

Jealousy

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[0 : 00] I want to turn back to Sam 37 on page 563.

I'm not going to go into this Sam in great detail. I'm going to look at the theme of jealousy this evening. And it's an interesting Sam because it's a Sam of contrast.

So we're using that same picture again that missionaries use when they're talking about the countries that they've been in. So it's moving from the righteous to the wicked, the believer to the unbeliever.

And it's kind of setting out the difference between the two. And it's doing that, and Sam is just doing that particularly because of his introduction to the Sam in verse 1.

Do not fret because of evil men, or be envious of those who do wrong. So the theme, the motivation behind this Sam is the sense of jealousy and envy that the believer can have towards those who don't believe.

[1 : 23] Because their life seems so good, and the life of the believer is so difficult and so hard. And so there's this amazing reality that is, you know, a little bit like what we said about this morning.

It's a free gift, but we need to be persuaded to take it. And when we receive this amazing gift, it's astonishing, isn't it, that we battle with so much of our lives.

Having received this amazing gift of God so that the verdict is declared before the performance happens.

The verdict of being accepted and being clean and being given entry into heaven is accepted before we do anything. And when we receive that, yet we still wish sometimes we were back in the gutter.

We would prefer to not believe because it's easier. And that's a really important reality for us to recognise. It will help us in our struggles as a Christian to realise it's much easier not to believe in the short term.

[2 : 41] It's much easier to not serve and follow the living God. It's an important mindset for us to have, especially when we begin to struggle.

Now, jealousy, being envious of those who don't believe it is very much the theme of this Psalm, but also the theme of Psalm 73, even more so. And they're both great Psalms.

Brilliant Psalms for us. And tremendous because they expose for us, they unpack for us a lot of what we feel. And sometimes what we feel guilty about feeling, well, I shouldn't really feel like this.

And yet the Psalm is unpacked for us and deliver us, enable us to be delivered from feeling like that. But jealousy and envy as a characteristic, it's not pleasant, is it?

It's not a pleasant subject necessarily to discuss. We don't like it in other people. We don't like how it's outworked in other people when they are jealous or envious, do we?

[3 : 46] And probably definitely don't like it being exposed in our attitudes, in our thinking. But jealousy or envy lies there as a twin brother.

It's got a twin brother. What do you think that twin brother is? It's pride. So jealousy and pride are kind of twins from the same satanic father wanting, wanting it all.

Because we feel we ought to have it. It's a right. We deserve it. Things that don't belong to us. And that's what happened, wasn't it? Right at the very beginning, the core, the root of Adam and Eve's rebellion was pride.

We want to be in God's position. We want to be independent. We want to do our own thing. And along with that goes envy and jealousy. We can have this knowledge of good and evil.

We can know what God knows. We can be God's. Something that God said wasn't to be theirs. Something that God said wasn't their possession was exactly what they wanted.

[5 : 01] The one piece of fruit symbolizing that rule, that one law was the one piece of fruit in all of creation that they wanted, that they coveted.

It wasn't that they needed it. It wasn't that it was the nourishment that they craved. It was simply because God said no, because it represents what you can't have and what you can't own.

And they coveted it. They were jealous because God was keeping them from that. They were envious of what they thought it could give them.

Don't be envious of those, jealous of those who do wrong. I just think about that generally, that characteristic generally for a moment. Envious of what other people have that you don't have.

It's not a pleasing characteristic. I want that. I deserve that. I should have that. Think about that in our own lives.

[6 : 05] I would love to have the kind of money that they have. I just wish I was on the same salary package as them. I wish I looked like them.

I wish I was as gifted as them in sport. I wish I had their wife, their husband. I wish I had their health.

I wish I had their job. And there's all kinds of envy and jealousy in our lives when we think like that. Why shouldn't I have this?

Why can't I have this? And we look in a discontented way at what we have and want what other people have. And it tumbles into an unhappiness about and with ourselves.

As we want what other people have and we don't have, the natural foundation or root of that is because we are unhappy about ourselves.

