

"OVERCOMING JEALOUSY" – 2 Corinthians 11:1-3

This morning, I would like to draw your attention to 2 Corinthians 11:1- 3. Paul now is defending his position once again as an apostle of the Lord. He had to start in chapter 10 and 11 and 12. We will find that he will be doing the very same thing; not that he's defended himself, but the position that God gave to him. He had brought this church up in the ways of the Lord, had spent 18 of his months with them teaching and instructing them on how they were to live their lives, correcting some of the major problems among them. When he left, he now writes two letters to them, 1st and 2nd Corinthians. 2 Corinthians is really a response to first hoping that they would respond in a great way, but they came back beginning to attack his ministry and to attack his integrity. And so he now lays out the importance of the calling of God and what God had done in his life. And each of the chapters to me has been kind of just a tremendous insight of how to come and overcome certain areas within our lives. And as I mentioned Paul was not afraid to talk about certain issues. Last week we looked upon criticism. How in the world do you ever overcome a critical attitude and how to do you rejoice when people are attacking you?

Well, this morning the very same thing – we're going to take a look at the horrible, horrible monster called 'jealousy' and how in the world can you ever overcome that jealousy within your life and Paul gives to us, I believe, a real key because he talks about Jesus Christ being jealous for His church and how people are jealous of each other. And I believe that's the key: If I'm jealous of you, I'm going to look out for myself; but if I'm jealous for you, I'm going to give my life and minister to your heart. And so God is jealous for you. He's not jealous of you, He's jealous for you and that's the key that we want to take a look at as we look at 2nd Corinthians, chapter 11. And I know that none of us get jealous, none of us has a problem but just in case you ever get jealous in your life, you might remember this little Bible study because it's interesting, I think, how God puts the whole thing together.

In verse 2 He goes on to say, "For I am jealous over you," and there's the key: "over you." Not of you but over you; "For I am jealous for you," Paul was saying, "with a godly jealousy." And so he defines it: **"I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."** So Paul was saying that I'm very jealous hoping that you would be able to come and let me present you to Jesus Christ and that you would remain pure within your life. But then Paul goes on to say in verse 3, **"I'm afraid that Satan has beguiled many of you,"** speaking of the Corinthian people.

Dwight L. Moody said something interesting. He once told a story about a very jealous eagle who had envied another bird that could fly higher than he could. And then one day the bird saw the sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, "I wish you would bring that other eagle down." The man replied that he would if only he had some feathers for his arrow. So the jealous eagle pulled out one from his wing. The arrow was shot but it didn't quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high and too quick. Then the jealous eagle pulled out another feather, then another until he lost so many that he himself could no longer fly. The archer took advantage of the situation, turned around, drew his bow and killed the helpless bird. And that's the danger about a life of jealousy that you defend yourself to a point that you become an open target for the enemy. It's one of the major seven sins that Solomon talks about in the Book of Proverbs. He says in Proverbs 6:16: **"These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations..."** and that's what it means, jealousy, **"...feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."** So jealousy is mentioned of one of the seven sins that Solomon talks about.

Even before the creation of man, jealousy was there. It was you remember, Lucifer that became jealous of God there is Isaiah 14 and it was because of that jealousy that he was transformed into Satan as that angel of light, that rebellious spirit transformed him into Satan himself. Billy Graham I think, said at the very best, "Jealousy can ruin a reputation, split a church, cause murder; jealousy can shrink our circle of friends, ruin our business, dwarf our souls. Procrastination may be the thief of time, but jealousy is the murderer of the soul." And Paul challenges here in 2 Corinthians 11. So in verses 1 through 3, **"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly..."** so Paul begins to challenge us in verse 1, **"and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."** Let me give you a different translation that might make a little bit more sense. **"I hope you will be patient with me as I keep on talking like a fool. Please bear with me. I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. For I promise you as a pure bride to one husband, Christ. But I fear that somehow you will be led away from your pure and simple devotion to Christ just as Eve was deceived by the serpent."**
(2 Cor. 11:1-3 NLT)

So Paul is desiring to present the church perfect before Christ in a sense of spiritual life. But because of the jealousy, that sin of the spirit, so many things have happened. Well, let's take a look at chapter 11. Three things I want to look at this morning that might be able to give you a little bit of insight.

