



# Jealousy for God in a Godless World

Notes of an Address at one of the Clifton Conferences of Christians.

"I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." - I Kings xix. 10.

We have especially, dear Christian friends, to notice that we are to be jealous *for God*; for *His* honour and *His* glory, and not for our own honour and glory; not for our own reputation and name, not for our party, our ecclesiastical position, nor even for our particular religious notions. The spirit of that holy man of God, John the Baptist, when he said, with reference to the Lord Jesus, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (John iii. 30), should be aimed after by us. The more we are willing, like him, to go down in our own esteem, and in seeking our own honour, the more we are fit to be used by the Lord; and He will also see to it that we are honoured by Him, because we seek to honour Him (I Sam. ii. 30).

As in everything, so in jealousy, or zeal, for the honour of God, our adorable Lord Jesus is to us the perfect example, whom we have to set before us, and whom we have to seek to imitate. But in order to be able in *any degree* to imitate Him, we have, -

1. Through faith in Him to obtain spiritual life; for we are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins." We have therefore, naturally, no desire whatever to seek the honour of God: yea, are unconcerned about it when He is dishonoured. But when we have become the children of God, through faith in the Lord Jesus, and are thus reconciled to God, and have our sins forgiven, we begin to seek to please God, seek to honour Him, and desire that others, too, should honour Him and please Him.

2. This zeal for God allows of an increase or a decrease *in ourselves*; and it will be found to increase, in the measure in which our own hearts are practically entering into the loveliness of the nature and character of God. We have therefore to seek for ourselves to become more and more convinced of the graciousness of God, of His love, His bountifulness, His kindness, His pity, His compassion, His readiness to help and bless, His patience, His faithfulness, His almighty power, His infinite wisdom; in a word, we have to seek to know God, not according to the views of men, nor even according to the notions of Christians generally, but according to the revelation He has made of Himself in the Holy Scriptures, in order to have our hearts filled with love to Him, so that we may be earnestly longing to honour Him, and seek to stir up others to honour Him.

3. Our Lord Jesus knew the Father perfectly: He came out of His bosom. Moreover, as the perfect Man, the servant of the Father, He meditated day and night in the Holy Scriptures (Ps. cxix). The more we, the children of God, meditate in the Holy Scriptures, the more perfectly we shall become acquainted with the true loveliness of God, and the more shall we therefore ourselves seek to please Him, and the more shall we seek to stir up others to acquaint themselves with Him, that they may please Him.

4. There never was a time when it was not true regarding the world what the Apostle John says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John v. 19). Hence the deep importance that all the children of God in this godless world should seek to bring honour to God, live for God, be as lights in the world, manifest their zeal for the glory of God. In seeking to do so they may meet with many difficulties, but God will help them and strengthen them, if they pray to Him for help, and expect help from Him. They may find themselves sometimes almost alone, or quite alone, in their path in seeking to glorify God, as was the case with some men of God of old; but the more alone, the greater the importance to live for God, to seek zealously His glory, and the greater the reward of grace at last for doing so. Sometimes also it may appear as if we thus lived and laboured in vain for God; but the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures is the very reverse; for it is written, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. xv. 58). Again, it is written, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not!" (Gal. vi. 9).

As we are drawing nearer and nearer the close of the present dispensation, spiritual darkness, departure from the Holy Scriptures, and consequent ungodliness, we have reason to believe, will increase more and more, though coupled with a form of godliness (see 2 Tim. iii. 1 - 5); therefore the path of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus will become more and more difficult; but for this very reason it is of so much the more importance to live for God, to testify for God, to be unlike the world, to be transformed from it. If we desire that thus it may be with us, it is needful that we give ourselves to the prayerful reading of the Holy Scriptures with reference to ourselves. The Bible should be to us the Book of books; all other books should be esteemed little in comparison with the Bible. But if this is not the case, we shall remain babes in grace and knowledge.

And now, beloved fellow-disciples, how many of us are in heart purposed to live for God, to be zealous for God, and to be truly transformed from the world? We have but one brief life here on earth. The opportunities to witness for God by our life will soon be over; let us therefore make good use of it. Let none among us allow his life, nor even a small part of it, to be wasted, for it is given to us to be used for God, to His glory, in this godless world.



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