

# Works of the Flesh: Jealousy, Emulations

A tree is known by its fruits, and in this passage (Galatians 5:19-23) Paul lists the works of the flesh contrasted to the fruits of the Spirit. Paul here lists sins of sensuality, idolatry and of personal relations. Of the later, he names eight sins, of which our word "jealousy" or "emulation" (KJV) is a part.

## Definition

Jealousy is from the Greek word *zelos*, which literally means "to boil." It should be noted that each of the works of the flesh has a proper and improper usage in the christian life. So it is with our word. One can be jealous in a legitimate way or illegitimate. The word has good uses as in Exodus 20:5 (God is a jealous God), and 2Cor 11:2-3 while negative uses such as here and in 2Cor 12:20: *For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and [that] I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest [there] [be] contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults;* Notice that this is a parallel passage of sins similar to that of Galatians 5.

If the "zelos" moves one in their ambition toward goodness, then we might say this was a work of the spirit. But, if to bitterness, resentment, etc., then of the flesh. It is this way in which our word is here used. Here in Gal 5, it is clearly used in the later sense, seeing that "*those who practice such shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" 5:21

The English word "jealous" and its cognates occur 41 times in the NKJV, with 8 of those being in the New Testament, although the word is translated differently and used in countless other passages, being rendered as envy, zeal, etc. Strong defines our word as: 2205 *zelos* {dzay'-los} from 2204; TDNT - 2:877,297; n m/n AV - zeal 6, envying 5, indignation 2, envy 1, fervent mind 1, jealousy 1, emulation 1; 17 1) excitement of mind, ardour, fervour of spirit

1a) zeal, ardour in embracing, pursuing, defending anything

1a1) zeal in behalf of, for a person or thing 1a2) the fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal 1b) an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy

## Degree

How does jealousy then differ from the envy of vs 21? William Barclay offers this distinction between jealousy and envy (vs 21): "*Zelos*" is the envy which casts grudging looks whereas "*phthonos*" is the envy which has arrived at hostile deeds. We might also add this distinction: "*zelos*" is less serious, less bitter, less malignant than "*phthonos*" But "*zelos*", left unchecked, can result in "*phthonos*." Whereas "*zelos*" has both a good and bad sense, "*phthonos*" is always bad. The distinction has been blurred however by many modern translations which have rendered the word "envy" as "jealous."

## Application

In our materialistic world, this is such a common place attribute. Jealousy spans the spectrum of the poor to the rich indiscriminately. It can be said of sinners in the works as well as members of the church. But have we really thought about just how soul damning jealousy really is? Look at the list of sins this one is sandwiched between! God places it in the same list as murder, adultery, idolatry, etc. In fact, jealousy can be the first step *towards* these other sins which we typically think of as "big sins!" . One of the tragic features about the "the works of the flesh" is that they seldom appear singly in the heart. One who is infected with the virus of carnality often develops a variety of symptoms, not all of which are external and readily visible. This can be seen in the fact that strife and jealousies are often mentioned together, Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20.

It has been observed that a powerful test of ones character is his reaction to the greatness and success of others. Jealousy never allows one to "*rejoice with those who rejoice*" (Rom 12:15), but rather makes them

miserable while others rejoice. This will lead invariably to envy, and Paul plainly said in 1Cor 13:4 that "love does not envy." We may find ourselves not only unable to rejoice with someone who has reason to rejoice, but end up actually speaking evil of that person and despising him! All because they were blessed!

The wise man said in Proverbs 14:30, "A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones." Not only will jealousy and envy make one bitter and rotten in their own spirit, but they can easily rob the one who has reason for rejoicing from their deserved happiness as well. One preacher related this story:

"I heard one sad example from a brother who went to visit some old college friends (also Christians) whose business had blossomed and brought them great financial gain. When he visited in their expansive house (bought with that financial gain), he commented how he was happy for them in their success. The wife broke down and cried, asking him if he really meant it! Why? Because no one had ever said that to them – not even their own brethren where they worshipped!"

To this end of being happy with the fortunes and blessings of others, someone has well said: I love a thing that's fine

Even when it is not mine

And though it never mine can be

Yet it delights and gladdens me

We must be careful in *receiving* blessings as well, that we don't *provoke* others to jealousy. Just as we should rejoice in the blessings of others, we should be humble in our own, lest we stir a spirit of jealousy in others.

### **Assumptions**

Though this certainly is a damnable sin, some have been falsely accused in regards to this. That is, we may try to show someone that they are guilty of some sin or error. The one confronted may turn around and say we are "just jealous." And true, we must make certain we are not. We may try to warn someone that their mate or "steady" is cheating on them, only to be told we are "just jealous." This accusation then has been used as a form of denial and a refusal to deal with real problems frequently. The one making such an accusation (that we are "just jealous") may not realize it, but they have actually accused us of sin, seeing that jealousy is here named as such.

This has also become a scapegoat though for error in preaching. By this I mean I have been told numerous times, when I would warn of some other preacher (whether it be doctrinal or moral error in their lives), "You are just jealous of him." True, these may have numerous conversions.....hold lots of meetings.....have more hair on their head than I do, or whatever. BUT, if they are preaching false doctrine, or more often, *holding up the hands of others who do*, then perhaps it is not a *sinful* jealousy here that moves me, but rather a "*godly* jealousy" that we may be able to present a pure bride to Christ, as Paul said:

2Cor 11:1 Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me.

2Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present [you] [as] a chaste virgin to Christ. 2Cor 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2Cor 11:4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or [if] you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!

### **Antidote**

The answer to this problem is putting to death the flesh, Gal 2:20, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the*

*Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* If we are jealous, we are still alive to self and of sin, for a dead man can be jealous of nothing.

Second, we must realize we are all members of the same body, 1Cor 12:26. *"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with [it]; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."* The eye is not jealous of the hand, nor should members of Christ's body, the church, be jealous of a gift or talent or blessing that someone else possesses that perhaps I do not. It could be that they applied themselves to receive it more than I, and if I were to so apply myself, I might as well.

Third, we must learn to be content with what we have. The Bible teaches us to count **our** blessings, and not **other people's** blessings, 1Thess 5:18, "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Jealousy comes in part from ingratitude, another sin...thus putting one's soul in double jeopardy. The jealous heart considers everyone else's blessing a curse to himself. On the other hand, Paul said, *"giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* Eph 5:20. Some forgotten poet has worded the danger of counting our bruises rather than our blessings in this :

The grumblers life is ever so sad  
It is filled with sorrows and woes  
He hasn't though how content he could be  
By counting the blessings God bestows

### **Conclusion**

With all of this in mind, it is certainly no wonder the Bible declares that "jealousy as cruel as the grave." Song 8:6. and that "jealousy is the rage of man", Prov 6:34. Let us strive to be humbly grateful for the gifts which God has so richly blessed us with already, rather than being grumbly hateful over what he has not (yet). Paul said in Hebrews 13:5, " *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*