

LESSON DELLIVERED TO BEACON SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS, NICHOLS HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH
as substitute teacher, probably about 1966

A PREACHER ONCE SAID: "I'm going to elucidate this morning on some subjects
that the Lord has touched on but lightly."

As a newsman I would like to have had opportunity to cover stories that are
wrapped up in today's lesson. They deal with royalty, war, religion, murder,
friendship, marriage, insanity, and other sins and troubles that we face today.

The main character is a country boy who whipped the biggest bully in the valley,
won the distinguished service medal, and then barely escaped with his life when
the man who gave him the medal tried to kill him. The murder attempt was set
off by a bunch of singing women just trying to pass a compliment.

Let's look at some headlines that might have appeared in the morning paper
if there had been a daily newspaper back in Old Testament times:

POPULAR WAR HERO
IS NAMED GENERAL

KING DENOUNCES PARADE
OF SINGING, DANCING WOMEN

DAVID LOSES FAVOR
AT COURT: ENVY RUMORED

PALACE WALL DAMAGED
IN MURDER ATTEMPT

MONARCH GOES OFF
HIS ROCKER, APPARENTLY

SAUL SUSPECTS DAVID
HAS DIVINE PROTECTION

MUSICIAN FLEES AS
SECOND JAVELIN MISSES

PEOPLE STAND BEHIND
DEPOSED ARMY HERO

DAVID MEEKLY ACCEPTS
DEMOTION TO CAPTAINCY

The stories above are all in the Bible. I just wrote some headlines for them.
Now let's read the Scriptures:

I Samuel 18: 5-16

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and Behaved himself wisely;
And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all
the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the salughter of
the Philistines 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 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 to David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed but thou-
sands, and what more can he have 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 his house; and David played with his harp, 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 to the wall with it,"
And David avoided out of his presence twic.

And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him,, and was departed
from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him captain over a thou-
sand, and he went out and came in before his people.

And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and teh Lord was with him.

Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. (end of scripture reading)

To get a better picture, let's review earlier news on this palace intrigue. Saul had been stunned by Samuel, who told him: "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected you from being king." (I Sam.15:23)

Saul had been warned earlier by Samuel. Saul had tried to get the decree changed, and had even confessed that he had sinned. But Samuel wouldn't be moved. Instead, he went back to his old home in Ramah, and Saul never saw him again.

TODAY'S NEWS:

Deals with the relationship of Saul and David, which in the beginning was much like father and son. In fact, David's friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan, is one of the great classic friendships of all time.

David already has been introduced to us as the eighth son of Jesse, a ruddy youth who herded the family sheep. Probably smelled like sheep, too, but he also could play the harp, and that was one reason Saul kept him around the palace. The harp music soothed Saul's hypertension, and alleviated his manio-depressiveness. They called it melancholy in those days. Now it might be called the blues, or something worse.

This came about more or less by accident, or would have been so described if we couldnot see the work of the Lord in the whole matter.

Jesse had three of his boys off fighting in Saul's army, and he hadn't had any word from them for quite a spell. So he sent David down to where they were fighting the Philistines. (It seems like about all the Israelites did in their first couple of thousand years was to fight the Philistines.)

David took along a box of cookies and a few extra cans of C-rations for his brothers. He also had his slingshot along, just in case he saw a coyote or maybe a jackrabbit.

Before David got to where the war was going on, Saul drafted him--not to be a soldier but to play the harp. It turned out David was about the equivalent of the United States of Israel field artillery band.

While David was standing around watching the battle he saw that everybody in Saul's army was scared green of Goliath, a 9-foot tall giant with a brass helmet. You know the story of how David took him in a duel and David won.

That gave David a start in the army, but he also held onto his job playing his harp back at the palace. It may have had some special fringe benefits. David also took to whomping the Philistines pretty regularly, and that's where we take up with him today.

Saul liked the way David was winning and he appointed David a five star general. The people liked it, too, and that's how the women happened to stage the parade and demonstration that caused David a lot of trouble.

These women were playing their tambourines and whatever the Israelite equivalent for guitars and saxophones may have been. They may have been doing the watusi or twist or something as they came down the street singing:

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands!"

