

WHO CAN STAND BEFORE ENVY?

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Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; *but who is able to stand before envy?*” Proverbs 14:30 also says, “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: *but envy the rottenness of the bones.*” Satan is our adversary, who is like a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:8). We must resist him steadfast in the faith (1 Pet 5:9). To be able to successfully resist the devil, it is vital that we not be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor 2:11). Envy is certainly one of Satan’s most powerful devices. Many of the wickedest deeds recorded in the Bible involved envy.

Joseph and his brothers

Genesis 37:3-4 says that “Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.” God gave Joseph dreams that foretold that one day his brothers would submit before him (Gen 37:5-9). The result was that Joseph’s brothers envied him (Gen 37:11). Acts 7:9 says that “the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt.” God used these events to bring to pass the very things that He had revealed to Joseph by his dreams. But what would drive men to desire the death of their own brother, to sell him into slavery, and then break their father’s heart by telling him his son was dead? Envy!

Moses and the Levites

Numbers chapter 16 records the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses and Aaron. Korah was a Levite, and desired to have the priesthood that God had reserved for Aaron and his descendants. In Numbers 16:3, Korah said to Moses and Aaron, “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” God killed the rebels and brought a plague to show that Moses and Aaron were given their authority by the Lord. What was the root cause of this rebellion? Psalm 106:16 says that “*they envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord.*”

Saul and David

Saul was moved with envy against David because of the honor David gained from the people. The glory of men was the thing Saul loved and desired more than anything else (1 Sam 13:8-12; 15:13-30). “And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of

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music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1 Sam 18:6-12).

The crucifixion of Christ

Without doubt, crucifying the Son of God is the worst sin ever committed by mankind. To accomplish this severest of evil deeds, Satan used what is probably his most powerful device: envy. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many believed on him (John 11:43-45). John 11:47-53 says: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and *the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.* And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. *Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*" A few days later, Jesus was betrayed and was brought before the Roman governor, Pilate. Pilate attempted to persuade the multitude to accept the release of Jesus instead of Barabbas (Mark 15:6-9). Mark 15:10 says that Pilate "*knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy*" (Mark 15:10; see also Matt 27:18). Envy is one of Satan's most powerful and destructive weapons. It is part of the "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:19-21). Galatians 5:26 says, "*Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*" James 3:14-16 says, "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*" We must lay envy aside (James 2:1), along with every other weight and sin (Heb 12:1).