

A JEALOUS GOD

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A SERMON
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“For the LORD, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.”
Exodus 34:14

THE passion of jealousy in man is usually exercised in an evil manner, but it is not in itself necessarily sinful. A man may be zealously cautious of his honor, and suspiciously vigilant over another, without deserving blame. All thoughtful persons will agree that there is such a thing as virtuous jealousy.

Self-love is, no doubt, the usual foundation of human jealousy, and it may be that Shenstone is right in his definition of it as, “The apprehension of superiority”—the fear lest another should by any means supplant us. Yet the word “*jealous*” is so near akin to that noble word “*zealous*,” that I am persuaded it must have something good in it.

Certainly we learn from Scripture that there is such a thing as a godly jealousy. We find the apostle Paul declaring to the Corinthian church, “I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” He had an earnest, cautious, anxious concern for their holiness that the Lord Jesus might be honored in their lives.

Let it be remembered then, that jealousy, like anger, is not evil in itself or it could never be ascribed to God. His jealousy is ever a pure and holy flame. The passion of jealousy possesses an intense force, it fires the whole nature, its coals are juniper, which have a most vehement flame. It resides in the lowest depths of the heart, and takes so firm a hold that it remains most deeply rooted until the exciting cause is removed. It wells up from the inmost recesses of the nature, and like a torrent irresistibly sweeps all before it.

It stops at nothing, for it is cruel as the grave (Song 8:6), it provokes wrath to the utmost, for it is the rage of a man, therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance (Pro 6:34). It overthrows everything in the pursuit of its enemy, for “wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before jealousy?”

For all these reasons jealousy is selected as some faint picture of that tender regard which God has for His own Deity, honor, and supremacy, and the holy indignation which He feels towards those who violate His laws, offend His majesty, or impeach His character.

Not that God is jealous so as to bring Him down to the likeness of men, but that this is the nearest idea we can form of what the Divine Being feels—if it be right to use even that word toward Him—when He beholds His throne occupied by false gods, His dignity insulted, and His glory usurped by others.

We cannot speak of God except by using figures drawn from His works or our own emotions. We ought, however, when we use the images, to caution ourselves and those who listen to us, against the idea that the Infinite mind is really to be compassed and described by any metaphors however lofty or language however weighty.

We might not have ventured to use the word “jealousy” in connection with the Most High, but as we find it so many times in Scripture, let us with solemn awe survey this mysterious display of the divine mind. Methinks I hear the thundering words of Nahum, “God is jealous and the LORD revengeth, the LORD revengeth and is furious, the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.” My soul be humbled before the Lord and tremble at His name.

I. Reverently, let us remember that the LORD IS EXCEEDINGLY JEALOUS OF HIS DEITY.

Our text is coupled with the command—“Thou shalt worship no other God.” When the law was thundered from Sinai, the second commandment received force from the divine jealousy—“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.”

Since He is the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, He cannot endure that any creature of His own hands, or fiction of a creature’s imagination should be thrust into His throne and be made to wear His crown. In Ezekiel we find the false god described as, “the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy.” And the doom on Jerusalem for thus turning from JEHOVAH runs thus, “Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.”

False gods patiently endure the existence of other false gods. Dagon can stand with Bel, and Bel with Ashtaroth—how should stone, and wood, and silver be moved to indignation? But because God is the only living and true God, Dagon must fall before His ark. Bel must be broken and Ashtaroth must be consumed with fire. Thus says the Lord, “Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.” The idols He shall utterly abolish.

My brethren, do you marvel at this? I felt in my own soul, while meditating upon this matter, an intense sympathy with God. Can you put yourselves in God’s place for a moment? Suppose that you had made the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures that inhabit this round globe. How would you feel if those creatures should set up an image of wood, or brass, or gold, and cry, “These are the gods that made us. These things give us life.”?

What—a dead piece of earth set up in rivalry with real Deity! What must be the Lord’s indignation against infatuated rebels when they so far despise Him as to set up a leek, or an onion, or a beetle, or a frog—preferring to worship the fruit of their own gardens, or the vermin of their muddy rivers, rather than acknowledge the God in whose hands their breath is and whose are all their ways!

