

**James 3:13** Who among you is biblically wise with advanced understanding of doctrine? Demonstrate [ IM #25 ] his production by his honorable manner of life of rectitude and probity [ πραΰτης (*praiútēs*) <sup>1</sup> ] characterized by wisdom [ σοφία (*sophía*) ]! (EXT)

**James 3:14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (NASB)

1. James 3:13 presents a positive analysis of a believer who has advanced to the summum bonum of the Christian way of life.
2. Wisdom speaks of the content of the believer's stream of consciousness when he has attained spiritual maturity.
3. James indicates in verse 13 that such a level of spiritual growth is demonstrated by a person who has an "honorable manner of life of a gentleness characterized by wisdom."
4. The word "gentleness" is the Greek noun, πραΰτης (*praiútēs*). It is a good translation; however, the word's impact is revealed by these excerpts that positively contrasts this character trait to the negative ones in verse 14:

**An inwrought grace of the soul, and the expressions of it are primarily toward God (James 3:13). It is a condition of mind and heart which demonstrates gentleness, not in weakness, but in power. It is a balance born in strength of character.<sup>2</sup>**

**The quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance, *gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness* (James 3:13).<sup>3</sup>**

**Gentleness is a mark of the true righteous who are inspired by divine wisdom (James 3:13). It is demonstrated in the whole walk of the righteous and stands in pleasing contrast to bitter zeal and contentiousness, 3:14.<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> "The diacritical mark *diaeresis* (¨) is placed over a vowel to indicate that the vowel is pronounced in a separate syllable" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2014), s.v. "diaeresis.")

<sup>2</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, "πραΰτης," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1210.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Bauer, "πραΰτης," in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 861.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Hauck and Siegfried Schulz, "πραΰτης," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 6:650.



5. Before we get into the exegesis of verse 14, we need to indicate that the translation provided by the King James Bible is pretty much off plumb:

**James 3:14** But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. (KJV)

6. This verse is correctly introduced by the adversative conjunction, **δέ (dé)**, which is used instead of the expected conjunction, **ἀλλά (allá)**, and translated, “but.”
7. James wants to immediately establish a stark contrast between what he has stated before in verse 13.
8. The particle, **allá**, is used to mark opposition or an antithesis to what went before. The particle, **dé**, is “strictly adversative, frequently denoting transition and serving to introduce something else that is quite the contrary;”<sup>5</sup> a “marker of heightened emphasis.”<sup>6</sup>
9. James’s use of **δέ** goes beyond the opposition or antithesis of **ἀλλά**; instead he heightens his opposition by stressing the stark adversity that exists between verse 13 and verse 14.
10. Verse 13 presents the character traits of a believer who has acquired wisdom by which he maintains an honorable manner of life. James 3:14 returns the reader to the way things really are.
11. He immediately identifies those who are his present subjects with the present active indicative of verb, **ἔχω (échō)**, and is correctly translated, “you have.”
12. In this context, the better translation is, “to have and to hold” since this attitude has facilitated behavior patterns that follow paths of least resistance in the soul’s status of reversionism.
13. The behavior patterns are stated next beginning with the phrase, “bitter jealousy.” The adjective “bitter” is, **πικρός (pikrós)**, but is intensified to include such emotions as harshness and cruelty.
14. What it defines is the noun, **ζῆλος (zēlos)**: “envy, jealousy, anger.” The adjective, **pikrós**, which includes “bitter,” is also defined as “cruelty.” It defines **zēlos** whose negative definitions include “envy.”
15. When used negatively, **zēlos** “may degenerate into jealousy which makes war upon the good it sees in another, thus troubling that good and diminishing it.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, “δέ,” 399.

<sup>6</sup> Bauer, “δέ,” 213.

<sup>7</sup> Zodhiates, “ζῆλος,” 699.



16. The NASB and NET Bibles translate ζήλος (*zēlos*) with “jealousy,” the KJV with “envying,” and the NIV opts for “envy.” These two English words are the ones Walter Bauer uses to define ζήλος: “Intense negative feelings over another’s achievements of success, *jealousy*, *envy*. James 3:14, 16.”<sup>8</sup>
17. This indicates that the definition of ζήλος is best defined by these two words plus theological dictionaries addition of the word, “zeal.” Let’s note each:

**Jealous:** exacting exclusive devotion; intolerant of rivalry. Disposed to suspect rivalry in matters of interest and affection. Suspiciously watchful.

**Jealousy:** suspicion, or resentment, arising from mistrust of another. Grudging; envy.

**Envy:** chagrin or discontent at the excellence of good fortune (of another); resentful begrudging. To long after; covet.

**Envious:** feeling or exhibiting envy; actuated by, or proceeding from, envy. Malignant; spiteful. Envious implies a grudging of that which one covets inordinately; jealous, a grudging of that which one regards as peculiarly one’s own.

**Zeal:** ardor in the pursuit of anything; ardent and active interest; enthusiasm. Passion: implies energetic and unflagging activity that manifests one’s devotion to a cause or an end.

**Zealot:** one who is overzealous; a fanatical partisan.

**Zealous:** character and behavior of a zealot; excess of zeal; fanatical devotion.<sup>9</sup>

18. Each of these definitions contribute to a better understanding of ζήλος. Probably the best English word to translate this noun is “envy.”
19. This noun properly describes one of the major mental-attitude sins of the human race. If envy in the soul can be rounded up and cast out, then the spiritual growth of a believer will be enormously improved.
20. Therefore, to best understand James’s emphasis on this issue requires us to do some research by engaging a study of the Doctrine of Envy.

<sup>8</sup> Bauer, “ζήλος,” 427.

<sup>9</sup> Definitions cited from *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. (1953), s.vv. “jealous,” “jealousy,” “envy,” “envious,” “zeal,” “zealot,” “zealous.”



## The Doctrine of Envy

### Introduction:

The major resource for this study is the book, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior*, by Helmut Schoeck, reprinted in English in 1987 by Liberty Fund, Inc., from the original, 1966, German edition.

My purpose in using this resource is because Schoeck's book applies the word to the circumstances by which envy is exercised in the human race. This universal and singular source of the sin of envy and its applications are a constant among those who populate the earth at any given moment of history.

The Bible regards envy as a sin; its Greek root, ζήλος (*zēlos*), and its derivatives are used 17 times in the New Testament. What follows are excerpts from Schoeck with page numbers indicated in parentheses.

### A. Definitions:

'Envy' and 'envious' in modern English are derived from the Latin *invidia* and *invidiosus*, which have the same meanings. The verb 'to envy' corresponds to the Latin *invidere*. (17)

Definitions emphasize the feeling of hostility, spite and ill-will. According to these, envy is present when there is 'mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages.'

The first definition of envy as a verb is more specific: 'To feel displeasure and ill-will at the superiority of (another person) in happiness, success, reputation, or the possession of anything desirable.' It is also called envy when a person withholds a thing from someone else out of spite.

'Jealous' came to include a craving for the affection of someone else. Later it came to designate the fear of losing another person's affections, just like 'jealous' in the modern sense.

But the principle meaning of 'jealousy' remains the passionate endeavor to keep something that is one's own by right. One may postulate a man of jealous disposition whose mind is at rest once he knows he is free of rivals. (18)

Where jealousy acquires undertones of mistrust or hatred, what is meant is generally the suspicion that somebody is seeking to take something from us which we have hitherto enjoyed in tranquility. (18-19)

The jealous man can never normally become a spontaneous, primary aggressor. His hostile behavior begins only when a rival appears on the scene to give him specific reason of anxiety.