Both numbers probably were just figures of speech, because they probably didn't get accurate casualty reports from the enemy on the battle front, but the lines sounded good and they rhymed, not a bad combination for a song.

But Saul didn't like it, and that brings us to the point of today's lesson. Saul became jealous of David. He was envious of his successes. This changed the relationship of Saul and David. Saul thought: "First thing I know this kid will be after my job and I'll lose my throne and palace. He may want to be king himself. I'd sure better keep my eye on that boy!"

He did. Saul had his eye on him that day in the palace when David was playing the harp and Saul was pacing up and down "prophesyng." No doubt he was thinking about Samuel's warning that as far as the Lord was concerned Saul was OUT. Back and forth Saul paced, prophesying with a javelin in his hand. At least one of his prophecies didn't work out. Saul said: "I will smite David to the wall with this javelin." He missed and only the wall was damaged.

David thought to himself: "Well, now I believe this guy is trying to kill me." He skedaddled and when Saul tried a second time, he got out pretty quick again. Saul's envy and jealousy was causing trouble for him and for David.

Sometime after the divine rejection of Saul, the scriptures (ISam.16:14) say: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. That statement troubles me, to, because our concept of God does not have Him sending evil spirits upon people.

One Bible scholar, McLaren, explains that in these words; "The writer of this book felt that God was the ultimate cause of all things, and that all beings were under His control, and his devout recognition of the fact that led him the apparent paradox of tracing an evil spirit to God. But we must not be so straitlaced as to overlook the truth that Saul had prepared the fit abode for that evil spirit by his own indulgence in a whirl of sinful passions and acts, and that these were punished by their natural consequences."

On the other hand, we find it is written twice in this passage that David behaved himself very wisely. We also find that Saul was afraid of David because of this, and because Saul observed that the Lord was with David.

The subject of this lesson, "The Snare of Envy," focuses attention on the major truth to be gleaned from this study. The unscrupulous nature and the damning effect of envy are portrayed in the life of Saul.

Envy refers to the discontent or jealousy which one person holds in regard to the good fortune of another. In the Bible the word "envy" is used frequently with the distinct idea of spite or malice.

Envy is reproved by the Scriptures. The New Testament says envy is an evil attitude which originates in an ignorant and conceited mind. It was for envy that the enemies of Jesus delivered him up to be crucified. The Bible classes envy with deceit, covetousness, hatred, drunkenness, and murder.

Envy is a destructive force in human life. It often leads to strife, spite, hatred and murder. In the Bible we may cite envy or jealousy between Cain and Abel, between Joseph and his brothers, between Haman and Mordecai, and between the Pharisees, the priests of the temple, and Jesus.

In today's world, we may cite excessive social ambition, greed to make money, political mud slinging, a salesman running down a competitor, envy that may cause a worker to embezzle his employer's funds. You might cite other cases.

Job 5:2: "For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one."

Proverbs 14:30: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy is the rottenness of the bones."

Envy might be viewed as an expression of insecurity, of lack of faith in God, lack of confidence in one's self.

James (3:16) said: "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

Envy perverts the moral and spiritual senses and bring confusion within. It is like a deadly poison. It leaves the victim unconscious of his disordered condition.

Envy is a violation of love. "Love envieth not." (I Cor.13:4) Envy is the opposite of love. When envy dominates our hearts we cannot fulfill Christ's significant words: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."

Contentment is the opposite of envy. Contentment is a part of God's plan for our spiritual security. Love is the theme. To combat envy we must recognize it. Here are some symptoms:

- We get angry without justifiable cause, as Saul did.
- We become irritated when we hear other people being praised.
- We develop suspicion of people who succeed.
- We try to find ways to get even, sometimes by hurting others.
- We are afraid of what others might do to us.

My dictionary defines envy as "a feeling of discontent and ill will because of another's advantages, possessions, etc." and as resentful dislike of another who has something desirable.

Envy can destroy one's right relationship with God, and one's right relationship with God will destroy envy.

MEMORY VERSE, Proverbs 16:5-6:

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil."