

Whose name is Jealous

Knowing God

By Pastor James Mansfield

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Exodus 34:14

Preached on: Sunday, May 5, 2013

Bethel Baptist Chapel

Church Street

Billingham, Lincolnshire, UK

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/770171

One of the most fulfilling things in a relationship is to know that someone cares. It might be in a marital relationship, brother/sister or parent/child. But to know that someone cares within that relationship and that that is expressed perhaps by things that are done. However if another party, a third party arises within that relationship, then there are different feelings that arise. Particularly we think of jealousy. Someone is taking the affection that you should be getting in that relationship.

Jealousy can also arise when we see something that another person possesses and we want it, it's closely aligned with covetousness. In the passage that we read this morning from Exodus, chapter 34, we find among the names and titles that God was telling Moses about himself, we find there is one there that he says that God's name is Jealous. Verse 14 is the one I leave with you, "For thou shalt worship no other God, for the Lord," that is Jehovah, "for the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God."

That's interesting isn't it. He's not just saying that one of the attributes of God is jealousy. He is saying his name is Jealous. God is underlying that, that is a part of who God is. And it's a challenging verse because we usually think of jealousy in negative terms. It is not right, usually, to be jealous because someone has something better than us.

It's also a verse of challenge because we say, "How can a holy and perfect and loving God be jealous?" and yet he says very clearly, "My name is Jealous." Well, we're looking at knowing God on Lord's day mornings and here we find something again that God has decided to reveal about Himself.

It's a great verse for seeing God's view of his love for his people, to see the very special and demonstrative way in which God expresses his love to us. And his view of idolatry when there are those that would give their love that is due unto God but give it to others. God is jealous of that love.

So, let's have a look at these things this morning.

1 **What does it mean for God to be jealous?**

You say, "Surely, we're not to be jealous." We teach the children not to be jealous, we are not meant to think like that." It may be some times we know that as Christians that

we're in a situation and someone tells us about something they've bought, something they've got, the situation they're in, and almost instantly within our hearts there's something that rises that we think, "Oh, I want that. Why isn't that me?" and maybe we have to just suppress that and we think, "Oh, where did that come from? That's not how I should think." We very quickly put it back to bed again.

Jealousy is a negative thing that can eat away at us if we let it. You say, "How can God be like that?" We associate jealousy with self-love, that this is about me, we live in a "me" culture, don't we? People see and think, "That should be me, that should be mine." Shakespeare called it "the green eyed monster."

Now it is right that we should not exhibit that type of jealousy. Indeed, that type of jealousy, "Give that to me, I want what you've got, you've got something bigger, I want that bigger," is, of course, the breaking of the tenth commandment amongst other things. Proverbs 6:34 says, "Jealousy is the rage of a man. Therefore, he will not spare in the day of vengeance." And such is the heart of man. It is a part of our old nature to have that desire that rises up very quickly in the form of jealousy and sadly we can be familiar with that.

Many a crime has been caused through jealousy. Murder has been committed through jealousy. Theft has been committed through jealousy. But, there is such a thing as Godly jealousy. In other words, there is a sinful jealousy that is misplaced but there is a righteous jealousy that is well placed.

The root word for jealousy here particularly in the Old Testament means to become intensely red, it means the rising of an emotion. And I think that's something we actually do feel sometimes, to say, when we find ourselves in a situation and instantly there is a rising within us of something, almost a measure of resentment that we have to put down very quickly and that's what the word means.

In both the Old and the New Testament the root words that have been used have sometimes been translated similarly for jealous and zealous. They are very, very similar words. And it was interesting in that hymn that we've just sung, verse 5 says, "A cheerful confidence I feel," well I hope you did as you sung it, "My well-placed hopes with joy I see, My bosom glows with heavenly zeal." That word "zeal" we find in scripture is similar and is in some cases identical to being jealous. My bosom glows with a heavenly jealousy that that which we want is good and right and the jealousy that which we want is to worship him who died for me.

And in the Old Testament we see particularly this view and the context of our passage is God's love and jealousy for the nation of Israel. In Psalm 135 he calls them his peculiar or special treasure. In the New Testament we've got similar phraseology in Peter where he talks about the church, as being a peculiar people, a chosen nation, a special people.