[7 : 08] We don't like our life. We don't like our looks, our image, our body, our jobs, our wives, our husbands. Our friends, our salary.

We don't like that. We're just discontented with who we are and where we are. We're dissatisfied with what we've been given.

The sense of worthlessness is often lies behind an envy and a jealousy of what other people have.

With the result that many of us, if we are honest with each other, may be wishing our lives away. Just wishing our lives away.

Wishing for a different situation, a different job, more holidays, more family, no family, different husband, different wife.

[8 : 12] Wishing that we were older, wishing that we were younger. Just wishing that whatever we are wishing, we are wishing that I'm not where I am today.

Wishing our lives away. Whatever it is, if only, I just don't want to be who I am today. I don't want to be where I am today. I'm looking for other things.

I want other things. I'm dissatisfied. I'm jealous. I'm covetous. A negative, resentful, selfish, spiral downwards results from unbridled jealousy.

Looking at our lives and wishing we were somewhere else. Maybe there's many students here tonight wishing their exams were finished. Wishing they had a job.

There's many people in a job wishing they were students again. There's people who have grown up kids. Yeah, they could go on all night with different things. We're always wanting to be in a different place, different time, different age, different stage.

[9 : 23] We're tired of poverty. We're tired of ill health. We're tired of a lot of different things. And generally, I'm sure you can associate a greater or lesser degree with some of these things.

The psalmist picks up on this in a spiritual way. Because he recognises that it's very easy to be envious of those who don't have faith.

And jealous of those who do wrong. And that spiritually it kind of leads to an anger with God.

What are you playing at God? What's it all about? And Sam 73 is fantastic in its description of the same condition.

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped. I'd nearly lost my foothold, for I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. And that comes up a lot in this Sam 37 as well.

[10 : 22] They don't have any struggles. Their bodies are healthy and strong. They're free from the burdens coming to man. They're not plagued by human ills. Pride is their necklace. They clothe themselves with violence. The theme is very similar.

Looking at these people and saying, well, what's the point of believing? What's the point of knowing God's favour and forgiveness and love in my life when it doesn't make any difference?

Because they're doing great and my life is miserable. What's the point? They're carefree. The life of faith, which we hear about every week, is in vain.

It's tough. It's a struggle. I'm not being allowed to pursue what I want. I'm always being told to pull back and be self-denying. I'm envious of life without God.

They have no burdens. They seem so happy. I wonder if you've been in that place spiritually, maybe generally jealous of others and envious of others, but spiritually looking at them and saying, this is a good life they have.

[11 : 31] The life of faith isn't so good. We wish we weren't believers. It's not something that we trumpet, that we delight in, that we rejoice in.

Well, can we look at the life of faith briefly as the psalmist speaks about it here and remind ourselves of how important it is to deal with this particular emotion. It's important to understand it spiritually, because this whole emotion, this whole way of feeling, it comes from the pit of hell in our lives.

When we want what we haven't got, when we're discontent with what we have, when we're always wanting to be someone else or be somewhere else, or believe something else or not believe at all.

And one of the things that comes across throughout this Psalm is this recognition that, yes, as believers we will struggle, because we still remain in a world under the governance, as it were, of evil and brokenness.

It's not yet the redeemed, perfected world. There's struggles, there's injustice, and things are not right. Yes, evil, and those who don't believe, and those who have no faith can and do prosper, much more often than believers do.

[13 : 05] Verse 70 speaks about how successful they are. Verse 14 speaks about how they can oppress others and with their violence succeed. How they can be tremendously powerful.

That dishonesty in verse 21 pays. That ruthlessness in verse 35 is rewarded. That these things seem to be how you get on in life, by doing exactly the opposite, by denying Christian principles, by denying the servant spirit, the soft and weak and spineless servant king.

But that power and ruthlessness and dishonesty pays, and inequality is rife in this world in which we live. It's unjust, it's unfair.

