

YOKEFELLOW

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From The Director ENVYINGS (VI)



ENVY AND THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM (III)

Hartline stated that envyings “become extremely dangerous to the local congregation when they divide brethren who polarize into factions, not over things right and wrong, but personal preferences and personalities.”⁵⁰

It is truly destructive when these envyings are escalated like wildfire from the local situation into the brotherhood. The envy and destructive work of the Judaizers against the apostle Paul was virtually brotherhood-wide, following at his heels wherever he planted and strengthened the church. These brethren so strongly resented Paul and “his company’s” (Acts 13:13) success that they lied about him and his work [Read 2 Corinthians] and tried to turn the other brethren against Paul; further, they [Brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., was strongly convinced] were even among the mob crying out and trying to take his life in the temple area in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30-35). “For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him” (21:36). A number of times in studying in brother Turner’s classes on Acts and in discussing with him this point, the writer heard him say that he thought “the Judaizers were crying out the loudest!” His point was that the bounty for the poor in Jerusalem collected and delivered by Paul had not quelled this bitter envy and hatred, which was Paul’s hope. The viciousness of envy is hard to quell. Truly, it is “the rottenness of the bones” (Prov. 14:30).

The Judaizers resented Paul’s influence and authority [which he used “for edification, and not for your destruction,” 2 Cor. 10:8]; they wanted that influence and authority! They lied about his letters and his preaching; “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (10:10). They by lying about this great apostle wanted to discredit him with those whom he had taught the gospel and loved so dearly, so they themselves could be held in such high esteem—envy personified! Dear reader, who had the better heart; who truly loved the Lord and the souls of mankind; who was dedicated to the preaching of the gospel in love, Paul or the envious Judaizers? Who had laid down his life for them and had made countless sacrifices to reach the lost with the precious gospel (11:7-9; cf. 21-33)? Who really cared for “all the churches” (11:28), doing all within his power to save them from vicious, lying accusations, division, and strife resulting from evil envy? How much could Paul have accomplished for the Lord through His grace if he not had to defend himself from attacks by envious brethren? But, it very much grieved him that “though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (12:15).

Likely, the attacks were aimed also at his fellow-workers, Timothy, Titus, and others; “I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we

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Co-Editor's Column

“I CAN--IN HIM” Garland Elkins



“I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Who is the man behind this speech? The quality in the man’s testimony is conditioned by the quality of the life which presents it. If a man has been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, if life has been a lazy afternoon in the land of ease, the testimony of his pretended victory is worthless. What kind of life is there behind this statement? How many times has he been compelled to fight his way through the territory of the enemy? Has his life been a picnic or a crusade? The Apostle Paul does not shrink before questions like these. He has a great history behind him. He has run the gauntlet of the fiercest fires. He has encountered tremendous obstacles, and he has beaten them into fine dust. So we certainly should pay respectful attention when he jubilantly says, “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.”

What has he done? He has discarded the errors of his past life (1 Tim. 1:13; Gal. 1:15,16). He has cast away his prejudices, which had grown upon him like a tight skin (Acts 26:11). It is difficult to cast off prejudice, which is at first like a loose fitting garment but at the last binds as tight as the skin. It is especially difficult to overcome religious prejudices, and this is especially true of those in places of ecclesiastical prominence. Paul had been a Pharisee, a member of the strictest sect of the Jews, possessed of keen and bitter jealousy for his party. But through the mercy of the Lord he was now a Christian, and through the strength that came to him in the Lord he had taken those prejudices and stripped them from him and now was living an abundant life in Christ.

What else had he encountered? He had encountered the violence and enmity of those who were still in the bonds of prejudice. There is no antagonism like the antagonism of those you desert. When a politician crosses the floor of Congress he is followed by intense and bitter resentment. When a person in religious error learns the truth and renounces the error and obeys the gospel, often nothing can exceed the enmity of his old associates. This was definitely true in the case of Paul. He learned that he was in error in persecuting Christ and his church and so he renounced error and obeyed the truth, but in becoming a follower of Christ he incurred the wrath of his old friends. They had no reply to his message, they would therefore seek to kill the messenger. Yet Paul was not dismayed nor vanquished. Again and again he returns to the sphere of violence and persecution and proclaims “I can do all things.”

