

THE THREE HEADED MONSTER

Genesis 37

INTRODUCTION:

The days of goblins and ghosts are about gone except for the T. V. Youngsters used to be frightened at tales of spooks and monsters, as the old folks would spend some experience that had been passed on from one generation to the next. They no longer seemed to be frightened at any of these ordinary things that happen or have happened to people. And we have all sorts of reasons given as to why people are made up in this way.

For example, why do children like crunchy cereal. One study suggests that the chance to snap, crackle, and pop appeases childhood hostilities by providing an outlet for aggressive feelings.

Why do you suppose men love to fondle a cigarette or a cigar. Well, they tell us that this may be nothing more than indulgence in an adult version of thumb sucking. The cigar served as a passifier for grown-ups. Sad to say, some of the ladies carry on this practice as well. Now these, and many other startling explanations, of human behavior have been advanced by the social scientists who carry on research and they are trying to explore these hidden things that cause man to react as he does.

Now the Christian needs to have a healthy fear of the moral monsters that threaten to destroy his character and his influx. Perhaps the most vicious and most destructive of all such monsters is the three headed monster of selfishness. And here is a great big monster in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis. This comes to light as you study this monster, you begin to see that there are about three heads that poke out at you.

Keep in mind now that this is about Joseph. The well known type of Christ. He was indeed despised and rejected, and he was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Like our Blessed Lord, when he was cast out and sold by his brethren.

I. Jealousy - V. 1-4.

The brethren discovered that he was loved of his father. Like Christ, he was loved of the Heavenly Father. In return his brothers despised him. They were not pleased with this and of course this led them to persecute him.

Now jealousy was involved here with these people and persons and it was involved with personalities not just with things, but they were suspicious. They had resentment. They had mis-trust for him. They would not show him affection.

Jealousy often reared its ugly head within the family. And this of all places should never be. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him.

Jealousy arises often when people are left out of plans and projects. There is a good illustration of this in Judges 8:1. "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply."

Jealousy sometimes erupts violently when others are praised for success, where we failed. That is to say, its hard for us to accept that we have failed in something and another person succeeds in it.

I Samuel 18:8 - And Saul was very wrought. And the saying displeased him. For they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands. Saul, the great King, could not stand to see this young man making his way to the top. And the people had already recognized that David was a great conquerer.

Jealousy wells up when others receive equal reward for less work.

Matthew 20:12. These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

This can be very frustrating and of course a sacrifice on the part of those who have worked diligently.

Jealousy even crops up when a sinner or a prodigal is given a reception. Luke 15:28. And he was angry and would not go in, therefore came his Father out, and entreated him.

If we can learn the habits of jealousy and its likely breeding places, we will be better equipped and prepared to kill it before it destroys us. Now mark you, because it takes root and this thing took root in the hearts and minds of these boys. And it bore fruit.

Acts 7:9 gives us the speech of Stephen, in which he refers to the jealousy of the brothers and their sin against Joseph, and how God blessed him and led him.

Romans 13:13 - the Scripture says, let us live as in the daytime. Not in quarrellings and in jealousy.

I Cor. 3:3. - Paul says you are of the flesh as long as jealousy is among you.

2 Cor. 12:20. - Paul appeals for repentance for the matter of jealousy, anger, slander, and he lists several other sins.

James 3:14 and 16 - We discover that jealousy had brought about the great disorder in society and that it is classified as of the earth, and of this world.

II. Envy.

The second head of the monster is envy. We discover this in the 5th verse - through verse 24. This is a very interesting passage of Scripture, in which Joseph dreams a dream. And he had a dream of binding sheaves. And it was interpreted that

these boys would bow down and that he would reign over them. Then he had a dream in the 9th verse, another dream about the sun, the moon, and the stars - that his father and all of his brethren would bow down before him. And in the 17th verse, he is sent on an errand. He is a good boy. He is sent to Dothan. And we discover that on this trip that he had difficulty because of the monster envy taking hold of him. In the 23rd verse, removing his coat of many colors, and in the 24th verse, putting him in a pit.

