

The Seven Deadly Sins – Envy

Today I am going to continue our study on the sins which are often referred to as the seven deadly sins (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride) by discussing the fifth, envy. As I've said before, I believe that all sin is deadly, and these sins are not identified in any list in Scripture as being any different from other sin. All sin is transgression of the law, and the wages of sin is death. I think these are interesting, though, for the simple fact that they cover so many of the things that commonly cause people to stray from righteousness.

In order to understand envy let's first get a definition of envy. According to Webster's Dictionary envy is "To feel uneasiness, mortification or discontent, at the sight of superior excellence, reputation or happiness enjoyed by another; to repine at another's prosperity; to fret or grieve one's self at the real or supposed superiority of another, and to hate him on that account."

Let's take a moment to discuss the difference between envy, lust, and greed. Lust is essentially a failure to keep our inner desires under control. Greed is an indordinate desire to better oneself no matter what effect it has on others. Both of these are centered upon exalting oneself.

Envy, on the other hand, results more from insecurities than from being exalted. Let's look at this a little more by looking at an example of envy. 1 Samuel 8 says:

- (1) And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.
- (2) Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beersheba.
- (3) And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.
- (4) Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,
- (5) And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.
- (6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.
- (7) And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.
- (8) According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.
- (9) Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.
- (10) And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.
- (11) And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and to

- be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots.
- (12) And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.
- (13) And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers.
- (14) And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even* the best *of them*, and give *them* to his servants.
- (15) And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.
- (16) And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work.
- (17) He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.
- (18) And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.
- (19) Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;
- (20) That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.
- (21) And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.
- (22) And the LORD said to Samuel, Harken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

Notice here that the people of Israel were envious of the people around them. They were feeling an insecurity about their own selves when those around them who appeared to prosper were different. Envy, then, is really a rejection of God's promises.

I think that's what makes envy such a dangerous sin. It begins to put human accomplishment above God's accomplishment. It takes us away from God.

James talks about envy in James 3:15-18, which says:

- (14) But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
- (15) This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.
- (16) For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.
- (17) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
- (18) And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

You see, envy does not come from God. It is of the devil. Envy does nothing to help you but brings about strife, confusion, and evil works. Peter goes on in 1 Peter 2:1-3 that envy stands in the way of spiritual growth. This scripture says:

- (1) Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

- (2) As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
- (3) If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

Envy serves, then, to set us apart from God. We should flee from envy, being lifted up when we see others lifted up, knowing that God will lift us up in our own time.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich