

THE SIN NOBODY DISCUSSES

Song of Solomon 8:6

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Song of Solomon 8:6.

Human relations are faced openly by more people today than in any preceding generation. Numerous psychological problems are no longer reserved for discussion by a few highly skilled counselors. Multitudes talk about mental blocks to happiness, inner fears and drives. We freely discuss worry, discouragement, fear, injustice, bitterness, pouting, reversion to infantile behavior and various other psychological sins. But there is one sin which nobody discusses and that is jealousy. What is jealousy? Jealousy is defined as an unpleasant suspicion or resentment arising from the fear or the mistrust of another person.

It is doubtful if many of us ever heard a single complete sermon dealing with jealousy. It has been said that during the last sixty years less than fifty articles dealing with jealousy have appeared in the popular magazines, and all but seven of these were concerned mainly with telling parents how to keep older children from being jealous of the new baby. But jealousy is not reserved for children. Jealousy is not a transitory affair peculiar to infants, children and youth, but it persists into old age.

Not only have we refused to talk about jealousy, but most people do not even think about it. Byron said,

"Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it.
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it."

A man who can enjoy reading about the successes of his competitors without saying, "They get all the breaks," or "Who couldn't do it with his backing?" may consider himself free from the sin of jealousy. When you see somebody ascending the ladder of success, do you think such thoughts as, "If others only knew what I know"; "Give him time; he'll fall and when he does I want to be there"; or, "Who does he think he is, I knew him when...."? Clarence Darrow once said, "I've never murdered a man, but I've read many an obituary with pleasure."

I. The Character of Jealousy.

In the Song of Solomon it is written, "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave." To understand the force of this comparison of jealousy and the grave, walk with me through the cemetery and read the names and the dates that are engraved on the tombstones. Here is the grave of one who lived nearly a century; here is the grave of another who died at seventy; here is the grave of another who died in middle life; here is the grave of a young man; and there is the grave of an infant. The grave lays its exactions upon all ages. Some were poor and others were rich; some were uneducated and others were learned; some were comparatively unknown and others were well known; some were ungodly and others were godly; some died believing in Christ and had the hope of a blessed resurrection, while others died without trusting Christ and were therefore without hope. Thus we see that the grave takes in all classes and conditions. The cemetery received a cross section of society. Now we begin to see the power of the comparison of jealousy and the grave, for, like the grave, jealousy preys upon all ages, kinds and conditions of

men. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave.

Nor is the second comparison of the text any the less forceful. "The coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Many and fierce are the flames which leap out of the furnace of the heart of man. Vehement is the flame of pride, anger, scorn, hate or revenge; but most vehement of all, scorching unto death every good thing that comes within its path, is the flame of jealousy.

There are two kinds of jealousy, namely, constructive and destructive. Just as the surgeon's instrument may be used to kill or cure, jealousy may help or injure. As evidence of the fact that all jealousy is not evil, listen to these verses: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exodus 20:4-5); "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). Observing the children of Israel in their disobedience the prophet Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts" (I Kings 19:10). Ezekiel quoted God: "Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name" (39:25). Writing the Corinthian Christians Paul said, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (II Corinthians 11:2).

A Christian should be jealous of his good name, for the salvation of lost souls, for the welfare of his church, and for the glory of his Saviour and Lord.

Destructive jealousy is a sin. "Envy, however, stops with wanting things for ourselves; jealousy begrudges others having what we want." Jealousy is never a hallmark of pride in possession. Rather, it is the mark of a poor loser. It is a kind of defense mechanism we hide behind to avoid facing the fact that we have lost. Jealousy is compensation for hurt pride, whether the injury be real or imaginary.

Twinging at the successes and possessions of others, jealousy usually arises between those whose activities are similar and whose rivalries are close. As a rule you do not find a groceryman who is jealous of a lawyer, or a politician who is envious of a teacher. What woman, with the instincts of a social climber, ever wastes any time being jealous of the wife of the President of the United States? The jealousies that destroy her peace of mind are directed against somebody in her own club or social unit.

II. The Consequences of Jealousy.

1. Disinterest.

The youngest of two brothers who lived on a farm in the east got tired of life there and decided to try the city. His father advanced him his share of the inheritance and he went to the city, where he spent all of his money. After unpleasant experiences in a most undesirable job, he returned home. There a big celebration of the event was held. His elder brother became very jealous and feigned disinterest in the whole affair. This brother is not the last person who has expressed jealousy by untimely disinterest.