He was hated for his words and he was not honored because of his visions. His words of wisdom, his revelation wounded the pride, the heart of these brothers and they hated him more, because he dreamed a dream. And they sought ways to get rid of him.

And they had an opportunity in Verse 24, and these ungodly boys put him in a pit - there was no water but they cast him there. And it was envy that put him there.

Envy is very close kin to jealousy. And it is as someone has stated, to be discontent at the excellence or good fortune of another, to be resentful or begrudging.

Some envy the power of others. Even if the power is cruel. That is, as Proverbs 3:31 says, envy not the power of the oppressor, nor his ways.

Some people are envious of the pleasure seekers and those who seem to be thriving on worldliness.

Proverbs 23:17 - let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Some envy the prestige or the position, or we might say, the popularity of others.

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Gal. 5:26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Some are envious of prosperity which seems to come so easily to some people.

Psalms 73:3-18. For I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

All of us seem to forget that envy lives when love dies and envy is destroyed when true love reigns in a man's heart. Charity suffers long and is kind. Charity envieth not, wanteth not itself. I Cor. 13:4.

Honesty about our envious feelings is the first step toward defeating them.

Many men are envious and jealous about other people or they are selfish even about things. Mendelssohn visited the cathedral of Friedberg and having heard the great organ, he went into the organ loft and asked if he might be allowed to play for just a moment. The old organist was jealous for his instrument. At first, he refused to let this young man play. But afterwards, he allowed the great German composer to try the colossal thunder of the cathedral. And after standing by in great delight and amazement for a few moments, he suddenly layed his hands on the shoulder of the inspired musician and exclaimed -- who are you? What is your name? Mendelëssohn replied the player. And can it be that I had so nearly refused to let Mendelëssohn touch this organ.

How little the Lord's people know what they are doing when they refuse to let Christ have possession of their eternal and entire life. And they allow jealousy and envy to keep them from the better things in life.

Our aim should always be not to injure but to bless others. And the success of

our neighbors, our attitude should be correct. As St. Thomas once said, that he defines sadness and another's good to be envy. That is a displeasure and regret that another person has prospered better than we ourselves have prospered. Or we take satisfaction in the calamities of another. As Saul eyed David. Now if pride produced the first sin, surely caused the second sin. If pride was the cause of Adam's fall, then envy was the cause of Cain and his horrible sin against Able.

We do not have to look far before we discover that even our Lord was delivered to the cross by envy of the priests and the Scribes.

Envy drove Socrates to drink the hemlock.

Envy expelled John Wesley from the church which he had been born.

Envy in Scotland caused the covenaters to shed their blood. And it is not uncommon for men of vision to discover that there is bitter envy .

Well, they cannot bear smaller folks getting or succeeding in anything. This was Alexander The Great's big sin. He could not bear or tolerate praise for any of his generals. It subtracted from him.

Andrew Bonar wrote in his diary and he was a saintly man - this day 20 years ago I preached for the first time as an ordained minister. It is amazing that the Lord has spared me and used me at all. Yet, envy is my hurt and today I have been seeking grace to rejoice, in the usefulness of others. Lord, give me more and more. More and more to the brethren who I have despised.

The note in the diary had been written because this good man had been jealous of ministers who seemingly had been more successful than himself.

Envy is a sin of the eye, the ears, and the tongue. We find that Lord Byron first appeared an anonymous reviewer as his poems first appeared. An anonymous reviewer declared and praised him by saying that this is the product of a genius. Sir Walter Scott could no longer be considered the leading poet of his day. Afterwards it was discovered that the reviewer was Sir Walter Scott himself. And Scott

frankly said, I appreciate Byran's amazing powers. He was putting a spoke in Byran's wheel.