Oh! it is a marvel that God has not dashed the world to pieces with thunderbolts, when we recollect that even to this day millions of men have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. With what unutterable contempt must the living God look down upon those idols which are the work of man’s hands—“They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.”

God has longsuffering toward men, and He patiently endures this madness of rebellion, but oh! what patience must it be which can restrain the fury of His jealousy, for He is a jealous God and brooks no rival. It was divine jealousy which moved the Lord to bring all His plagues on Egypt. Careful reading will show you that those wonders were all aimed at the gods of Egypt.

The people were tormented by the very things which they had made to be their deities, or else, as in the case of the murrain, their sacred animals were themselves smitten, even as the Lord had threatened—“Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am JEHOVAH.”

Was it not the same with ancient Israel? Why were they routed before their enemies? Why was their land so often invaded? Why did famine follow pestilence and war succeed to famine? Only because “they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.” (Psa 78:58-59).

How was it that at the last the Lord gave up Jerusalem to the flames and bade the Chaldeans carry into captivity the remnant of His people? How was it that He abhorred His heritage and gave up Mount Zion to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles? Did not Jeremiah tell them plainly that because they had walked after other gods and forsaken JEHOVAH, therefore He would cast them out into a land which they knew not?

Brethren, the whole history of the human race is a record of the wars of the Lord against idolatry. The right hand of the Lord has dashed in pieces the enemy and cast the ancient idols to the ground. Behold the heaps of Nineveh! Search for the desolations of Babylon! Look upon the broken temples of Greece! See the ruins of pagan Rome!

Journey where you will, you behold the dilapidated temples of the gods and the ruined empires of their foolish votaries. The moles and the bats have covered with forgetfulness the once famous deities of Chaldea and Assyria. The Lord has made bare His arm and eased Him of His adversaries, for JEHOVAH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

With what indignation, then, must the Lord look down upon that apostate harlot called *the Romish church*, when, in all her sanctuaries, there are pictures and images, relics and shrines, and poor infatuated beings are even taught to bow before a piece of bread. In this country, Popish idolatry is not so barefaced and naked as it is in other lands, but I have seen it, and my soul has been moved with indignation like that of Paul on Mars' Hill, when he saw the city wholly succumbed to idolatry.

I have seen thousands adore the wafer, hundreds bow before the image of the Virgin, scores at prayer before a crucifix, and companies of men and women adoring a rotten bone or a rusty nail, because it is said to be the relic of a saint. It is vain for the Romanist to assert that he worships not the things themselves, but only the Lord through them, for this, the second commandment expressly forbids—and it is upon this point that the Lord calls himself a jealous God.

How full is that cup which Babylon must drink. The day is hastening when the Lord shall avenge Himself upon her, because her iniquities have reached unto heaven, and she has blasphemously exalted her Pope into the throne of the Most High, and thrust her priests into the office of the Lamb. Purge yourselves, purge yourselves of this leaven.

I charge you before God, the Judge of the quick and the dead, if you would not be partakers of her plagues, come out from her more and more, and let your protest be increasingly vehement against this which exalts itself above all that is called God. Let our Protestant churches, which have too great a savor of Popery in them, cleanse themselves of her fornications, lest the Lord visit them with fire and pour the plagues of Babylon upon them.

Renounce, my brethren, every ceremony which has not Scripture for its warrant, and every doctrine which is not established by the plain testimony of the Word of God. Let us, above all, never by any sign, or word, or deed, have any complicity with this communion of devils, this gathering together of the sons of Belial—and since our God is a jealous God, let us not provoke Him by any affinity, gentleness, fellowship, or amity with this Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth.

With what jealousy must the Lord regard the *great mass of the people of this country*, who have another God beside Himself! With what indignation does He look upon many of you who are subject to the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world! To you JEHOVAH is nothing. God is not in all your thoughts. You have no fear of Him before your eyes.

Like the men of Israel, you have set up your idols in *your heart*. Your god is custom, fashion, business, pleasure, ambition, honor. You have made unto yourselves gods of these things. You have said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." You follow after the things which perish, the things of this world which are vanity.

O you sons of men, think not that God is blind. He can perceive the idols in your hearts. He understands what be the secret things that your souls lust after. He searches your heart, He tries your reins—beware lest He find you sacrificing to strange gods—for His anger will smoke against you and His jealousy will be stirred. O you who worship not God, the God of Israel, who give Him not dominion over your whole soul, and live not to His honor, repent you of your idolatry, seek mercy through the blood of Jesus, and provoke not the Lord to jealousy any more.

Even *believers* may be reproved on this subject. God is very jealous of His deity in the hearts of His own people. Mother, what will He say of you, if that darling child occupies a more prominent place in your love than your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Husband, what shall He say to you, and with what

stripes shall He smite you, when your wife reigns as a goddess in your spirit? And wife, you should love your husband—you do well in so doing—but if you exalt him above God, if you make him to have dominion over your conscience and are willing to forsake your Lord to please him—then you have made to yourself another god and God is jealous with you.

Ay, and we may thus provoke Him with the dead as well as with the living. A grief carried to excess, a grief nurtured until it prevents our attention to duty, a grief which makes us murmur and repine against the will of Providence, is sheer rebellion. It has in it the very spirit of idolatry—it will provoke the Lord to anger, and He will surely chasten yet again, until our spirit becomes resigned to His rod.

“Have you not forgiven God yet?” was the language of an old Quaker when he saw a widow, who for years had worn her black dress and was inconsolable in her grief—“Have you not forgiven God yet?” We may weep under bereavements, for Jesus wept, but we must not sorrow so as to provoke the Lord to anger.

We must not act as if our friends were more precious to us than our God. We are permitted to take solace in each other, but when we carry love to idolatry, and put the creature into the Creator’s place, and rebel, and fret, and bitterly repine, then the Lord has a rod in His hand, and He will make us feel its weight, for He is a jealous God.

I fear there are some professors who put their house, their garden, their business, their skill—I know not what—at seasons into the place of God. It were not consistent with the life of godliness for a man to be perpetually an idolater, but even true believers will sometimes be overcome with this sin, and will have to mourn over it.

Brethren, set up no images of jealousy, but like Jacob of old cry to yourselves and to your families, “Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean.” Let me warn those of you who neglect this, that if you be the Lord’s people, you shall soon smart for it and the sooner the better for your own salvation.

While, on the other hand, to those ungodly persons who continue to live for objects other than divine, let me say, you not only smart in this life by bitter disappointments, but you shall also suffer eternal wrath in the life to come.

Come, let me push this matter home upon your consciences. Let me carry this as a point of bayonet. Why, my hearers, there are some of you who never worship God. I know you come up to His house, but then it is only to be seen or to quiet your conscience by having done your duty. How many of you merchants aim only to accumulate a fortune! How many of you tradesmen are living only for your families! How many young men breathe only for pleasure! How many young women exist only for amusement and vanity!

I fear that some among you make your belly your god, and bow down to your own personal charms or comforts. Talk of idolaters! They are here today! If we desire to preach to those who break the first and second commandments, we have no need to go to India or traverse the plains of Africa. They are here.

Unto you who bow not before the Lord, let these words be given and let them ring in your ears—“The LORD whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.” Who shall stand before Him when once He is angry? When His jealousy burns like fire and smokes like a furnace, who shall endure the day of His wrath?

Beware, lest He tear you into pieces and there be none to deliver. Dreadful shall it be for you, if at the last you shall behold an angry God sitting in judgment. Pause now and meditate upon your doom, and imagine you see the Almighty robed in tempest and whirlwind.

*“His throne a seat of dreadful wrath,
Girt with devouring flame;
The Lord appears consuming fire,
And Jealous is His name.”*

God save you for Jesus' sake.

