

Series: God Is Jealous #1821

Title: 1 Corinthians 10.1-5, 22

Do We Provoke The Lord to Jealousy?

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We really appreciate the time you give to this ministry. Believe me, I know how busy you are and you have many different Bible teaching programs you can hear on the radio, online, and as a podcast. So for you to invest these minutes together with us is not something we take for granted. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit uses the Bible in your life to draw you continually to Jesus Christ, our one Savior from sin, to teach you His Word, so that you – like us – will joyfully and consistently obey Him and in live in close relationship with Him. Let us draw close to God again today, repenting of our sins, and living by the power and presence of the Spirit in us, dear fellow Christians.

We are talking about the communicable perfections of God and this one in particular: God is jealous. There is One God. He has no rival. But we have certainly invented many rivals to Him. These are the idols, the gods we worship. Objects, our ideas and philosophies, our habits and occupations and our sports. These are the religious rituals we participate in, the worship of saints, icons, the virgin Mary. The stars and planets (astronomical “signs,” like checking the horoscope). We make gods and goddesses of men and women as well. All of these. Totally man and woman-made and they become rivals to the Lord God. Well, no wonder God hates idolatry and takes swift and firm action to judge it; to judge unrepentant idol worshippers.

We have seen that in the text, and primarily thus far in the Old Testament. Today let’s turn to the New Testament and the Book of 1 Corinthians. If you want to find your place it is 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 22. (1 Corinthians 10.22.) You have heard me say that God’s commandments against idolatry, such as in the Ten Commandments, still applies to all of us today. The reason I said that is because those commands have been repeated throughout the New Testament. What God said to Moses and the people of Israel is no different than what God still says to us, including the Gentiles. (The non-Jews, whom make up the bulk of the people listening.) So, let’s find a prime example of the passionate warning against the worship of false gods in the second part of our holy Bibles.

I want to deal with the first part of 1 Corinthians chapter 10 in some detail and let me show you why (let me give you the purpose) up front. It is this verse, verse 22. The Apostle Paul, the human author writes and the Holy Spirit inspires this word, **“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?”** That’s quite the question. “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?” “We” means Paul and the Christians in ancient Corinth and “we” means you and me – today’s Christians all over the world. This is a penetrating question. And we want to see why the Apostle asks it. For that, let’s go back to verse 1 of this tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. I will read from there in a moment.

By way of context, here are some insights to keep in mind. First, Corinth was a pagan city. To this day it is located in southern Greece and you can make a visit, something I have done several times. In ancient times it was a prosperous trade city for Greece and also the Mediterranean Sea, Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa. You are aware of the Olympic Games, well a similar version called the Isthmian Games were hosted in Corinth. And when we add together a major trading city with a port and a popular sporting competition what we get are throngs of people and with people always comes *sin*. This was a place of vast moral depravity. Even the language represents this. “To corinthianize” is to speak of living a promiscuous life. One example of this was sitting atop of the acropolis, the “high city,” – 2,000 feet high - was a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Aphrodite. At least one thousand priestesses – that is temple prostitutes - worshipped there and then came down into the city in the evening to sell their bodies for sex to the citizens and visitors of Corinth.

So this is a place of rampant immorality and associated idolatry, not unlike most cities in the world today. Is your city like this? Mine is. In this context Paul founds the church on his second missionary journey. Others joined him in this, like Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, and Timothy. Then, circumstances you can read about in the Book of Acts drew Paul away.

When he gets word that the Corinthian church had become very worldly, that believers would not separate themselves from the culture around them and were therefore continuing in the same sin they had before they were saved, he writes them this letter of correction. There were a lot of *unrepentant* sinners in the Corinthian church and the Apostle Paul does not just let this go. He actually wrote them a letter before this one, but it has been lost and is not included in our Bibles. We know this because 1 Corinthians 5, verse 9 reads, **"I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people..."** That's a reference to the first letter. So, what I will read for us becomes 1 Corinthians and then there is 2 Corinthians. I invite you to read these letters and learn along with us what the Spirit will say to you by way of application and implementation in your life.

A second insight exists to make sure we capture the flow of the Book. In this section – chapters 8, 9, and 10 – the Apostle is addressing how the freedom we have in Christ affects our lives and ministries. Chapters 8 and 9 deals with how this affects others, chapter 10 how it affects our own lives. So that sometimes what we participate in, while not clearly forbidden in Scripture as being morally wrong, nevertheless can have severe consequences for us, indeed disqualify us from service for Christ, because we fall headlong into sin. When Christians play around at the edge of fire, we will get burnt. An example of this, in chapter 8, is eating food that has been sacrificed to idols.

When a Corinthian Christian matured in his or faith and practice it was not morally forbidden for them to eat the leftover food that had been sacrificed to idols at the pagan temple, because that Christian understood there was no spiritual power coming from the idol, because there is no such thing as an idol in the sense that there are *not* many gods. There is only One God. However, a new Christian did not yet understand this, and for them to eat meat at the temple, where they had previously worshipped the idols, this would make it very difficult for that new believer to break away from idol worship. Paul says, if they see you (the mature Christian) eating that food, then it signals they (the immature Christian) can go on eating *and* worshipping the false gods at the temple. Therefore, do not use your liberty, because your liberty will cause others to sin. And may even cause *you* to sin again.

OK, that's an example. Read 1 Corinthians 8 for full details. And we will see how this matter of how we use our freedom in Christ comes up again as we study in chapter 10.

The reason we are here in our series on the jealousy of God is because what really pops off the page is this: the connection between God's jealousy and our idolatry. Ah yes, the same thing we have been learning in the Old Testament. Having shared these insights, I will read 1 Corinthians 10, verses 1-5. **"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness."**

In verse one, highlight "our fathers." This is a reference to the Old Testament Patriarchs and Israelites. Think of Abraham. The Bible teaches that all of us – believing Jews and Gentiles, Christian Jews and Gentiles – are descendants of our father Abraham. We are his spiritual descendants because we believe, by faith, in Jesus just as Abraham did. Abraham was saved *by faith*, just like everyone who has ever been saved from sin will be. We are saved by God's grace through faith, not by our good works. So, "our fathers" applies to every Christian who reads Paul's letter. And he is emphasizing that we must be *aware* of three basic blessings they had, blessings Paul summarizes here and we can read about in the Old Testament.

The first blessing was how God delivered them from Egypt. The second blessing was how God baptized them into Moses. And the third blessing was how God provided them spiritual food and drink. Next time we will pick here with verse 5. Despite these many blessings, God was not well-pleased with them. Why? Find out soon on God Is.

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