

CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 31, 2021 • WEEK 12



SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

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Verse of the Week

Matthew 20:15

Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?

Green With Envy (Part I)



AN ENGLISHWOMAN, A FRENCHMAN, AND A RUSSIAN are each given a single wish by one of those genies whose almost relentless habit is to pop out of bottles. The Englishwoman says that a friend of hers has a charming cottage in the Cotswolds and that she would like a similar cottage with the addition of two extra bedrooms and a second bath and a brook running in front of it. The Frenchman says that his best friend has a beautiful blonde mistress, and he would like such a mistress himself, but a redhead instead of a blonde, and with longer legs and a bit more in the way of culture and chic. The Russian, when asked what he would like, tells of a neighbor who has a cow that gives a vast quantity of the richest milk, which yields the heaviest cream and the purest butter. “I vant dat cow...” the Russian tells the genie, “...dead.”¹

Dead? **Dead!** The Russian word *Zavast*, when roughly translated, means envy of the meanest, most black-hearted kind. All persons and all political leaders in all nations deal with the ugly, deadly, green sin of envy.

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

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



INTRODUCTION

In our “Seven Deadly Sins and Civil Servants” series, we have seen that all sins find their root in the goodness of God’s created order. Sin did not come from a vacuum. Before sin existed, there was nothing sinful from which it could spring. Therefore, we discover sin’s origin in no other place than God’s perfect creation. God, who gave us free will, is not the author of sin. Sin is a freewill perversion of a part of His wondrous world.

1. STEWARDSHIP: A GOOD AND GODLY DESIRE

All sin is idolatry, elevating something in God’s creation to a level outside His will as revealed in His Word. All sin is excess. All sin is wanting *too much* of something God has created, wanting something *so much* that a person will go outside of God’s will, God’s Word, and God’s way to get it. What is envy?

ENVY IS A DESIRE FOR *TOO MUCH* STEWARDSHIP.

A. Stewardship: Funny Word, Good Thing

We do not use the words “steward” and “stewardship” often in twenty-first-century America. We find the closest word in our everyday vocabulary flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet across the friendly skies. An airplane stewardess manages the affairs of passengers on behalf of an airline. Stewarding flight attendants will cite federal regulations about using cell phones in airplane mode, sitting in exit rows, and not smoking in claustrophobic lavatories. They will steward and give out thin blankets and petite pillows. They will supervise by instructing about seat backs, tray tables, and carry-on luggage, all in line with airline policies. As the airline’s guardians of food supplies, they will dispense tiny foil packets of salted peanuts, micro-bags of pretzels, soft drinks, or alcoholic beverages for five dollars. All that they do, they do as managers, wardens, and supervisors of the airline’s customers on behalf of the airline’s owners. They do their work according to the airline’s word, its will, and its way, because it is their airline, and they are its employees, specifically its stewards and stewardesses.

Spiritual sloths are bad stewards of their spiritual gifts, complaining that they need (too much) rest. Peter and Paul are good apostolic managers, writing about the stewardship and administration of all that God has graciously given His people.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 (NKJV)

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.²

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.



God filled His world with wondrous wealth. Having done His due diligence, He finished His work and He rested on the seventh day, not that He was tired. He was glad to declare His satisfaction at the sight of His new and perfect planet in which He took great pride.

Genesis 1:31

God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, both very good and brimming with blessings.

B. Dominion Mandate: Steward the Earth

Back during the study that I did with the 103rd Nebraska Legislature, we looked at Biblical economics and the Dominion Mandate. We had a little ditty that reminded us of this fact:

GENESIS 1:28 IS GREAT – IT IS THE DOMINION MANDATE!

Genesis 1:28 (NKJV)

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Heaven bestowed nothing but blessing onto God’s very good, green earth. How is it then that all people of His planet are beset with the deadly sin of envy, the green-eyed monster? Truly it is hell’s handiwork.

**“ENVY’S A COAL COMES HISSING HOT FROM HELL.
‘T’WILL BE SUCH COALS WILL BURN YE BY THE WAY.”
– PHILIP JAMES BAILEY, ENGLISH POET³**

Pride filled Satan’s heart on the day he became the Devil because he envied God’s governmental magnificence, in which Lucifer had his trade. Lucifer corrupted his managerial powers through his freewill choice to desire “too much stewardship.” He had been the anointed cherub covering God’s throne, but he willfully wanted more—much more—*too much* more. He should have been a good steward: faithful, gracious, glad, and humbled that the infinite God had delegated duties to him in His heavenly government.

On earth, Adam and Eve fell in a hellish seduction, wanting to steward the only thing God said they could not steward—or even taste. Eve wanted more, and Adam wanted Eve, so he did not stop her. Together these original sinners fell—taking us down with them. They were not content to have dominion over an entire planet and its centerpiece garden paradise; they also wanted to have forbidden fruit and decide for themselves “good and evil.” They chose in freewill rebellion to be bad stewards. Because of envy, they ignored God’s will, His word, and His way.

C. Private Property, Pursuing Happiness

Father Adam fell. In hopes of happiness, he declared a sinfully rebellious independence from the God who prohibited him from defining good and





evil. In corruption he envied the ability to “be like God,” to define and intimately know everything about good and evil. Father Adam’s fall encoded the sin nature on the spiritual DNA of all his future grandchildren.