II. The Lord IS JEALOUS OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

He who made heaven and earth has a right to rule His creatures as He wills. The potter has power over the clay to fashion it according to his own good pleasure, and the creatures being made are bound to be obedient to their Lord. He has a right to issue commands, He has done so—they are holy, and just, and wise—men are bound to obey. But alas, they continually revolt against His sovereignty and will not obey Him.

Nay, there be men who deny altogether that He is King of kings, and others who take counsel together saying, "Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us." He that sits in the heavens is moved to jealousy by these sins, and will defend the rights of His crown against all comers, for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

This reminds us of *the Lord's hatred of sin*. Every time we sin, we do as much as say, "I do not acknowledge God to be my sovereign. I will do as I please." Each time we speak an ill-word, we really say, "My tongue is my own, He is not Lord over my lips." Yea, and every time the human heart wanders after evil, and lusts for that which is forbidden, it attempts to dethrone God and to set up the evil one in His place.

The language of sin is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice? I will not have God to reign over me." Sin is a deliberate treason against the majesty of God, an assault upon His crown, an insult offered to His throne. Some sins, especially, have rebellion written on their forehead—presumptuous sins—when a man's conscience has been enlightened, and he knows better, and yet still forsakes the good and follows after evil.

When a man's conscience has been aroused through some judgment, or sickness, or under a faithful ministry—if that man returns, like a dog to his vomit—he has, indeed, insulted the sovereignty of God. But have we not all done this, and are there not some here in particular of whom we once had good hope, but who have turned back again to crooked ways?

Are there not some of you who, Sabbath after Sabbath, get your consciences so quickened that you cannot be easy in sin as others are, and though you may, perhaps, indulge in sin, yet it costs you very dearly, for you know better? Did I not hear of one who sits in these seats often, but is as often on the ale bench? Did I not hear of another who can sing with us the hymns of Zion, but is equally at home with the lascivious music of the drunkard? Do we not know of some who in their business are anything but what they should be, and yet for a show can come up to the house of God?

Oh, sirs, oh, sirs, you do provoke the Lord to jealousy! Take heed, for when He comes out of His resting-place, and takes to Himself His sword and buckler, who are you that you should stand before the dread majesty of His presence! Tremble and be still! Humble yourselves and repent of this your sin.

Surely, if sin attacks the sovereignty of God, *self-righteousness is equally guilty of treason*—for as sin boasts, "I will not keep God's law," self-righteousness exclaims, "I will not be saved in God's way. I will make a new road to heaven. I will not bow before God's grace. I will not accept the atonement which God has worked out in the person of Jesus. I will be my own redeemer. I will enter heaven by my own strength and glorify my own merits."

The Lord is very wroth against self-righteousness. I do not know of anything against which His fury burns more than against this, because this touches Him in a very tender point—it insults the glory and honor of His Son Jesus Christ. Joshua said to the children of Israel, when they promised to keep the law—"Ye cannot serve the LORD, for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; and he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

So I may well say to every self-righteous person, "You cannot keep the law, for God is a jealous God," carefully marking every fault, and just to mark your iniquities. Nor will He forgive your iniquities so long as you attempt to win His favor by works of law. Throw away your self-righteousness, you proud one. Cast it with all other idols to the moles and to the bats, for there is no hope for you so long as you cling to it.

Self-righteousness is in itself the very height and crowning-point of rebellion against God. For a man to say, “Lord, I have not sinned,” is the gathering up, the emphasis, the climax of iniquity, and God’s jealousy is hot against it.

Let me add, dear friends, I feel persuaded that *false doctrine*, inasmuch as it touches God’s sovereignty, is always an object of divine jealousy. Let me indicate especially the doctrines of free-will. I know there are some good men who hold and preach them, but I am persuaded that the Lord must be grieved with their doctrine though He forgives them their sin of ignorance.

Free-will doctrine—what does it? It magnifies man into God. It declares God’s purposes a nullity, since they cannot be carried out unless men are willing. It makes God’s will a waiting servant to the will of man and the whole covenant of grace dependent upon human action. Denying election on the ground of injustice, it holds God to be a debtor to sinners, so that if He gives grace to one He is bound to do so to all.

