

1st John 3:13 Spiritual Jealousy—Part 1

13 Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

Why would we be surprised? Because early Christians were widely noted for their compassion; Jesus' message lived out in their lives resulted in radical communities offering love and care for those in need that the pagan world had never seen before. The Didascalia, published in the 3rd century was a guidebook to Christian practice, and insisted that church leaders were to ensure that arrangements were made for orphans to get education, widows to receive aid, and the destitute to be provided with food and firewood. Even before Constantine, the church had created a system of social assistance that no department of the pagan state had ever provided. The teaching of Jesus was the great motivation behind the rise of hospitals, orphanages, and hospices for the dying. Christian hospitals could be found all over the Christian world, from Syria in the East, to Europe in the West. Later Middle Ages, the Benedictines alone were responsible for more than 2,000 hospitals in Western Europe, and by the 15th century there were 37,000 Benedictine monasteries caring for the sick. In America today, approximately 19% of hospitals are religiously-affiliated, and many more used to be. Yet, we have been hated, and persecuted. So often, we get repaid evil for doing good, and yet, John insists that we should not be surprised. Why?

Be Not surprised

He's saying that they need to "Stop being amazed or shocked" by it, because this can give way to a feeling of "oh poor me", which was not going to be helpful to their spiritual growth. These are good warnings to be reminded of today, so that we're not caught off-guard, and so that we do not fall into despair or self-pity.

Jesus warned us

Jesus warned us in John 15:18-19 **"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.** That means that because we are not of this world, and have been taken out of the world to live our lives for Jesus, we are no longer the world's own, under the influence of the enemy, but now fight against the flesh, the world and the enemy, and this results in a kind of spiritual jealousy and hatred that Jesus is describing here. The people of the world neither know God, nor mostly want to know God. Jealousy involves the "feelings of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantages or prosperity of another." (according to Webster). It also involves "longing after or coveting some advantage or possession of another." Then spiritual jealousy concerns feelings of displeasure about someone else's perceived closer relationship with God, or coveting someone else's spiritual gifts, ministries or blessings.

The Scriptures Warn Us

Cain and Abel-Cain made the choice not to come under the authority of God, and chose a life of sin for himself instead. And because Cain's heart was wrong, in his failure to love God enough to obey, then God had no regard for his sacrifice. Samuel the Prophet made this clear to King Saul in 1 Sam 15:22 **And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.** Again in Proverbs 21:3 **To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.** But Cain wanted to just go through the motions of a sacrifice on his own terms, instead of obeying God, and of course this was unacceptable to God. As 1 John 3:12 told us: **And for what reason did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous.** And by the end of Cain's story, he is banished from the people of God, and basically founds the line of people who don't follow God. So, we find the same spiritual lesson that the Pharisees were to learn later--Don't regard our ways and traditions as higher than God's Law, or we will find ourselves fighting against God, and if we're not careful, separated from Him. Also, don't hate people for having a closer relationship with God—learn from their good example. Follow them as they follow the Lord.

Joseph and his Brothers--In Gen 37, in verse 5 **5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.** Joseph had a dream from God about being put in charge over them. Now, as the youngest, it was kind of understandable that they were unable to rejoice with him about this. Jealousy not only makes us want what others have, but it also makes us want them to not have what they have. The lesson for us, as Christians who have been shown favor by God: we didn't earn it! Ephesians 2:8-9 **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** Romans 11:6 **But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.** In other words, there was nothing commendable in us. Romans 3:10 **10 as it is written: "There is no righteous person, not even one;** And so, the point is this: Let us not give reason and justification to spiritual jealousy by being self-righteous and arrogant, as young Joseph sounds in Genesis 37, or we may have to learn some hard lessons, as he did—13 years of slavery and prison to work on his character before he was ready to lead! And so, we see another lesson here, in that the very person that they were trying to kill was the one that God was going to use to save them from certain starvation later! So, maybe the person you don't like, or even the Brother or Sister in Christ that you don't like will be the very one with a Spiritual Gift that is going to be used to minister to you later in your life! Don't attack and try to get rid of that person now, or you may find yourself suffering later!

David and Saul--We see how jealousy and disobedience destroyed the life of Saul most clearly in his relationship with David. It began when David returned from killing Goliath, we read in 1 Sam 18:7-8 **7The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." 8 Then Saul became very angry, for this lyric displeased him; and he said, "They have given David credit for ten thousands, but to me they have given credit for only thousands! Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 And Saul eyed David with suspicion from that day on.** And, of course David was going to have the Kingdom, but it was because God had anointed him to have it, not because he killed Goliath, or was in charge of the men of war and killed a bunch of Philistines. Saul was afraid that David would take the kingdom away from him, but he also saw David as the embodiment of the fact that he had chosen his own sinful way instead of God's, and that David had chosen to follow God—so God was with David. Saul had turned against God, and was jealous of David, who hadn't. The lesson is that we must obey God fully, and that means loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, not being jealous of their relationship with God, their gifts or their ministries, and of course not killing them with hatred in our hearts, and certainly not trying to kill them physically, as Saul did! Love your Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Don't allow a root of bitterness springing up to defile yourself, or others!