Number one in verses 1 through 6: loving his people. Paul was able to love the people of God. And then in verses 7-12, Paul was willing to labor for the people of God; willing to labor for the people of God. And then in verses 16-33, Paul was willing to live among the people of God. Three important areas of our lives that we need to

understand if we're ever going to overcome this horrible thing of jealousy. Am I willing to love other people? Am I willing to labor among the people? And am I willing to live my life for them? Three incredible things – Christ, 2000 years ago, you remember, came and loved you. He was willing to labor and show us how to walk this Christian walk. And then of course, He was willing to live in us in tabernacles among us. And so if I'm ever going to overcome jealousy, these are the three things that I believe that Paul lays out for us.

And so he mentions in verses 1-6, loving his people. In **verse 2: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy."** Jealousy has gripped the hearts of so many. It has broken more homes, destroyed so many businesses, perverted so many relationships, divided so many churches and crippled so many personal lives. And Solomon mentions in Proverbs 14:30, **"A sound heart is the life of the flesh; but envy the rottenness of the bones."** And then again in Proverbs 27:4, **"Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"** So the word "jealousy" or "envy" means the same; jealousy has to deal with what you have, envious is hoping that I can be what you are. It's interesting the root word for jealousy is the same in the Hebrew as in the Greek: it means a warmth. It means the passion, the fire, the emotions of your life; it can be used either positive or negative within your life.

Before Paul was converted, you remember that he had a passion to kill the Christians. And so the Bible says that he made havoc with the church of God. He had a letter on his way to Damascus to bring havoc to the church. And the Bible said that when he was saved, the whole church rested. He was a madman. He was completely governed by a passion in his heart to destroy Christianity. He was committed to the dark side. He was a servant of Satan ready to destroy the work of God. But it was God on that Damascus road that took a hold of him and changed his emotions and changed his mind and his will. Took the whole man and completely changed him. And sometimes when God changes our lives, we will not allow God to change our emotions and that's

what needs to happen. God got a hold of Paul's emotions on that Damascus road. And so Paul went from serving the devil to what, serving Christ. He went from being passionate about the kingdom of darkness to being passionate for the Lord Jesus Christ. He was willing to kill Christians, now he's willing to give his life for the sake of Christ. Nothing has changed except the passion in his heart. And so God simply, on that Damascus road, turned his life around and did something for him. Before the Damascus road Paul was jealous of people. He was jealous of the Christian walk. He was jealous of those around him. But after that Damascus road, Paul became jealous for the church. He now lived his life in a sense that he would love people; that he would once again labor for the kingdom of God and he would live among people for the glory of God. Those three things now dictated and governed his life.

And so when we look at really the love of Christ, it is God loving you. He has a jealousy for you and you need to understand this. It's the same jealousy I have for my children. I want them to be blessed. I want God to use them. I want them to be secure. I want them to be financially set so they don't have to ask me for money. That's kind of a selfish thing, but jealously I really desire that they would have everything they need in their lives. Now my kids would look at that and they would say, "Dad, you are controlling." And I would say, "No, I am jealous." You would say, "God, you are controlling of my life. I can't go to R-rated movies. I can't go out with other women. I can't go out and get drunk. God, you are controlling my life." God would say, "I am not controlling your life. I am jealous for you because those other things are going to take you to the kingdom of hell. Those other things are going to destroy every single relationship that is dear to you. Those other things are going to take you down the road of drugs or take you down the road of AIDS or take you down the road of being homeless. They're going to destroy your life." And because God is not jealous of you but He is jealous for you, it makes all the difference in the world.

Satan came to Eve and said to her, "Listen, God is afraid you're going to be like Him." And we'll talk about that tonight. If she would have understood that it is not the nature of God; God is not jealous of anything, He is jealous for you. And the Bible says in Habakkuk **"His eyes are pure and cannot look upon evil."** So it's God's desire that you would walk in purity; that you would walk in the power of the Holy Spirit because in that He can bless you and He can use you and He can begin to prosper your life. But it's when I become jealous; looking out for myself where all of a sudden my jealousy is of you; if I begin to take and desire everything seems to fall apart within my life. And we find that people often times are jealous of; often times we become jealous of our neighbors or jealous of what people have or jealous of what we don't have or what we desire. And so we go in debt seeking to try to live a certain standard and our whole life is caught up. And I believe with all my heart the most wicked of all sins even more than the love of money, I believe that jealousy is behind all the sins because it originated in the heart of Lucifer. And so I need to have God give me victory in this incredible area and Paul did. He said, "I'm living now for others; no longer living to myself." And so the importance of loving people.

