

James

God's Jealousy, God's Grace

March 25, 2012

I. Introduction

A. **James 4:1-10** . . . What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? [2] You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. [4] You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." [7] Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

B. Prayer

II. God's Jealousy – A Good Thing, God's Grace – Greater Than His Jealousy

A. **James 4:5** . . . Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?

1. Last Sunday, my goal was to reinforce in your thinking the value God places on relationships – from the relationship between God and us, to our relationships with each other, and that includes the relationship we have with those with whom we are in conflict.

a. In **James 4:4**, God points out that parting ways with Him and His way in order to go our own, fleshly and worldly way is a mark of spiritual adultery, a show of hostility, and an act of making ourselves His enemy. Such acts on our part certainly do damage to our relationship with God and to those around us – and especially those we are in conflict with.

b. Then in **verse 5**, God points out that His own jealousy is aroused when we commit these acts of spiritual adultery, hostility, and

enmity by turning away from Him in order to go our own, sinful, worldly way. And we know that when God's jealousy is aroused, He is feeling the pain of our unfaithfulness.

- c. Finally, in **James 4:6**, the exceedingly great value God places on relationship with us is affirmed again by His exceedingly great grace shown to us in the hope that we will come to our senses, repent of our unfaithfulness, and seek the healing and restoration of our unique, marriage type relationship with Him.
 - d. The point I am trying to make here is that God's jealousy is a direct result of the great value He places on healthy, mutually meaningful relationship with us. And of course, He wants us to value, in this same way, our relationships with each other.
2. With this truth concerning the value of relationships in mind, I want to take a few minutes and deal with the fact that for some Christians, the idea of God being jealous is a difficult truth to accept.
- a. Some Christians wonder if God's jealousy is a flaw in His character. But since there isn't agreement on what that flaw is, I thought it wise to look at the two flaws that are most often assumed in relation to God's jealousy.
 - (1) The first assumed flaw has to do with the weakness of need.
 - (a) For example, we teach that God is self-existent, which means He should not have any needs. The fact that He jealously desires something in us, implies that He does have a need. Therefore, this implies that either God isn't self-existent, or He has a flaw in His character.
 - (b) Another example of a weakness of need in God is the fact that jealously often is associated with insecurity. And if our self-existent, all-powerful God is so insecure as to be jealous, it proves He is flawed in some way.
 - (2) The second assumed flaw is represented by unrighteousness. For example, jealousy is often associated with outward manifestations of selfishness, controlling behavior, and even violent behavior. Therefore, if God is perfectly holy and righteous – as we teach He is – how could He also be jealous?
3. I don't know if you have had questions concerning God's jealousy, but this portion in **James** is not the first mention of God's jealousy. In fact, there are eight scripture portions – including this one – that speak directly of God's jealousy. And there are other scriptures that refer to it without using the word jealous. Let's look at three of the scriptures that speak directly of God's jealousy.

- a. **Exodus 20:4-6** . . . You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not worship them or serve them; for **I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, [6] but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Note also: **Deuteronomy 5:8-10**) *Just as in a marriage we are to have one spouse, so in the Christian faith we are to have one God.*
- b. **Exodus 34:11-14** . . . Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. [12] Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. [13] But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim [14] —for you shall not worship any other god, **for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.**
- c. **Numbers 25:10-13** . . . Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [11] "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that **he was jealous with My jealousy** among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in **My jealousy**. [12] Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; [13] and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because **he was jealous for his God** and made atonement for the sons of Israel.'" *Faithfulness in marriage and righteous purity in the Christian are marks of loving our spouse and God with the same kind of love that God has. Also, do we jealous for God, wanting Him to get all the attention rather than sin and the world?*
- d. Last weeks handout of scripture verses speaks to this matter of Gods jealousy (see below).
4. It is clear to me that the scripture speaks of God as being jealous, and I do not see any reason to think of God's jealousy as a weakness or wrong in any way. So let me give you my reasons for why I see God's jealousy as perfectly good.
 - a. First, I am convinced that God is the ultimate being beyond all we know or can know. And I believe that God is perfectly good. On that basis alone, I accept His jealousy as a good quality.

- b. Second, God created us, and He created us for a purpose. It is my understanding that His purpose in creating us is to enjoy an intimate, unending love relationship with us – a relationship which begins the day we come to our senses, repent, and are converted, and will continue throughout eternity.
 - (1) According to God's word, when we repent and are converted, we enter into a unique relationship with God that is similar to the relationship between a husband and a wife. And I suspect we all would agree that there is no relationship on earth equal to the uniqueness of the marriage relationship. In this same way, there is no relationship in all eternity equal to the reconciled relationship between God and us.
 - (2) Therefore, if a husband has a natural right to expect that he be the sole and faithful focus of his spouse's marital love, should not God have that same right in relation to us? If it is naturally right for a wife to want her husband's marital love all to herself, should it not also be right for God to want us all to Himself?
 - (3) Also, I think we would agree that feeling jealous over your spouse giving their marital love to another is natural and right. Therefore, God's jealousy is neither flawed or evil, but good and natural given the uniqueness of His relationship with us.
- c. Beyond creating us for the purpose of entering into a special, one of a kind of relationship with Him, God gave His only Son to redeem us from our foolish and selfish rebellion against Him. In redeeming us, God paid a precious price to regain our love and allegiance. And the price He paid, He did not have to pay, because we are the ones who spurned Him. And in spurning Him, we brought condemnation and death upon ourselves. Yet God paid a great price so we could regain life and relationship with Him.
 - (1) Given the price God paid for us, does He not have the right to expect those who are doomed to eternal damnation, yet who come to Him for eternal life, to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength?
 - (2) And is it not logical that if His longing for relationship is equal to the price He paid, that He will feel jealous when we give our allegiance and our love to another?
- d. Finally, God is holy. And because God is holy, all that God does is holy. This means that God's jealousy fits within the boundaries

