

CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 13, 2021 • WEEK 1



SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

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Verse of the Week

1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

Seven Sins and Civil Servants



DON'T TALK RELIGION AND POLITICS. Surely, you have heard that proverb. Yet religion and politics, because they are moral, are vital to human life. Furthermore, laws are necessarily moral. Governments necessarily “moralize culture” through legal force. The recent effort to keep moral arguments and moral judgments out of the political realm is truly indefensible, un-American, unsound, and even absurd. An important figure who would agree with this is the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

President Obama said, “Secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering into the public square. Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King—indeed, the majority of the great reformers in American history—were not only motivated by faith, but repeatedly used religious language to argue for their cause. So to say that men and women should not inject their ‘personal morality’ into public policy debates is a practical absurdity. Our law is by definition a codification of morality, much of it grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition.”¹

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V. D. M.

(This study is adapted from an earlier series by Rev. Gauthier, 1960–2020.)



INTRODUCTION

Lawmaking is indeed the codification of morality. Morality is that which concerns good and evil. Good and evil choices, good and evil thoughts, good and evil plans, good and evil actions—these are the components of morality. It is obvious, then, that a culture's definitions of good and evil, right and wrong, morality and immorality, are integral to the functioning of that culture. Collectively, those very definitions create the moral fabric of a culture. On a statewide level, the warp and woof of the moral fabric of Nebraska is woven together from the threads of our collective ideologies.

1. WHY “SEVEN SINS AND CIVIL SERVANTS”?

This session, we will be discussing the “Seven Deadly Sins” as they have been referred to since the 7th century AD. We will weave together threads of thought about our own personal beliefs regarding morality. We will also discuss, Biblically, your duties as state leaders. In these Senate Studies over the past years, I have expressed my working definition of the government's role as one of “legislating morality” or “moralizing the culture.” We will explore your role as leaders in that regard and whether or not the Bible bears out my working definition.

A. Because Senators are People Too

I will never forget the dinnertime conversation and the heartfelt request from the wife of a former senator. It was many years ago on a cold, rainy, spring night. I had just completed my first year serving senators here in the Nebraska capitol. As hot coffee was poured, I mentioned that one of our directors in another state capitol had written an article called, “Senators Are People Too.” As tears began to well up in her eyes, this Senator's wife asked, “May I please have a copy of that?” Her body language and her request spoke volumes. My heart as a pastor was significantly moved.

So very often, the very real and human needs of political leaders and elected officials are overlooked. In the pressure cooker that is political life, governmental leaders, their families, and their constituents all too easily forget that “senators are people too.” Every senator present at today's study put their jacket on this morning “one sleeve at a time.” Senators are recognized and elected as leaders, ordained by God, and honorable, but they are also “just people.”

That is the first reason I would like to do this study—for your own personal growth, for the good of your soul, your spirit, and your mind. Your personal lives are under attack in your political positions. Hence, your own personal spiritual health is of vital concern to me as a pastor. I care about you as people made in the image of God. You are made in His image and for His glory.

**IT MAY TAKE A TRAIN WRECK OR A TRAINED THERAPIST
TO HELP GOD ANSWER OUR PRAYER: “OUR FATHER WHICH
ART IN HEAVEN... DELIVER US FROM EVIL.”**



As people of faith, we often learn by crisis and trial. We see this in the lives of God’s people all throughout the Scriptures. So often, we have to learn “the hard way” that it is truly best to walk in righteousness. I know I often learn “the hard way.” Nevertheless, I have a better and higher hope for all of you this session. My hope is that you can learn by faith (not train wrecks and trained therapists).

B. Because Senators Are Leaders in Culture

As senators, you are not merely representatives *of* your district and 37,000 viewpoints; you are leaders *for* your district. You are also leaders *in* our state. I have reminded thousands of Nebraskan Christians of their Biblical duty to pray for you, because each of you, all 49 of you, are state senators and statewide leaders. As such, and before God, you are obliged, as what I will call “governmental ministers,” to legislate morality the way God defines it. He has appointed you to office, but not just for your sake. He has done this so that you might fulfill His purposes for this place on His planet. Therefore, you are to lead *for Christ’s sake*. As Mordechai asked Queen Esther:

Esther 4:14

...[W]ho knows whether you have not attained political position for such a time as this?²

You are to lead for God’s sake. However, you are also to lead for your constituents’ sake. You are to *lead* your constituents, not merely *represent* them. Note God’s “real time” instructions to you and His will for you as government leaders, revealed in this eternal Scripture from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (underlined emphases mine):

Romans 13:1, 2, 4, & 6

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves... ⁴for [government rulers are] a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for [civil government] does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil... ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

2. SO WHY “THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS”?

Among other things, the Bible calls sin the “lusts of our flesh” meaning, “the sinful desires that come from our fallen humanness.” All sins are truly the enemies of our souls. As the Scriptures exhort:

1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.