And I want to ask you a question: "Do you really love people?" And if I could say to you over a cup of coffee or at Starbuck's, "Do you love yourself or do you love others more? What would the answer be? And are you willing to show that love? And are you willing to manifest that love?" And we know that 2,000 years ago Christ came and died; He revealed and manifested that love. We know that Paul was willing to manifest that love, so in other words the first thing that will overcome a very jealous life is to learn to love others more than you love yourself. You see, God desires the mastery of your life. He wants the passion. He desires the ambition. He will not share your life with anyone. And the reason why is because He wants the very best for you. So why would he share it with anyone else? And when you begin to bring other lovers in, your life begins to fall apart because those other lovers, no matter who they are, will never match up to the grace or the power or the anointing of God in your life.

Even my wife, as much as I love her, will never come close to who God is. And so my commitment, my heart, my love needs to be to God. And when that happens, I will love my wife – not because of who she is, but because of what Christ has done in her life and my love will be for her. And I will not need anything from her. And that's the secret about living your life when all of a sudden you are totally content with God above. But our problem is we have lost that honeymoon. And because we are gripping and hoping and reaching out for this incredible love, we're hoping that others will minister to our hearts and we become jealous when people do not pat us on the back. Our love needs to be centered in that relationship of Jesus Christ.

And so number one, in verses 1-6 is learning to love people the way that Jesus Christ did and the way that Paul did. But then secondly, I come to realize that in verses 7-12, Paul said not only loving people but secondly, notice, laboring for people. He said here in verses 8 and 9, **"I'm not burdensome."** In other words in verse 8, **"I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service."** And Paul was laying out to these Corinthians that I have not taken advantage of you. In verse 9, **"And when I was present with you, and wanted, (or had need) I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied; and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself."** That is the key. Paul was not willing that he would be a guy that would have to be ministered to. In other words, when I am void of jealousy, I am ready to minister and labor among people. And if God blesses them, great; if God raises them up, great; if God uses them more than me, great. It's when I become jealous that the work of God is hindered. It's when a marriage is destroyed. It's when children are wasted. When I'm willing to labor in my marriage or willing to labor in my church or willing to labor at work, it means that I am set free willing to do the task at hand. Often times we begin to realize what it does.

Haman and Mordecai, I believe, is one of the outstanding stories of the Old Testament. It says of Haman, you remember, that he **“desired that Mordecai would bow down to him,”** (Esther 3:5) but Mordecai wouldn't bow. And it got underneath of Haman's skin; begin to really bother him. He became extremely jealous of Mordecai but Mordecai wasn't willing to yield his love to Haman. Mordecai was committed to God and Mordecai was in love with God. Haman was in love with himself, very jealous about the position of Mordecai. And so the Bible says that Haman built a gallows. But then the Bible tells us in Esther, 7:10, that Haman hung on the gallows that he built and that is a story about a life of jealousy. You will hang yourself every single time.

The Bible says that Leah, you remember, had children; Rachel didn't. And the Bible says that Rachel became extremely jealous of Leah and her family. It says again that Saul was jealous of David – extremely jealous – that David, after he killed Goliath, that the song began to sing throughout Israel, **“a thousand Saul, you have killed, ten thousand, David, you have slain.”** And the Bible says in the King James, **“from that moment Saul began to eye David and for the next twenty-some years, Saul chased David,”** wasted his life and lost his kingdom because of jealousy.

We find the ten boys of the family of Jacob, minus Benjamin, had a plot to destroy their brother Joseph because Joseph had a dream and he was favored by his father, Jacob. And so because of jealousy they sold Joseph into Egypt. And then we find constantly that the elder's son in the New Testament was completely jealous of his brother. When his brother came back, you remember, the father had a tremendous love and it bothered the elder son that his father would love the prodigal this way.

