

Envy-Part 4

Getting Serious About the Counterattack

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Jesus once employed a military illustration in Luke Chapter 14 verse 31, and I can summarize his illustration in one sentence. It is, "Don't be a fool to get in a fight you can't win." Don't be a fool to get in a fight you can't win, that's what he said. If there's a 10,000-member army that you're overseeing and an army's coming against you with 20,000 men, you better sit down first and figure this out. If you can't do it then you shouldn't get into the fight. To a junior high-like mind, that's good advice to live by that. Right? You could choose whether to fight or not. You certainly want to assess if you've got a chance to actually win. Sometimes I had a choice. I might just want to put it off for a semester or two, put on some weight or somewhere in the garage lifting weights. But some battles you just can't fight so you had to just kind of give in, that's called terms of peace, it goes on to say in verse 32. In junior high that meant you'd be that guy's slave for a while, right? You have to do whatever the bully tells you to do.

I know that in this series on envy, perhaps you've been renewed in your resolve to go toe-to-toe with this sin. And it is a sin, and it's a big sin. Matter of fact, the church historically called it one of the seven deadly sins because they were concerned about sins that were the root of a lot of other kinds of sins. This in particular is one of those. Envy is the cause of a bunch of other sins that we have in our lives. This bruise, this resentment and this frustration of the fact that other people have blessings and advantages that you don't have. It causes all kinds of things, gossip and criticism and backbiting and factions and all the way to our first encounter with it, at least in the book of Genesis, that is that Cain rises up to kill his brother Abel because he's envious.

Maybe you said, "Well, I'm going to fight this thing in my life, Pastor Mike has given me some good tools to do that." But I'd want to warn you that it looks a lot easier on a Sunday morning in a sermon than it does throughout the week and you may have already figured that out. You may figure like, "I'm trying, but I'm getting pummeled in this. I put it down on a Tuesday and by Thursday it's back." And you may find that this kind of fight is one that you're tempted to call a truce and ask for terms of peace and just kind of live under the subjection of this recurring sin in your life. "Well, I tried, and I can't seem to kick it."

Well, I advise you not to do that. And I'll tell you that even though I gave you instructions, that really is the linchpin to this whole thing. I said last time we were together, if you were to put these things into practice, to know the emerging desires and cravings of your life, when you identify those that are starting with coveting and leading to envy, that you would learn to love with a genuine Christian love, and you would genuinely see other people's interest as above your own. And you could genuinely bless them when they are blessed that you would rejoice with them when they were rejoicing. I mean, that would be it. And I told you that multiple times last time. I said, this is it. You do this and you will kick this thing called envy.

Now, while you know the instructions and the solution, you may not have the wherewithal to make it happen. I would tell you that you need to get that wherewithal to make it happen



because you don't want to live under the subjection of the bully that is envy. The way to do that is to make sure that we have a stronger army than what's on the other side. What we need to do, like the captain in the illustration in Luke 14, if you've got 10,000 and he's coming against you with 20,000, I would say you should go out and start recruiting more soldiers. You better figure out how to get a stronger army together to fight this. In our case, I want to give you the instructions that will give you the wherewithal to employ the solutions, to have this thing actually happen to where you live the rest of your Christian life with a whole lot less envy. While it'll be a fight and there are always some bruises and cuts when you get in a fight, you can win this fight and you can win it consistently.

What you need is found in Ezekiel Chapter 36 and I'd like to start here. It's much like the illustration of having an army that is really outgunned by the other army. The solution is for you to have a fighter on your side who is more powerful than the fighter on the other side. And that is something I think you know, it's a Sunday school answer. You certainly need God on your side or to be more specific, with the adult Sunday school answer is, you need God's Spirit on your side. And that may sound simple, but I find it so profoundly difficult to make sure it's true in your life. I know that because Jesus said at the end of time there'll be many who come on that day and say, "Lord, Lord, hey, we're on your team. We've done all these things for you." And he'll say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

So here are people who never knew God. They thought they knew God. There are all kinds of things on the resumé that make them feel like I should be in because I did all this stuff for you. Clearly, that stuff was done for God, not because they didn't believe the things that God said. It's just that they never employed the things, they never appropriated the things that God said needed to be employed and appropriated. So I want us to make sure that you don't get to the end of this road and you realize I never really had God on my side. I mean, I thought I did, but a lot of people will be surprised. Many will come to me on that day and say, Lord. Chapter 7, by the way, the Sermon on the Mount, the words of Jesus.

Ezekiel 36 is the answer. At least the descriptive answer of what you will need to be successful in your fight against this sin and any other sin, whether it's lust or pride or gossip or whatever it might be, envy in particular, it's an insidious and a powerful sin. You can defeat it if this is true of you. Let's start here in verse 25. This sounds like something I would hope most of you think, well, this is true of me. Verse 25 is all about forgiveness. "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean from all your uncleannesses," as odd as that word sounds, "and from all your idols I will cleanse you." Now that's looking in your past, in your life and saying there are plenty of things I valued as supreme in my life over the ultimate supreme person in my life. In other words, the person who should be hailed as supreme, the ultimate, transcendent, exalted Almighty God should be the center and focus of my life, but I've got all these other things that have taken priority over him, those are called idols, and often it's envy and coveting that's driving us to acquire more of that as Ecclesiastes says.

A lot of men are out there, a lot of people are out there pursuing things all out of envy of their neighbor. But all this work, all this stuff that we're doing that is not this God-centered focus, this God-glorifying focus, all of that, it can be forgiven. That's the falling short. That's the misalignment. That's the missing target of your life and God says, I'm going to have a



cleansing of your life. And he illustrates it with a sprinkling of clean water. And it's going to clean you. And anything that falls short of God's standard or glory, I'm going to eradicate it from your resumé. You'll be clean.

You think, "That sounds good. I think I'm forgiven. I learned about it in church. I mean, I've responded to that in some way. I've prayed a prayer. I've, you know, I've said I want that. And I suppose that's all you need to do, because God's a pretty generous God. And he'll do that." Well, if he has done that, he also does this. There's an "and" here starting in verse 26, that the people that he forgives, he gives them a new heart. "I will give you a new heart and a new spirit." There's a small "s" on that because the context distinguishes what he's doing here in the interior life to what he's about to talk about in the next verse, in verse 27, and that one has a capital "S" on it because we're talking about God's Spirit. But this is your spirit. And you have a spirit, you have a heart, you have the interior control center of your life, and it's going in a particular direction from birth.

