



Envy – Part 1

A Private but Disruptive Sin

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As most of you have read Paul tells Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. At the end of Paul's own life he looks back and he says, "I have fought the good fight." We as Christians are told to put on the whole armor of God. And the battle and war metaphors, they just continue throughout the New Testament. The question I have for you is, what do you think of when you think of the Christian life as warfare? What comes to your mind? What do you think about? You might think, as so often the metaphors go, that, for instance, as Paul says in Second Corinthians, we have been armed with "weapons for the right hand and the left." They're not earthly weapons, but they're weapons that we enlist to tear down any argument that raises itself up against the knowledge of God. They're powerful for the destruction of those arguments.

You might think of that the apologetic war that we're in with a world that constantly tries to tear down and besmirched the truth about God, about Christ, about the gospel. You might think of Christ's very militaristic terminology regarding the advancement of the Church. You might think of the evangelistic assault upon the gates of hell as we're pushing into enemy territory to see people won to Christ, putting their trust in Jesus. That's certainly appropriate and guided by the biblical texts. Much of the battle in the Christian life is external. It's out there. But I think most of you know also that a lot of the battle motifs are directed to the battlefield inside of your life. There's a lot going on that really necessitates a kind of a war footing in our own thinking regarding our hearts, our lives, our minds. It's put in First Peter, there are passions, desires that wage war, that's the terminology, against your soul. We know that there is much that we are told, talk about a war footing, Colossians 3:5, we are supposed to "put to death whatever remains in you that's earthly," that's an unchristian way to do things that reflect an unregenerate life. Those are to be declared as things to be eradicated.

The Christian life has much that directs us to think about the war on the inside and many of the things on the inside that we're called to fight are easy to identify. Right? When the lustful, immoral thought erupts, you, I hope as Christians know, "Wow, that's got to be dealt with." The outburst of anger or as Paul says, the obscene talk. There are a lot of things that you say and you go, "Ah, that's not befitting a Christian." And, you know it's there. It comes with like the roar of a jet engine over the horizon as a missile is launched your way and it explodes like a 500-pound bomb. It's like, "Okay, this is clear. This is wrong. I need to fight this." But there's a lot of warfare in the Christian life, on the interior, the battlefield of your own heart, that it's much more stealth. It's like a sniper who is hiding in the grass with a very hefty silencer on the end of the barrel. And he takes shots at you, these particular sins, and they hit you before you even know what happened. There's a kind of assault that's going on in your sanctification that is much harder to detect.

Christians of a different time they spent a lot of effort in looking at some of those very subtle enemies that are very insidious, they're covert, they're under the radar. The kinds of things that Christians in past generations have said, you better be careful about these because



these aren't obvious. I found that we have let some of these assaults on our sanctification to go unchecked, and it's time for us as a church, I think, to stand back and to say we need to look at the things that are moving me away from Christ's likeness, and they're really attacking my progress in the Christian life.

And the reason we need to spend time on this is because there are certain insidious temptations and sins that take root in your life, and they are the cause of a hundred lesser evils, as Tozer put it, that are unfolding in your life and you never make the association. Well, I have this problem, but this problem really is associated with this undetected sniper who is taking shots at you. And you don't even realize it. You don't hear it. You don't see it. You just start to see the effects as you start to bleed out in your passion for the Lord or something happens and then no longer am I interested in loving or caring or serving or reading my Bible or praying. These are things that are happening. And we've got to identify them.

I was studying for the sermon on Acts 13. We've been going through the book of Acts, as you know, unless you're visiting, you don't know that we're working through the book of Acts, several sermons into it now, 60-something, I think. And in Acts Chapter 13 in verse 44 in particular, there's a description of why Paul and Barnabas were run out of the city in Antioch. It ends up, as you know, as you studied it with us, it ends up not only just having them run out of town, but the city ends up putting a mob together to chase them down and they leave Paul for dead under a pile of rocks. And the descriptive there in Acts 13:44 was a description that I noted, and I even underscored it in the sermon, but only with like a few sentences. And it really stuck in my mind in particular because the sin that was described as a sin that I think today Christians tolerate pretty well, and perhaps they don't even see it as a sin.

Indicated, by the way, by the fact that I've been in this for a long time and I hear very few Christians ever repent of this particular sin. How big is it? It's so big that when I read that and studied that text and brought that sermon to preach to you, though the sermon was about something else, about our example of Paul's tenacity, I realized that this is the very same sin that was designated as the reason that they crucified Christ. I thought, wow. I don't see much written on this. I don't see much preached on this. Matter of fact, I went back into my sermons and I have thousands in my sermon database and I look for times that I preached on this topic, I found one sermon out of thousands at least that I had put in the heading under the category of this particular sin.

But if this sin isn't dealt with, I can assure you it's going to be the source of all kinds of other sins. Matter of fact, this particular sin has always been found from very early in church history as what they would call a capital vice, a capital sin. As some of the early church fathers would put it, this is a sin that is the dictator and commander of a bunch of lesser sins. This is like a, you know, a general in the fight against you. It's a capital vice or a capital sin. And maybe if you've read books or come out of some church tradition that speaks of the deadly sins, the seven deadly sins, it's always going to be listed among them.