Jealousy will destroy your life. It will completely devastate your life. It's kind of like the story of the two people that owned businesses across from each other. Cute little story, but has tremendous truth to it. Both of these men were competitive. Both of these men were entrepreneurs. Imagine you and your best friend across the street.

Both of you owning maybe a Taco Bell or maybe a Subway and there you are across from each other. And all of a sudden you begin to see this guy beginning to prosper and so you begin to do that. And you begin to do this and you begin to prosper and he begins to do that; your whole life is lived trying to outdo each other. You don't really care about the people; you just care about slamming the other guy. Your whole life is consumed about him and the sandwiches he makes and how you can rid of this Subway. In other words, two more pickles on it, two more tomatoes, whatever it be, you're going to have the very best one in the whole world. Finally an angel comes, wakes you up in the middle of the night. He says to you, "Listen, you can have anything you want, but your guy across the street, your rival, I'm going to give him double whatever you get."

So the guy thought, "Well, you mean if I ask for a million...?" "That's right; I'm going to give your buddy a billion." "You mean if I ask for ten of these places?" "I'm going to give him twenty. Whatever you want, I'm going to give him double, understand?" "Yes." So the guy thought about it, really thought about it. He said, "Okay, I've made my decision." The angel said, "You sure?" "Oh, yes, I've made my decision." "Well, what's your choice?" "I want you to blind one eye." I mean, isn't that the human nature? Isn't that the ability to go around with one eye as long as my friend is totally blind, I can get the edge? There's this competitiveness about us and so we find that they were willing to do these things but they were not willing to labor.

Rachel was too busy being jealous. She was not willing to labor. The boys were too busy they couldn't labor because they were jealous. It says of Miriam, a great story there in Numbers 12 that she became jealous of Moses. Here was the woman that sang for all of Israel. Here is the woman that made the song up. Here was the woman that stood with her hands lifted up and all of Israel rejoiced when the enemy was destroyed. Now she's caught in this horrible moment of jealousy. Moses became married; she didn't like who he married. And you remember, very simply that Aaron,

Miriam and Moses, they were brothers and sister. So God started this whole thing with the family business and all of a sudden we find that Miriam became jealous of Moses and what happened? She was smitten with leprosy. The very thing inside became outward and began to destroy the very work of God and so the whole nation of Israel had to stop for seven days until she was purified. You see jealousy will destroy the very things you're doing. So though you are not laboring for the body of Christ and you're laboring for yourself, you're really losing in the long run. Christ came to give His life and once again, you build His kingdom, He'll build your kingdom.

And then lastly, and I don't want to keep you too long, but in verses 16-33, lastly, not only loving poor people and not only laboring for the people, but now we find that he was willing to live for the people. And those are the three keys of your life to overcoming jealousy. He said in verse 24, I'll read down through 28: **"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one** (I was beaten five different times with 40 stripes save one)" so 39. **"Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned,"** that would be at Lystra; **"thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;"** that would be in the Mediterranean, so you would not want to go with Paul on cruises. That would not be a good thing. If Paul said, "Hey, we're going to have a cruise in Alaska, how many want to go," you do not want to go with him. **"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren."**

Let me put that in today's language. Running the kids over to the soccer game, going down to, you know, get the clothes out of the wherever you get them, you know; going down to the city, pulling permits, writing checks out. I mean everything I've got to do, driving me crazy; I have no time for myself. I have no time to live for myself. Woe is me!" Paul says, "Listen, may, I was beat up, I was thrown down, I had to run away, I had to hide, I was let out the back of a window in a basket, I have been through; but in

all this, I have been faithful living for people." He said in verse 27, **"in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often** (that's not TV), **in hunger and thirst."** Now when is the last time you've been hungry and not been able to eat? Or when was the last time you have been thirsty and not been able to satisfy it? **"Beside those things that are without."**

