

Righteous Jealousy and Intolerant Love

Pastor Marvin R. Barham

In this year of decision we must ask ourselves, “What is God really trying to do? What is His will and intent?” I believe that rooted in the fundamentals of any decision is a manifestation of one’s true nature and heart. People’s decisions reflect what they really believe and what is really most important and precious to them. God is not one who is indecisive and therefore, His love and His judgments are absolute, or yes and amen. I believe God is graciously and mercifully calling us to a place of making some personal judgments about who we are in Him and where we stand with Him. It is a question, as with Joshua, of whose side are we on. He is calling us to judge ourselves, our own hearts, and our lives before He does. In essence, it is a place of resolving to place Him and His Word in the highest honor of our lives. He is calling us to an opportunity of greater relationship with Him. He is calling us to become as jealous for Him as He is for us.

In his book *Godly Jealousy*, Erik Thoennes states, “His jealousy is for His own honor, and for the faithfulness of those with whom He has established a covenant relationship. Any violation of the exclusive favor in this relationship is met with a strong emotional response.”¹

Look with me in **(Read Exodus 34:1-16) Exodus 34:14** *For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*³

To better understand the jealousy of God over us we must first attempt to define it and understand, not in human terms but in divine terms. “Because jealousy is primarily seen as a result of personal and relational insecurity³⁹ it is assumed that a God who is jealous must therefore be insecure. ‘Thus the jealousy of God correlates with the insecurity of His Chosen People.’”⁴⁰ It is not an issue of God’s emotional instability but that of His people. **God’s jealousy is not the result of His relational insecurity but because of our inability to remain faithful and maintain a secure relationship in Him.**

Referring to modern Christianity’s inability to comprehend the concept of a jealous God Thoennes states, “Few Christians understand that godly jealousy exists, and seldom is any distinction made between jealousy, which can be godly, and envy, which never is. One of the biggest problems lies in the fact that no human language is sufficient to describe any part of God and His nature. We are trying to describe an infinite God in terms of finite comprehension. When we use the term ‘jealousy’ we are using in **anthropomorphic concepts or relating** to human attributes as opposed to divine attributes of a transcendent God.¹ Envy can be defined as desire to gain possession of something that does not belong to you whereas jealousy is the desire to maintain possession of something that does rightfully belong to you. Thus, they are not synonymous.¹

It must be understood that Godly “jealousy, in distinction to human envy and zeal, will always carry with it a relational element in which the one who is jealous desires exclusive favor in the relationship.”¹ This can be found in God’s design of covenant such as in marriage.

Our finite understanding of jealousy is often restricted to our personal experience of it in our lives and therefore is unwarranted, sinfully expressed, and destructive, making it difficult for us to see and understand righteous jealousy. Because of this, it can be extremely difficult for many to understand how this could be a godly emotion.¹ Again, Thoennes states, “For God, His jealous response is based in love, for His people, love that expects to be reciprocated by them. This love God expects from His people is not only an emotional response, but also necessarily results in obedient behavior. When a person experiences godly jealousy, he has a ‘passionate, consuming zeal’ focused on God that results in

¹ Godly Jealousy, A Theology of Intolerant Love, by K. Erik Thoennes, Christian Focus Publications, Ross-shire, Scotland, 2005

² Meriam-Websters Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

³ Biblegateway.com, Public Domain online Bible References for King James version, Amplified, and New International

²⁸ Bernard Renaud, I am a Jealous God, (Paris:Les Editions du Cerf, 1963)70-71

³⁹ Ringer, Yahweh, God of the Fireball, 85

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the doing of His will and the maintaining of His honor in the face of the ungodly acts of men and nation.”¹

The godly jealousy we speak of is translated in Hebrew, according to *The Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, as *qinah* “recognizes the strong link between God’s jealousy and His holiness.”¹ “The objects of God’s holy jealousy are the honor of His name and his people who are bound to Him through covenant. The jealousy of God is vital to the essence of His moral character, a major cause for worship and confidence on the part of his people, and a ground for fear on the part of His enemies.”¹

As with the covenant of marriage, as designed by God, the desire of which godly jealousy is founded is a desire for exclusive favor and righteous fidelity between those in covenant relationship.¹ “Jealousy expresses the unique character of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and His people.” The word ‘jealousy’ translates *qna* and *zelos* most accurately, when it is intended to describe the emotional response to infidelity that a personal being experiences. God’s transcendent qualities do not diminish his personal immanence (ability to remain the same²). Indeed, ‘God is not only the master who commands, He is the Father who loves and passes this love into the reality of the life of human history.’²⁸ Thus righteous jealousy can be biblically defined as, “The ardent desire to maintain exclusive devotion within a relationship in the face of a challenge to that exclusive devotion.”¹

It is imperative that we understand that if we profess to be a part of the covenant of God, we have assumed the responsibility of that covenant on our part and therefore either jealously adhere to the same love He has for us, or we are outside that jealousy and fail to adhere to the covenant thus being partakers instead of His wrath and anger. Some might say, “You mean I have no choice? I either live as He jealously commands or face His wrath and anger in the end?” I would say that is a choice, and the fact that you have a choice with the Creator of all things is extremely gracious and merciful. His jealousy over you is for a single devoted love relationship. It would be like getting married but not expecting your mate to be faithful to just you. As if they said “I do” in covenant to you but then have other choices for intimacy as well. Why should God expect any less of us in relationship with Him? **Proverbs 27:4** tells us “*Wrath is cruel and anger is an overwhelming flood, but who is able to stand before jealousy?*” (Amplified Bible)³

