

God is Jealous

Today, as we continue our study on the character of God we are looking at the truth that God is jealous. Something about God calling Himself a jealous God sounds strange to our ears doesn't it? It feels right to say that God is a God of love, a God who is holy, unchanging, wise, just, all-powerful, . . . but jealous? Isn't jealousy a bad thing? Part of what makes us struggle here is that we tend to think of jealousy in only negative terms because in humans it is almost always a negative thing. But in God it is a worthy trait. J.I. Packer says that God's jealousy is His "praiseworthy zeal to preserve something supremely precious" (*Knowing God*, 153). God is zealous to preserve His honor and His place as the unrivaled object of our worship and affection.

Read Joshua 24:14-28

Note: Joshua served as Moses' successor. Under His godly leadership, Israel entered the Promised Land, conquered the nations dwelling there and then apportioned and settled the land. Joshua 24 contains his final words to the nation when he was 110 (24:29).

1. What is the heart of what Joshua is calling the people to at the end of his life?
2. How does Joshua's challenge connect back to what God commanded Israel many years before in the giving of the first two commandments in Exodus 20:2-6?
3. What do the people decide? And what reasons do they give for what they decide (24:17-18)?
4. In Joshua 24:19-20, Joshua challenges the people to truly count the cost of what they are committing to. He doesn't want them to speak carelessly. In doing so, what aspects of God's character does he point to?
5. Seeing the peoples' resolve to serve only the True God, Joshua commands them to incline their hearts to the Lord (24:23). What do you think this means?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

6. How does Paul's jealousy for the Corinthians mirror God's jealousy for His people as expressed in such passages as Exodus 34:14-15?
7. Paul uses the language of marriage to describe the nature of our relationship with God (we are betrothed to one husband; we are to be a pure virgin). How does the marriage relationship help us understand the nature of what God jealously seeks from us?

Brian said:

God is a jealous God. It is His nature to always zealously seek His honor and to be the only object of our worship. As we think about this truth about God it certainly begs the question: Are there any idols in your life? Is there anything that is occupying the place in your heart where only God should dwell? Is there anything that is drawing you away from your pure devotion to Christ?

8. Do you sense that you have any idols in your life? Is there anything that is drawing you away from pure devotion to Christ?

Brian said:

If you refuse to turn from that idol, the example of Israel should be a strong warning in your life. God in His jealousy will use severe means to discipline us that we might worship Him alone. Someone has said that we will seek God out of priority or pain. If you don't choose to place God as the object of your worship and affection, because He loves you so much and because He is jealous to occupy that rightful place in your heart, He will bring pain into your life just like He did the nation of Israel. It took Israel the pain of losing everything before they finally turned from idolatry.

9. What might it look like to get rid of any idols in your life and make it your priority to incline your heart to worship and serve God alone?