

Reflections

FEBRUARY 2020

A Poetic Reminder to Beware the Deadly Sins



he “seven deadly sins” refers to a group of sins identified by pastoral theologians in the early centuries of the church, out of which most other sins grow.¹ C.S. Lewis addressed each of them in a poem titled, “Deadly Sins”:



Through our lives thy meshes run
Deft as spiders' catenation,
Crossed and crossed again and spun
Finer than the fiend's temptation.

Greed into herself would turn
All that's sweet: but let her follow
Still that path, and greed would learn
How the whole world is hers to swallow.

Sloth that would find out a bed
Blind to morning, deaf to waking,
Shuffling shall at last be led
To the peace that knows no breaking.

Lechery, that feels sharp lust
Sharper from each promised staying,
Goes at long last—go she must—
Where alone is sure allaying.

Anger, postulating still
Inexcusables to shatter,
From the shelter of thy will
Finds herself her proper matter.

Envy had rather die than see
Other's course her own outflying;
She will pay with death to be
Where her Best brooks no denying.

Pride, that from each step, anew
Mounts again with mad aspiring,
Must find all at last, save you,
Set too low for her desiring.

Avarice, while she finds an end,
Counts but small the largest treasure.
Whimperingly at last she'll bend
To take free what has no measure.

So inexorably thou
On thy shattered foes pursuing,
Never a respite does allow
Save what works their own undoing.²

Just as Lewis took time to reflect on the damage and allure of seven deadly sins in order that he could apply the work of Christ in them to undo them, we too can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the sin in our life so that we can take it to the cross.



*“Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!”*

PSALM 139:23-24 (ESV)

¹ For more information about the seven deadly sins, see Rebecca DeYoung, “How We Got the Seven Deadly Sins”, *Knowing & Doing*, Summer 2014.

² C.S. Lewis, “Deadly Sins” in *Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1992), pp. 91-92.