The Bible says that's a direction that's the wrong direction. It's a self-absorbed direction. It's a direction that will never allow you to do what we talked about last week, and that is to genuinely love people the way that Christ did, which means you're putting their interests before your own. You're genuinely seeing them as more valuable than yourself. And people do not do that because we're all aligned in the interior of our lives to put ourselves first. That's the way we were designed. Not just to look out for our interests, but to look out for our interests in a supreme way. We're not going to let anything get in the way of that. Even the choices that we make that look sacrificial, the discipline or whatever it might be ultimately are about advantaging me. There are a lot of people that do a lot of things for other people that are ultimately about themselves. A lot of people say a lot of things that seem really nice and compassionate, but they're ultimately about themselves. And so it is that the interior of our lives is moving in the wrong direction. What we need is a new heart, a new spirit. We need it to be different.

It says God's going to do that within a person who is forgiven. God forgives them and gives them a new heart, new spirit, "And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh." Now, if your heart is stone, you're dead, right? Your heart, the interior of your heart to illustrate this with a body, you need your heart to be beating and pumping oxygen and blood through your body. So that's very important. And the problem is the people who are dead to God as it's put in Ephesians Chapter 2, they don't have an interest in God. They say they might, they might talk about God, but they don't really care about God and say that I care about God as God. And God as God means that God is God, he's ultimately supreme. They are not interested in his agenda. They're really interested first and foremost in their own agenda. And so they don't have a heart that is alive to God, the phrase there in Ephesians Chapter 2.

But God says, I'm going to change all that, I'm going to take out that heart that's dead to me and I'm going to give you within your flesh, your body, I'm going to give you a heart that's real, it's fleshly, that it's going to beat. Right? Now, it's not a term that's negative in this case, it's the term that's positive because it's standing in contradistinction to a heart of stone. If your heart is stone, you'd like a heart that's made of flesh. So here's a good example of the fact that you're dead to God, now all of a sudden you're alive to God. You have an interest in God,



you have an interest in the things that are important to God. You want to adopt his agenda. You care about him. You care about what he thinks. You care about his honor and his glory and his dominion and all the things that Christians should and every person should care about. But now, all of a sudden you do care about it.

Not from the outside in, not by hearing people say things and you go, "Well, that sounds reasonable. I agree with that." But on the interior of what your core desire, what your core desires are, you say, "I want that. I really do want that." That's all sounding good. It sounds like I might be able to do the right things if I desire to do the right things. I'm forgiven of all the failures of my past. But here's the real kicker, verse 27. "And I will put my Spirit within you." Okay, now who's talking here? God, the thrice holy God of Isaiah 6. The God "who dwells in unapproachable light," First Timothy Chapter 6, the one who has all power, the Almighty God, the God who is perfect, who sets the standard, who himself is the moral standard of all things. That God will put himself, here's the analogy, within you. So my heart now, the core of who I am, the way I think, the way I value, the way I prioritize, it all is now interested in God's agenda. And that is like me drawing near to God. And when we do that, God says, "Now I'm going to draw near to you," to use the terms of James Chapter 4. And now how near to me is he? He now takes his interest and his desires and his concerns and his agenda, and he brings it right inside.

Now, this is something that's alien to me and that I'm not the Spirit. I am my own spirit. I am my own mind and my own heart. But God now says I'm going to take my heart, my mind, my Spirit, I'm going to put that there within you. And when I do, you want to talk about success, here it comes, and "I'm going to cause you," there's a big phrase, "I'm going to cause you to walk in my statutes." Walk, right? That analogy of living, making your pattern of life. I'm going to cause your pattern of life to be such that you're aiming toward and succeeding in doing what my statutes, my precepts, my requirements, my instructions are. And you will be... Now, your heart is in sync with my heart. Your spirit's in sync with my Spirit. My Spirit's drawing near to you. You're drawing near to me. And in that symbiotic relationship here, a new heart, Spirit of God within me, I'm going to make you careful to obey my rules.

You can sit through a lot of sermons, hear a lot of church, and you hear things that might agree with your thinking. You think that's logical. That sounds good. And I'm going to do that. I'm going to choose to do that. I'm going to resolve to go toe-to-toe against this corruptive sin, this deadly sin of envy. Go out there and you try to scrap with this sin and you feel like I'm just no match for it. I'm getting pummeled, I'm getting beaten. And all I'm telling you is you want to win this fight? I mean, winning is right there in verse 27. Winning against sin, against disregarding his statutes, his rules, his commands. Right? Winning is found here. If the Spirit of God is within you, driving you, pushing you, or here's the word, causing you to walk in that pattern, well, then I think you're going to win. Are you going to have anything against you? Well, plenty. You got the whole culture against you. You've got your flesh that's still wired to do whatever it wants to do. You have Satan out there tempting you. All of that's true. So we've got an enemy. The world, the flesh and the devil. No doubt about that.

But you're going to have success because of the core of your desire. And the God of the universe is going to come and say, "I'm going to now reside within you and I'm going to move



you, I'm going to cause you to keep my precepts and to be careful to obey my rules." That's a big, big deal. And that means success. And I'm concerned in a group this size that there are plenty of you who will probably hear from God one day, "Depart from me. I never knew you." You will go through your, quote unquote, Christian life, which is nothing more than an external adherence to a community of people who are Christian, most of them. And you will not become a Christian, you will just agree with the stuff that's taught. Well, whenever you do agree with it. And you'll get to the end and you'll realize I tried to do all of this stuff and I was hit and miss on kind of applying all the messages. But you are never really, as we say in the New Testament, regenerate. You were never made new.

You were never, as Jesus put it to Nicodemus, who knew the Bible really well and tried to keep the Bible's commands, you were never born again. That's what you need. What does that mean? The Spirit of God changes who you are, forgives you of your sins. Those are the three verses. Verse 25, forgiveness. Verse 26, new heart, new interior. Verse 27, Spirit of God invades your life. That all happens at one point. And some of you think agreeing with the facts is when that happens. It's not when this happens.

What we need is the Spirit of God residing in us. Let's just shut that down and then I'd like to show you a passage that may help even more. Number one, you need to "Make Sure God's Spirit Resides in You." If you want the wherewithal to win this fight against envy or any other sin, you need God's Spirit in you. Because then you'll get that promise of that wonderful verse, "God's Spirit will cause you to walk in the statutes and be careful to obey his rules." That'll be more and more the pattern and trajectory of your life.

