

One Attitude for Which There Is No Just Cause

- A. Envy is a prevalent problem, producing all kinds of anguish in people's lives.
1. We don't always see envy for what it is, because it's a root that lies beneath so many other sins.
 2. Tonight, we're going to push back the soil and bring envy to the service in order to root it out of our lives.
- B. When the early church listed the seven deadly sins, envy was one of them.
1. The seven deadly sins are *wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony*.
 2. Envy is deadly – to body and spirit.
 3. Every culture has their fables, myths and legends about the harm and even death caused by envy (read), but Scripture says...

Job 5:2 (Eliphaz)

2 For anger slays the foolish man, and jealousy [*envy*] kills the simple.

Proverbs 14:30

30 A tranquil [sound] heart is life to the body, **but passion [*envy*] is rottenness to the bones.**

James 3:16

16 For **where** jealousy [*envy*] and selfish ambition **exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.**

[We may not think so, but there's probably a little bit of envy in all of us.

Christians have made public confession to almost every sin imaginable, but I don't think I've ever heard anyone confess to the sin of envy.]

I. ENVY: DEFINITION, ILLUSTRATION

A. Definition:

1. In Scripture envy is related to jealousy, but they are not exactly the same.
 - a. But jealousy can *become* envy.
 - b. Jealousy is desiring to have the same kind of thing another person has ("keeping up with the Joneses").
2. Envy, on the other hand, is the desire to have what the other person has.

3. And if an envious person cannot have what the other person has, the envious person will belittle what the other person has or even try to deprive him of it if possible.

Belittle: 1) to cause something to seem less serious; play down 2) to express a negative opinion about someone 3) to mock the authority, dignity, or reputation of someone.

4. “The envious man grows thin at another man’s prosperity.” (Roman poet Horace)
5. So, envy is one man’s unhappiness and displeasure over the good that comes to others, wishing it were his instead.

B. Illustration: When you consider the number of tragedies, in Scripture, perpetrated by envy, it staggers the mind.

1. **In Families:** Whole families were brought to shambles by envy.

- a. Cain – Able
- b. Sarah – Hagar
- c. Rachel – Leah
- d. Leah – Rachel
- e. Joseph’s brothers – Joseph

2. **In Israel:**

- a. Miriam and Aaron – Moses

- b. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram – Moses
- c. Saul – David
- d. Elder brother – prodigal son

3. **Against Israel:**

- a. Haman – Mordecai
- b. Princes of Babylon – Daniel

4. **Against the church and the Lord.**

- a. Jews – Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13, 17)
- b. Chief priests – Jesus (Mark 15:10)

[These examples should help us realize just how easily the sin of envy can be the root of our own problems.]

We are tempted to aim envy in two directions.]

II. AIMING ENVY IN TWO DIRECTIONS

A. Toward the ungodly (Psa 73:1-9, 16-20).

Proverbs 23:17

17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the Lord always.

Proverbs 24:1

1 Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them;

Proverbs 24:19-20

19 ***Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked;*** 20 for there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

1. For the child of God, envying the ungodly shows a lack of trust in God as the All-wise Giver of good and perfect gifts.

James 1:17-18

17 ***Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,*** with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

- a. When we envy the ungodly, we are thinking that they have something of value that God has not given us.
- b. Secondly, when we envy the ungodly, we are thinking that we actually need what they have; life is incomplete without it.

[So, don't *model* yourselves after the ungodly, or *want* what they have, or *crave* what they desire. Just don't envy the ungodly.]

- B. Toward the righteous.

1. We mentioned many cases of this as we pointed out the Biblical illustrations of envy.

2. But why would people like us (God's people) direct our envy toward the righteous?

- a. Maybe we're not living righteously, and so we want to drag those who are living righteously down with us.
- b. Or, maybe we're not content with the outcome of living righteously, because our outcome is different from (or, in our eyes, not as good as) someone else's.

[Envy causes much harm, because it is an attitude totally deprived of love (1 Cor 13:4), and that's what makes it one of the greatest problems of the world, in the home and in the church.]

III. TWO OUTCOMES OF ENVY

- A. Destroys relationships (Jas 3:13-18; 1Cor 3:3; 1 Tim 6:3-5); it produces hate not love.

1. What a happy and productive life Cain could have lived with his brother Abel, if Cain had only been willing to shun envy and work with his brother rather than against him.

- a. I suppose farmers (Cain) and ranchers (Abel) have always been at each other's throats.
- b. But if rather than envy Abel, Cain (older brother) would have said, "Hey brother, why don't we help each other? I've got vegetables in the garden and you have animals for the sacrifice; maybe we can work out a trade."
- c. Let's take that a step further. What if Cain had said, "Abel, if something bad happens to your flocks, I'll do whatever I can to save as many of your sheep as possible; and I've got you covered during the winter season with my grain."
- d. Abel might have even responded saying, "Cain, if something bad happens to your garden, I'll do whatever I can to help you replant and get back on your feet."

B. Misrepresents God's character (1 John 4:8, 16).

- 1. Just because God is love doesn't mean that He is bound to give us what He gives someone else.
- 2. A Christians who envies another believes that God is not playing fair in the way He treats each person:

- a. An envious person would say, "God treats that person better than me, and that's the reason I want what he has!"

- What is the problem with that statement?

- 3. It is based on the unsound principle that God ought to give everybody what they deserve (in this life).

- a. That didn't ring true in Psalm 73.

- b. Envy says, "If I'm not getting what I think I deserve in life – which is what he or she has – then there's something wrong with God's management of this world.

- 4. The fact is, God is not bound by our sense of fair-play.

- a. It is not fairness we should expect in this life, but the exercise of God's wisdom, knowledge, judgments and ways for the good of His people, the church.

Romans 11:33

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ***How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!***

1 Peter 2:1-3

2 Therefore, **putting aside all** malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and **envy** and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 **if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.**

[So we should stop envying anyone, because not only does it destroy our relationships, it causes us to be blind to the many kindnesses of the Lord.]

IV. PUTTING ASIDE ENVY

A. Learn to rejoice with people who are rejoicing (Rom 12:15).

1. A mark of spiritual maturity is the ability to appreciate another's gifts, to applaud another's honors, and to be glad for another's prosperity.
2. Only love can replace envy (1 Cor 13:4).
3. So how do we respond when something good befalls another – but not us?

A. Be thankful for what you have (Psa 100:4-5).

1. If we spent more time counting our many “blessings to see what the Lord has done”, then we would spend less time (or no time at all) envying what others have.

B. Stop making comparisons between yourself and others.

1. Children become envious when they are compared to other children.
2. For that matter, so do doctors, preachers, teachers, lawyers, bricklayers, etc.
3. So don't compare who you are -- and what you have -- to others.

1 Corinthians 12:5-7

5 And **there are varieties of ministries**, and the same Lord. 6 **There are varieties of effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

4. Envy is irrelevant to our lives as Christians, because God knows what each of us needs to accomplish the work He has for us to do, and He will provide it.

Envy is the attitude for which there is no just cause!

Illustration:

There is an ancient story from Greece about a great champion in the games.

He was beloved by the city for his great athletic abilities; He was handsome and strong.

So the town decided to construct a statue in his honor. And they put his figure in the center of town, in a place of great honor.

But one of his competitors saw how much the town loved his rival, and he was full of envy, and vowed he would destroy that statue.

So, each night he snuck out under the cover of darkness and chiseled at the base of that statue.

He was hoping to undermine its foundation and make it fall.

One night, last he succeeded. It fell with a great noise—only, it fell on him.

And he died a victim of his own envy.