What else did he do? He embarked upon a crusade for the propagation of his new faith. He went forth to lands far distant, carrying the good news to strange people. Let us think for a moment of the strength and insight required in this manifold variety of conditions and needs. Every sphere he entered seemed to present a circle of new conditions. Now he was meeting with a few women by the riverside at

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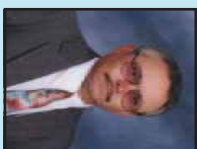
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(Cates Continued)

not in the same steps?" (12:17,18). Might the Judaizers have spoken in derision and in attempt to discredit Paul and his "yokefellows" by calling them names similar to "Pauline clones," or "the evangelistic circuit," or "knuckleheads," etc., which the Judaizers intended to be disrespectful, prejudicial, and destructive? To say the least, they attacked Paul, Timothy, Titus, and others of Paul's fellow gospel preachers. And sadly, sometimes those who envied Paul succeeded in alienating brethren from Paul (Gal. 4:16).

The reaction of Paul to this destructive type envy was to state the truth, to salvage as best as possible the Corinthians' confidence in him, and thus to maintain the allegiance of the Corinthians to the Sacred Message (13:1-7), to the end that they might "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace," so that "the God of love and peace" might be with them (13:11), which peace they were very much in danger of losing. Please note that Paul did not get into the mire of wickedness and into the lies of envy with the enemies of truth. That reaction is a real and present danger for those who are attacked by jealous, envious people, who at times even carry on a "witch-hunt" for fodder they might use to destroy those who are in envy's "evil eye" (Mark 7:21,22).

There is also a danger involved for the one against whom the attack has been mounted. In confusion and frustration, he could become guilty of saying and doing things he would not normally have done. So the vicious circle begins, and the end result is much like the fabled tigers which chased one another until they melted into butter.⁵¹

Also, the apostle Paul defended Titus against envy's attempt to besmirch Titus' name (2 Cor. 12:18). It behooves every Christian, when hearing charges about our brethren, to "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" based upon objective truth and evidence, not based upon envy and its fruits (John 7:24). "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 17:15).

REMEDY

As it has for every other transgression, the Bible has the remedy for the root sin of envy. B. C. Goodpasture wisely observed, "If envy could be removed from the hearts of all men today, many of problems that beset and the troubles that afflict people in the church and out, would immediately disappear."⁵²

In the first place, we must turn to the Word of God and practice and preach the truth about envy. Brother Elam wrote:

We do not wonder that the Bible so solemnly warns Christians against envy, and charges all to lay it aside. (1 Pet. 2:7.) Love envies not. (1 Cor. 13:5.) The heart with envy in it is not right in the sight of God. In practicing and preaching the whole counsel of God, envy comes in for due consideration. Let us practice and preach all the Bible says against envy.⁵³

Note the connection between "laying aside all...envies" and "desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:1,2).

In the second place, we must examine ourselves. Brother Elam also perceptively wrote,

All persons should examine themselves to see that nothing is done by them through envy, strife, or vainglory. Men have acknowledged that they have been drunk, have cheated others, and have committed other sins; but where is the man who ever confessed that he acted from envy or was ever jealous and envious? Reader, did you ever see that man? I have never met him.⁵⁴

We need to view our hearts, motives, and actions in light of the "perfect law of liberty" and make the changes in our lives necessary to bring ourselves into congruency with the mirror of God's Word (Jas. 1:22-25). Indeed, the person who "deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is

vain" (1:26).

In the third place, we must recognize realistically the innate worth and the abilities of others of God's offspring along with our own worth and ability. Brother Brents put it thus:

Can envy be cured? It can if one will take a right estimate of things. By the law of God we judge the standard of good and evil. What the law of God declares to be valuable or enjoins to be beneficial is certainly so, and what the law of God disclaims to be hurtful, harmful, and worthless is in fact to be so regarded. Truly the word of God condemns the spirit of envy. One should try to make a right judgment of his worth and ability. If one does this, he will find that there are others at least as wise and as good as he is, and likely he would find that if merit were the standard of honor, his would not measure up to the standard as much so as another. If one would seriously reflect upon the vanity of all worldly things, and if advantage should be gained, how much has one profited by being envious of that creature, one's fellow man, "whose breath is in his nostrils," and whose "glory fadeth as the flower of grass"?⁵⁵

Job recognized very keenly the sacred nature and dignity of all human life, for every person is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26,27) and is the offspring of God (Acts 17:26-29). Job realized that had he mistreated his fellowman, God would judge and punish him come the day of judgment: "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" (Job 31:14,15). Question, when I am envious of the ability God gave to another, what does that say also about my attitude toward God?