And of course, this cloaked introduction is no surprise to you because you saw the bulletin when you came in or you saw the title of the sermon published on the website. You know



we're going to be talking about the sin of envy. And I think some people think, wow, why would we spend any time on that? We need to spend some time on that. As a matter of fact, I've scheduled four sermons to work through the problem of envy, because envy, I think, just like it surprised me, a pretty well-traveled student of the Bible, as to how often this comes up, but how rarely it's addressed, and how rarely the light of Scripture is put on it. I think it's high time that we do this. I looked around for popular books that were written on it, in Christian circles and in Christian booklets, this is a hard topic to find elaborated on, and it's time for us to elaborate on it because it is the source of a million things that probably are going wrong in your life that you've never made the connection.

So I want to spend four weeks talking about what really came out of the study of Acts 13. And I thought, if you're seeing this in literary form in your mind here as you read one of those books and you have this big offset in a box over here. Here's a little supplementary study that kind of unpacks a problem that we just blew past in Chapter 13. So I'd like you to grab your Bibles. And as you see here, this is going to be a, if you got your worksheet, you'll see it's going to be a textual topical series. I call it that because it's not rooted in one particular passage of Scripture. It really comes from many of them. It's a systematic study of a problem that we need to address, or we're going to continue to take hits and not even know where they came from.

So take your Bibles and maybe it would be good for you, I don't even know if you need to turn to this first one. It's there next to the first point on your worksheet, that blank that I trust you're going to fill in here in a minute. And it comes from Mark Chapter 15 verse 10. And in Mark 15 verse 10 we see someone you wouldn't expect to have a lot of insight into spiritual things. And he doesn't. But he certainly has enough sense as a leader, an accomplished leader, to look at the problem of Christ being brought before the Romans and he says, I know what the issue is. The issue is they're delivering him over because of envy. Who was? Well the Sanhedrin, the top ruling class of the Jews, the people who ran the Temple Mount. Right? I mean, he had so offended them, not so much by the fact that he stood for certain things they didn't like, although they didn't care for that. But because the crowds were going after him.

I mean, all Israel's going to be following. So he's just like, here he is riding in on a donkey on Palm Sunday and everyone's like cheering and palm branches. They were envious. He had something that they wanted. They didn't like that he was getting more of the spotlight than they were. They were thinking, "Who was he? What seminary did he go to? How did he get into this? I don't understand. I mean, we used to be something here and now it seems like all the favor of the people is shifting over to him." And they were envious. And the man who saw this in Mark 15 is Pilate of all people. And it said he, the word is "Ginosko." He perceived it. He understood it. Ginosko. It's the word for "knowledge." He had the knowledge. It rose to the surface that he was able to see the motive behind it. And so really envy is a motive. That's why it's a capital sin. It's a deadly sin. It's a deadly vice that causes other things. Right?

The crucifixion of Christ, or even as it says in Acts 13, the reviling of Paul, which is bad, right? You're slandering a man who doesn't deserve it. He's innocent of the things you're slandering him about. And also the heresy of speaking against what he was saying. He was holding up



the scrolls, Paul was, and speaking about what the prophecy said and how Christ fulfilled them. And they said, "No, we're not going to have you teach those and we're going to teach something that contradicts that." So they became heretics all because of, as it says in the text, they had this jealous, envious desire to have what they had. And you remember what happened was when Paul showed up on the second Sabbath, they had a big crowd. Now all of a sudden we needed two services, we needed more parking spaces out front, we needed to order more donuts. And all of a sudden the leaders of the synagogue were going, "We don't like this. When I preach, I don't get crowds like that. I don't understand."

Envy. I thought immediately of Christ. Christ was delivered over because of envy. It says in Matthew 27. Clearly it says as I've stated in Mark 15:10. Here is a perception of a man saying, "I get it." Which, by the way, sin is always easier to perceive in someone else than yourself. Right? I understand that Pilate had a lot of problems. I've preached on Pilate, kind of psychoanalyze Pilate, if you will, theologically analyzed Pilate. And he's got issues, but he's able to see the issue of envy in other people.

I guess that's where we need to start. As we define it, we need to identify it, we need to discern it, we need to get a sense of it. So if you're taking notes, jot these words down. You need to "Discern the Sin of Envy," just like Pilate did. He could see it and he needs to see it, not only in other people, he needs to see it in himself. He needs to come to faith in Christ. But here you are sitting, I assume, as a committed follower of Christ, you need to see it. You need to see it when it's in you, not just when it's in other people. So we need to define it. We need to see what it is.

And to do that, I want to go to Matthew Chapter 20. In Matthew Chapter 20, we have a story that Jesus tells that's all about the problem of envy. And the word that is used in the passage, as you'll see, the punchline of the story is going to give us great insight and will help us just illustrate this and show you examples of it and maybe even have the lights come on, the light of God's word and the conviction of God's Spirit this morning and say, "Oh, I got a big problem here. I didn't even realize I had it." Because it is the source of a thousand lesser evils in your life. Let's find it. Let's rooted out. The enemy doesn't want it. But let's shine a light on the sniper in the grass and say, right there, we got to deal with that.

Matthew Chapter 20. Did you find your way there? Let's look at this text. It says in verse 1, "The kingdom of heaven is like a master," these are the words of Christ, "of the house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day." That's the ancient Roman equivalent of one day's pay for a worker. So this is a fair wage, whatever that is today, whatever, you know, the going rate is for a worker who is working in fields, right? Then they said, "Will you work for a day's wage?" It's like, "Yeah, OK, a good quid pro quo. I'm going to exchange my time for dollars. And so, yeah." And "he sent them into the vineyard." And the key word in verse 2 is they agreed to it. "After agreeing with the labors for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard."

