 (many dynamics going on here . . .) *Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”*

²¹ *When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?”* ²² *Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!”*

²³ *So the saying spread abroad among the brothers^[b] that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”*

➤ **The next two symptoms can be taken together: CRITICIZING and COMPLAINING.**

Cornelius Plantinga: *“Envy is a MOTIVE that prompts us to slice up other people’s REPUTATIONS, belittle their ACHIEVEMENTS, minimize their VIRTUES, to question their MOTIVES, to challenge their INTEGRITY, and if all else fails, to KILL them.”* [Story of HILLARY & LIZZIE . . . High School RIVALS, LIZZIE was president of the FCA for girls @ the school, HILLARY always said, “WHY would a girl that does the things I’VE HEARD she does DARE to head up a XN organization?” When LIZZIE won “CLASS FAVORITE,” Hillary said it was because she slept w/people on the football team & they all voted for her. When LIZZIE took a group to the homeless shelter, HILLARY said, “It was her showing off, & she was just campaigning for VICE PRESIDENT of class; after all, EVERYTHING Lizzie does has an ulterior motive!” HILLARY was EDITOR of the Yearbook, & when she turned the final proofs in, on every picture of LIZZIE, Hillary drew HAIR coming out of her nostrils and hair growing out from under her armpits, and blackened in some of her teeth in “class beauty” picture. So that showed up when the Annual was distributed. When confronted, “I HATE LIZZIE, I WOULD KILL HER IF I HAD A CHANCE!”] Hillary had a SEVER problem w/ENVY. Do YOU ever just, you know, just wish someone would just go away?

➤ **The next symptom is INGRATITUDE, or the failure on our part to see all the UNDESERVED BLESSINGS that God and others have already shown to you.**

How does this play out? If you’re healthy, have all your faculties, eat 3 squares, and are breathing, that’s GRACE. That’s God’s BLESSINGS. But if you’re worried about people

having more . . . WHATEVER you have, ENVY will blind you to all the GOOD in your life AND to the GOD who gives you good GIFTS.

- **The next symptom is HATRED, which most likely led to the first MURDER in human history (in Genesis 4).** Out of ENVY b/c Abel's worship was more acceptable to God, instead of straightening up his act, CAIN killed Abel!

The Roman Poet Ovid had an insight on this symptom... in the narrative poem *Metamorphosis*: (speaking of ENVY personified), "Her eyes are all awry, her teeth foul with mold . . . venom drips from her tongue . . . She never smiles, save at the sight of another's troubles . . . unwelcome to her is the sight of men's success . . . she gnaws and is gnawed . . . she herself is her own punishment."

ENVY ALLOWS FOR NO ENJOYMENT OF LIFE B/C YOU'RE TOO FOCUSED ON THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS AND YOUR RESENTMENT FOR THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS SENDS RAINCLOUDS INTO WHAT SHOULD BE A PRETTY SUNNY LIFE.

2. What is the CURE for this sickness?

- **First, recognize where the heart of the problem lies.**
Cf *Mark 7:20-22*. It lies in the heart. & at the heart of ENVY is PRIDE. The higher the PRIDE INDEX is in your life, the higher the ENVY / MISERY INDEX will be in your life!
- **How does the Gospel work healing into our souls regarding this sin?**
1st Peter 2:1-3 gives us the dynamic. It involves confession, repentance, and refocusing. Let's consider these ongoing dynamics. YOU BEGIN WITH CONFESSION THAT YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ENVY. "Hello, my name is _____, and I have a PROBLEM w/ENVY." Then, REPENTANCE is taking off ENVY like you would take off an old dirty set of clothes. Then REFOCUS – CHANGE the FOCUS from YOURSELF (humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself, less) and REFOCUS on the GOODNESS of GOD in your life – ESPECIALLY evidenced in the GRACE God has shown you in CHRIST JESUS!

What did we DO to DESERVE Christ? NOTHING! Yet Christ gives us ALL THINGS.

- **How does Christ show us how this work of the devil may be destroyed in our lives?**
The 1st work of the devil, who was MISERABLE because of his pride and rebellion, was to see our 1st parents in their happy estate in the Garden of EDEN & make them ENVIOUS of what they did NOT have. That ENVY brought ruin. The work of CHRIST was to HUMBLE HIMSELF, give up what He had (which was EVERYTHING), and in a display of NOT begrudging us ANYTHING (Jesus was HAPPY to do what He did) Jesus LIVED / DIED

FOR US to take away or sin – including the SIN of ENVY – and give us HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Ultimately, the ONLY radiation that can destroy the cancer of ENVY is what Thomas Chalmers called “The EXCLUSIVE POWER of a NEW AFFECTION”. When you LOVE CHRIST more than anything or anyone else, and understand what HE has DONE for you, then and only then will you stop fretting over what you DON’T have and REJOICE in the GRACE you DO have . . . and you will REJOICE in the GRACE God has given others, too!

A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE IS THE ULTIMATE CURE FOR THE CANCER OF ENVY!