

The Jealousy Of God

2 Corinthians 11:1-4

This statement of Paul's is very unusual, striking, and somewhat challenging. Of all things that have brought misery upon the human life it is jealousy. There is nothing that has done so much harm in homes, in personal, and in church life, as the ugly, devilish poison of jealousy. This has been true all through history, not only in secular history, for at the beginning of the story of redemption, as you will recall in the Word of God, Cain is jealous of Abel and slays him; the children of Israel are jealous of Joseph and sell him; Saul's jealousy of David results in his trying to murder him.

In the New Testament, to carry the picture through, the disciples become jealous of the man who cast out devils in the name of the Lord, and try to destroy him; the scribes and Pharisees are bitterly jealous of the Lord Jesus Christ and stirred up the emotions of the crowd to crucify Him. Everywhere in the story of God's Book and in the story of human life, you have this fearful, ugly business of jealousy, which is the seed of murder, and which usually has led to it, especially in the case of our Savior Himself. Against this background, therefore, I find these words of the Paul very striking, "...I am jealous over you with godly jealousy..."

I would never have dared to think it possible that God could be jealous, and yet I am reminded that the moment God begins to lay down the pattern of His relationships with human people, He reminds them, "...I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..." And if I might carry the analogy further, in laying down the basis of human relationships by the implication and standard of the Ten Commandments, the Lord not only declared His jealousy but He said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

In other words, it is as if Jehovah in effect says, "I refuse to consider the possibility of a rival, I must be master, I must be supreme. I must be the Lord, total Lord of all, or I will not be Lord at all. I am not going to compete with another for a place in your affection, I am not going to attempt to bargain that you should decide upon a syndicate or by resolution of a committee that you should follow Me. I will be your sovereign, I will be your Master, your God, -or I shall be nothing."

But this is surely the very thing that has wrecked human living, that has broken marriages and wrecked homes, and this ugly business has smashed its way into churches. Jealousy states, "I will have no other friends nor will I allow friends to come into your life, but me." **Is this the thing of which God is responsible?** Oh, no, but at least I have said enough to make you realize that this word "jealousy" needs examination and explanation.

What is the jealousy of God? I will answer that question in the first place by reminding you of the character of God revealed to us in the Bible. And then, I will answer it for you by reminding you of the context from which our verse is taken.

First of all, what does the Bible say about the character of God? It has always been the belief of non-Christian religions that their gods are jealous and must be appeased by sacrifice. But this is not our God. **The Bible reveals that our God is essentially moral and just, essentially pure and holy, and His jealousy, which is the greatest flame that burns in the heart of deity, is the flame of love in action.** His jealousy is a concern for the *purity*, the *holiness*, the *greatness*, and the *glory* of His people. His concern, and you need only to read your Bible and you will see there His purpose to call out a peculiar people unto Himself who will be His witnesses, and whose lives will demonstrate His beauty to the world, is a consuming flame, burning eternally in His heart, the flame of love in action.

No sooner does He lay down the law in the Ten Commandments than He declares His jealousy for His people. His eyes are too

pure to behold iniquity, yet He declares that the whole basis of His people's holiness and happiness is centered in their loyalty to Himself.

Therefore, let me remind you that the ceremonial law of the Jew was finished in Jesus Christ. God made the first sacrifice in the Bible, and God made the last. The first He made in a garden; the last He made on a rugged cross outside Jerusalem; and there the thin trail of blood which has flowed from Genesis all through human history was stopped. **Christ's finished final work was the last complete sacrifice for the salvation of the human race.** But the moral law of God as defined by the Ten Commandments was not put away by Christ. It was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ completely in order that in this day, in civilized "Christianized" lands as well as in the uttermost parts of the earth, there might be a great company of people redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, in whose lives the righteousness of the Lord is fulfilled by the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

God's jealousy, therefore, is a concern for the holiness, integrity, purity of ethics, and Christian standards for His people. Because of this, He will refuse to allow a rival in our *affections for Him*, not because of a selfish greed which wishes us all for His own possession, but simply because He knows that His great purpose for us of *purity and holiness* of life depends on our personal *surrender and submission* to His purpose, and because God would make it known (and we are very slow to believe) that happiness without holiness is impossible.

God is fearful lest His people bestow their affections on something or on some other master, and therefore I say unto you that the jealousy of God stems from tenderness and passion that burns in the heart of God for the welfare of His people.

To put it another way, the jealousy of man is selfish and self-centered. It seeks to take away the rights of others, it is blind to their

happiness and it involves their ruin by leading to confusion, and it cares nothing for anybody else as long as he gets through.

Observe carefully that God is not jealous of you: He is jealous for you, and that is the big difference. If you want proof and demonstration of this in reality, I take you to the cross and ask you to remember that there God, instead of destroying the race that deserted and rebelled against Him, has allowed that very race to rebel against Him in order that through that very act He might win back their love. **That is the jealousy of God!**

Think about that; let it get into your heart and into your soul: God jealous for His people and displaying it. Instead of wiping out of existence those who had deserted Him and treated Him so basely, He allowed them to murder Him on the cross of Calvary that He might win back their hearts. **Glorious life-giving jealousy!**

Does that then throw some light on this passage? I believe it does, for it introduces us in the second place to the *jealousy of Paul*. What an amazing thing that here is a man who says, in writing to a group of Christian people, "...I am jealous over you with godly jealousy..." He says, in effect, "I wish that you could bear with me in my folly; please understand, for this flame that burns in my heart for you and eats up my life, possessing my personality and gripping my soul, is something that has got hold of me until nothing else matters." "...I am jealous over you with godly jealousy."

Elsewhere Paul said, "My little children... I travail together in birth...until Christ be formed in you." Paul is saying, "I am jealous, not of you, but I am jealous for you. I care nothing for anything else, except that those to whom I minister might fulfill God's purpose in their hearts."

Look at verse 3 to see Paul's concern, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his craftiness, so your minds

should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Let me read this verse from the Greek, "But I am apprehensive that, somehow or other, as the serpent by his cunning deceived Eve, your thoughts may be turned aside from single-hearted devotion to Christ." **If there is one thing that will destroy your Christian witness more than anything else, it is divided loyalty!**

Paul says, "...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." What is the "simplicity that is in Christ"? I give it to you in a nutshell: it is a faith that looks to Christ crucified and risen as the only source of salvation and life; not Christ plus the church; not Christ plus baptism; not Christ plus ceremony; not Christ plus works; but Christ: crucified, risen, glorified, coming again!

To the child of God, I plead with you to make Christ first in your life! To the lost person, I plead with you to come to Him for salvation!