Let me take you to Titus Chapter 3. If you've been following through this series, I've quoted that many times and let's start in the passage I've often quoted, because it has, in the middle of it, the word envy. And the word envy is the problem. And matter of fact, it's the characteristic of a life without God's Spirit in it. Look at how it's described here, Titus Chapter 3 verse 3. Let's start there and then read a little bit more than we normally read, at least as we've quoted it in the past. Titus Chapter 3 verse 3. "For we ourselves were once foolish," looking back now at a life as Paul said, who I was before I became a Christian and it was foolish, it was "disobedient." It was a life, he says we, now he's including Titus in this who's a pastor at this point, before you became a Christian you were "disobedient, you were led astray, you were slaves to various passions and pleasures," even if you wanted to in your own mind, as Paul says to the Romans, he says, "You know, when I heard that coveting was wrong and God said, 'Don't covet.' Now all of a sudden now I was aware of the battle and I kept losing the battle." Well, like it just stirred up a lot of knowledge of how I was getting pummeled and beaten by this thing not to covet. I was just all about these desires to covet what I didn't have.

"Enslaved to various passions and pleasures, passing our days," in the expression of the kinds of passions that are against God's rules and precepts are, "you have malice, you have envy, hated by others and hating one another." Why? Because everyone's looking out for themselves. Everyone's trying to take these cravings and fulfill them when it comes to my status or my position or my stuff or my possessions, whatever. We wanted more of that, we just wanted to get for ourselves. And all of that is what characterizes a non-Christian life.

But, the Spirit of God is going to change that for people. "When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness," and I finally tried to apply enough of the sermons about coveting or envy or strife or whatever it might be and I made good progress. My batting average was good one season and God all of a sudden said, "You've qualified. You can now be on the team." That's not what happened. "He saved us not because of the works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy." That means someone that just doesn't deserve it. We can't pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We can't just try and do good enough. But by his mercy. He has to save us "by the washing of regeneration." That's the word, right? That means being born again. "Regeneration and the renewal." What's that? That's the passage we just read, Ezekiel 36, a new heart, a new spirit. "The renewal of the Holy Spirit." He's come in. He changes us. He resides within us. "Who," by the way, how much Spirit do you get? "Poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. So that now," here's what Christianity spells, "being justified by his grace," you didn't deserve it, he was merciful and gracious, "we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

When did that happen? At the moment of our justification, when God declared us righteous, when he said all your sins, there's the beginning of our passage in Ezekiel 36:25, your sins are forgiven. The cleansing of the pure water on you. It's this picture of cleansing, "the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. He poured out on us richly in Christ Jesus our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying," verse 8, "is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things." Titus is a preacher on the island of Crete. I want you to go out there and preach this stuff, "so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things," these good works, "are excellent and profitable for people."

I assure you that if you could kick envy, you'd look back and say, "Well, I lived the last season of my life without any envy. I saw that go away." That would be "profitable and excellent." That would be like, so good for you. I mean, it would help you in your homes. It would help you in your small groups. It would help you in your church. It would help you in your extended family. For some of you it would help you in your immediate family. It would help you in your neighborhoods. It would help you in your workplace. It would help you in your headspace. It would just help you. It would be "excellent and profitable."

What needs to happen for you to get from verse 3 to verse 8 is that you have to have an encounter with God's Spirit. And that was really defined in verse 8 when it says, you need to instruct these things, "insist on these things, so that those who believe in God." Ah! See, there you go. That's me. Do you? Because some people read that and they think "believe God." I believe God. I believe, I believe, I believe there's a God. I believe that he revealed himself in the Bible. I believe that he sent Jesus to die for my sin 2,000 years ago. I believe that. I believe it. That's what faith is. Faith is believing. And I believe. And James would tell you and James Chapter 2, well, even the demons believe. That's not what believing is and it's not what the word faith is all about.



Do you want a word that's going to help you? Then make sure you read the word that stuck between "believe" and "God." It's the word "in." And the word "in" changes everything about that phrase. To believe God is one thing. And there are people going to hell sitting in church this morning who are going to hear, "Depart from me. I never knew you. You who practice lawlessness," and they practice lawlessness because the Spirit of God is not in their life and the Spirit of God is not in their life because they believe God, but they don't believe "in" God. And that's a radical, cataclysmic difference. That's so different. Demons believe that. Matter of fact, their theology is so good, they don't need another sermon. They don't need to take our theology classes. They don't need to go to the Compass Bible Institute. They know all the theology, and it's better than your theology, and they believe it. They have no doubt. When you're doubting some things in theology, they don't doubt it because they know it. They know it firsthand.

They do not believe "in" God. They do not trust in God. It's those who know that they're sinners, admit their sin, confess their sin, repent of their sin, and they trust in God to forgive their sins. And then they get a new heart. They get the Spirit of God in them. And then they say, I want to go out and do what God asks me to do. Which is where this goes. The excellent and profitable things are the things that I desire to do. How much do I desire? Well go back to Chapter 2 of Titus. Look at the last part of this passage. "The grace of God," let's look at verse 11 of Titus 2, "appeared to bring salvation for all people." You say, "Well that's what I've done. I believe God and I'm saved." Well, are you? Because that faith, that grace, that I trust in God's provision, that grace of salvation, what does it do? Well, it "trains us," verse 12, "to renounce ungodliness." How are you doing on that? "Worldly passions and live self-controlled," that means you're winning some battles here, consistently winning battles, "upright and godly lives," even in a cruddy place like Crete in the first century, "in the present age." We can transfer that right to our age, 21st century in America.

"Waiting for," that's what people do who have the Spirit of God. They can't wait for the arrival of the King, "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself," cleansing these, "a people for his own possession." And here's what they do. They're moved to keep his precepts. They walk according to his rules. They obey his rules. They're zealous for that. Why? Because the Spirit of God has fueled them. Because their spirit is new and they're going to have success, "they're zealous for good works."

I know this is hard stuff, but I'm told to tell you this, verse 15, just to reflect a little bit of a verse that's for pastors and preachers. Verse 15 is to a preacher on Crete in an island where they're not going to applaud him for saying it, but he needs to say it and the regenerate people are going to say amen to it. But he's got to say these things, "declare them and exhort them and rebuke them with all authority." And he can't let anyone sit there and make him say, "Well, maybe you're right." Say it "with all authority and don't let anyone disregard you." You will not get me to disregard what I'm telling you this morning that you are a sinner and you will go to hell unless you put your trust in Jesus Christ. You have to believe IN God. Put all of your eggs in one basket, recognize his Lordship and the greatness of who God is, because the Spirit of God then will train you and move you to obey what he has said.