John, The Baptist, is a great example of how to conquer this monster. On the banks of Jordan he had been preaching to big crowds. He was an idol. But Jesus came along and his popularity began to wane. Now he could have been jealous, and he could have had envy, but John, The Baptist, solved it by saying "He must increase but I must decrease".

III. Covetousness.

We turn next to the 28th verse and we read where they lifted up Joseph out of the pit. And they sold him for 20 pieces of silver. This was something you can see jealousy led to envy, envy led to covetousness, and one sin was digging a little deeper with each passing experience. And they began to covet what somebody else has. They began to covet what did not belong to them. And they began to covet Joseph's good name and his position with his Father. And therefore, it led them to cast him forth from the pit, and sell him as a slave. And this covetousness will lead to other sins because in the 31st Verse, they took his coat, killed the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood, and then they told the Father that this is what they found. Thinking that the father would consider he had been destroyed by a wild beast.

Here was a young man with a good reputation and sold for the price of a common slave. And this man was only carrying out what his father had instructed him to do.

I have not time to give you the contrast here but you will remember that Jesus who was carrying out his Father's will was sold for 30 pieces of silver and yet God continued to prosper him.

One of the commandments for this sin, though shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Though shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, or his maid servant. Nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's. Ex. 20:17.

I might state in the next place that no one is immune from the disease of covetousness. Jer. 6:13. Far from the least of them, even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness. And from the Prophet even unto the Priest, every one dealeth falsely. This monster gets into the hearts of people in high places and in low places.

Even in the midst of faithful church going Christian people there can be self-centered craving and greed.

Ez. 33:31. And they came unto thee as the people cometh. And they sit before thee as my people. And they hear thy word but they will not do then, for with their mouth they show much love but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

The spirit of covetousness results in actions of selfishness and cruelty. This is why these men were willing to sell their brother as a slave.

They covet fields and they take them by violence. And houses, and take them away. So they oppress a man and his house even a man and his heritage.

Covetousness blinds the soul to the real values of life. And the lasting virtues of eternity. These brothers could not see that Joseph was going to bless the entire nation. They were blind to his type of living.

Luke 12:15 - Take heed and the ware of covetousness for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Covetousness always crowds God off the heart's throne. And puts up some material idol. We are challenged to mortify the members which are upon this earth - uncleanness, and inordinate affection, evil, and covetousness which is idolatry. Col. 3:5.

Perhaps when we see how hideous covetousness really is, we will not be willing to encourage it and to hold it, and to keep it in our hearts.

Now we might reconstruct this by saying that in jealousy there may be good and bad because God was a jealous God -- he was wed to Israel. And the law of jealousy given in Numbers 5:11-31.

But jealousy leads on to envy and this is a hidden sin. This is a moving thing - lurking in the shadows. It doesn't really come out in the open a lot of times. For example, since his sin was not an abstract principle - it was Delilah. And he was seeking to compromise his spiritual committment by something that was harmless.

Now to David this sin of jealousy and envy was not something that was in the abstract but it was in the form of Batsheba. 2 Sam. 11.

The sin of Peter and his lack of complete committment there was in the form of a servant girl, who was asking him some questions. Now through out the Bible, sin wears many masks. In the case of Judas it was disguised, in the garb of the disciple. And today sin is camouflaged, and people simply do not want to face it. Just like an inset buried underneath the ground into the soft fibers of a tree and eats away at the interior. And the tree soon dies.

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This great monster of selfishness must be replaced by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ becomes the ruler of our self. Now he is the one who can change this and bring

us into his likeness. And I believe that we see that this thing changes when these boys at last have to come before their brother who is in charge of the things in Egypt and when he sells them food and wheat, then their envy, their jealousy, their covetousness is brought out in the open and they discover that here is a man who is providing salvation for them. Be careful of the man you are jealous of, or envious of, or covetous in behalf. Maybe his principles are high and noble. And they are the kind that are going to lead to a new life in Jesus Christ.