"And going out about the third hour," so I don't know, he's heading to a Home Depot in the mid-morning here, and he's got to run into town, "he sees others standing in the marketplace,



and he said to them, 'You go into the vineyard, too, and whatever is right, I'll give it to you.'" We won't talk about the money arrangement. Just I see you're all ready, you're burning daylight. You're three hours into it. So just go out into the field. "So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour," so now he's driving through, you know, In-N-Out Burger to get lunch. He's like, "Wow, there are more workers standing around here." And "He did the same thing." "Hey, you guys want to work? Go work and I'll pay you whatever's fair."

Verse 6, "And about the 11th hour he went out and found others standing, who knows what kind of errand he's running here, "Why do you stand here all idle all day? They said, 'Well, because no one has hired us.' And he said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'" Verse 8, "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the labors and pay them their wages, beginning with the last.'" Now, remember the last he hired 11 hours into daylight. They only had an hour to work. "Go to the last and then you pay up to the first," the first people to get here, who got here in the morning. "And when those hired about the 11th hour came, each of them received a full day's wage, a denarius." Well, I got a full day. I got, you know, a few hundred bucks here in my pocket. That's awesome. And you can imagine thinking, "We were only here for an hour. Well, this guy's super generous, super nice."

"Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more." They started doing the math. "Man I'm going to receive like 1100 denarii. That's going to be awesome." "But each one also received a denarius. And upon receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you've made them equal to us who borne the burden of the day in the scorching heat.'" Does that make sense to you? Does that not make perfect sense to you? Think about it. You go get a degree. You go get a master's degree, you go interview, you go get a contract. They talk about your pay. They talk about the package, the benefits package. They talk about the retirement plan, the 403b or the 401k. They talk about the health insurance and the health benefits savings program. They put it all in front of you and you agree to it. You walk out, you go home, you tell your wife, "I got a good job, a good package, good deal. This is awesome. Let's celebrate. Let's go out to dinner. We got a good job now."

And you come back into work the next day and he hires someone else with no college education, gives him the same title that you have, and he happens to share that his pay is twice your pay and he has better benefits. And not only that, he's got an expense account and a bunch of other things and he starts sharing, "Isn't it great to work here? Our boss is so generous." And you go, "He ain't that generous to me." Well, yesterday you celebrated it with your wife. Your pillow talk was, "It's great to have a good job now." But you go in the next day and this guy has twice the package of benefits as you and twice the pay as you. I don't know. How is that going to go when you start to talk to your wife that night around dinner? You're going to grumble against the master of the house. You're going to say, "What's with the HR department? What's with the boss? What's with this guy? Who is this guy that I'm sitting with in the workroom talking about making twice what I'm making and he didn't even go to college?"

What's the response? Verse 13. "He replied to one of them, 'Friend, I'm doing you no wrong.'" "Yesterday you were in here and you signed the contract. You signed the benefits package, you were all fine. You told your wife this was a great job." "Did you not agree with me for a day's wage?" That's a fair wage. "Take what belongs to you and go. If I choose to give this last worker as I give you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" Okay. There's a word you probably didn't use much this week, "begrudge." You know that's a word that's not a good word. I don't want to feel this begrudging feeling. It doesn't even have an object here. It doesn't have an object because in Greek you might see if you have a footnote, you're reading, for instance, an ESV, an English Standard Version. Look at that footnote and look at the marginal reading. It will give you this really weird Greek construction of what we're translating from the original language of the New Testament.

Do you see it? Let's look at it here together. What does it say? You've got an ESV. Here's literally what it says. "Is your eye bad because I'm good?" What? "Is your eye bad because I'm good?" Is your eye bad? Wait a minute. No, I'm complaining about my pay and my benefits package. No, no, I get that. But here's how it's described. Your eye is bad. Envy. Let's just talk about it grammatically. Envy is a transliteration, a loose transliteration of the Latin word "Invidia." It's a compound preposition "in" which is "against" or "toward" or "upon" in Latin. And "vidia" or "video" would be the noun. And video we know is something we see moving on a screen. But the word means, "video," means "to look." Vidia means my eyes. Okay. So "invidia," looking at, looking upon.

See, the assumption is I'm looking not just upon you because you, boss, gave me a package deal that I don't like because you gave someone else something better. But my eye now is cast on them. I don't like them. The way they get treated differently than I get treated when I should be doing better because they've done less. They're getting benefits that I'm not. They're getting advantages I'm not getting. I'm casting my eye on them. Right? And that's a bad eye, a bad eye. Envy really means to look upon, to look upon. And I'm looking upon other people who God has been more generous to, or the master of the house in this illustration, and I don't feel good about it. That's why begrudge is not a bad translation, because it really captures the idiom both in Hebrew, by the way, which goes way back, and Greek. The idea of putting your eye on someone.

If that seems too complicated. Think of it this way, gals. You buy a dress for Easter. It's really nice, you paid a little extra money for it. You look in the mirror and you go. "Looking pretty good. Let's go to church." You went to church last week and you see another gal out there after church wearing a dress that looks really a lot like yours. Not exactly, but a lot like yours, but apparently in the "Who Wore It Better" category, it must be her because you're overhearing as you're by the coffee table there, the donut table, I mean, you're standing near her, you've heard like four compliments on her dress. And guess who said nothing about your dress? No one, including your husband. It's like no one said anything. You're looking at your dress. You're looking at her dress. You're hearing everyone compliment her.



