

1 John 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Analysis

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. Following the Cain example, John addresses the reality of worldly hatred toward believers. "Marvel not" (μῆθαυμαζετε) commands believers not to be surprised or shocked. The present imperative indicates a continuous attitude—never be amazed when this occurs. The term "my brethren" (adelphoi mou) expresses affectionate connection while introducing the subject of brotherly relationships.

"If the world hate you" (εἰ μίσει ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος)—the conditional "if" doesn't express doubt but assumes reality ("since the world hates you"). Kosmos (κόσμος) here means the world system organized in rebellion against God, not the physical world or all people. The present tense "hate" indicates ongoing, continuous hatred. This hatred is inevitable and systemic, rooted in the same dynamic that motivated Cain's hatred—the righteous life exposes and condemns wickedness.

Jesus warned His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). The world hated Christ because His righteous life and truthful teaching condemned its sin. Believers united to Christ share His experience. Rather than being discouraged by opposition, Christians should recognize it as confirmation they belong to Christ. The absence of any worldly opposition might indicate dangerous compromise or cultural Christianity lacking distinctiveness.

Historical Context

The Johannine community experienced persecution from multiple sources. Jewish Christians faced exclusion from synagogues (John 9:22, 16:2). All Christians faced periodic Roman persecution, especially under emperors like Nero (mid-60s AD) and Domitian (late 90s AD). Social ostracism, economic boycotts, and martyrdom were real threats.

The early church's expectation of persecution differed markedly from some modern Western Christianity that expects worldly acceptance. First-century believers understood that following Christ meant bearing a cross, facing opposition, and sometimes dying for faith. This verse provided realistic preparation and theological framework—you're not being treated unjustly when the world hates you; you're sharing Christ's treatment. This is normal Christian experience.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How should the expectation of worldly hatred shape your response when you face opposition for Christian faith or practice?
2. What's the difference between persecution for righteousness's sake and suffering due to your own foolishness or lack of wisdom?
3. If you currently experience no opposition from the world, does this indicate commendable wisdom or concerning compromise?

Interlinear Text

Μὴ θαυμάζετε ἀδελφοί μου, εἰ μισεῖς ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος
not Marvel brethren my if hate you G3588
G3361 G2296 G80 G3450 G1487 G3404 G5209 the world
G2889

Additional Cross-References

John 17:14 (Parallel theme): I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Luke 21:17 (Parallel theme): And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

James 4:4 (Parallel theme): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

2 Timothy 3:12 (Parallel theme): Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Mark 13:13 (Parallel theme): And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 (Parallel theme): If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.