It teaches that the blood of Christ was shed equally for all men, and since some are lost, this doctrine ascribes the difference to man’s own will—thus making the atonement itself a powerless thing until the will of man gives it efficacy. Those sentiments dilute the Scriptural description of man’s depravity—and by imputing strength to fallen humanity, rob the Spirit of the glory of His effectual calling grace.

This theory says in effect that *it is* of him that wills, and of him that runs, and not of God that shows mercy. Any doctrine, my brethren, which stands in opposition to this truth—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,” provokes God’s jealousy.

I often tremble in this pulpit lest I should utter anything which should oppose the sovereignty of my God. And though you know I am not ashamed to preach the responsibility of man to God—if God be a sovereign, man must be bound to obey Him—on the other hand, I am equally bold to preach that God has a right to do what He wills with His own, that He gives no account of His matters, and none may stay His hand, or say to Him, “What doest thou?”

I believe that the free-will heresy assails the sovereignty of God and mars the glory of His dominion. In all faithfulness, mingled with sorrow, I persuade you who have been deluded by it, to see well to your ways, and receive the truth which sets God on high, and lays the creature in the dust. “The Lord reigneth”—be this our joy. The Lord is our King, let us obey Him and defend to the death the crown rights of the King of kings, for He is a jealous God.

While tarrying upon this subject, I ought also to remark that *all the boastings of ungodly men*, whenever they exalt themselves, seeing that they are a sort of claim to sovereignty, must be very vexatious to God, the Judge of all. When you glory in your own power, you forget that power belongs only unto God, and you provoke His jealousy.

When kings, parliaments, or synods, trespass upon the sacred domains of conscience, and say to men, “Bow down, that we may go over you”—when we make attempts to lord over another man’s judgment, and to make our own opinions supreme, the Lord is moved to jealousy—for He retains the court of conscience for Himself alone to reign in.

Let us humbly bow before the dignity of the Most High and pay our homage at His feet.

*“Glory to th’ eternal King,
Clad in majesty supreme!
Let all heaven His praises sing,
Let all worlds His power proclaim.”*

*“O let my transported soul
Ever on His glories gaze!
Ever yield to His control,
Ever sound His lofty praise!”*

Let us crown Him every day! Let our holy obedience, let our devout lives, let our hearty acquiescence in all His will, let our reverent adoration before the greatness of His majesty, all prove that we acknowledge Him to be King of kings and Lord of lords, lest we provoke a jealous God to anger.

III. THE LORD IS JEALOUS OF HIS GLORY.

God's glory is the result of His nature and acts. He is glorious in His character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that He must be glorious. The actions which flow from His character, the deeds which are the outgoings of His inner nature, these are glorious too. And the Lord is very careful that all flesh should see that He is a good, and gracious, and just God. And He is mindful, too, that His great and mighty acts should not give glory to others, but only to Himself.

How careful, then, should we be when we do anything for God, and God is pleased to accept of our doings, that we never congratulate ourselves. The minister of Christ should disrobe himself of every rag of praise. "You preached well," said a friend to John Bunyan one morning. "You are too late," said honest John, "the devil told me that before I left the pulpit."

The devil often tells God's servants a great many things which they should be sorry to hear. Why, you can hardly be useful in a Sunday school but he will say to you—"How well you have done it!" You can scarcely resist a temptation or set a good example, but he will be whispering to you—"What an excellent person you must be!"

It is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory." Now God is so jealous on this point that, while He will forgive His own servants a thousand things, this is an offense for which He is sure to chasten us. Let a believer once say, "I am," and God will soon make him say, "I am not." Let a Christian begin to boast, "I can do all things," without adding, "through Christ which strengtheneth me," and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust.

Many of the sins of true Christians, I do not doubt, have been the result of their glorifying themselves. Many a man has been permitted by God to stain a noble character and to ruin an admirable reputation, because the character and the reputation had come to be the man's own, instead of being laid, as all our crowns must be laid, at the feet of Christ.