America’s founding fathers righteously rebelled against a human tyrant in 1776, independently declaring that he had repeatedly violated their God-given, unalienable rights. Among these was the pursuit of the happiness found in the diligent stewardship of private property. God gave Adam and Eve a big planet to steward. It would take millennia filled with multiple millions of their descendants to fulfill the Dominion Mandate. We are to be faithful stewards of the entire earth in God’s name (His will, Word, and way). We have a delegated dominion. The founding fathers knew that ingrained in each soul was a need to have freedom and opportunity and to be a freewill steward of a small part of a great planet.

This is where envy enters in. In the providential sovereignty of God, we are to receive the gifts He has given us with *thankful, contented faithfulness*. We are to use our free will, personal industry, and morals-based work ethic to prosper on His planet. God designed us to flourish not *for* a communistic equal outcome but *in* equal freedoms. We should thank God, from whom all blessings flow, knowing He has made us and not we ourselves. He also providentially orders all things, including the length and timing of our lives, opportunities, and talents. We should be content, stewarding what we have, not coveting what others have. The godly senator will not rationalize:

“I ENVY BECAUSE OTHER PEOPLE ARE SO MUCH LUCKIER, SMARTER, MORE ATTRACTIVE, AND BETTER THAN I AM.”

Healthy self-esteem knows that our sovereign God is always good and did a *very good* job in how He created each of us. An unalienable human right is to pursue the happiness of being a steward of our one and only life—as faithful property managers of the gifts, talents, and resources that God has given us.

2. ENVY DESIRES *TOO MUCH* STEWARDSHIP

We should be happy to pursue excellence based on who we *are* (not who we *are not*) and what we *have* (not what we *do not have*). The God of the Garden of Eden knows what to give and what to withhold.

ENVY GIVES YOU A PINCHED SOUL AND DOES NOT MAKE YOU FIT FOR HEAVEN OR FUN TO CARPOOL WITH.

A. Envy and the Tenth Commandment

The Tenth Commandment legislates against the immorality of a pinched, envious soul. An envious soul pines away with a jaundice-eyed, sideways stare at what the neighbors have, shouting, “Why them? Seriously: WHY. NOT. ME ?!” Yet God warned:



Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Pride turned Lucifer into the Devil, but the Tenth Commandment killed the envious Saul of Tarsus and turned him into the born-again Apostle Paul. Note:

Romans 7:7-10

[Paul says:] I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." ...⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me."

God's brilliant legislation against the immorality of envy made covetous Saul realize his heart was unfit for heaven. And just so, Saul was saved!

B. The Evil Eyes of Envy

Envy is the sin of seeing. It is not sinful to see the beauty of God's creation or to see the wonder of the wealth that God has given you. Envy is the sin of seeing what others have—eating one's heart out and begrudging those things that God has not allowed you to have at this time. Senator, the drug of envy calls your name. When you discontentedly burn for the blessings others have received, you have snorted the same line of cocaine that the devil did on the day "unrighteousness was found in [him]" (Ezek. 28:15).

The word envy comes to us from the Latin word *invidere*, which means *to look at*. Envy is, simply, sinful seeing. We should keep our eyes on our business. So:

DANTE'S *INFERNO* SHOWED THE ENVIOUS IN HELL IN FREEZING WATER WITH THEIR EYES SEWN SHUT.

C. The Economics of Envy

Former U.S. Representative Bob McEwen (R-OH) said, "Politics is easy as P.I.E."⁴ What he said of politics, formulaically, is this:

POLITICS = INTEGRITY + ECONOMICS

We will look next week at some specific political implications of envy, but at an individual level, it is very common to envy the financial blessings and private property of others. Let us close with an observant glance at the envious eyes of some whining workers in Jesus' day. The scene is the private property of a landowner who desired to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. He agrees to give the workers a denarius (a day's wages). All throughout the day, this aggressive, generous entrepreneur chose to hire additional workers. When the final whistle blew, the owner decided to pay everyone the same day's wage. Watch the envious workers' eyeballs pop out over other workers' wages, and look at the





generous man who pursued happiness through the good management and **stewardship** of his property.

Matthew 20:11-15

When they received [“only” one denarius as their pay], they grumbled at the landowner, ¹²saying, “These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.” ¹³But he answered and said to one of them, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?”

Through gainful employment, the early-morning workers got the pay for which they had agreed to work, but when other workers entered the workforce, envy kicked in. The wandering-eyed workers turned green, and started to pine in rivalry and discontent as they saw the wages of their fellow workers. Their sights were sinful—with envious eyes.

PASTORAL PRAYER

My prayer for you is that you will not hold hell’s hissing coal of envy but, in cool-headed trust, rejoice in what God has given you. May you steward your life in God’s will, in God’s Word, and in God’s way.

With my eyes on our Sovereign Savior,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier

FOOTNOTES

1. Joseph Epstein, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Envy*, The New York Public Library: Oxford University Press, 2006, page 22.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update* unless otherwise noted.
3. Philip James Bailey, *Festus: A Poem*, Third London Edition, 1872, pg. 91-92. <https://archive.org/details/f00estuspoembailrich/page/90/mode/2up?p=91/>.
4. Bob McEwen, *Politics: Easy as P.I.E.*, Freedom Quest, 2002.



Personal Study Notes

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Matthew 20:15

Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?



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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