And here's what you're going to do to her gals, because gals do this all the time. You're going to cast your eye upon her. Up and down. Now, guys look at girls. We don't need to get into all the details of this. Go anywhere. Go to the mall, go to the airport. Guys are looking at girls. They look at girls very differently than girls look at girls. And girls look at girls like a lot. Up and down. It's a whole different thought process for the guys. But for the girls, they're looking it over, everything. And while she, by the way, as you're looking her over, is picking up her coffee and then she gets a donut for her kid and her kid's kind of pulling on her skirt and she's balancing that coffee, you're just kind of eyeballing maybe that coffee will just go right, like on her dress. Wouldn't be bad. I mean, I might run over and go, "Oh, could you use a napkin?" But it wouldn't be horrific if the one getting all the compliments on the dress that looks just like mine has a nice coffee stain all over herself now. Oh, I would never say that out loud, but I'm "casting a bad eye" on that.

Okay. Let's go to the Old Testament book of First Samuel. If you need more examples of this, there are many of them, but we're trying to define it. We're trying to define it. I'm looking with askance, I'm looking with a negativity. I'm looking with a feeling of disruption of my peace and tranquility. I felt okay looking in the mirror before I came to church. Now I don't feel so good. And it's not that I'm sitting here saying I got to rush to a mirror in the bathroom at the church. It's that I'm looking at her like I could look through her. And if there were daggers, I would be daggering her with my eyes. That's just how it happens. And I don't even start to realize what's happened. As a matter of fact, when someone says, "Oh, her dress looks nice." Now, it's like, "Yeah, but have you seen her kids? How unruly are her children? Did you see how they're tugging on her?" I mean, there's instantly this pejorative sense of negativity about the person because they're getting something that we're not.

First Samuel 18. How about this guys? Verse 6, "As they were coming home," First Samuel 18:6, "David returned from striking down the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated." So here's a little parade after the war, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Now, if you're David, you get it. Right? "Women are coming out to celebrate my amazing skill on the battlefield. I'm getting accolades, I'm getting awards. I'm getting all the gals going, 'This guy is great.' Really good. Done really well." I mean, you're the salesman of the company. Yeah. You really have done well. Look at the job, look at the car, look at the house, whatever it is. Look at your accomplishments.

The problem is David is a lieutenant, up-and-coming leader, right? I mean, he's still not much, he's still doubling as a jazz musician in the king's palace. But he's trying to make his way in this. And Saul is the king. He's older, he's taller. He wears the crown. He's got a palace. He's got the armies at his beck and call. And he's cleaning out his ears going, "You said I've struck down my thousands and David his ten thousands? Well, how does that go?" Verse 8. Saul said, "It's great to have such a great up-and-coming lieutenant in my army. Praise the Lord. Thank you, God, so much for bringing David into the army." Do you see all that in verse 8?



Actually it says, "Saul was very angry and this saying displeased him. And he said, 'They've ascribed to David ten thousands and to me they've ascribed thousands and what more can he have but the kingdom?' "Soon, they're going to move me out of my corner office. This guy keeps getting bigger. Who's the hotshot now at the office? I don't get it. He gets all the bids, he gets all the accounts, he gets all the accolades, he gets all the awards. He's getting raises, he's getting promotions. I now look at him askance. I look at him with this feeling of resentment. And I think what else is he going to take from me? He's already taking the praise and the accolades and the girls are looking at him like, this is the hotshot now in the army, and they know that I'm the commander in chief, but I'm no longer... I mean, he's stealing my spotlight. What else is he going to take from me?"

Okay. Here's the idiom, verse 9. "And Saul," here it is, "eyed David from that day on." Not just girls in their dresses and, you know all the rest. It's guys in this comparative sense of what are you doing? How are you getting, you know, how's it going for you? Here's the reason this series is important for us. There are certain sins that I think as Christians it's easier and easier to conquer them as we grow in the Christian life. Envy is one I guarantee you, I guarantee you, from the pastor to the plumber, it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter if you're a new Christian or have been a Christian walking with Christ for 50 years. This is an equal opportunity temptation. And it is a vice and it bites literally. It clamps you into place and does things in your life that you're not proud of.

And it's like the old story that's told that's illustrated, and many people illustrate with this story, of the monks who were in the desert, and the desert fathers, the hermits they were called, and they're out there serving God, praying prayers and the demons, this is the old story, the myth, they're trying to trip them up. They can't trip up the monks because they're so righteous and holy. They're always thinking about God. They're always praying. And so the demons are frustrated. It's a lot like Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, if you haven't read it. Just a fantastic book and all fictional, of course, about the insight of the demons trying to trip us up. So they go to Satan and they go, "We can't get these guys. We can't get them. Everything we try, every temptation, everything we try to get them to do and lust and anger and obscene language. We can't get them to do any of this stuff." So Satan goes, "Watch this." And he goes up and he whispers into the most holy monk out there in the desert, the priest monk, and he says, "Your brother has just been appointed the Bishop of Alexandria" and backs off. All the demons watch as his face scowls.

But the point is, Paul can say this: envy is a motive even for preachers. It drives them on. Paul was in prison and they were concerned about the fact that he's getting all the attention. And now they're out there, I'm quoting now, *Philippians 1*, preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry. I mean, think about that. It's sin. It's a big sin as we'll see.

How do you envy? Do you put your eye on other people? This is a relational thing. We're going to deal with this next time. It's a relationally damaging sin, and it's a focus on the person. Like this text says, "Saul put his eye on David." And to do what? Well, verse 11, if you want to jump down to verse 11, "Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, 'I will pin David to the wall.'" I mean, it isn't for good that we're paying extra attention to the person. We're looking for



problems. We're looking for things that are somehow in contradistinction to the things that I'm jealous of in the person's life.

