



The Ugliest Sin

By Bill Boyer

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, only one qualifies as uglier than the rest. This dubious honor belongs to Greed, by virtue (if such a word can be used in this context) of its sly infusion into several of the others -- having a determined impact in actions also attributable to Envy, Pride, Wrath and Lust, if not Gluttony and Sloth.

I've personally known instances of persons resulting to wrath (in its anger form), after being thwarted in attempts at achieving ends by questionable means; and most people can relate instances where envy and pride displayed by others, sometimes get in the way of common sense. Lust, too, can be transformed into greed -- often portrayed by nations that covet another's natural resources.

In fact, it could be said that greed propels most of mankind's wars, as an underlying craving by countries' leaders to expand boundaries and influence. And, of course, wars generally bring about a boost to the economy, particularly in manufacturing.

Oddly enough, greed (though universal to some extent) is more prevalent in advanced societies, and among the affluent. The poorer people not only are demonstrably happier, but are less covetous of what others have.

In our country, where the dollar is king, greed takes obvious form in the obscene remunerations doled out to company CEOs, sports figures and 'personalities'; but assumes a more secretive guise in the machinations of government.

This is because politicians couch their grasping for power in various other terms such as public service, serving for the greater good, or patriotism; yet even integrity eventually is transmuted by a sybaritic lifestyle that only transmits dissatisfaction, and where plenty -- whether it be in influence or funds -- is seldom sufficient for peace of mind.

Greed, in fact, is a conscience-consuming malady that dictates one's day-to-day dealings, and not only is deleterious to one's character, but affects all relationships. And its yield is nothing less than thievery. Nothing is worse than

a thief -- because even murder is the robbing of the victim's life. Thus it was particularly symbolic that the other two persons crucified alongside Christ, were thieves.

Greed is exemplified in nearly every aspect of daily life: from those instigators -- and victims -- of Ponzi schemes, to the manipulations of the markets, to executive compensations, and even rising costs of airfares and college tuitions. All treaties with the Indian tribes were broken because of greed; and in the present day, individuals who abuse the disability and food stamp programs are as guilty as doctors who milk the Medicare program or perform unnecessary procedures, or returning servicemen who are falsely claiming PTSD benefits, to the detriment of deserving veterans.

We have come to recognize red as the color of anger; green denoting envy, and cowardice construed as being yellow. Greed, then, to me is best depicted as being brown -- and as redolent by its presence, as feedyard waste.

Webster's Dictionary states that greed is: "Selfish desire to acquire more than one needs or deserves." The Bible also speaks to us of greed, but a couple of other quotes come to mind concerning this subject. Louis L'Amour, in his depiction of a banker-rancher in the tale of Utah Blaine, has the principle stating: "The man's money-hungry. It's an obsession now. It makes a man lose perspective. It's the getting that's important, the getting and having -- not how it's gotten." And another author, Clive Cussler, has his character Dirk Pitt commenting to his nemesis: "If greed is your god, then you possess little of true value."

In the current climate, it is interesting to note how PACs and lobbyists traffic in the knowledge that their contributions satisfy the thirst for money relished by their recipients. And this in a country where schools are under-funded and children in some locales are going hungry, while millions are being currently consumed in a senseless game of political one-upmanship via negative messaging in the televised media, through the advent of SuperPACs.





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Corporate greed has cost the loss of countless jobs to other countries, and decimated in less than half a century the manufacturing capabilities that once transformed this country into a model of unparalleled productivity. We export oil, and import steel -- which is the opposite manner in which this nation once thrived.

Wall Street's minions managed (through nefarious schemes to bilk the public) to not only cause the housing bubble to burst, but degraded the market to the detriment of multiple millions of stockholders -- and also have managed to bring gasoline prices to their highest seasonal levels ever, through speculation by investors. Plus the recent downfall of MF Global (with \$1.2 billion down the drain), affecting a major loss to the Midwest farming community through its use of the commodity markets.

As for the individual, just to want something doesn't mean you are greedy. But the act of acquiring it may tell a different story. And it was such that was responsible for the riots in a number of stores during the holiday season -- including an incident in Seattle where police used pepper spray on about 20 customers who were after Air Jordan sneakers. Such disturbances also were quelled in Richmond, Stockton and Las Angeles, CA, Taylor, MI and Lithonia, GA, as people let their actions override better judgment.

Similar to an insidious tumor, greed not only can affect a person's demeanor, but give them a dour and apprehensive outlook, where they become suspicious of others' motives. From personal experience, this can cause division in families, as well as color relationships -- and also be unhealthy to the 'entitled', just as worrying too much or succumbing to stress are attributed to physical distress.

The secret to a successful -- and perforce happy -- life, as I see it, is to be satisfied with what one has, or can attain, without taking from others . . . and to not hold grudges, even against those who have taken from you. **1**

