

THE JEALOUSY OF GOD

Exodus 20:1-5; 34:12-17

Intro: It should be very interesting to all of us to know that God is not only called in Scripture, “a jealous God,” but that “Jealous” is actually one of His Names. We see the first in Exodus 20, verse 5. (Read Ex. 20:1-6.) We see the second in Exodus 34, verses 14. (Read Ex. 34:12-17.)

We have this same emphasis in the book of Deuteronomy, both at the beginning and again at the end, where Moses, just before his death, was speaking for the last times to the children of Israel.

There are other passages in the OT that speak also of this side of the character of God but we are limited from reading them all because it would take more time than we have tonight. But the one thing that I want you to notice is that God’s jealousy is usually (if not always) mentioned in connection with Israel’s idolatry, or her inclination toward idolatry.

We might think that this is a part of God’s nature that we see in the OT, but not in the NT. But since God is immutable, to say that He was “a jealous God” in OT times means that we must say that He is still a jealous God -- although there is certainly a stronger emphasis on the jealousy of God in the OT than there is in the new. But twice Paul referred to God’s jealousy, and interestingly they both occur in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. Let me read them for you.

The first passage begins with verse 14 of 1 Corinthians 10 and actually continues to the end of the chapter. The word “jealousy” is found in verse 22. (Read 1 Cor. 10:14-33.)

It is generally thought that Paul was referring to Deut.32:21 when he spoke of provoking the Lord to jealousy. That verse says this:

They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

The other NT passage in which we find Paul referring to the jealousy of God is 2 Cor. 11. Beginning with verse 1 we read these words:

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Cor 11:1-4).

If we had the time I would like to read the whole passage because it all has to do with the reason for Paul's jealousy, which, speaking by the Spirit of God, he called it, "godly jealousy." He was speaking as an apostle, and therefore speaking on behalf of God!

Now there are two ideas present in the word jealousy. One is the kind which the husband in Numbers 5 exercised when he felt that his wife had been unfaithful to him. This the dictionary defines as an "unpleasant fear, suspicion, or resentment, arising from mistrust of another." This is the kind of jealousy that we often see among human beings, but this does not fit what God was revealing when He called Himself "a jealous God," or when He said that His Name was "Jealous." God is omniscient and so He never acts on suspicion. He knows all that we do. He knows everywhere we have been. He knows every word that we have spoken. He even knows every thought that we think. So God never acts on the basis of suspicion as though He were trying to find out something which He did not know.

Instead, we turn to another definition of jealousy. The dictionary also gives this. And it is defined as "exactng exclusive devotion, intolerant of rivalry."

Now is this not what the Lord was expressing when He was asked by a lawyer about the greatest commandment in the law? You all remember His answer, I am sure:

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment (Matt. 22: 37-38).

Now if we love the Lord with all of our hearts and souls and minds (and one quotation adds "strength"), then it must mean that the Lord will not

tolerate any competition. The Israelites were not to put any other gods before the true God, nor were they to make any images by which they were seeking to represent the one, true, living God! And He warned Israel that any violation of these commandments would not only result in judgment for the offending person, but it would also result in judgment upon the children to the third and fourth generations. But remember this also: God's promise was just as strong that He would show mercy to all who loved Him and kept His commandments.

When the Devil promised the Lord Jesus all of the kingdoms of the earth if the Lord would fall down and worship the Devil, the Lord responded by quoting Deut. 6:13. We find our Lord's words in Matt. 4:10:

Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

The whole passage in which that verse is found is introduced with these words:

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deut. 6:3-9).

And then Moses warned the people that when they enjoyed all of the blessings of the Lord, they were to beware lest they would forget the Lord and start serving the other gods of the land. This warning was repeated over and over again in the Scriptures, but the children of Israel were continually turning to false gods until the Lord brought judgment on the nation. And this is basically why Israel is in the condition today that she is. God expects that His people love Him uniquely, and without any

rivals.