Is it hard for you to compliment Mrs. So-and-so on her new spring outfit when you cannot afford one? Can you give somebody else your best wishes for a nice vacation when you must stay at home? When jealousy enters, it is quite easy to become disinterested. Aesop's fox who could not jump high enough to reach the grapes came to the conclusion that the grapes were sour. He immediately lost interest in grapes. If you find yourself expressing the "sour grapes" attitude, jealousy will not be hard to locate.

2. Depreciation.

Belittling, needling, bragging and scoffing are the tools used by those who are jealous of others and seek to depreciate the victims of their jealousy. There is the urge to throw mud on a white suit, to puncture another's balloon or to crush another's pride. When people are jealous, they like to goad or minimize their victims. Jealousy often tries to inflict pain by depreciating an object of joy. If you are jealous of your friend's new car, you will point out its faults. If you are jealous of the big wedding your friends are planning for their daughter, simply say, "My, my, too bad they couldn't slip away quietly and have all this money for more practical purposes."

3. Destruction.

The first crime that stained the history of the race was committed by a jealous man. "And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:2b-5). The venom of envy and jealousy crazed Cain and he slew his brother.

The first blow that man ever struck against man was the blow of a jealous man. Alas! how many crimes since then it has committed; what eminent careers it has wrecked; what good causes it has hindered; what hopes it has blasted; what hearts it has broken, and what homes it has blighted with its withering curse. Yes, jealousy is as cruel as the grave.

A very wealthy man had twelve sons all of whom were destined for places of historical significance. The youngest of the twelve, and the son of his father's old age, was victimized by the jealousy of his eleven brothers. They conspired to slay him, but sold him into slavery instead. The destruction of Joseph has been a pattern for other jealous brethren. However, most people have a better hold on their senses than to permit themselves to commit murder. Most of them will settle for the assassination of character. They associate their victim's name with questionable places and things.

A word to a victim of the jealousy of another is in order here. If somebody gets jealous of you, do not allow it to drive you from the community or cause you to become anti-social. Ignore the manifestations of the jealousy. Don't fight back. A one-sided war soon becomes disinteresting. Go on and live for God.

Jealousy was the rock on which King Saul made shipwreck of his life. The king was in a terrible shape. Morale was at its lowest among the troops. The enemy was firmly entrenched and was carrying on a most successful psychological warfare. One blatant speaker daily taunted the king and his soldiers. He bragged about his own might until everyone was psychologically whipped, with the exception of one inexperienced recruit from the hill country. This shepherd lad named David looked the situation over and wondered why the king and his men let a big bully frighten them. David volunteered to tackle Goliath himself. When permitted to do so, David killed the giant and saved the king out of his embarrassment. Everyone rejoiced, including the king.

King Saul's army started on a victory march back to the capital. People gathered in large numbers along the way in honor of King Saul. However, as they sang their gleeful welcome they said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." From that very day Saul eyed David with jealousy and tried to nail him to the wall with a javelin. The end of it all was that Saul and his three sons finally lay dead upon the bloody slopes of Mount Gilboa.

III. The Cure For Jealousy.

To have an insight into the ugly character of jealousy and to be aware of its inevitable consequences are not enough. We need information about a cure.

Frequently we read in some paper the account of some crime where the story began with these words, "In a jealous rage." This terrible sin fills its victim's heart with a wild craving and leads to some lawless act. Jealousy lures the soul on to a fierce banquet of hate, and then tortures and mocks it with hunger.

"O beware of jealousy!

It is the green-eyed monster that doth mock
The meat it feeds upon."

Have you ever felt the flame of jealousy in your heart? Has that serpent ever hissed in your ear? Is there anyone whose superior talents and gifts have made you secretly gnash your teeth? If so, the time to attack jealousy is when you feel the first sting of its scorching flame. Jealousy is like cancer, in that it must be dealt with in its incipient stage. It is an awful sin, because there is no depth to which it will not descend.

If jealousy has gotten a foothold in your life, there is only one remedy for it, and that is Christ. He, and He alone, can cast out this unclean spirit. He can uproot this rank weed in human hearts and plant the lovely flower of magnanimity in its place. Jealous people are not relaxed and enriching. Instead, they are suspicious, tense, irritable and unlovable. Jealousy is a sin that must be crucified. Christ talked about a demon that cometh not out except by prayer and fasting. This is certainly true of the hideous demon of jealousy. Christ will crucify jealousy for you if you are willing for Him to do it. There is no substitute for the grace of God in the hearts of people who are troubled with the sin nobody discusses.