Some will complain, "That's legalism!" It's not legalism. It's the gospel. The gospel of grace trains you to do this. And if you deny that, I'm sorry. Well, then you're believing a false gospel, not the gospel that's in the New Testament. Because the good news is, yes, you will be forgiven. But it's like reading Ezekiel Chapter 36 verse 25, and forgetting there's a verse 26 and a verse 27. Verse 26 is a new interior of your life with new desires, and verse 27 is the power within you, the great warrior of the universe, the Holy Spirit of God driving you to holiness. That's the gospel. And it's the gospel of grace.

If you believe that you go to church and you agree with some facts about Christ dying on a cross for you, then you've misunderstood the concept of faith and you're agreeing with the demons about the facts, but you've not put your trust in Christ. So I exhort you and I admonish you to put your trust in Christ. Because this will just be another sermon series that just frustrates you because occasionally you'll try to listen to things and apply them, but your heart will be dead to God. And the Spirit of God does not empower you to do it. And you're not going to do it. You just won't do it. You'll be like that person who says they're going to quit smoking every weekend. Right? You know, I'm just continually stuck in the rut.

The Spirit of God gets you out of that. Is going to be hard? Yes. World, flesh and devil. Lots of battle. I get it. We take a couple of steps back here and there, you might. But you're going to take steps forward and you're going to continue to make progress in this thing called sanctification because the Spirit of God guarantees it. I don't say that on my authority. I don't say that based on my experience. I don't say that based on anyone's experience. It's based on Ezekiel Chapter 36 verse 27, the "Spirit of God within you, moving you to obey his precepts, causing you to obey his precepts and making you careful to keep his rules."

Here's one of his rules. Don't live with envy in your life. Envy and coveting are wrong. It's one of the big commandments of God from the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. "Do not covet what your neighbor has." Instead, Jesus says you got to love them. Love them not just like you love yourself, love them like Christ loved you, which is that he put his interests before yours, and you're supposed to put other people's interests before your own. The world won't applaud that, I guarantee it.

Make sure God's Spirit resides in you. I say that and you think, "Well, I don't know. I thought you assumed we're all Christians." I have to say today you need to make sure you're saved. Really saved. And I had people just recently that I can say this to them. I know they have no adherence to the Gospel of Christ. They just believe in a basic set of facts regarding theism, and they can walk out of a sermon like this thinking, "But yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." I just need you to make sure today. At least I want to do all I can to exhort you and admonish you and to let you not disregard me as best I can to say you need to hear this and make sure you're really a Christian. Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? If so, great. We got the wherewithal within us to do it.

Now, here's what the Spirit of God is going to do as preachers preach the truth of the book that the Spirit wrote and as the Spirit of God is directing your spirit. He's going to get you to change your perspective, which will allow you to love others as Christ loved us and rejoice with others who rejoice, which is the key, it's the lynchpin to all of this. So I need to turn you to



Psalm 73 and help guard you from a problem that we will all have, even if you know the truth and the Spirit of God does reside in you. You have to make sure that the Spirit of God has his way in keeping your focus where it needs to be. You need to, as Jesus taught us, as Paul reiterates in Colossians 3, "Set your minds on things above." You have to have a view that goes beyond the temporal of this life. If you get short-sighted, if you can't see beyond the horizon of the next year, the next month or the next decade, you are going to be an envious person.

This psalm is all about envy and I want to read it to you, Psalm 73. Let's start here in verse 1. You can see in the superscription this is a psalm of Asaph, and it starts with the declaration that I hope everyone in the room should agree with theologically. "God is good to Israel." In that case, that's the context of the Old Testament in the ninth century B.C.. In our case, we'd say God is good to his people. Of course. "To those who are pure in heart," the people who he's forgiven, those who were right before God, those who are walking in step with the Spirit, Galatians Chapter 5. God is good to those people. If you sow to the flesh then you reap from the flesh corruption. If you sow to the Spirit, to quote Galatians 5, you reap from the Spirit eternal life. God is good to those who are pure in heart.

That would be a great short little psalm, it would be the shortest psalm in the Bible if that's where it ended. But it doesn't end there because this is about envy. "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped." I almost fell flat on my spiritual face. Why? "Because I was envious." I was envious. Now, think about that. That's the problem. Envy, by the way messes everything up, including your theology and your relationship with God. "I was envious." Now, here's what's weird about this, because most of the things we've talked about throughout this series have been illustrated in my offhanded illustrations about you dealing with another Christian that you're thinking, "Well, I'd like to be like her. It'd be great if I was like him. And why does God keep giving him advantages that I don't have? Why does she have blessings that I don't get? Why is their family better than mine?" Why? We get frustrated, we get bitter, we get resentful, and then we start all the stuff that comes out of envy. That's bad.

But when I talk about some godly person in your small group who just does so well and gets all the open doors, and she just thinks about dieting and she loses weight and her skin is clear and everything's wonderful for her. That person. That's easy for you to think, "Yeah, I envy that person." But that's not what this passage is about. Same sin, different object. "As for me and my feet had almost stumbled, my steps nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant." Of the arrogant? Yeah. "When I saw the prosperity of the wicked." We got to deal with this and I touched on it briefly last time, but there is a lot of us in this room tempted this week to envy the arrogant, the wicked.

Why? Well, it's a long poetic list here, starting in verse 4 about how good they have it. I mean, these guys aren't getting sick like I am. "They have no pangs until death." I mean, "their bodies are fat and sleek," which I know I just said we all value in this day in being slender. But back in the ancient world, if you were poor and down on your luck, you wouldn't be... You're not going to be overweight and on welfare. That's not going to happen. If you're poor, you are starving. You're begging for food. You're skinny, you're skin and bones. Well, these people



have all the food they want. They're fat, and "their bodies are stout and sleek. They're not in trouble as others are." This is showing their blessings, their temporal blessings. "They're not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore, pride is their necklace." They're wearing pride and arrogance like its jewelry. It flashes around all the time.

"Violence covers them as a garment." They're willing to put anyone down. They talk with harsh words. They're ready to throw out some harsh tweets any time they want. Right? "Their eyes," speaking of how much they've got, they've got so much stuff, they got more cars than they can fit in their garage. They got more square footage than they can even live in. They got more fat than can fit in their heads. "Their eyes are swelling out" because of that. "Their heart overflows with follies." I mean they're foolish. "They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens." They turn their words for Christianity and theism and God. Their tongue," look at this, "struts through the earth."

Now think about the people who sit on shows mocking God, mocking his standards, mocking his word. Well, they get into limousines and get taken to the best hotels and the best restaurants. They've got bank accounts that are huge. They get on Netflix and do their comedy specials and talk about their millions and millions of dollars they have at the bank. Right? They're the NBA stars who stand up there and do interviews and they live flagrant lives, immoral lives. And everyone applauds when they walk into the room, kids run up and want their autograph. They have all the things that we just in our lives we think, well, that would be great to have some of that. It would be good. I'm just barely making the rent. I can't even find an affordable house in Orange County. And these guys have everything. And yet they hate God. They're snarky and they're mean and they're critical and they're godless. And they applaud people who do evil things. But that's what happens in the world.