We find God is jealous for two things:

First, God is jealous for His own glory.¹ Thoennes says, “God’s jealousy for His own glory is His inherent jealousy that desires that His glory be acknowledged and proclaimed. God’s jealousy is more than a passing mood; it springs from His innate character and is the foundation of all godly jealousy. God demands that His people recognize His exclusive claims on them (Deut. 6:13-15).”¹ This can be expressly found in **Deuteronomy 6:13-15** *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.*³ And again in **Ezekiel 39:25** *Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;*³

Self-directed jealousy for personal glory is reserved for God alone. No one in creation has the right or authority to glorify himself or demand glory of himself from others. To do so is a sinful act of pride against God. Only God deserves such honor, worship, and glory and He responds unkindly to those who take it upon themselves and do not ascribe it unto Him.¹ This He affirms in **Isaiah 48:11** *For mine*

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²⁸ Bernard Renaud, I am a Jealous God, (Paris:Les Editions du Cerf, 1963)70-71

³⁹ Ringer, Yahweh, God of the Fireball, 85

⁴⁰ Ibid.

own sake, even **for mine own sake**, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? **and I will not give my glory unto another.**

Second, God is jealous for the faithfulness of His people.¹ **Exodus 20:5** says, *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am **a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation **of them that hate me;***³

So often this Scripture is so misunderstood. God is very clear as to those generations He visits His wrath upon being those generations who break His covenant, those who are not jealous for His love as much as He is theirs, those who thus hate Him. His jealousy is so warranted that He desired a single devoted love from you and I. **His love is intolerant in that He will not have a people who say they love Him but live a life of religious prostitution.** He demonstrated this with the prophet Hosea. **A love that tolerates infidelity is not a love at all but a lustful, self-pleasing, perversion thereof. We must not be seduced by a humanistic and relative ideology that seeks a god who oozes an insincere love tolerating promiscuous relationships with sin. This would equate to nothing less than paganism. He will not tolerate a religious orgy of your heart where you say you intimately love Him with a single devotion, yet have a love for things of self or the world in your heart.** We asked God for revival and that is exactly what He is demanding of us – a return of the heart to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is demanding that our hearts and lives be totally consumed with him and preoccupied with nothing else. **Deuteronomy 4:24** says, *For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*³ and **James 4:5** *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?*³ He wants us to be as jealous in our love for Him as He is for us. He desires us to love Him more than ourselves, our lives, our sin, or anything else. When you are as jealous for Him as He is you, you have as little tolerance for sin or idols in your own life as He does; you desire time and intimacy with Him as much as He wants with you; you desire to have as much undistracted devotion to Him as He wants with you. Choose you this day.

1 Godly Jealousy, A Theology of Intolerant Love, by K. Erik Thoennes, Christian Focus Publications, Ross-shire, Scotland, 2005

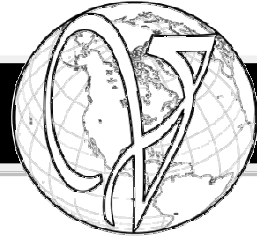
2 Meriam-Websters Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

3 Biblegateway.com, Public Domain online Bible References for King James version, Amplified, and New International

28 Bernard Renaud, I am a Jealous God, (Paris:Les Editions du Cerf, 1963)70-71

39 Ringer, Yahweh, God of the Fireball, 85

40 Ibid.



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1. In his book *Godly Jealousy*, Erik Thoennes states, "His jealousy is for His own _____, and for the _____ of those with whom He has established a covenant _____. Any violation of the _____ favor in this relationship is met with a strong emotional response."¹
2. It is not an issue of God's emotional instability but that of His _____. God's jealousy is not the result of His relational insecurity but because of _____ inability to remain faithful and _____ a secure relationship in Him.
3. We are trying to describe an infinite God in terms of finite comprehension. When we use the term 'jealousy' we are using in anthropomorphic concepts or relating to _____ attributes as opposed to _____ attributes of a transcendent God.¹ Envy can be defined as desire to gain possession of something that _____ belong to you whereas jealousy is the desire to maintain possession of something that does _____ belong to you. Thus, they are not synonymous.¹
4. As with the covenant of marriage, as designed by God, the desire of which godly jealousy is founded is a desire for _____ favor and righteous _____ between those in covenant relationship.¹
5. It is imperative that we understand that if we profess to be a part of the covenant of God we have assumed the _____ of that covenant on our part and, therefore, either jealously adhere to the same love He has for us, or we are outside that jealousy and fail to adhere to the covenant thus being partakers instead, of His wrath and anger. His jealousy over you is for a single, _____ love relationship. (Exodus 34:14)
6. God is jealous for two things: a.) _____ (Ezekiel 39:25; Isaiah 48:11) and b.) _____ (Exodus 20:5).
7. His love is _____ in that He will not have a people who say they love Him but live a life of religious _____.
8. A love that tolerates _____ is not a love at all but a lustful, self-pleasing, _____ thereof. We must not be _____ by a humanistic and relative ideology that seeks a god who oozes an insincere love tolerating _____ relationships with sin. This would equate to nothing less than _____. He will not tolerate a religious _____ of your heart where you say you intimately love Him with a single devotion yet have a love for things of self or the world in your heart.

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³⁹ Ringer, Yahweh, God of the Fireball, 85

⁴⁰ Ibid.

9. When you are as jealous for Him as He is you, you have as little _____ for sin or idols in your own life as He does; you desire _____ and intimacy with Him as much as He wants with you; you desire to have as much undistracted _____ to Him as He wants with you.

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