All sins wage war on the soul, but are all sins equal? We would surely all agree that *premeditated murder* (the first human crime against which God legislated in the Bible³) is a more serious sin than a *little white lie* designed to protect someone's feelings (possibly an infringement of the 9th Commandment⁴) or *eating too much ice cream* some night because you are stressed or depressed (a misdemeanor in gluttony).

ALL SINS HAVE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES IN THE EYES OF A PERFECT GOD, BUT NOT ALL SINS ARE EQUAL.

For centuries, theologians have wrestled with codifying a list of sins that are most deadly to our souls and spiritual sensitivities. Such lists vary in number from five sins up to thirteen. The “list” which became most popular throughout Christian history is this list: The Seven Deadly Sins. It was arranged and classified by the prolific 64th Pope—Gregory the Great⁵ (holding office from AD 590–604).

As football coaches lecture each week before watching film, “To defeat your opponent, you must study and know them. Study what their moves are and know what their game plan is. Know their patterns and their plan of attack.” We will study these Seven Sins in a focused way that will significantly help our spiritual lives. These seven opponents are indeed seven enemies of all our souls.

THESE SINS ARE SINISTER TO THE SOUL OF EACH STATE SENATOR.

3. LET US HANG THIS LIST ON A GLAS-PEG

In my own efforts to learn, as a Bible student, I developed an acronym to help me memorize the Seven Deadly Sins. If you want a mnemonic peg (a memory peg) to hang your thoughts on, you can borrow the one I developed. I visualized a peg that was crystal clear: a “Glas Peg.” This “Glas Peg” itself became my memory device.

“**GLAS PEG**” is an acronym for the list of the Seven Sins in the order in which we will be studying them. Note that there is only one **S** in this **GLAS**. Also, note that two of the sins start with **G**. The first **G** is for Greed. Also note that we will save our theological feast of a study of Gluttony, so to speak, until the very end. So, Gluttony is the **final G** in **GLAS-PEG**.

This is also the order in which I will ask you to memorize them, starting today: Greed, Lust, Anger, Sloth, Pride, Envy, and Gluttony—the Seven Deadly Sins.

Repeating numerically: ¹Greed ²Lust ³Anger ⁴Sloth — ⁵Pride ⁶Envy, and ⁷Gluttony—seven enemies of every senator's soul.

¹G ²L ³A ⁴S – ⁵P ⁶E ⁷G

It is good to recognize your enemies. I do not speak of opponents on the campaign trail. I speak of the enemies who want to stalk the pathways of your heart, affecting your mind, altering your moral clarity, even affecting your legislative jurisprudence. Know your spiritual opponents.



As a Bible-teaching pastor called to minister in the political realm, I highly recommend it.

I look forward to showing you why the Bible places such importance on these Seven Sins, and what you can do to gain mastery over them. In your own personal Bible reading time the next 16 weeks, I invite you to have your radar up, staying “on red alert” for these Seven Sins.

Memorize the list of these key seven sinister opponents. Do it for your own good (because “Senators are people too”). Also do it for the good of the State of Nebraska since its moral fabric will be impacted by your own personal and moral leadership.

4. A HELPFUL WORKING DEFINITION

As we close our first study, let us look at a simple formula to help us define each of the Seven Sins. The formula is this: *The Sin is a desire for TOO MUCH of a Virtuous Part of God’s Creation.* For example, the Deadly Sin that we will study next is:

1. *Greed* is a desire for TOO MUCH *Money*.

The deadly sin is not *in* the money; the sin is in the inordinate *desire for* the money (to be precise, desiring “too much” of it). Money is a good thing! With it, individuals can help the poor and underprivileged; banks can make loans and help the undercapitalized through the vehicle of good debt. We can all support churches and charities. With money, we can pay taxes, economize culture, and reward the industrious people who work diligently in the institution of commerce. Finally, money is put to very good use as we advance man’s dominion⁶ of the planet through technology and science.