By the way, we should distinguish some of these words. Jealousy literally is the word, if you were to transliterate it, we get the word zeal from it and sometimes it is translated that way, "Zelos." Zelos is a word that sometimes is put in a positive context and sometimes in a negative context. But always it's an eruption of feeling. I can be tranquil, I can feel peaceful. And all of a sudden I have this thing build up inside my heart. Jealousy is like that. And sometimes jealousy is a good attribute because we are jealous for things that we rightly possess and we don't want a threat of someone coming in and taking it away. And even God himself is jealous, right? His people should worship him. They shouldn't bow down to Moloch. Right? They shouldn't be, you know, worshiping at the Asherah pole. So he says, "I'm jealous for my name. I'm jealous for my people. The Lord your God is jealous. Do not worship any other gods." Jealousy can be an exasperation at something that's rightfully yours being taken away.

So sometimes the word zealous, sometimes the concept of jealousy is a synonym of envy, and sometimes it's not. Because it can be a desire for me to have something or keep something like the corner office. And I don't want you taking it from me because I'm envious of you and your talent and your position and your looks or your weight or whatever it is that you're concerned with. I don't want you to take something from me. And so jealousy sometimes can be translated and used that way in Scripture to describe something that is bad as well as something that's good depending on the context. Envy, though, it's the core problem.

How about this word "covet"? Just two separate biblical words. Coveting. I would argue that coveting is a component part of envy. Right? Envy is I don't like the advantages and the things that you have that I don't have. I'm going to look at you now with a critical eye begrudging you. Right? Really ultimately, as we'll see in future messages, it's really a begrudging of God. Right? Really, I'm critical of God. But that's not, I mean, the relational sin is I'm looking at you with a critical mind and it usually comes out with gossip and criticism and a lot of other things, and it can get way worse than that. But the idea of coveting, it can start with I want what you have.

Matter of fact, in the Big Ten, God brings the Ten Commandments down off the mountain in the hands of Moses. And the 10th command is coveting. And it's weird because all the other ones are like, obvious. Like, if I murdered someone this afternoon, I'd have a hard time sleeping tonight. "Ah, man, I feel the guilt." But here is one that's in the top ten and God says, do not covet, don't covet your neighbor's wife. Don't covet his ox or his house or anything else that he has. His stuff you should stop looking at with this desire, this salivating desire. I want what he has. Don't do that.

So envy, then, is like the next step. Envy is the whole category. I'm looking at what you've got. I want what you've got. And really it starts to have that sense of I don't like that you have it. It moves from the thing to the person who possesses it. And it is a guarded so it overlaps with jealousy in that I don't want you taking what I've got. And it could be attention, it could be

position, it could be paycheck, it could be a lot of things. It ends up being so self-injurious. As a matter of fact, the idea of discerning what envy is in your life, you can see that I'm willing to even have things taken away from me if you would be somehow advantaged if I don't lose those things.

The illustration that's used often in this discussion of envy, at least in church history. Back to a Jewish parable where there's a shopkeeper and he's got a competitor down the street in the marketplace, and an angel comes to him and says, kind of like a genie in a bottle, an angel comes and says, "I'll give you whatever you want. I will give you whatever you desire, you give me a request I will grant it. The only catch is your competitor down the street gets twice of whatever you asked for." You can see the conundrum, the problem. So he thinks for a while. "Well, if I ask for bigger revenues, if I ask for a raise, if I ask for, you know, I want to double my business. He's going to quadruple his business." So the man ends up in this Jewish parable just asking for this, "Okay, make me blind in one eye." Right? And the point of the Jewish parable about envy is, "I'm so concerned about his advancement. I'm so concerned about him stealing the spotlight. I'm so concerned about him having so much more. Even if I had a lot, I don't want him to have more." And that's how this goes.

And we'll see this even in classes and how it works in economies and how it works in society. And a lot of the things that we're debating on the stage of modern evangelicalism really comes down to envy. It's like saying that if I could say to everyone who's, you know, making \$10,000 a year, I'm going to give you \$100,000 a year. Right? So you can stop feeling like, you know, those people in the 1%. Well, but here's the only catch. Everyone else who's making over \$100,000, they're going to make ten times more than what they make. It's the class distinction. It's the distinction that I don't like her looking better than me. I don't like him being more successful than me. I don't like her advancing in that job or that company fast. I don't like that. I'm casting an eye on you. "Is your eye bad because I'm generous?" That principle is going to come through this whole series. We're going to have to understand that from every direction. You have to discern the sin of envy. You have to understand that that's something that's active going on in your life.

And speaking of eyes being cast. Do you think social media helps this or hurts this? Speaking of things you put your eyes on all day long. When we look at where they vacationed and how clear her skin looks and how great his car is and, you know, where they went again and they took another cruise and they did this other thing. We look at these and we think we're just kind of checking in with those people. I just wonder how that avenue of my eye being cast on them. It's great that that idiom and it is an idiom, I get it, trying to talk about the feeling of that belligerence and that resentment. But it really is so good that it's been maintained through both Old and New Testaments because it really is where your eye is drawn. And often it's drawn to a place that fuels my discontent, not only with where I'm at, but my discontent that they're at where they're at. We have to be sensitive to this. We have to know it.