Dear reader, would it not also be utterly foolish for a soldier in a foxhole (under severe attack by the rushing enemy) to envy, resent, and try to destroy his fellow soldier in the foxhole for being more successful in defending their lives and combating the enemy than he? We are under vicious attack from Satan and his evil forces. Anyone with sanctified common sense ought to be able to see that it is utter folly to envy those who are successful, influential, and gifted in soul winning and upholding the blood-stained banner of King Immanuel and in being "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17)!

In the fourth place, brother Noel Merideth wrote, "The antidote for envy is genuine love cultivated for our fellow man."⁵⁶ Dunn stated, Paul said: "Love envieth not." (1 Cor. 13:4.) One cannot love those whom he envies, and he cannot envy those whom he loves. These two impulses are at opposite poles. They cannot dwell together in the same human heart with reference to the same person. Love is godlike, and envy is diabolic. To "love your neighbor as yourself" is to fulfil a royal law (James 2:8); but jealousy springs from a wisdom that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish" (James 3:13-15).⁵⁷

Note the powerful observations of brother Cox.

The divine remedy for envy is love—love out of a pure heart, love like that which motivated the Lord Jesus....Love is not grieved when others are honored, when others are favored, when others are promoted. When one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with him; when one member of the body is honored or praised, all the members rejoice with him. (1 Cor. 12:26.) "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13:10).⁵⁸

Brother North summarized his article thus:

Envy and love cannot remain in the same mind at the same time. Love cannot envy (1 Cor. 13:4), for envy provokes while love embraces (Gal. 5:26). So, the way to overcome envy is to love. And the way to react to someone envious of us is to love them. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." (Prov. 25:21-22.) We are paid handsomely when we displace the venom of envy

with the peace of love. In this way, we replace an enemy with a friend.⁵⁹

Jesus is our perfect example in returning good for evil. He fully knew what it is to have been the target of unrelenting, vicious envy. Even while He was shedding His innocent blood for all of us whose sins put Him onto the cross, He could cry out, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Some of them did indeed receive forgiveness, when they were baptized as penitent believers (Acts 2:36-41). Very sadly, though, "they also which pierced him" and who repented not shall see Him at His second appearing, unprepared, "and shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7). We realize that not every enemy can be transformed into a friend, to be realistic, though that should be our goal. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

CONCLUSION

Very regretfully and in spite of being commanded "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1), the Lord's precious family has through the years been troubled and in some places rent asunder by envy and its fruits. At times, such attitudes have placed not only the envious souls in immediate jeopardy, but through their influence the souls of countless others within the congregation [perhaps far beyond that local situation] have been alienated from each other. It often works similarly to and is as destructive as a spreading, virulent cancer. It has separated long-time, formerly deeply devoted friends and co-workers, just one of its deadly consequences. Sometimes, it has brought about large-scale divisions in the body of Christ which shall never be healed. How heaven must weep over such folly!

Dear reader, have you ever wondered why factions and divisions and alienations over personalities and personal preferences in our spiritual family very often have little or no chance of being rectified? Is it a lack of continued respect for Biblical authority, or for forbearing one another and letting the love of the brotherhood continue, or for Christ's prayer for unity, or for the precious souls of oneself, his wife and children, and of brothers and sisters in Christ? Is it pride that is involved in a refusal to bring oneself to repentance, especially when others have been influenced to polarize around such a faction?

Brother Bill Hartline made the following observation:

And even if there is confession made regarding this terrible sin, the injury and hurt are for all practical purposes, irreversible. The illustration of shaking into the wind, the contents of a feather pillow, and the futile effort to recover all the feathers, points out all too clearly, the futility one would encounter if he tried to recover all the hurtful and sinful things said about another.⁶⁰

The place to stop the fruits of envy is at the little end of the taproot—in the heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Endnotes

¹All scripture references from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

²Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), IV, 312.

³R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 288.

⁴J. M. Powell, "The Seven Deadly Sins," *Gospel Advocate* (April 27, 1961), p. 263.

⁵Ibid., p. 257.

⁶J. Noel Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," *Gospel Advocate* (April 1, 1965), p. 193.

⁷J. M. Powell, "The Curse of Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (December 22, 1960), p. 801.