"Therefore his people turn to them." Right? These arrogant, wicked people. They walk in a room and everyone turns to them. "They find no fault in them." They praise them, give them accolades. They're wonderful. They're great. They overlook their faults. "They say," when they talk about God and we start talking about God's going to judge, "How can God know? Is there knowledge with the Most High?" They say, "He doesn't seem to be too upset with my endorsements and the things that I'm for and all the causes I'm after, because you know what? If he was against them, I suppose I wouldn't have all this blessing. I'm not being zapped by your God." Verse 12. "Behold, these are the wicked; they're always at ease, they increase in riches."

Here's the problem. I look at my own life. "All in vain have I kept my heart clean." And I'm saying no to stuff. I'm willing to take a hit at work. I'm willing to say no, this is wrong because God said it's wrong. No, that doesn't honor God. I'm willing to say things that just get me in trouble. I sit here and try and do the right thing. "I've washed my hands in innocence." I've said I'm not going to do that. I try to get all the dirt and the moral filth off of my life. "And all day long..." Guess what? "I get beat up. I get rebuked every morning" for that. "If I go to the workroom at work and I start talking about God's truth or God's rules for anything, right? I get beat up. Not to mention when I open the Bible and every morning the Bible rebukes me for my sin. It's a mirror that shows me what's wrong with myself. And it's like a two-edged sword that cuts into my conscience and separates my thoughts and intentions. And I feel like, Oh



God, I got so much to work on in my life. I'm such a sinner. I need your grace and your mercy. It's like every day I'm getting beat up."

"Well, if I had said thus" and I'm going to speak like that, if I had said I will speak like this. I'm going to be affirmed in this thought. Now I'm feeling these thoughts. But if I said this is my thought life. This is how I stand. I stand this way that it really stinks to be an innocent holy follower of God. I don't like it. And we lose. The good guys are losing and the bad guys are winning. "Well, then I would have betrayed a generation of children." Right? All the people who are living God I would have betrayed them. I would have gone out there advocating for the other side. If it's better to live as a non-Christian, is it better to live an unfettered life from the moral strictures of the Bible, well, then, you know, I would have betrayed everybody who's being faithful to the Bible.

"When I thought how to understand this," verse 16, "it seemed to be a wearisome task." Well, that's certainly how you've written the psalm, Asaph. It's wearisome. Here's a good word for you. Five letters. Verse 17, "Until..." Something changed. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." Where do you think the celebrities of our culture who are shining God on with everything they say, who are mocking God's law? They don't care about keeping their life clean. They're not worried about pleasing some divine person sitting in heaven. They don't care about anyone else's opinion. They're not listening to your preacher preach. They don't give a rip about that stuff. They're their own boss. They do what they want. Well, Asaph goes to church. He goes into the temple courts in Jerusalem. He hears the scrolls being read. He hears people praising God from the songs of the redeemed. He goes, Oh, yeah. That doesn't end well.

Sediments are "slippery places." I learned that when I went to church. "They'll make them fall to ruin." I know that. This isn't going to end well for them. "How they are destroyed in a moment, they're swept away utterly by terrors!" They don't die well. Non-Christians do not die well. They die in terror. "Because it's appointed unto man once to die and then comes the judgment." They face their God and they grip on to this life because that's all they've got. "Like a dream when one awakes." That's all this is. The arrogant, wicked life that disregards God and his law, those are like people who are dreaming a dream. It's crazy.

Then God comes into the light. They see God. They meet their maker. "When you rouse yourself," when you stand before your creatures, "you despise them as phantoms." Right? Whoop. There you go. You've acted like I don't exist. Now I'm going to act like you don't exist. "Into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth." You reject me. You reject the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the source of eternal life. Okay. You get what you want now. You enjoyed a lot here on earth, just to quote Jesus in his parable about the rich man. Now you're going to suffer. This is the end of your life and you're going to live it in the second death. Oh, there's no annihilation. There's conscious torment. You are going to despise them as phantoms. They'll be in the outer darkness. They won't see the light of the gospel or the King of the gospel.

Asaph says, verse 21, "When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked," it was like I was penetrated by a knife blade "in my heart." By the way, do you want a good definition of what



envy looks like? That's it. Embittered heart. A heart that's wounded. What did I act like when I thought the way I was thinking there in verses 1 through 15? Well, you were thinking like a "brute," like a knuckle-dragging fool. You were "ignorant." You weren't thinking of the big picture. He says to God, "I was like a beast toward you," like an animal, just instinctive. I looked around and looked like I should sniff it or eat it. I did it. I wasn't even thinking straight. I wasn't thinking about the future. Like your dog. You go to your dog. Your dog's not thinking about retirement. Your dog just is living in retirement. Perpetual retirement, just doing whatever he wants. He doesn't think about it, he doesn't contemplate. He doesn't plan. And that's the point. Christian life that's shortsighted. It's foolish, it's brutish, it's ignorant. It's like a dog.

Nevertheless, I think about it now without ignorance, without dragging my knuckles around as a fool. Recognize what I have that they don't have. I don't have the riches. I don't have the applause. I don't have people patting me on the back. I don't have microphones shoved in my face. I don't have kids running up to get my autograph. I don't have any of the things they have. I don't have the cars parked in the driveway that they have. I don't have all the stuff that they have and that I've been so envious of. But I have you. "I'm continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterwards," if I want to think about the big picture, "you receive me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you?" I mean, you want the prize of everything. It's meeting my maker. It's being in sync with my creator. "Nothing on earth I desire besides you." I've been desiring a lot of things. I've been desiring and coveting what my neighbor has. My neighbor's wife, my neighbor's house, my neighbor's stuff. Ridiculous. I need to desire is the one who matters.

Like Augustine said, "I have a desire that cannot be met by anything else. My heart really is restless until it finds rest in you." And here's Asaph coming to that realization. "My flesh and my heart may fail," I may live with deprivation between now and the time of my death, "but God is the strength of my heart and is my portion," my inheritance. He's all that I need "forever. For behold, those who are far from you," now I've got to remember this for all those who I was envying, "they shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."