And in Hosea, God refers to Israel there as his espoused, his wife. Chapter 2 verse 19, "I will betroth thee unto me forever." That was the extent of God's love and commitment to

the people of God. So there are two ways that God describes the nation of Israel, two ways in which we can begin to understand how he is jealous. He set his love on them and he expects that love to be reciprocated, he expects that love to be received. What he has a right not to see is them giving their love to someone else, and that causes a righteous jealousy.

He has a right to be angry if their love is stolen or as they did so often as a nation, they gave their worship, they gave their love, they gave their passion to pagan gods. Their love should've been going to God and God has a right jealousy of that situation.

In chapter 34 of Exodus that we've read, the Lord has just been giving Moses the commandments for the second time. You notice that Moses had to get the tablets this time, God wasn't providing them and the Lord says there, "Bring these tablets, I will write on the tablets, you bring them, you hew them out and I'll write upon these tablets the words that were on the first tablets. And he says which thou breakest. You know, I love these little extra phrases we see in scripture. The Lord wanted to point out to Moses, you broke the last ones, now you bring stones this time and by grace I will write on them again. And so that's what had to happen.

And the Lord is giving these commandments and God's righteous jealousy relates particularly here to the second commandment, that they were to have no other gods, that no one else was to compete with their affections. Remember, this is the second giving of the commandments. On the first occasion, Moses was so incensed by the idolatry that he saw when he came down that he broke those tablets of stone. And God here is underlining that which was vital in their relationship with him, that there would be for them, they would know spiritual and material prosperity. But God was also underlining the fact that they'd just broken this commandment and despite their sin, he was jealous over them.

So God does have a righteous jealousy over those that would replace his affections. Is that not a challenge to us immediately that God has a jealousy over us. Where are our affections this morning? "You say, it is a bit easier this morning, we're in God's house, it's the Lord's day and we've been singing some hymns and you're talking to us and we just read the passage and our hearts are going out to the Lord." But what about tomorrow when we're busy doing other stuff. Where are our priorities? Do we let other things really take such chunks out of our time, out of our devotions, out of our passions that ought to be going to the Lord. Because if we do, God is jealous of that. Our affection belongs to the Lord.

The Lord had done so much for Israel, he had brought them out of bondage, he'd redeemed them by blood, he'd brought them out by miracles. And it was by his grace he was giving them the commandments that they should know the standard of God and ultimately that they should be pointed to one who was yet to come in all the sacrifices. The sacrifices were tied in with the commandments and all pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, they were given the gospel, in that sense, the same as we are. And that it is by

grace that God was giving it to them. And yet they'd poured out their love on the worship of a dead lump of gold that was shaped like a calf. You see why God was jealous.

And God the Holy Spirit gives us instruction. In 1 Corinthians when we turn to the New Testament, Paul says there, "I'm jealous over you." And that was a righteous jealousy. Paul was jealous over the church at Corinth, he says, but with a godly jealousy. You see that, there is a difference. "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy for I have espoused you to one husband." In other words, the church was there and he ministered to them and he was writing to them, he wanted them to be pure because he says, "I've espoused you to one husband the Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. Paul's passion was that this church that they might be pure, they might rectify things that were wrong, that was Paul's ministry, he might be clear before God that this people might be right before God, they might be ready for that marriage supper of the Lamb.

Paul is not wanting anything unholy to enter their lives. And he was trying to watch over them and he was jealous of anyone that would come in and there were people coming in and there were things that were coming in and Paul was saying, "No don't give your affection to these." It's a good thing he had a true pastor's heart.

And so we see here in Exodus 34, God is describing himself as jealous. His jealousy is pure and it underlines his great love for his people. It is not something that God turns on and turns off. It isn't something that just rises like it does in us. Yes, there are situations where God would intensify his jealousy if you like. But by describing himself in saying my name is Jealous, it's something that God is. It's a part of what God is. He can be nothing else but jealous.

2 Things God jealous of.

This is important isn't it? If God is jealous then I need to know that because didn't I ought to be jealous of the same things? I need to cherish these things and I need to make sure in these things and there'll be more than I can mention, in these things that no one else takes affection for these but God gets all the praise and the glory.

So what is God jealous of? Let me just give you a few things.

He is jealous of his divinity and what we might say his uniqueness.

The fact that he's the only true and living God. Let me take you back to the second commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me, thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or likeness of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." You see God is jealous of his divinity. I am the Lord thy God, I am the only true and living God, there is no other god. It's not a case of lining all the gods up and, "Oh look our god's higher than all the others." There *are* no other gods.