⁸J. W. Brents, "The Rottenness of the Bones," *Gospel Advocate* (June 2, 1938), p. 501.

⁹C. D. Plum, "The Works of the Flesh," *Gospel Advocate* (July 24, 1941), p. 703.

¹⁰Frank L. Cox, "Works of the Flesh," *Gospel Advocate* (June 10, 1954), p. 443.

¹¹Robertson, *Word Pictures in the Greek Testament*, p. 312.

¹²Robert L. Johnson, *The Letters of Paul to the Galatians* (Austin, TX: R. B. Sweet Co., Inc., 1969), p. 155.

¹³Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.

¹⁴Cox, "Works of the Flesh," p. 443.

¹⁵Fred E. Dennis, "The Works of the Flesh," *Gospel Advocate* (April 29, 1948), p. 417.

¹⁶John E. Kirk, "Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (May 12, 1955), pp. 372,373.

¹⁷Jack C. Dunn, "Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (December 21, 1961), p. 804.

¹⁸E. A. Elam, "Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

¹⁹Ira North, "The Sin of Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (February 17, 1972), p. 100.

²⁰William Barclay, as quoted by J. William Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," *Gospel Advocate* (February 31, 1973), p. 345.

²¹Brents, "The Rottenness of the Bones," p. 501.

²²G. F. Raines, "Envy—A Deadly Evil," *Gospel Advocate* (November 12, 1959), p. 722.

²³Dunn, "Envy," p. 804.

²⁴Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.

²⁵Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," p. 345.

²⁶E. A. Elam, "Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (January 1, 1914), p. 12.

²⁷Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.

²⁸Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

²⁹Raines, "Envy—A Deadly Evil," p. 722.

³⁰Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.

³¹Powell, "The Seven Deadly Sins," p. 263.

³²North, "The Sin of Envy," p. 100.

³³Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

³⁴Elam, "Envy," (January 1, 1914), p. 12.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

³⁷Elam, "Envy," (January 1, 1914), p. 12.

³⁸Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰J. M. Powell, "The Curse of Envy," p. 801.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Elam, "Envy," (January 1, 1914), p. 12.

⁴³Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1128.

⁴⁴Raines, "Envy—A Deadly Evil," p. 722.

⁴⁵Frank L. Cox, "The Venom of Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (April 30, 1959), p. 282.

⁴⁶Powell, "The Seven Deadly Sins," p. 263.

⁴⁷Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 193.

⁴⁸J. M. Powell, "The Curse of Envy," p. 801.

⁴⁹Kirk, "Envy," p. 374.

⁵⁰Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," p. 345.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²B. C. Goodpasture, "Envy," *Gospel Advocate* (February 13, 1958), p. 99.

⁵³Elam, "Envy," (October 29, 1914), p. 1129.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Brents, "The Rottenness of the Bones," p. 501.

⁵⁶Merideth, "Envy—The Evil Eye," p. 199.

⁵⁷Dunn, "Envy," p. 804.

⁵⁸Cox, "The Venom of Envy," p. 282.

⁵⁹North, "The Sin of Envy," p. 100.

⁶⁰Hartline, "The Sins of Envy and Jealousy," p. 345.

(Elkins Continued)

Philippi, and now with the philosophers at Mars Hill and again, he spoke amid the pomp and luxury of imperial Rome. Paul was equal to any occasion. Every emergency found him fully equipped. "I can do all things." And how did he do it? "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." At either end there is a person, and power passes from one to the other, "Him that strengtheneth me." Christ is not just a great historic hero, a supreme example in a great gallery of heroes, Christ is a living Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). Paul drew his spiritual force, the power which made him effective, out of fellowship with the living Christ.

The tragedy in so many professedly Christian lives is that they do not live in close communion with Christ, and so, when they are confronted with a supremely difficult task, they fail to cope with it and are disastrously overwhelmed. To draw upon the ideals, philosophies and false doctrines of men for spiritual power is to place oneself in a precarious situation. It is only from Christ as he speaks to us and dwells in us through his word can we come to appreciate the statement, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ is a living personality, who is himself "the fountain of life." It is only "in him," that there is "bread enough and to spare." If we will be true to Christ the heavy demands of life will not overcome us. We shall not be exhausted. If we are to live a vigorous and triumphant life, we need a mighty dynamic, and we find it in the risen and glorified Lord. "In him" we "can do all things," even "we are God's fellow-workers" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Garland Elkins, Gospel Advocate, February 20, 1969