

Mark 10:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John.

Analysis

And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John (ἵρξαντο ἀγανακτεῖν περὶ Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωάννου, ērxanto aganaktein peri Iakōbou kai Iōannou). The verb ἀγανακτεῖν (aganaktein) means "to be indignant, angry, greatly annoyed." The ten didn't respond with spiritual maturity or correction of James and John's error—they became angry because they wanted the same positions for themselves.

Their displeasure reveals that all twelve disciples shared the same worldly ambition—James and John were simply bold enough to voice it. The other ten were angry not because the request was wrong, but because they didn't think of it first. This exposes the pervasive nature of selfish ambition—it infected the entire apostolic band. Mark's honest portrayal of apostolic failure demonstrates Scripture's trustworthiness—he doesn't sanitize the disciples' flaws or create hagiographical portraits, but presents them as deeply flawed men whom Jesus patiently transforms.

Historical Context

Disputes about rank and status were common in first-century Mediterranean culture and religious communities. The Qumran community (Dead Sea Scrolls) had strict hierarchical rankings. Rabbinic literature records disputes among disciples about which students deserved positions of honor near renowned teachers. The disciples' argument reflects this cultural context—they assumed Jesus' kingdom

would mirror earthly structures with positions of graduated authority. Jesus' radical redefinition of greatness as servanthood (10:42-45) challenged this entire cultural framework.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the ten's displeasure reveal that criticizing others' selfish ambition often masks our own desire for the same things?
2. What does this incident teach about how competitive striving for positions and recognition destroys Christian community?
3. When have you been 'displeased' with someone else's advancement, revealing your own hidden ambition for recognition or status?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ δέκα ἤρξαντο ἀγανακτεῖν
And heard G3588 when the ten it they began to be much displeased
G2532 G191 G1176 G756 G23

περὶ Ἰακώβου καὶ Ἰωάννου
with James And John
G4012 G2385 G2532 G2491

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 13:10 (Parallel theme): Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Romans 12:10 (Parallel theme): Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Philippians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

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