God gave clear instruction and remember these commandments were written by the very finger of God in stone. And God declares himself in this commandment that he is the jealous God and he will have no one stealing his place of authority. There is an anger mixed in with that jealousy and a wrath mixed in with that when people turn to idols and any religion other than the biblical Christianity that we see within holy scripture, then God is rightly angry.

Look at the world today, God set his love upon this world. In creation, in mercy, in provision, in even giving his only begotten son. And what does God find as he looks across the world today? He finds people going off to gods of their own making. He finds people not wanting to worship him at all. And when people point this out and they say, "No, this is the one true God, not this god" that they're put in prison. It's as simple as that isn't it? We know that in North Korea you only need to have a Bible and you're imprisoned. In Pakistan at the moment which is supposed to be a reasonably mature land you just say the wrong thing and you'll end up in prison. And there are many places like that. And, of course, in our own land there are those who want to silence statements to the uniqueness and the singularity and the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And God is jealous of those things. He alone has poured his love upon the world, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." And God is rightly jealous when he sees men and women's passion and love just going on themselves and upon false gods.

But he's also jealous of his glory.

Isaiah 42, verse 8, "I am the Lord that is my name and my glory will I not give to another. Neither my praise to graven images." So he's still talking about idols. He won't give his glory to another. We have to be very careful don't we?

A man approached John Bunyon after hearing a sermon and he said, "You preached very well tonight, Mr. Bunyon." "Too late," replied John Bunyon, "the devil's already told me that." You see what a simple thing like that, you can preach in a pulpit here and you know when I finish preaching just bow your head at the end and you know you have to be careful what you say to the Lord. If you felt the sermon went well and perhaps that's not very often you have to be careful just to say, "Lord, thanks for helping me there." It's your word. The preacher has to diminish and God is to be exalted. And sometimes you bow your head at the end of a sermon and you think, "Lord I didn't really get very far there, didn't seem to get over what I wanted to do there." And you're really asking the Lord for forgiveness. Sometimes when people say, "That was a good sermon," you have to quickly put that down and hope that those of us who are preachers are not too rude but we have to be very careful. They say if you pat a preacher on the back there is something about him that means his head gets bigger. That's just a little example isn't it? We all have to be careful.

In all things we must give the praise and glory to God alone. And what a privilege it is that you can do that if you're a Christian. Psalmist says, "Whosoever offereth praise glorifies me says the Lord." Isn't that a wonderful thing? God in all his glory and we've

been saying a lot about the glory of God and in creation and the trinity and the fact that he's omnipresent and omniscient and all of those great things about God and yet you as a little humble person can come along here and you can glorify God. It's a wonderful thing praising him.

We have a responsibility to keep our hearts right before the Lord. We find that the children of Israel here they didn't keep their testimonies because it says in Psalm 78, "They did not set their heart aright." And that's what moved God to jealousy, their heart was not right. And we have to ensure that our hearts are right before God. One has said, "There's only room for one glory in the universe and that's the glory of God." We have to be careful not to raise ourselves above our Creator and rob him of his glory.

Let me move on.

God is jealous of his gospel.

He is jealous of the content of the gospel and if someone comes along and pollutes it by adding to it or takes something out God is jealous.

Now, to be fair, we can preach as preachers on repentance or we can preach on faith, we can preach on the cross, we can preach on different aspects of the gospel but it doesn't necessarily mean that we've left other things out, you just can't preach on every bit of the gospel in every sermon. But in the round we have to be careful that we do include everything in the gospel, that we're not deliberately missing something out, that is changing the gospel.

It's not difficult to understand God's jealousy in that he has given us all that is needed for the forgiveness of our sins and then when as sinners we want to do something different. Take it from God's view for a moment. He made the heavens and the earth and he made every creature therein and how would we feel then if the creatures we had made if we'd put ourselves in the mind of God for a moment, if those creatures that we'd made then set out their own gods and said, "We don't want to worship you. In fact we don't even believe you're there."

God sent his son that men might live. From the gospel call it is, repent and believe but men want to go some other way. God is jealous. God is jealous concerning it's proclamation and when it's proclaimed in some places people will mock in other places people will take you off to prison. We pray for such. I was reading this morning of four men in India that were taken to prison. They were leaders in a church, one of them was a pastor. Three were imprisoned attacked, and the fourth one went to report it to the police station, to report it as a crime and instead of that, he was arrested and he was put in prison with the other three.