I'll give you one more passage here. We don't have time to turn to this one but here's what Solomon said. Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 4:4. Listen carefully. "Then I saw all the toil and all the skill in work that comes from a man's envy of his neighbor. This is vanity and it's



striving after the wind." Did you catch that? Then I saw all the toil and all the skill in work from a man's envy of his neighbor and I said, vanity, striving after the wind. Do you know that you can say, "I think I just have a good work ethic"? And really what's fueling that is a sin of envy and envy of your neighbor. The next degree, envy. Right? The next thing that you're trying to match. The next book you're trying to read. The next promotion you're trying to get. The competency, the skill set. It could be driven by envy and envy, let's just be clear, it's sin.

A definition for what it's worth. On a series like this, I should at least give you my definition in my study on this topic. Here's how I put it: "envy is the resentment, envy is the resentment of others." Ultimately it's going to go back to God. We'll get to that. But just a baseline definition. "Envy is the resentment of others for their comparative blessings and advantages." Envy is the resentment of others for their comparative blessings and advantages," and here's what we need to catch in the series, "and is the source and the motive for all sorts of compounding evils." And it is the source and the motive for all sorts of compounding evils. If we start with that, I think we'll know why we should be addressing the topic and why we should see that envy as a sniper in the grass who doesn't come out like a tank roaring down the road at us with a big gun. It's stealth. It's covert. It's insidious. But it causes so many other problems, as we'll see in this series.

Well, do you have your worksheet there? Look at the reference for the next point. It's going to be a long sermon. (audience laughter) Point number two, I've referenced here Genesis 3 through Revelation 19. That's a lot of ground to cover. And we won't take time to cover all of it. But I do want you to know it's found everywhere between Genesis 3 and Revelation 19. You start looking for this sin and you will see it everywhere. And what I want you to see as you think of just kind of start thinking through the Bible, I want you to dread the cascading compounding evils that come from it. I put it this way, number two, you need to "Dread the Impact of Envy," dread it, dread it. You ought to have a healthy respect for something that can hurt you so badly and hurt others so badly and bring and besmirched the glory of God so severely.

How bad? I don't know. Let's just start and we don't need to turn... Just think through with me, starting in Genesis 3. Genesis 3. "Now, the serpent..." That's how it starts in our English text. "Now, the serpent was more crafty than..." Okay, so we've got this figure here, this embodiment of Satan. We know that because throughout the rest of Scripture, we know who this was. This angelic being who had fallen. He's going to come and mess up everything in mankind. And I just want you to think of a connection that most people do not make and the early church was all about making it, underscoring it, making lists of saying, "Do not have envy in your life," because they connected constantly, the problem of the fall of Satan from passages like Ezekiel 28, Isaiah Chapter 14. All of these descriptions of the fall of Satan, they really come back to the problem of envy.

I know if I just said quickly, Sunday school grads, "Why did Satan fall?" You'd say pride. And you're right, because the word pride is mentioned in the passage. But read it carefully. What did he want? Right? He wanted the glory that God had. He wanted the glory that God had. It's much like you would see immediately if you're reading through Numbers and you see the

people who look at Moses and say, "How is it that Moses gets to be the hot shot?" And you'd say, "What's wrong with those people?" You wouldn't probably initially say pride unless in some biblical passage it's described that way and you'd be kind of stuck on that, you wouldn't think any further. But the early church thought further about this, and they constantly said the real problem, and even as the rabbinical wisdom literature put it, is the problem of envy. It is, as Augustine said, it's the diabolical sin. It's the thing that careened humanity into sin. Because Satan was envious, he wanted the glory of another. He wanted the spotlight. And he said, "I want that. I'm going to ascend. I'm going to take the place. I'm going to move there. How come you get all the compliments? How come you get the paycheck? How come you get the corner office? I should be in it. I don't like that you get it." And so aspersions are cast on the God of the universe just for being the God of the universe and Satan wants to be the God of the universe. Envy.

Now the serpent. And then you think, why did Adam and Eve fall into sin? Well, Eve was tempted. How was she tempted? Do you remember how she was tempted? It was not like you're really hungry, you got nothing else to eat, why don't you eat this? And I know you're not supposed to. It's not the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness who was told to make bread out of rocks. Right? That's wasn't a temptation. When the temptation was, listen, "God knows that the day you eat of it, you're going to be like him." Right? That's the whole paradigm of Satan's fall. I want what he's got. He shouldn't be the only one with that. Why don't I get that? Hey, here's the thing. Let's see if that'll work with human beings now. Now we have created beings and here he comes and says the same thing. "You know what? He knows you can be wise. You eat this. You're going to be like him. Why in the world should he have a corner on being the wise one of the universe?" Satan, the envious one, appeals to Eve and makes her the envious one.

You can just keep going throughout the rest of the book of Genesis. Isaac gets very wealthy and it says it's because of the blessing of God. And we'll come back to that passage in the series. And the Philistines, it says, became envious. Why did the nations have such a problem with Abraham and Isaac? Well, because they became rich and they didn't like it. And they went out and it says in the passage they went and filled in with earth, with dirt, all their wells. It's like they didn't want them to be that way. They resented them for their comparative advantages and blessings.

Or how about a guy named Joseph who was doing pretty well with his dad because he was the son of his old age. So Joseph here gets a special coat and his brothers don't get it. And they're going, "Man, we don't really like this." They didn't say, "Oh, it's so wonderful. I love the relationship Dad has with Joseph. It's so great. It must be great to be Joseph and praise the Lord. I'm going to rejoice with those who rejoice." They hated him for it. They were critical. They didn't like him. Why? "Because you have an advantage and I don't have that advantage. I don't know why you get that. I mean, what do you get special clothes? I don't get it. Why does he get to have that?"