However, Scripture is clear that it is the LOVE of money that is the root of all sorts of evil.⁷ Therefore, as we will see in depth next week, greed is NOT the desire for money. Greed is the desire for TOO MUCH Money.

In regards to all the Seven Sins, it will be our task to see how the Bible defines what is and what is not “TOO MUCH” of a good thing. Perhaps before next week, you can fill in these blanks (with virtuous parts of creation or God’s created order) for the other Deadly Sins:

2. *Lust* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

3. *Anger* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

4. *Sloth* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

5. *Pride* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

6. *Envy* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

7. *Gluttony* is a desire for TOO MUCH _____.

In your efforts to fill in the six blanks above, realize that all Seven Sins have their base in God’s goodness, God’s creation, and His created order. I have studied these Seven Sins for a decade, and that is the single most





surprising discovery to come out of all those years of study. It has been a surprising and vital discovery that the seven sins are ALL based in the goodness of God and His wonderful created order. We will look long and hard this session to see why this is SO vital in our theological precision and our personal spiritual growth.

I guarantee that this will also have profound impact on your legislative finesse (since all laws are moral). This study will also help you to listen more carefully to your colleagues while avoiding the error of “talking past” others in senate debate, private conversations, hearings, and in committee meetings.

CONCLUSION

I maintain that the executive and federal opinion of former President Obama quoted in our introduction is Biblically sound. Your duty at a state level is also to *codify morality*, just as the former President expressed. Know what you believe *about morality*, Senator, and even more importantly, *why* you believe it. This Senators’ Study will help.

By way of application, know the Seven Deadly Sins in three ways:

1. *Know personally* that they are sinister to *your soul as a senator*.
2. *Know legislatively* that they are sinister to *the soul of the Senate*, for legislators are not moving Nebraska forward if, in the chamber, they legislatively reward vice and hinder virtue. Do you agree?
3. *Know, as statesmen and stateswomen*, that these Seven Sins are sinister to the *soul of our state*.

Gain spiritual understanding and mastery over these Seven Sins for three personal reasons:

Firstly, do it for your own personal good (because “senators are people too.”) The fabric of your soul will be strengthened and cleansed by “the washing of the water of the Word”⁸ of God.

Secondly, do it for the good people of the great State of Nebraska who elected you to represent their moral values in our republican form of government.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, do it before a personal God Who Himself created you and has ordained you to public office. He has personally called you to live lives as moral leaders. You are to “governmentally minister” in His name, legislating morality the way He designed it.

May He richly bless you directly in the proportion to which you fulfill that calling on your life. Please know that I am, most humbly, your servant in that cause. With sincere prayer, and submitted with respect,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier

FOOTNOTES

1. Barack Obama, “Call to Renewal Keynote Address,” Washington, D.C., June 28, 2006, <https://sojo.net/articles/transcript-obamas-2006-sojournerscall-renewal-address-faith-and-politics>, Quoted in Dr. Timothy Keller’s *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just*, pages 168-169, Dutton, © 2010.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update* unless otherwise noted.
3. Genesis 9:5f — “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. ‘Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, In the image of God He made man.’”
4. Exodus 20:16 — “You shall not bear false witness...”
5. This Pope Gregory was called “The Great” because he was the first in a line of 15 later Pope Gregorys. In Roman Catholic theology, these sins are called “deadly” because they “kill grace” in the one committing them. The Deadly Sins are called Mortal (Deadly) as opposed to Venial (Forgivable).
6. I have a little jingle for this: “*Genesis 1:28 is great, and it is the Dominion Mandate.*” Genesis 1:28 — “God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
7. 1 Timothy 6:9f — “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil*, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”
8. Ephesians 5:26 — “[Christ gave Himself for the church] so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word....”

Verse of The Week

Matthew 27:18

*Beloved, I urge you
as aliens and
strangers to abstain
from fleshly lusts
which wage war
against the soul.*



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meets during the 107th
Legislature’s First Session

SENATORS

6:45–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays
Room 1022, *Facilitated by
Sen. Clements & Sen. Arch*

STAFF

12:00 P.M. Wednesdays
Room 1022, *Facilitated by
Joel Hunt*



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