of His holiness. Therefore, in spite of any negative connotations we may link to earthly jealousy, God's jealousy is holy, pure, and undefiled.

B. Which brings us to **James 4:6**: "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'"

1. **James 4:6a** . . . But He gives a greater grace.

- a. We see in these words the power of God's love and the degree to which He longs for a mutual, intimate relationship with each one of us – for surely His love and longing drives His greater grace.
- b. And yet even though God's love is powerful, His longing for relationship endless, and His grace beyond anything we can measure, there is still the fact that our adultery deserves something other than gracious forgiveness. Let me explain why:
 - (1) In the OT, adultery was so heinous and repulsive in God's sight, and so damaging to the family and the community, that He decreed it was to be punished by death.
 - (2) In the NT, adultery is so offensive to God, harmful to the family unit, and destructive to the spiritual health of the church that Christian adulterers are to be disciplined by the church. They are to be avoided as marriage partners. And if they do not repent and change their ways, God says they will be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven (I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21).
 - (3) If God's response to adultery on the human level is this strong, how strong do you suppose His response is to our spiritual adultery against Him?
- c. But beyond our spiritual adultery is the matter of God's jealousy over not only our turning away from Him, but turning against Him in following after our flesh, the world, and the devil.
 - (1) So picture God's deep hurt and intense dismay over our adultery against Him combined with the strength of His jealousy over our having given ourselves to another lover. And yet His grace is greater than our adultery and His jealousy.
 - (2) Such a picture ought to break your heart. It ought to strike fear in your heart. And it out to give us the great hope we can ever imagine having.
 - (3) You see, those who lack a broken heart over their adultery and a fearful heart over God's jealousy and unimaginable hope

over God's grace, treat God's **greater grace** as nothing more than what they deserve from God, and as a self-serving path to freedom from condemnation and punishment for sins committed.

- (4) Oh that we would treasure being espoused to God so much that we would be broken hearted over any acts of adultery against God, while at the same time being keenly aware of what our adultery deserves, while also clinging to the greatest hope anyone can have for a future with God.
 - (5) And if you lack these responses to your sin, then I urge you to plead with God, day-after-day, to so work in you as to bring you to the place where a broken heart for having sinned against God, and a keen recognition of what your sin deserves are a normal part of who you are as a Christian, and an overwhelming hope for the future.
2. Once again, **James 4:6a** makes it clear that God's grace far surpasses the guilt of our spiritual adultery and God's jealousy over His loss of our allegiance and love.
- a. This is a marvelous truth, and one that ought to bring us to tears of joy, words of thanksgiving, and songs of praise.
 - b. And yet, we will be fools if we ever take advantage of His grace by treating it as a freedom to sin or a reason to take the evil of our spiritual adultery less seriously.
 - c. May we be the kind of children and spouses who treat God's greater grace as something to thrill at and rejoice over. And may we make full use of God's greater grace to sin far less and love Him more nearly as we ought.

III. Conclusion

- A. Though I know you know this, I want to conclude with it anyway – God wants no rival to your love, or to His place of lordship over your life. He wants you for Himself alone. He wants to be the only King sitting on the throne of your heart. He wants to be your only spiritual and eternal husband and lover. He wants to be your first and foremost desire so that you desire nothing more than Him. And He wants **you** to be His faithful spouse who lives each day as one who treasures Him and the unique relationship you have with Him.
- B. May God be able to say of us that our gratitude for His greater grace drove us to greater love and faithfulness in all our choices, words, deeds, and relationships.

Exodus 20:4-6 . . . You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. [5] You shall not worship them or serve them; for **I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, [6] but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

Exodus 34:11-16 . . . Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. [12] Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. [13] But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim [14] —for you shall not worship any other god, **for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God**— [15] otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, [16] and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

Numbers 25:10-13 . . . Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [11] "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that **he was jealous with My jealousy** among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy. [12] Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; [13] and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.'"

Deuteronomy 4:23-24 . . . So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you. [24] For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, **a jealous God**.

Deuteronomy 6:14-15 . . . You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, [15] for the LORD your God in the midst of you **is a jealous God**; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

Joshua 24:19 . . . Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. **He is a jealous God**; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins.

Nahum 1:2 . . . **A jealous and avenging God is the LORD**; the LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.