Number two on your outline, you need to "Guard Yourself from Shortsightedness." You need to guard yourself from the kind of temporal shortsightedness that says if the bad guys seem to be winning, I don't know why I'm trying to be a good guy. I don't know why I'm saying no to sin and putting to death the deeds of the flesh. I don't get why I would live by this standard if it's not paying off now. Well, then you're not seeing the things you should see. You're not seeing the long view of things. You're not looking at the things that matter, that are eternal, and the things you see are not eternal. The cars in the driveway, the accolades and the pleasures and all the prosperity of the wicked, none of that lasts. You've got to see that.

You should think like Christ thought. Which, by the way, here's a good passage for you. Isaiah Chapter 11. The prophet looked forward as God's Spirit gave him utterance and said, "There's coming a branch from the root of Jesse." And that King is going to come and he's going to be a "signal to the peoples." I mean, that's a great prophecy there in Isaiah 11. But in verse 3, he



says, you get to the bottom of the verse, he says, "He's not going to judge by what his eye sees, he's not going to judge by what his ear hears. Verse 3 starts with this way, "he's going to judge and value the fear of the Lord." The God you can't see, the invisible God who dwells in unapproachable light. The God you cannot see, who can't be seen, has never been seen. The God that you're one day going to face at the judgment. That's the God that the Messiah is going to care about. You're going to see everything in light of that.

Remember I quoted that little verse that seemed out of place in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 last week? In the middle of that passage with all those headliner verses, there was that one verse that "we no longer consider anyone according to the flesh, even though we saw Christ according to the flesh at one time," even though we considered where he was from and what kind of degrees that he had and he's from Galilee and what's his accent look like? And I looked at the kinds of things he had, and I made a judgment based on external things. I judged based on appearances. I don't judge anyone that way. I don't think your life is good because you're blessed and your life is cursed because things are going wrong. I don't think that way. That's a great passage and it's helpful for our envy because when you see people you're tempted to envy at work, the boss, the manager, someone in your neighborhood who has got everything going his way. You got to stop with all that because that's short-sightedness. That's looking at things and judging based on the exterior.

Let me blow your mind on this. Ready? Envy I said last week, maybe it was helpful for you, some said it was, is not just between me and you. I'm not just looking at you going, you got blessings and advantages I don't have and I don't have those. Remember, the foundational illustration that we started this series with is Jesus paying those workers? And some had only worked an hour and some had worked all day. And the guys who worked all day looked at the guys who worked an hour and got the same amount of pay and they were envious. And the master says, he says, I don't get it. Here's the line. "Do you begrudge me for my generosity?" And the literal translation is "is my eye bad because I'm generous?" In other words, you are looking at them askew. You are looking at them. That's where we get the word envy from, right? We're looking at them. We're staring at these people. We're looking at them. Why do they get that and I don't get that?

But really, we're begrudging God's generosity. And when you look in a small group and you say, well, I'm really looking at that guy's life, or you're scrolling through social media, you're looking at that gal's life and you're saying, "Well, I really wish I had her life." It's not just you have a problem between you and her. You have a problem, we said last week, between you and God because God gave her all of that. Even though it's an air-brushed highlight reel on social media, I realize that. But even what you think she has, if whatever she does actually have you are envious of, you really have a problem with God's generosity because God has blessed her with those things and God has blessed your boss with that Ferrari or that red Porsche or whatever he drives. Really? Yeah.

Here's how it's put on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew Chapter 6. God causes his sun to rise on the evil. God lets his rains come on the crops of the just and the unjust, the righteous and the unrighteous. In other words, the good of the rain and the good of the sun upon the fields of the non-Christian, of the wicked and unrighteous person, is a gift from God. It sounds



like James Chapter 1. "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." So God is giving even the non-Christian these things. Well, wait a minute. You mean the arrogant and the wicked get all this prosperity and all this food and all this stuff and all these accolades, all that comes from God? Yeah. And I would say this. The same equation works. If you are envious of the wicked, you still have a problem begrudging God's generosity. Well, why would God be generous to the wicked? That's a good question. And he didn't have to explain himself to you, that's for sure.

But there are a few clues in the Bible. How about a couple of them? Here's one. Romans Chapter 2 verse 4. Romans Chapter 2 verse 4. And maybe there's a little bit in your testimony that looks like this: that "God uses kindness and generosity to lead people to repentance." God is always at work and maybe he's at work with your boss who you envy so much. Maybe he's at work being kind to that person. Maybe that's part of what God will use to bring him to repentance. And I'm going to begrudge God and his methods here with this guy if perhaps he's in the category of someone who's being prepared for eternal life and I'm going to say, "God, I don't like the way you're preparing because I would like all the stuff he's got." You still got a problem with God.

Envy is always a problem for Christians between you and God. It just happens that you're looking at people. Even the wicked. All of the things that they have that I get really are not bad things, right? Accolades and money and wealth and beauty. All those things are good. They're good things. And in the end, in the kingdom, the kingdom is going to be full of those things. But you're envying those things because you have a proper sense of justice and you think it's unjust because they're shining God on and they still have all that. And I'm just saying, well, maybe God's working a deal. Maybe God is doing maybe what he did in your life. Did you have any blessings when you were shining God on? Did you? I bet you did. Maybe God was using that kindness as it says Romans 2:4 to lead you to repentance.

Or how about the Ecclesiastes principle? Maybe Solomon, who talks of all the things that he had and he comes to the end of his life and he says, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And he gets to Chapter 12 and he says in that book, "Listen, I realize this, after experiencing all those blessings, none of them satisfy." To echo Augustine again, none of them made my heart feel at rest. My heart was restless. I need to find rest in Ecclesiastes 12. Here's the matter. Here's the end of the whole deal. And that is to "fear God and keep his commandments." So maybe all that blessing in that person who you know is a despised, wicked, evil, arrogant person. And I'm thinking, God, why would you bless them? Maybe God's working something in his life to get to the place of Solomon saying, "I had all these things and none of them fulfilled me." Maybe. And you need to stop begrudging God in his methods that include generosity toward the wicked.

This one will be harder for you. But maybe, as Jesus said, maybe they're just filling up their transgressions for the judgment. Paul says the same thing in First Thessalonians. They're filling up their sins until the day of God's wrath. It said it back in Genesis. Right? The Amorites. I'm not done with the Amorites yet. The reason the Amorites are still prospering, God said, is because the Amorites have not filled up their transgressions yet. The book of Revelation ends that way. Let the wicked continue to be wicked because they're building up a



whole resumé for judgment. Matter of fact, if you want to put that in close proximity to Romans Chapter 2 verse 4, well then jot down Romans Chapter 2 verse 5, because it says in verse 5 that the stubborn and unrepentant heart it stores up for itself wrath for the day of God's judgment. So maybe God's just working out his plan. And part of his plan is he's going to be glorified in the judgment of the wicked. And the judgment of the wicked is not full until all of their sins are complete. And maybe their sins of ingratitude, of taking all the blessings of the world and not giving thanks to God for them, is a sin that God is getting them to fulfill.