Then Joseph starts telling about his dreams. I mean, I'm just thinking, I mean, I fault him a little, like, (whispering) "Just keep your dreams to yourself." Right? But you get a dream about



what? All my brothers are going to be bowing down. "Hey, guys, I had an interesting dream. You're all going to be bowing down to me." Well, they're already envious of you, man. Shut up. Shut up. And they say, "We are going to kill this guy." Oh, by the way, I kind of skipped over one of the most famous ones. How about Chapter 4 of Genesis? Abel brings a sacrifice. Cain brings a sacrifice. One's accepted. One's not. Cain says, "I don't like it. He gets favor from God. I'm not getting favor. What's wrong?" And what does God say? "Hey, sin's crouching at the door, it wants to dominate you. Don't let it." Just do good. You'll be fine. You'll be accepted. Just fix your own problem. We'll deal with you. You deal with yourself here. No. He goes out and kills his brother.

Well, that's exactly what the brothers of Joseph wanted to do. Thankfully, because of one, Reuben, there was a sparing of his life. But he ends up still being thrown in the pit and sold to, you know, marauders coming through and ends up in Egypt. We could go on and on and on all the way to the culmination of the Jewish Sanhedrin looking at Jesus going, "I don't like that he's drawing bigger crowds than us. So I'm going to be critical of him. I have power and in my power I am going to put him down. In this case, let's just kill him." We had it by Chapter 4 that there's fratricide, there's murder of your own brother and it all comes back to the why Christ was crucified.

All the way through the rest of the New Testament. I mean, to summarize the New Testament teaching on this, how about Titus Chapter 3 verse 3. It says, we were "passing our days," talking about non-Christians, "in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." I mean, that's like how it works. Why can't we get along, right? We got problems. It splits churches. Do you know what splits churches? Envy is at the core. You have to dread the impact of envy. You got to think it through from beginning to end.

Maybe you need to start thinking like Chrysostom, fourth century. "To what then will one compare to this kind of sin. It's a viper, it's an asp, it's a cankerworm," whatever that is, "to a scorpion. Since there is nothing so accursed and pernicious as this kind of soul, an envious soul." William Law hundreds of years ago said "the most ungenerous, base, and wicked passion that can enter the heart of man is envy." Chrysostom elsewhere and he spoke a lot on this, "How great of an evil it was that caused an angel to fall." The context? He was preaching on envy. Preaching on envy in the fourth century after Christ. It's bad. It's worse than we think. It's corrosive. It's going to cause great damage.

It's like going to the store and getting that industrial... And you've got to find what you need to buy it. Like when you're living in a house with women with long hair and your drains get clogged up and there's no way to unclog them and you've tried the Drano and it didn't work. So they tell you there's a special kind of Drano that just like bores through whatever's in the pipes. And they sell it to you in a bottle that's in a bag that's in another bag that's in a case that's, whatever. You know how it is. And if you brought that, you know, that acidic, corrosive stuff home in the car and you were dumb enough to put it, like, on your leather passenger seat as you're coming home from the special hardware store that carries it, if you saw it leaking out as you're driving, I think you're going to pull over and deal with it.



This is the corrosive, destructive nature of envy. And we just need to feel it. We need to see it. This is going to cause problems. What's that seat going to look like after I try to wipe all this off of it. It's going to leave damage. Envy will be as subtle as you criticizing the person who you are envious of all the way to doing whatever you can to destroy them. And if you can't destroy their life you at least will destroy their reputation. All because you have got this vice that is the fuel for all these kinds of evils, and we haven't identified it and we haven't waged war against it. That's the calling of this series.

Dread the impact of envy. I read that passage for you in Titus Chapter 3. I don't know if you know that passage, but it talks about us being hated and hating others because our hearts are filled with malice and envy. Then it says, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of our God has appeared, he saved us, not because of our works done in righteousness," because, man, we were envious and malicious toward people, but "he saved us according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out richly on us in Christ." That picture of the Spirit of God. You need to know this: that the Spirit of God is wanting to wage war against this. And maybe he's grieved and maybe he's quenched in your life when it comes to this sin because you're just not interested. He's trying to hand you the binoculars to look in the field and there the snipers are and you haven't been interested in that, because to you, this is not a big sin.

I don't even... I don't know. I mean, I just wonder, how many times have you repented of the sin of envy? Seriously. I bet you've repented of the sin of lust many times. Maybe even materialism and greed. I mean, I bet you repented many times of outbursts of anger. I bet you've repented many times of saying obscene words. I just wonder how often you've dropped to your knees and said, "God forgive me for the sin of envy, the diabolical sin of the universe. Just, God, I'm sorry. My heart is envious."

Well, here's what's going to help. And this is just the foretaste and kind of the advertisement for what's to come. There's an answer. There's relief. And you ought too long for that. Number three, we need to "Desire Freedom from Envy." Freedom from envy. And let me quote the passage there that I have listed for you. Proverbs Chapter 14 verse 30, if you can turn there quickly, it's just a little verse, but it's so helpful. This is what we want. Not only do we want to please God and God says this is bad so we shouldn't do it, right? Do not envy. We'll talk about it. "Love does not envy," Envy, envy all over the Scripture as a problem. And we want to do it because God's told us to do what's right. But in Proverbs Chapter 14, I'm just thinking there's nothing you should be more motivated, at least in the next month, to care about than envy, because it's going to be good for you.

