

Mark 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

Analysis

James and John, sons of Zebedee, were surnamed 'Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.' This nickname reflects zealous, intense temperament—illustrated when they wanted to call fire on Samaritans (Luke 9:54). The name reveals both positive (passionate zeal) and negative (anger, ambition) traits. Jesus names them prophetically, acknowledging nature while planning to transform it. John eventually becomes 'apostle of love,' demonstrating grace's transforming power.

Historical Context

James and John were Galilean fishermen from prosperous family (employed servants, Mark 1:20). They were inner circle witnessing Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), Gethsemane (Mark 14:33), and Jairus' daughter raising (Mark 5:37). James became first apostolic martyr, executed by Herod Agrippa I around AD 44 (Acts 12:2). John outlived other apostles, writing Gospel, three epistles, and Revelation, dying in Ephesus around AD 100. Their transformation demonstrates sanctification's progressive work.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' acknowledgment of temperament show He accepts you while transforming who you become?
2. What negative traits need Jesus' transforming grace?
3. How does the contrast between nickname and later ministry encourage trust in sanctification?

Interlinear Text

καὶ Ἰακώβου τοῦ τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τοῦ
And James the son the son of Zebedee And John the son
G2532 G2385 G3588 G3588 G2199 G2532 G2491 G3588

ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ ἐπέθηκεν αὐτοῖς ὄνόματα
the brother the son James And he surnamed them G3686
G80 G3588 G2385 G2532 G2007 G846

Βοανεργές ὁ ἐστιν Υἱοὶ Βροντῆς.
Boanerges is The sons of thunder
G993 G3739 G2076 G5207 G1027

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 4:12 (Parallel theme): For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Jeremiah 23:29 (Parallel theme): Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Mark 14:33 (References John): And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

Mark 5:37 (References John): And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