Now they're going to do it by their own stubborn hearts. God is not culpable for their sin, they're culpable for their own sin. But maybe this is part of God's plan to let the Amorites fill up their transgressions. And when I think about them slipping into terror, when they're despised as phantoms and God now is brought into crystal clarity when they thought God was a joke, I don't even want to think about that. So even God's at work. Maybe God is just showing his tremendous patience and his mercy. I mean, talk about bad theology, right? Your best life now. You've heard of that? You understand that every non-Christian who you envy and you think how unjust that they get that, that's all they're going to get. I mean, I know you want to say it in a snarky way, but, you know, enjoy it now because it's going to end and when it ends it's going to be really bad. But in a way, I think it is your best life now. I mean, it is. It's God's mercy and patience for you. It's the common grace of God. And even in that, do you despise God for his generosity and his common grace, and showing mercy to non-Christians before they get cast into outer darkness? I'm not going to begrudge God for that.

God is a God who is merciful, just like building the ark. Second Peter talks about this when God was patient in the days of Noah. It's just like all those people there. God was working a plan over here with the righteous and the non-Christians got to experience all this stuff. They got to continue in their revelry and their partying and their marrying and giving in marriage. And God gave them all of that. Well, he worked the plan over here, and all of that was just part of God's plan of being patient. I'm not going to begrudge God for what he's doing with non-Christians, and I'm certainly not going to learn to envy them because I got to have a bigger view on all this. God's doing things in their life and God's doing things in my life, and I should be content with what I have. So guard myself from short-sightedness. The big picture solves all of this.

Psalms 73 couldn't be clearer. There's one thing I'd like to show you how to maintain this. I mean, can I go back to Psalm 73 verse 17 real quick? Until "I went into the sanctuary of God." If you want to build this long-sided perspective, if you want to guard yourself against short-sightedness, you need to go to church. You need to be among the people of God. This is what was called the "throne of God," the crowds, the multitudes in the temple. Those of you listening online and haven't been to church in a long time, you need to go to church. Some complain, "I live in Nebraska, there are no churches here." Find the best Bible teaching church you can find within reasonable driving distances and go there. Go there all the time. Go there every time it's open. If you're a part of this church and you're not coming here saying, "Well, it's dangerous." Come and enjoy the danger with us. Risk your lives with us. Right? You need to be here. Why? Because it'll keep you from short-sightedness. I need for you to click that livestream off and be done and, listen you need to be with the people.



The other thing you need, it's found there in verse 24. "You guide me with your counsel." There's a book sitting on your shelf, God's divine library. "It's sharper than any two-edged sword." It pierces through the thoughts and intentions of your heart. It's a mirror that shows you your sin. It gives you an eternal perspective because it is written by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who lives within you needs you to look at the book he wrote. You need the Bible. He guides us by his counsel. His counsel is embedded and encoded inscripturated in Scripture, in this thing we call the text of the Bible. You need to be in it every single day. You ought to crave it like newborn babies crave milk. You've got to crave it. You got to make it a habit. You need church, you need the Bible.

How about verse 28? "As for me it's going to be near God." You need to be near to God and the Scripture. I think if you take that concept, I want to be closer to God, I'm drawing near to God. You are pouring your hearts out to quote another psalm, "pour your hearts out to God." It's called prayer. You need prayer. You need more prayer. It starting to sound like your grandpa's church now, right?. You need to go to church. You need more Bible. You need more prayer. You do need that. If you going to keep a long view on things so that you don't envy the wicked, you need those things. And there's one more, bottom of verse 28, "that I may declare all your works." Some of you never talk to other people about Christianity. You never talk to other people about God. How about we add the fourth one, evangelism?

I guarantee you, if you're not in the church, in the word, in prayer, and talking to other people about the greatness of God, you are going to fall victim to myopic thinking. You're going to have a shortsighted view on things. You're going to judge, contra Isaiah 11 verse 3, on what you see and what you hear. You need to judge things on the fear of God, which there's a ton of there in the end of Psalm 73. Adjust your spiritual vision. Some great tools there. Grampa's church was right. These are the staples of the Christian life and we need them.

Let me wrap it up in the series in this sermon in Romans Chapter 8. Keep your eyes on the big picture. Eventually, your heart's going to be drawn back and your eyes are going to be drawn back, your spiritual eyes to where we're going. It's called the consummation of the ages. It's called having relief from this battle. We started this series with a statement of Paul saying at the end of his life, the last extant document we have from him. Second Timothy Chapter 4. And he talks about fighting the good fight and said, "I fought the good fight, I ran the race, I kept the faith." You need to continue to fight that fight knowing one day the fight is going to be over. There's something motivating about knowing that it's going to be over. You go out there and take hits on the field. You go do the thing. You may enjoy it. You may not enjoy it. You may feel like quitting. But all of this is going to consummate in the thing you're supposed to be praying for every single day, and that is that God's kingdom would come. We should be oriented on the fact that Christ is going to bring relief where there will be no crying, no mourning, no pain, no suffering. The tempter is going to be chained up. It's going to be over.

Between here and there it's a battle. "Through many tribulations we enter the Kingdom of God," and right now you're going to have to focus on fighting the battle. You're going to continue to go toe-to-toe with envy and lust and every other sin in your life. You're going to fight that. But here's the good news, temporal. It's only last for a little bit longer till we're done.



You don't get to say when it's done, but when God says it's done, it's done and you go home and it's over. That's motivating. Motivating in this way, verse 18. Look at it. "Consider that the sufferings of this present time." Which by the way, the Romans in the first century would not be having, the Roman Christians, a hard time of suffering were they not standing up for biblical truth. If they want to go along with Roman culture, if they want to go along with all that was going on in the marketplace, if they just want to go along with whatever the emperor said, whatever the polls were saying in Rome in the first century, they would not be suffering. They were suffering because they were Christians standing with Christ.

And if you stand with Christ and you fight sin you're going to suffer. "But all that suffering of the present time not worth even comparing," it's going to be so dwarfed, "by the glory that is to be revealed to us. For creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." What do you mean? The whole creation, the world, everything in the universe can't wait. It's personified here. Not that it's animate, but it's waiting, it's like, poetically waiting for us to be in that place of being glorified where we're revealed as the completed, glorified sons of God. Verse 20, "For the creation was subjected to futility." It's a mess. My body's a mess. The world's a mess. Satan's a mess. "Everything was subjected to futility, not willingly, because of him," God, "who subjected it." Put next to that Genesis Chapter 3. That's when he cursed the ground because of us. That's when he messed this world up on purpose because our hearts had chosen to mess up.