You may build the city, but if you say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded!" you shall be smitten to the earth. The worms which ate Herod when he gave not God the glory are ready for another meal—beware of vain glory!

How careful ought we to be *to walk humbly before the Lord*. The moment we glorify ourselves—since there is room for one glory only in the universe—we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Penitent souls are always accepted, because they are not in God's way. Proud souls are always rejected, because they are in God's way.

Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the Sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man that fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? O you nothingness and vanity, you puny mortal called man—humble yourself and reverence your Great Creator.

Let us see to it *that we never misrepresent God, so as to rob Him of His honor*. If any minister shall preach of God so as to dishonor Him, God will be jealous against that man. I fear that the Lord has heavy wrath against those who lay the damnation of man at God's door, for they dishonor God, and He is very jealous of His name. And those, on the other hand, who ascribe salvation to man must also be heavily beneath God's displeasure, for they take from Him His glory.

Ah, thieves! ah, thieves! will you dare to steal the crown-jewels of the universe! Whither go you, whither bear you the bright pearls which ought to shine upon the brow of Christ? To put them on the brow of man? Stop! stop! for the Lord will not give His glory to another! Give unto the Lord, all you righteous, give unto the Lord, glory and strength. Give unto Him the honor that is due unto His name! Any doctrine which does not give all the honor to God must provoke Him to jealousy.

Be careful, dear friends, that you do not misrepresent God *yourselves*. You who murmur. You who say that God deals hardly with you—you give God an ill-character. When you look so melancholy, worldlings say, “The religion of Jesus is intolerable.” And so you stain the honor of God. Oh, do not do this, for He is a jealous God and He will surely use the rod upon you if you do.

A flash of holy pleasure crosses my mind. I am glad that He is a jealous God. It is enough to make us walk very carefully, but at the same time it should make us very joyful to think that the Lord is very jealous of His own honor. Then, brethren, if we believe in Christ, you and I are safe, because it would dishonor Him if we were not.

For His own name’s sake, and for His faithfulness’ sake, He will never leave one of His people. Since “His honor is engaged to save the meanest of His sheep.” Now, if Christ could trifle with His own honor, if He had no jealousy, you and I might be afraid that He would suffer us to perish, but it never shall be.

It shall be said on earth and sung in heaven at the last, that God has suffered no dishonorable defeats from the hands of either men or devils. “I chose My people,” says the Eternal Father, “and they are Mine now that I make up My jewels.” “I bought My people,” says the Eternal Son, “I became a surety for them before the Most High, and the infernal lion could not rend the meanest of the sheep.”

“I quickened My people,” says the Holy Spirit. “The temptations of hell could not throw them down. Their own corruptions could not overpower them. I have gotten the victory in every one of them, not one of them is lost. They are all brought safely to My right hand.”

Hide yourselves, then, under the banner of JEHOVAH’s jealousy. It is bloody red, I know—its ensign bears a thunderbolt and a flame of fire—but hide yourselves, hide yourselves under it, for what enemy shall reach you there? If it be to God’s glory to save me, I am entrenched behind munitions of stupendous rock.

If it would render God inglorious to let me, a poor sinner, descend into hell—if it would open the mouths of devils and make men say that God is not faithful to His promise, then am I secure, for God’s glory is wrapped up with my salvation, and the one cannot fail because the other cannot be tarnished.

Beloved, let us mind that we are very jealous of God’s glory ourselves since He is jealous of it. Let us say with Elijah—“I am very jealous for the LORD God of hosts.” May our lives, and conduct, and conversation prove that we are jealous of our hearts lest they should once depart from Him. And may we smite with stern and unrelenting hand every sin and every thought of pride that might touch the glory of our gracious God—living to Him as living before a jealous God.

IV. In the highest sense, THE LORD IS JEALOUS OVER HIS OWN PEOPLE.

Let me only hint that human jealousy, although it will exercise itself over man’s reputation, rights, and honor, has one particularly tender place—jealousy guards, like an armed man, *the marriage covenant*. A suspicion here is horrible. Even good old Jacob, when he came to die, could not look upon his son Reuben without remembering his offense. “He went up to my couch,” said the old man—and as if the remembrance were too painful for him, he hurried on from Reuben to the next.