But now let me ask the question, and seek to answer it in the time remaining, WHY WOULD GOD SUCH DEVOTION FROM HIS PEOPLE?
As we consider the Scriptures, I think that there are several reasons for it.

I. BECAUSE THE LORD LOVES US, HIS PEOPLE, WITH A GREATER LOVE THAN WE CAN POSSIBLY UNDERSTAND.

Cf. Deut. 7:6-8. Cf. also Eph. 2:4-7. The love of God for the redeemed in Israel is the same as His love for the Church. There is only one Savior, and His love for His people in all ages shows no partiality. Cf. John 3:16.

A second reason:

II. BECAUSE THE LORD WANTS US TO LOVE HIM.

That is very clear from the Scriptures we have read, isn't it? He wants us to love Him pre-eminently and exclusively, and the Scriptures are clear that He measures our love by our obedience to His Word. It is when our love begins to grow cold that our obedience begins to suffer, and then so many troubles come into our lives which we should never have.

Reading Deuteronomy again has made me look at my own life to see where I may have become lax in my obedience to the Lord.

A third reason:

III. BECAUSE THE LORD KNOWS HOW EASILY DECEIVED WE ARE, AND HOW INCLINED WE ARE TOWARD SIN.

In spite of the many warnings the Lord gave to Israel about idolatry, they were an idolatrous nation anyway. Their failure to love the Lord with all of their hearts etc., and their lapses into idolatry, were the main reasons for their captivities. How quickly we forget the Lord, and how quickly we forget how much we need to be trusting Him every day. How easy it is for us to neglect the Scriptures, and then to find ourselves involved in sins we never expected that we would commit.

A fourth reason:

IV. BECAUSE IT IS IN THE HEART OF THE LORD TO BLESS US.

There is no question about this. The Lord's warnings were continually accompanied with promises of His blessing. In the manner in which God was dealing with them as a nation, they would have lacked nothing and no enemy could have conquered them if they had only loved the Lord, walked with Him, and made it the aim of their lives to please Him.

On one occasion you will remember how the Lord was grieved over Jerusalem, and He said this:

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,
and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often
would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen
gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.
39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till
ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the
Lord (Matt. 23:37-39).

And our Lord said this just after He had pronounced scathing denunciations against the scribes and Pharisees. How careful we need to be about our relationship and our fellowship with the Lord!

Let me give another reason. There undoubtedly are others, but I must close with this one. Why is it that God chastens us and disciplines us throughout our lives? He doesn't wait until we get into trouble, but He often spares us from sin and the results of sin by the way He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

V. IT IS BECAUSE HE WANTS TO BLESS OUR CHILDREN.

This ought to strike a favorable response in the heart of every parent and every grandparent.

We hear stories continually about the effects that children experience because of their parents sin. I heard of a woman recently who has given herself to drugs and to drinking, and she has a twelve year old son who is already out of control. The mercy of the Lord is promised to the children of those parents who know the Lord, love the Lord, and who keep themselves from idols.

Do we have idols today? Of course we do.

In Col. 3:5-7 Paul wrote these words to the believers at Colosse, but it applies to all of us today who know the Lord. Listen to his words:

5 Mortify your members which are upon the earth; forni-

cation, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil
concupiscence, **and covetousness, which is idolatry.**

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the
children of disobedience.

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived
in them.

The effect of the sins of parents and grandparents is being felt in the lives of their children. We as believers need to hear the Word of God, and we can see evidence all around us that the reason our country is going the way it is going is because we have left the Lord out of our lives. People go crazy if they win a lottery not knowing that their win could easily blind them to their real need and ultimately lead to their eternal damnation.

Concl: God is jealous for our love. And we ought to praise Him daily for all that He does to keep us reminded of how much we need Him. In this world which really has no place for God, let us not be deceived into thinking that we can find happiness and blessing for ourselves and for our families except by loving the Lord, walking day by day in fellowship with Him, and avoiding any and everything that can possibly take the place in our lives which belongs only to the Lord.

(Close with a word to those who do not know the Lord.)