The opposite of envy, this is a contrasting Hebrew parallelism, right? "The envy," look at the bottom, "is going to rot the bones." And it does. It is like that corrosive, acidic thing that's just going to leave damage. But here's the opposite. "A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh. A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." Your life is going to be so much better if you get through the series, can identify the problem, you can attack the problem, you can see God's counterattack to it. But I just want to tie it to the main theme. And the theme is this: that God said he's going to give you his Spirit, and the Spirit of God is going



to work in conjunction with the book that the Spirit wrote. It's called the Bible. And together, those things are going to help you eradicate this. Extricate this from your life. That's the goal.

Because as Jesus talked as he was leaving the Upper Room Discourse, John 14 through 16, he says this, he says, "I'm going to leave my peace with you. It's a peace that I'm going to give you. It's not as the world gives, it's a different kind of peace." And the point is the whole topic of the discussion is I'm leaving you my Spirit. The "Parakletos," the helper is going to come and the helper is going to come and is going to help you do a bunch of stuff, including eradicating the vices that are the fountainhead sins of the Christian life. And this is one of them. And the Spirit of God is going to be the answer to this.

Matter of fact, one passage real quick before we end, Galatians Chapter 5, we're almost done, Galatians Chapter 5. This list of things that we see in verse 22, the Fruit of the Spirit. We preached on that you might remember in the summer out in the patio of the courtyard, wherever we were. All of that is a bad dream to me, that season, but hopefully a couple of good sermons there. We went through every one of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. We preached on every one of those for weeks. Each one week after week. We didn't start, because I didn't know if we'd have anybody left if I started up where the works of the flesh started in verse 19. But the Fruit of the Spirit is the contrast to these outworkings of the flesh. I'm supposed to, Colossians 3:5, "Put to death whatever's earthly in me." Well, the earthly fleshly things in me that are in contradistinction to the fruit or the outgrowth of the Spirit, they're listed there. And some of them, like I said, they drop like bombs on our lives. You cheat on your wife this week. BAM! You're going to feel that. It's going to be bad. You have a fit of anger. You're going to feel drunkenness, orgies. I guarantee you. You're going to be like, "Wow, this is horrible."

Look at verse 21, though. The first word in verse 21 in the list right here, envy. And he says, I warn you as I've warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. This is a bad sin. How bad is it? Envy has got to be eradicated. It's got to be eradicated. Well, praise God, he's given us his Spirit. And as he summarizes all of what he says in verses 22 and 23 about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. Here's how it ends, verse 25, "Live by the Spirit." The Spirit wants these things. "Let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become," and then he summarizes the problem, "conceited, provoking one another," and it crescendos to this, "envy one another."

You don't think anything's a problem in our church? You don't think envy is a problem in your small group? You don't think envy is a problem at your workplace? You don't think envy is a problem at your school? Envy is a problem. It's a big problem. It's a big problem that most people don't know they have. Some people complain of back pain or hip pain or whatever. A lot of times it comes down to their shoes. Right? It's so weird. I used to sell shoes in college and even in high school I was selling shoes. I know that's weird, but... A bad pair of shoes, and a lot of people they, for some reason made a sport out of wearing shoes that didn't fit them and were wrong.



I mean, let's just picture it this way. You get a pebble in your shoe. Right? That happened to me not too long ago. A couple of weeks ago. And it was like it bothered me. I couldn't get to it, couldn't fix it. It makes you walk differently. You're walking from one office to the next or the conference room, and you're busy and you're walking around. It's like, I got to get this out of my shoe. Not only does it hurt your foot, but it starts making you walk with a limp and then your knee hurts and your back hurts, your hip. It's causing all these problems. The problems within the Christian life caused by this thing, it can be extracted, right? The vacuum cleaner, if you will, of the Spirit of God can take that and take it out. But we've got to stop grieving. We've got to let the Spirit of God identify this. That's the goal. And desire freedom.

Look at that word in Proverbs 14, "tranquility," right? That's such a good word. Chrysostom preached a lot, "Let us then escape from this disease of envy. For if it is not possible, indeed, if it is not, well, then we can't escape from the fire prepared for the devil unless we are free from this sickness." You'd say this guy is way overreacting on this. Well, again, I just read it, verse 21, envy is in the list and it says, "I warned you, those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God." You're looking through social media and your heart is provoked to envy. I'm just saying, do you recognize the issues here? We've got to deal with this. That doesn't mean you can't have a Facebook account or Instagram. It just means you better watch what your heart's doing. You better make sure that we've declared war on this vice. That's what the series is about. Three more installments to come. I hope it's a helpful, really a helpful sanctifying series for you.

Let's pray. God, we've introduced this topic this morning. I do pray that we could get this sin under control, out of our lives, eradicated, extracted. God, it's always going to be a battle and we know that. If we live to be 99 years old, we're going to struggle at some point with some other dude in the nursing home about our envy. We're going to be envious. So what we need to do is identify it, see it, and fight it and be quick to bend down, stop whatever we're doing, and take that rock out of our shoe. I pray for this congregation right now as we begin that self-reflective analyzing process. I pray many would get to a small group this week and discuss it. People who have never been to a small group to find one on our website and discuss these discussion questions that are attached to this worksheet. We might say, okay, yeah, here's the problem. We need to analyze it. We need to start working on it. Give us tools, maybe some minor tools in this week's message, but give us some major tools to launch the counterattack and be successful.

In Jesus name. Amen.