Now verses 24 all the way through 27 are the things that are without. Everything that happens to my physical body: me serving God, me giving to God, me loving God, me living among the people, me becoming a Christian—all these things that have happened to me on the outside, but then he says in verse 28, **"that which comes upon me daily, the cares"** and the word 'cares' is a word that means pressure, stress or anxiety inside. Paul is saying besides everything on the outside, I carry the church inside my heart. In other words, I'm willing to live among the conflict, willing to live among the problems, willing to live among the discouragements, willing to live in the midst of the heat and so often when your kids have problems, you don't want to live. And when your family begins to have problems, you want to run. And when the church begins to have a problem, you want to hide. Often times we're unwilling to live in difficult moments. You see that's jealousy. That is saying "Listen, that's all about me. I'm in this thing for me and when life becomes tough, it's time for me to go." And so many walk away from Christ and the reason why is because they have not the jealousy for you, but they have the jealousy of you. They desire that they would be like you but they're not. And because they're not, they lose heart. I believe that Paul lays out for me personally, something that I will have to carry for the rest of my life because there are moments that I become jealous. There are moments that I begin to look around and think, "God, what are You doing?" And these three things for the rest of my life I pray God that would burn deep within my heart. "Steven, do you love people?" "Yes." "Steven, are you willing to labor for them?" "Uh Huh." "Steven, are you willing to live with them?" "Uh Huh. "You're never going to, my son, until you come my way."

You know, I want to leave you with four simple things to do. Very simple, you don't need to write them down; you will be able to memorize them. I think the very first is to recognize that you have jealousy. Maybe you don't. Remember, I'm not talking to you. Just one day if you ever get it, you need to recognize that it's a possibility that you might have it. You might be jealous about your boss or jealous about somebody, but if you could recognize it that is the first step I believe to see that it's there. It's that ugly monster that is seeking to destroy your life. No longer am I willing to blame anybody else for my actions but I recognize that I'm jealous. I think the second thing that is so important is that you learn to confess it; that you learn to say to God, "God, I acknowledge that it's there but I need You to help me to overcome this area of my life. I need to renounce it and bring it once again to the Blood of Christ. And so, Lord, I acknowledge it. And secondly, I confess it. But thirdly, I believe you need to accept the grace of God. I think that Christ has come into your heart and that He has taken everything of the pain of your life. And it's Christ who's going to give you the strength, and He's going to give you the ability. In you, you can't do it, but in Christ you can do all things. (Philippians 4:13) And lastly, I believe that you need to receive the Holy Spirit. Because of the strength of jealousy, because it comes from the heart of Lucifer, because it comes to destroy the work of God, I need the power of the Holy Spirit to look jealousy in the eye and say to it, "I think I want to love. I think I want to labor. I think I want to live. I don't want to have a jealousy of you. God knows I want to have a jealous for you." If I could say that to my wife, "Honey, my jealousy is for you," my whole life would be lived for her.

Closing prayer:

Well, Father, we thank You and it is kind of exciting to see how You lay out things in Your word and how that we can look at some of these emotions within our lives and God how we see that so many in the Bible have been hung by their own jealousy. Lord, just understanding it's so rich and so real that God, that we can come and we can look at it and we can acknowledge it and we can confess it and Lord, we can just

receive the grace of God asking that Your Holy Spirit would come upon us, we pray today that, Lord, our love for You would grow and in that love growing a few things are going to happen. We're going to find it so much easier to love Your people. We're going to find it a joy to labor for them. And we're going to find the ministry of life that we can live among them.

And. Father, we thank You that we never need to be jealous of but we always can be jealous for. Give us that type of a love that would destroy this jealousy and turn us into men and women.

Father, as our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed; maybe some of you have never come to know Christ. And maybe God is reaching out to you this morning and I don't want to pass the opportunity; maybe you've walked away, maybe you thought that things would be better but now you look back and realize that Jesus Christ is the answer for your life; that He is the substance, that He has everything waiting for you. Or maybe you've never accepted Christ and God is saying that He has a jealousy for you, that you've never really understood why God wants you. God wants you because He's jealous for you. He wants to do something in your life that no one else can, but that means that you need to surrender everything to Him. And so God, while our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, you'd like to ask Christ into our heart or rededicate our lives, would you simply lift your hands that I might pray for you this morning. Lift them high. Oh, don't be embarrassed; lift them high so I can see them. Anyone else? Well, thank You, Father, for these wonderful hands and we place them into Your Hands and we thank You.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.