But the wonderful thing was that whilst they were in prison, they were able to lead another man to Christ. That's what we mean when God doesn't do these things in a haphazard way. He allowed those dear men to go through perhaps some very difficult

situations. Three of them were beaten and they ended up in prison but there they reached a man with the gospel. That was God's way of reaching that man with the gospel. You can imagine the thankfulness of that man to these men for having gone through what they did, but thankful to the Lord for all of that that had gone on that he might hear the gospel. Praise God, that God's word is not bound by such things.

3 God is jealous for his people.

Here we think particularly of the picture of marriage. Think of Richard and Rachel coming together next Saturday and if very quickly there was a third party coming into that relationship, then Richard and Rachel would be very jealous and that's a natural thing. It's a right thing. When the Lord looks to us as the bride of Christ there is a natural jealousy if our affections are going elsewhere, if there is someone or something trying to steal our affections.

We've been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. So when others seek to take us away it is a big thing. It's a big thing when we give our time and attention to something that is not the leading of God the Holy Spirit, if we are making, in that sense, a situation whereby God can be jealous.

Remember perhaps in an earlier sermon when we were looking at creation, we asked the question, "Why did God create?" and we had a number of answers to that question and one of the answers was that God created and created humanity in particular, that one day there would be a bride for Christ. Can you now begin to see, these things were laid down before time began that there should be a redeemed people, that a redeemed people should be a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. Then if someone else comes in and starts disturbing, we know certainly the devil has done that. If here we are being prepared to be a bride for Christ and if there's someone else who comes in and tries to steal our affections, this is an eternal work that's being disturbed and God has every right to be jealous for our affections.

He chose you, he loved you, gave himself for you and loves with a such a tender love. But you know my friends, the thoughts of such an attribute that God is jealous of any that would steal my love, should encourage us to see how God guards us and guards such love.

We're very familiar, aren't we, for the words from Romans chapter 8 in our study, we haven't yet got to those words yet but towards the end of the chapter he says there, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" You see, he's going to say, "None can separate us." And they can't, but there are those there that will try to.

Who will separate us? Through tribulation or distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, perils, sword. As it is written, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we're accounted as sheep for the slaughter." He says, "Nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors." He's persuaded that neither death nor life, angels, principalities,

powers, things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature should be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It's as if God whose name is Jealousy stands guard o'er our souls to protect us. To keep his love alone to us. That no other true love can really penetrate. We might be affected from time-to-time by the enemy of our souls, we may stray, we begin to gaze at another, as it were, but God whose name is Jealous stands guard of our souls and he will not let another permanently steal that love that he has for us. He would not let any prize us away from him who are truly his. We cannot be separated from the love of God that is in Christ.

Now, I want to spend the closing moments in application.

We've seen that God is rightly jealous, we've seen that he's particularly jealous of his divinity, his uniqueness, his glory, his gospel and then we've just seen particularly, that he's jealous of his people.

My friends, let's just think what we're going to do with this. We should be jealous of what God is jealous. We should be jealous of the gospel. We should be careful with it and when we see others messing about with it, it should cause within us a righteous jealousy to rise that we might say, "No, that's wrong!" We might be jealous of his glory that when we see glory being given to another that we very quickly put that down in our souls and in our lives. Because that's not what God wants.

Being jealous of his word, his gospel, his glory all that bears his name, it can be costly. Sometimes we're not willing to pay the price. There was a time when Rome was particularly strong, there was a man called Lycinius, some of you might have heard this little story before, but he was in charge of the eastern part of the Roman empire. And things weren't going too well and he wanted a demonstration of his men's loyalty. And as was often done in those days, it was to be a sacrifice. And so he demanded that they all come and sacrifice to pagan gods. There was a group of 40 Christian soldiers from Cappadocia and they said with respect, "We are Christians, we can't do that." So they were put under guard for a number of weeks and their captain pleaded with them, "It's simple thing you don't have to change your religion, just come and offer the sacrifice." "We can't do that." They were jealous for the name of their God.

