

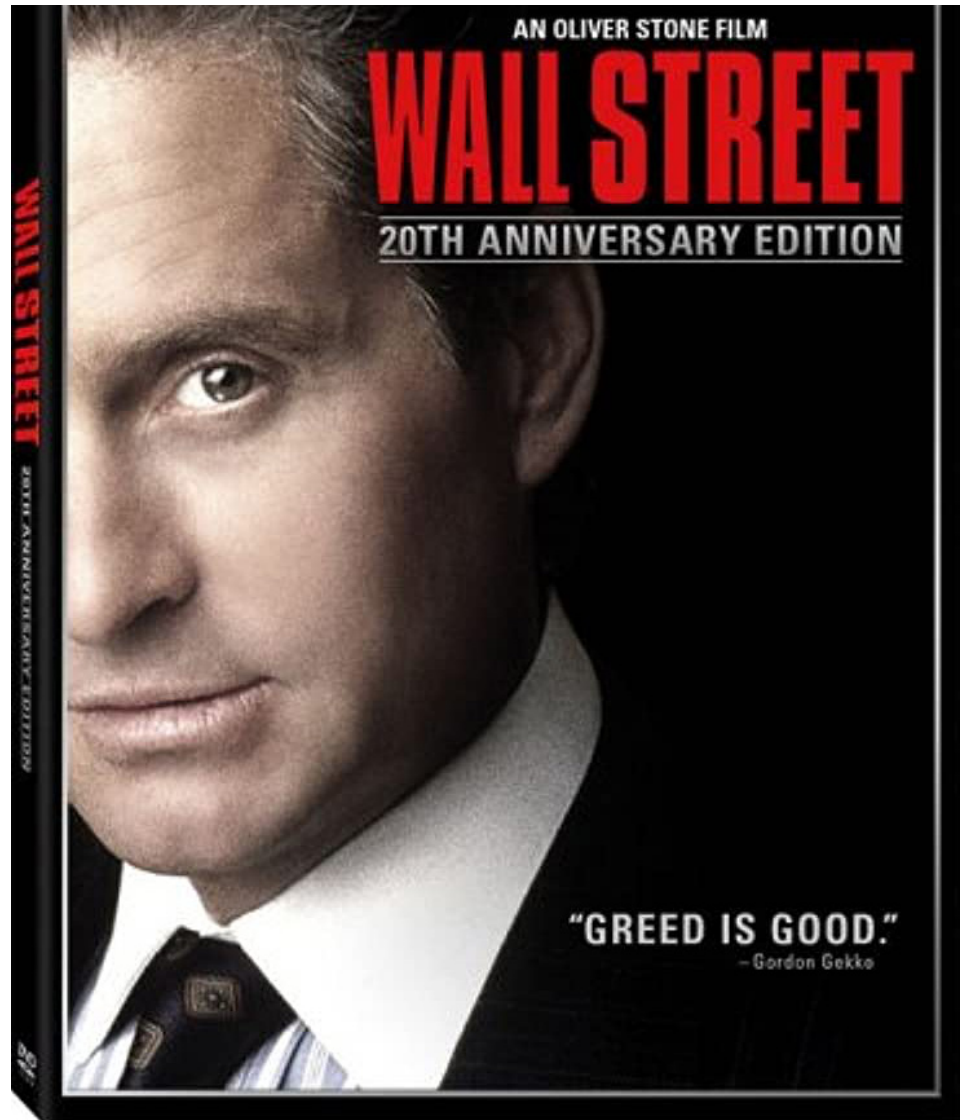
# Greed is Good

February 26 2023

**G**reed is good!" So says Oliver Stone's character, Gordon Gekko, in the movie Wall Street. However, the real-life tycoon, Ivan Boesky, told the graduating class at Berkeley's business school in 1986, "I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself." Shortly thereafter Boesky was fined \$100 million, and went to prison, for insider trading.[3]

Do you remember the horrible example of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)? Like Barnabas, they sold a piece of land they owned and gave some of the proceeds to the Church. However, unlike Barnabas, they lied and tried to tell the Church they were giving all of the money to help the poor. The lie was their sin, but what prompted them to lie? Perhaps it was envy. Maybe they wanted the same applause the Christians gave Barnabas. On the other hand, it could have been greed. Greed is a gateway sin; that is, it opens the door to many other sins. Boesky's greed led to insider trading. Ananias and Sapphira's sin led to lying - not just to Peter and the Christians, but to the Holy Spirit!

The book of Acts says that Ananias "kept back for himself some of the proceeds" (v. 2). Luke chose an interesting word to describe Ananias' sin: *nos-phi-zo* (νοσφιζω). It's used twice in this passage and one more time in the New Testament (Titus 2:10). The Greek dictionary describes



this word as "a type of skimming operation." After a battle, it was typical for the soldiers to strip their enemies and then divide the wealth equally, but if someone cheated by hoarding some of the spoils, this was the word that was used.

Do you remember the story of the Jewish soldier Aachen (Joshua 7:1-26)? The same rare Greek verb we just talked about appears in

that story to describe his sin.

What leads someone to cheat his brothers? Why did Judas steal from Jesus and the apostles (John 12:6)? How can we justify a sin like greed? How can we justify any sin? The answer is as simple as the word "sin" itself. There is an "I" in the middle. At its heart sin is selfishness - and that's never good.