The Lord has been graciously pleased to say of His people, “I am married unto you.” The covenant of grace is a marriage-covenant and Christ’s church has become His spouse. It is here that God’s jealousy is peculiarly liable to take fire. Men cannot be God’s favorites without being the subjects of His watchfulness and jealousy—that which might be looked over in another, will be chastened in a member of Christ. As a husband is jealous of his honor, so is the Lord Jesus much concerned for the purity of His church.

The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I now speak, *is very jealous of your love*, O believer. Did He not choose you? He cannot bear that you should choose another. Did He not buy you with His own blood? He cannot endure that you should think you are your own or that you belong to this world. He loved you with such a love that He could not stay in heaven without you. He would sooner die than that you should perish.

He stripped Himself to nakedness that He might clothe you with beauty. He bowed His face to shame and spitting that He might lift you up to honor and glory, and He cannot endure that you should love the world and the things of the world. His love is strong as death towards you and therefore will be cruel as the grave.

He will be as a cruel one towards you if you do not love Him with a perfect heart. He will take away that husband. He will smite that child. He will bring you from riches to poverty, from health to sickness, even to the gates of the grave, because He loves you so much that He cannot endure that anything should stand between your heart's love and Him. Be careful, Christians, you that are married to Christ—remember, you are married to a jealous Husband.

He is very jealous *of your trust*. He will not permit you to trust in an arm of flesh. He will not endure that you should hew out broken cisterns, when the overflowing fountain is always free to you. When we come up from the wilderness leaning upon our Beloved, then is our Beloved glad, but when we go down to the wilderness leaning on some other arm, when we trust in our own wisdom or the wisdom of a friend—worst of all, when we trust in any works of our own—He is angry and will smite us with heavy blows that He may bring us to Himself.

He is also very jealous *of our company*. It were well if a Christian could see nothing but Christ. When the wife of a Persian noble had been invited to the coronation of Darius, the question was asked of her by her husband—“Did you not think the king a most beautiful man?” and her answer was—“I cared not to look at the king. My eyes are for my husband only, for my heart is his.” The Christian should say the same.

There is nothing beneath the spacious arch of heaven comparable to Christ—there should be no one with whom we converse so much as with Jesus. To abide in Him only—this is true love. But to commune with the world, to find solace in our comforts, to be loving this evil world—this is vexing to our jealous Lord.

Do you not believe that nine out of ten of the troubles and pains of believers are the result of their love to some other person than Christ? Nail me to Your cross, my bleeding Savior! Put Your thorn-crown upon my head to be a hedge to keep my thoughts within its bound! O for a fire to burn up all my wandering loves. O for a seal to stamp the name of my Beloved indelibly upon my heart! O love divine, expel from me all carnal worldly loves, and fill me with Yourself!

Dear friends, let this jealousy which should keep us near to Christ *be also a comfort to us*, for if we be married to Christ, and He be jealous of us, depend upon it—this jealous Husband will let none touch His spouse. Joel tells us that the Lord is jealous for His land, and Zechariah utters the word of the Lord, “I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy,” and then He declares that He will punish the heathen.

And will He not avenge His own elect who cry unto Him day and night? There is not a hard word spoken but the Lord shall avenge it! There is not a single deed done against us, but the strong hand of Him who once died but now lives for us, shall take terrible vengeance upon all His adversaries.

I am not afraid for the church of God! I tremble not for the cause of God! Our jealous Husband will never let His church be in danger, and if any smite her, He will give them double for every blow. The gates of hell shall not prevail against His church, but she shall prevail against the gates of hell.

Her jealous Husband shall roll away her shame. Her reproach shall be forgotten. Her glory shall be fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners—for He that is jealous of Himself is jealous for her fair fame.

The subject is large and deep. Let us prove that we understand it, by henceforth walking very carefully. And if any say, “Why are you so precise?” let this be our answer—“I serve a jealous God.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.