

# Pride's Connection to Envy

by Ken Mars

A neighbor comes over to your house to show you their new car. Your boss wants to tell you about his vacation in Hawaii. A friend tells you their daughter just received a full scholarship from three different universities. Are you happy for them? Can you "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15)? Some can ... and some cannot.

Why is it that some of us find it difficult to genuinely feel glad for our friends and brethren when some good fortune comes to them? Could it possibly be that when we see our neighbor's new car we are really saying to ourselves: "Why can't I have a new car too?" "I deserve it just as much as they do!" or, try this one on for size: "What a shameless waste of money. Don't they have anything better to spend their money on than some fancy car/house/vacation? Why couldn't they have bought something cheaper and given the difference to the poor?" Shades of Judas.

You see, when we find ourselves criticizing someone's good fortune, it may be that we are not really critical of what has been done, but that someone else has prospered rather than us. We may even find it easier to say "I'm so sorry" to one who has experienced some misfortune, because we are in fact quietly content that someone else is suffering and not us.

The real problem here is not just a weak spirit, but a dominating sense of the flesh ... our flesh ... our welfare ... our own exclusive world of "me." When someone else prospers, it's not fair if we don't prosper also, and when another suffers, at least we are not suffering!

Few things could be as un-Christ like as the inability or unwillingness to feel and show true compassion for a brother. The humble heart will naturally empathize with a brother's lot in life, whether prosperous or calamitous (1 Corinthians 12:24-26), but a proud heart will be impotent to understand another's circumstance. A Christian life without compassion is inconceivable. A Christian life without humility is impossible.

## Envy

Envy is more than just wanting to have what others have or be as someone else. Envy seems to involve a measure of hatred. Paul enjoined envy with malice (Titus 3:3). Envy is married to resentment, and resentment is hard to hide. Pilate recognized the Jews and chief priests were moved with envy when they demanded that Jesus be crucified (Mark 15:10). The chief priests and rulers were not really concerned with the truth of Jesus, but with a self-centered heart they saw our Lord as a threat to their place in the

Synagogue and with the people.

Several years ago a gospel preacher was fired. Over ten years later, that same preacher received a phone call one Sunday afternoon. The man on the phone was from the congregation that had earlier "terminated" this preacher. The caller was crying as he explained that he was the reason for the preacher's dismissal. He had been a "favorite" of the congregation for several years until the new minister came. Everyone loved the new preacher and his wife, and they became the new favorites of everyone at the church. This brother couldn't stand it so he began to secretly spread false rumors among the brethren about the new preacher.

The caller had made a public confession that morning at worship services and was now asking for forgiveness from the one he had wronged. What a tragedy! What a burden to carry for over a decade of one's life! All because of selfish pride which conditioned this brother's heart to envy.

Pride is insidious. It strips us of reality ... the reality of ourselves and the reality of others. When we start comparing ourselves to others, we are faced with the never-ending task of explaining to ourselves why we don't have or didn't accomplish what others have. How torturous. How self-defeating. How foolish. Surely, selfish pride is the driving force in much of man's disapproval of other men.

### **Solution**

The problem of envy could be solved in our lives if we would just humble ourselves toward each other as we do the Lord. just think about this for a moment; we do not envy our Lord ... why? ... because we readily see that He is greater than ourselves. Likewise, we would not envy our brother if we would "... esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3).