But he did it all "in hope." It wasn't forever. A lot of people complain about the sin in this world. Look at the shootings and look at the problems and look at the disease. Where's God in all this? God is finishing his redemptive work so he can bring in the kingdom and all this will be a distant memory. 10 trillion years from now you're going to go, "I guess I remember." God keeps us remembering it by remembering the scars on the hands and the feet of the lamb of God who reigns in the middle of this perfect kingdom. But yeah, you're right. It's hard for me to even remember the problems. All this is coming to a conclusion. All this is going to be consummated in good. "In hope he subjected it that the creation itself is going to be set free from its bondage to corruption and it's going to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." That's you and I, when we're glorified. "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together and pains of childbirth until now." Again, it's personified poetically. It's like the world can't wait for us to graduate.

Verse 23, "And not only the creation, but we ourselves." We can't wait till it's over. "Who have the first fruits of the Spirit." There it is. Ezekiel 36. "We groan inwardly." Hey, welcome to the battle, guys. Groaning? I get it. Keep fighting. "As we wait eagerly for adoption as sons." The problem with our quest to do what God's Spirit wants is our body. It's our flesh. Guess what? We're going to get it redeemed. "The redemption of our bodies." Glorification. "In this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen," if you had it right here, "it's not hope." If this was your best life now, it's certainly not Christianity. "For who hopes for what he sees?" Christianity is about hope. It's about looking forward. It's not about this life. It's about the next, verse 25, "If we hope for what we do not see," here's my prayer for you, "wait for it with patience."

The theme has been envy. And I want to tell you this, point number three, you and I need to "Get Motivated by Envy's Future Absence" along with every other problem, along with Satan,



along with demons, along with all of the ungodly, stubborn, rebellious people who have shine God on. All that's going to be gone. Christ is going to be ruling and reigning. The consummation of the ages is when the kingdom comes, the things you've been praying for, the hope and prayer of Maranatha in the Christian's heart that is renewed, that wants to see the blessed appearing of Christ, our God and Savior Jesus Christ. That blessed hope, that thing that we're hoping for, it's going to happen and envy is not going to be a problem. Right now, we fight our way through.

One last passage. This will close our whole series, First Corinthians Chapter 6. I said in Second Timothy Chapter 4, Paul talked about fighting the good fight. In First Timothy Chapter 6, he tells Timothy to fight the good fight. He's the young pastor in Ephesus, and he says, you've got to fight this thing. Look at how it's put. With this we'll close. Verse 11. First Timothy 6:11, "But as for you, O man of God," and I hope that's true of you, new heart, the Spirit within you, sins forgiven, "flee these things." What things? Look back up. I don't know, like coveting. Verse 10, "Love of money, root of all kinds of evils," right? That love of money, which is another word that encapsulates the idea and the overarching sins of coveting and envy. Right? All of that. "It's through this craving," that's what I called it last week in the sermon, "craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things."

We keep moving forward, move the ball down the field. "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness." Keep fighting for that fruit of the Spirit. "Fight the good fight of faith." Keep fighting. "Take hold of the eternal life," bottom of verse 12, "to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Thinking back to Timothy's baptism when he stood up, like people on this platform stand up and say, "I am follower of Christ, I will follow Christ. I know he's the King. He's forgiven my sins. I'm now a Christian."

Timothy, you did that. "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things." He gave life to your dead heart, which he did. You're alive in Christ. Listen. "And of Christ Jesus, who in his testimonies," confessions, "in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession himself." Right? He said he was the Christ. What does he want him to do? "Keep the commandments." In this case we've been talking about envy for the last four weeks. "Keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing," here's the hope of the Christian life, "of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display." People say, "When, when, when? I want it now. I want it..." "At the proper time - he who is blessed and the only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion," eternal power. Yes. Amen.

Some will react, "Now, this whole series hadn't really been for me because I kind of got everything I want. I don't envy people." Great. Verse 17, "As for the rich in this present age, charge them," let me charge you, "not to be haughty, nor to set your hopes on the uncertainty of riches, even if you have it. Even if people are envying you, don't set your hope on that. Set your hope, "on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." And that's the whole trick in all of this. Contentment is enjoying and desiring what you actually have,



whatever God chooses to give you, even if it's just food and covering. Enjoy the food and enjoy the sleep. "Be good. Be rich. Do you want to be rich? "Be rich in good works," not craving stuff you don't have, "be generous and ready to share," whatever you do have. "Thus," I love this, "storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future." What? Retirement? Age 65? No. "So that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Our life is there. It is hidden in Christ with God. It's there. We know that the kingdom is coming and we have anticipation of that, where there's no envy and there's no temptation, there's no sin. We're taking hold of life by living that kind of value system here and now. I hope our church is not marked with envy. Envy, it bleeds into factionalism, criticism, gossip, all the garbage you see in churches that are just gripped by envy. I want us to be free from that. God's Spirit lives in you. Keep your focus where it should be and keep knowing that the fight is temporary until we get there. We know the solution. We love like Christ loved. We rejoice in the blessings he gives other people. The power of it comes from God himself. God make this a reality for us.

Would you stand with me and I'll dismiss us with a word of prayer? God, this series it's been a challenge, I think for most of us, at least, I know it has been for me to think through and police our own lives. To be able to confess sin that maybe hasn't been a pattern of confessing that needs to be confessed. We said it the first week of this to search our hearts, try to see if there's any wicked way in us, and perhaps we've raised the awareness of the problem and insidious nature of the deadly sin of envy. But as we deal with that practically, I pray it wouldn't just be the solutions that we put forth in remembering this, that or the other. But we'd start with the fact that if we know the solution, it's the power that we need, the wherewithal that we need, that comes from a relationship with you, a dying to ourselves, a trust in you, an internal motivation that's given to us, granted to us by the promise of the New Covenant of the Spirit within us, making us new, forgiving us of our sins.

God, I know we've got a long way to go. There's a battle, there's a trajectory, there's a pattern. There's a training of grace in our lives to deny this kind of stuff and to be more self-controlled, even in the area of our feelings about what other people have. For you to accomplish that, give us success in that, that we would be characterized in this church by good works, by generosity, by being ready to share it, really putting other people's interests before our own. Make that a reality as you extract from our life this evil and insidious problem. Do that with increasing measure. Give us success in that and encouragement along the way.

In Jesus name. Amen.