And on a particular day, they were stripped of their clothes and were marched into a freezing lake. On the shore, there was built a little hut and in that was warm water. They could come out of the water at any time and have a warm in the hut as long as they were willing to make sacrifice. That's all they had to do. As those 40 men were in the water and they sang. They sang, I haven't got all the words but the first little bit that they sang, they sang, "Forty good soldiers of Christ, we shall not depart from thee as long as thou givest us life." It is very easy to sacrifice, no one's going to know are they, only a few that see? We can get back to our jobs.

As midnight approached their song grew weaker. One man crawled out of the water and into the warmth of that bathing hut. They sang, "Thirty-nine good soldiers." And that man didn't stay in the hut long and he came out he was overcome by the heat and he died on the beach. Seeing all this, the jailer was overcome by all that he'd seen, not just then but what he'd known of the men earlier. He wrenched off his uniform and he went into the water to join the men. They sang, "Forty good soldiers."

They were all dead the next day. As they brought the bodies ashore, the jailer's body caught the eye of captain and he said, "What is he doing in there?" And the other men said, "Ever since those Christians came into his care he has been a changed man." You see, it wasn't just the witness in the water, it was the witness beforehand of great men who were what? Who were jealous for God. What they did in just going about their lives, had a quiet and profound effect upon this man.

And my friends, though we may not always realize it when we go about our business in a proper and decent and biblical way, when we say what we can, when we take our opportunities, people do see us. If we behave as those who are jealous for God, which means we don't ignore things when they're not right but we just point out very graciously what should be the case. And then when we find we come to perhaps a crisis in our lives, people are still watching us. And it was in the crisis that these men went through that God moved in the heart of this man on the shore and brought him to Christ.

Oh, my friends, as we promote and proclaim the gospel, if we love one another, we are following in the pattern of Jesus Christ. For there was one who died on the cross, wasn't there? And it was one right next to him, wasn't it, who said, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

My friends, let us make sure that we're not provoking God to jealousy by robbing him of time and talent. In Malachi, there were the Jews there, God said to them, "You robbed me." And they said, "Well, where were we robbing you? We come to worship you and bring our sacrifices, we're not robbing you, we put our money in the box and whatever else." And God said, "Yes you're bringing me the tatty lamb. Bringing me the lamb you say well we can't eat that, it's not a lot of good. Take that as an offering." In other words, they were giving God the rough end of the day, they were giving God the stuff they didn't want. It was an attitude of mind, wasn't it?

We were reading recently in Psalm 139 where we read, "Search me, O God and know me and see if there be any wicked way in me." We could say, "But I go to chapel, I put the money in the offering and I do this and I do the other." No, we want the Lord to shine upon us. We want to be people who are keen for the Lord, that we're not provoking God to jealousy because actually we're not loving him with all our hearts as we should.

You've been bought with a price and the Lord demands that you're his. He's paid for us, we're his. Spurgeon said, "Some might say that that's a high demand." Why do we need to be so exacting? He said, "Let this be our answer. I serve a jealous God, I serve a jealous God."

Let's ensure also that we are zealous for the Lord. I said that jealous and zealous were often the same root word in scripture. To be truly zealous for God is to be enthusiastic in the things of God. It's almost like not just being at every meeting but wanting to be at an extra meeting, it's being keen for the things of God, keen for God himself. J. C. Ryle says, "Zeal is a burning desire to please God from a new nature that's within. If it's not coming out it's because it's not within." A zealous Christian is a person of one thing, "the desire to please God." There were those in scripture that Paul had to write about he said they were zealous but not according to knowledge. In other words, they were keen, they were doing this, that or whatever, but they hadn't a clue why or what they were doing.

We're to be keen, we're to be zealous but according to the knowledge that we have in scripture.

And then, my friends, we should be comforted. You know, this jealousy should keep us near the one who loves us. If we are espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ, he is jealous for us, he will let none touch us and he will keep us and he will want to have fellowship with us. And it should be a great comfort to us.

And then finally, if there are any who know not the Lord then you want to seek the Lord that he might be jealous for you, that you might seek his face to be a child of God, that you might come within his care. For he will care for us for all eternity.

If your not a Christian this morning, then where is our affection going? It's going somewhere. Who else can save? Who else can forgive sin? Who else can deliver us from judgment? Who else can love us with an everlasting love? Only our jealous God.

Well, may the Lord so help us. For the Lord whose name is Jealous is a jealous God. Amen.