

Whom should you never envy? (3:31-35)

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways. For the devious are an abomination to the LORD; but He is intimate [literally, His private counsel is] with the upright. The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous. Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted. The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor.

THE TEXT (NASB)

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Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to LORD: but his secret is with the righteous. The curse of LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scornors: but he giveth grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools. KJV - Proverbs 3:31

INTRODUCTION



For some people, their great wealth is their last hurrah—like people on death row being offered a sumptuous breakfast, on the morning they're going to hang.

Those who employ cruelty and violence are pitifully ignorant of what they become in this life, and what awaits them in the next. Watch out. We're not smart when we want their sort of tainted wealth. It's not true happiness to be rich and devious.

Don't be fooled.



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COMMENTARY

Envy is a form of self-abuse, and it causes trouble. It breeds from discontent with what we have, when compared to what others have. It is doubly dangerous to envy a man of violence, because, in desiring his wealth, we may adopt his methods. We will suffer the consequences: The curse of the LORD on the House of the Wicked.

Translation: *Envy*

The Hebrew verb for envy, קנא (qā•nā, pronounced “kah-nah”), expresses an unruly desire—a consuming appetite and a disruptive passion. All English translations use the word “envy,” rather than “jealousy” or “resentment.” We envy a man of violence only if he has something of value that we lack, be it power, popularity, or riches. We don’t envy the poor, but the rich. The English word, envy, stems from the ancient Latin, “to look on.” Envy usually begins with longing looks. Yet, as a maxim in many languages says, “What the eye does not see, the heart does not crave.”

What is Envy?



Webster’s New World Dictionary defines envy as discontentment and ill-will over another’s possessions, talents, or any other comparative advantage. It includes resentment of the person themselves, from the desire for their possessions or qualities (*American Heritage Dictionary*), and has the synonyms begrudge (the person) and covet (their qualities).

Pope Gregory the Great (+604 AD) classified *invidia*, envy, as one of the Seven Deadly Sins. *Invidia* has its roots in the Latin, “to look against, to look in a hostile manner” or “with an evil eye,” with a grudge. The Church has taught for millennia that envy leads to personal chaos and eventually death. And in fact, all sin (not just the Seven Deadly) ultimately leads to death.

Translation: *Violence*

The Hebrew word for violence is חַמַּס (hā•mās, pronounced “hah-mahs”). (Notably, this is the name of the Palestinian terrorist group.) It is usually translated simply as violence, but the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* says that it’s used almost exclusively in



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~~connection with sins of violence. This is not the violence of natural catastrophes, a police take—down, nor the aggression of the energetic athlete, muscling his way to the goal line. It's not simply brute force, in and of itself, but evil power—like terrorism. It is the wickedness cited as the cause of the global Flood (Genesis 6:11). This distinction is confirmed by the word “devious” or “perverse” in the next sentence. The LORD does not hate energetic, enthusiastic work; he hates malice and deception in command of that work.~~

The violent use destructive methods to amass wealth. They bully their way to fortune with deception (32), wickedness (33), scorning (34) and folly (35). Misrepresentation, delaying payment, lying, cheating, scamming, and stealing are all used destructively by many in business, taking wealth instead of building it. The LORD opposes all their methods, yet may provide them riches—briefly. See Proverbs 11:16: [“Bullies Get Rich?”](#)

House or Dwelling



There is a contrast here between the House of the Wicked and the Dwelling of the Righteous. The wicked may live in an impressive mansion, but he will be plagued by recurring woes, with the LORD's curse upon him. Note that the wicked has a house, but the righteous has a dwelling, where he dwells or lives. Though the wicked may have more property, he is cultivating the LORD's curse. The LORD's blessings and curses are not therefore measured by profits but by other factors: health, friendships, security and serenity. See Proverbs 14:11: [What causes a household to flourish?](#)

Classic Comments

Matthew Henry wrote that we must not envy the prosperity of the wicked: “Though they be rich and great, live in ease and pleasure, impress all around them, yet do not seek their condition. They stand on the brink of judgement.” They ignore the fact that they face imminent loss and unending agony. As the *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (JFB)* commentary neatly concludes: “The destiny of successful evil-doers warns against desiring their lot.”

Wrong Thinking

Even thinking wrongly about riches is condemned. Imagine: We sin simply by thinking the wrong way, intending wickedness, perhaps without being able to say or do anything more. Evil intentions lead to evil words and actions. Before we know it, we can be copying the ways of the



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~~wicked just because we want what they have. We need instead to think twice and consider~~ where someone else is headed, before we pursue his lifestyle. Many grab for riches, but end up losers.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Riches are useless if they can't be enjoyed, and enjoying them means gratitude, not greed.

Jesus was not opposed to riches. He did not advocate poverty for the sake of poverty, but He warned against putting the pursuit of material wealth ahead of the pursuit of the fullness of life.

Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36 KJV.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Thank God for all that you have now.
- Maintain your existing assets well. Clean them. Fix them. Keep them in good working order.
- Watch your emotions. Don't crave what the wicked seem to be enjoying.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), bully, contentment, envy, curse, focus, gift, house, inheritance, LORD, protection, righteous, folly, violence

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Self-Centered Sam?



Self-Centered Sam looks out for number one. Who's that? It's Sam, of course! Sam doesn't consider himself to be self-centered. One of his favourite books is ["The Richest Man in Babylon."](#)

What does Sam do with his income? The cream, the very best goes to his own long-term growth fund. His motto is 'pay yourself first.' Some call him Stingy Sam. But he's not stingy; he's just making careful preparation for his own future, comfort, and well-being. He is part of the "me" generation. He typifies the Maslow's hierarchy of needs with self-actualization as apex of all values. Sam is a dedicated humanist. He doesn't recognize any higher power than himself. He's a tough negotiator.

Sam doesn't ignore charity. But how could he possibly help anyone one else unless there was something in it for him? Therefore any and all charitable donations must have full and public credit given to the donor. The more people are aware of his generosity the better. After all, a little bit of advertising is good for business. When his corporation gives a gift it comes as a percentage of profits, not revenues.

His financial hero is the multi-millionaire, whose assets once exceeded the entire US treasury:



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The great Railroad and Steamship Baron [Cornelius Vanderbilt](#).