What difference has Calvary made? Jesus is supposed to be king and lord, but it hasn't made any difference. And our temptation may be, and sometimes even we covet, being able to make decisions based on injustice and power, and principles that are godless, because that is how we will get on.

There are some young guys or some young women here in business, where we're envious of the decisions that our colleagues can make, without any moral compulsion, because they're just free to step on others in order to succeed, and they're getting much higher than you.

[14 : 42] And you say, well, where's the blessing of being obedient and moral or upright in my business principles, my ethics and my thinking? You're envious and jealous, because it seems unjust and it seems unfair.

And that is the picture that the psalmist gives. That's what's happening. That's the world in which we live. But the reality is that it's not the whole picture of the world in which we live, and it's not the picture from God's perspective of the world in which we live, because the psalmist seems to be suggesting that God doesn't care, that God is distant, that it makes no difference whether you believe or don't believe, and that you're probably better just going on without God, because you succeed and get on well, as if he doesn't care.

But we recognize and know a different picture through the prism of the cross. We know a God who came as the servant king to destroy the power of sin, and to enable us to live righteous lives, and to have a different perspective and a different future.

And part of that different future is a reminder that God has judged sin on the cross, has paid for the sin of His people on the cross, but will one day return to judge this world.

Now that is a hugely significant perspective in this Psalm. It is the future judgment of God.

[16 : 28] There's this recognition, and again, a very significant and important understanding in our Christian life, is the temporary nature of evil prospering.

It is in this period between Christ's victory on the cross and Christ's second coming. All will be made clear on that day.

The envy, jealousy, the injustice, the unfairness, the oppressive success, the abuse of power, the inequality will be brought before the living God on the day of judgment.

It's quite frightening verse in verse 13, the wicked plot against the righteous. And by the Lord laughs at the wicked, for He knows their day is coming. And there's this sense in which we're reminded that all will appear before God, that this isn't all that matters, this life, and our success, and our blessing, and our comfort, and all that we long for is not what it's all about.

We will receive all of these things in glory, but God is the one who's all powerful. It doesn't look like that. It doesn't seem like that.

[17 : 59] I don't know why God has chosen to do that, other than what He says Himself, and that He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, and He delays, as it were, His return in judgment.

Satan rules as a defeated ruler, thrashing out, thrashing around, but the reality is those who don't believe, those who don't follow, those who don't serve, they will, as He says Himself in the Psalm, they'll be cut off.

They will vanish. They'll be like fading flowers in the noonday sun. Rebellion will have had its day. Success without God, pleasure without God, health without God, wealth without God is fleetingly temporary.

And therefore we do need to step back with that knowledge, and see a bigger picture, and recalibrate our priorities as Christians, particularly when we are envious of others, when we are longingly looking at those who have lots of things we don't have, of those who don't believe, or even those who do believe, but are just people that we would love to be, or have what they have.

Please remember some very important things. Remember in the first place that God is no man's debtor.

[19 : 41] Now remind ourselves of that, that our life as believers is very precious to Him. Verse 27, 20, it says, Turn from evil and do good, then you will dwell in the land forever, for the Lord loves the just, he will not forsake his faithful ones.

The Bible is full of this truth that as a believer you are precious to God. You did not choose God, He chose you, and you are called by Him.

You have been bought with His precious blood, the blood of His Son. He has paid the price for all the envy, and jealousy, and sinful rebellion of our hearts.

And He has gifted you this inheritance with Him in the land forever.

You are made in His image, and He has redeemed you, and He is reforming you, returning you, transforming you back into His image as you deal with sin.

[20 : 53] But He loves you, and you are precious to Him as you. Not as somebody else, you, precious to Him, loved as you are.

Not loved just for what you might become, or if you were to be like somebody else, but as you become Christ-like with your life, your gifts, your talents, your place, that is what is precious to Him.

He does not want you to be anyone else. He does not want you to mimic other people. He does not want you to become other people. He does not want you to be richer or poorer.

He wants you to know that you are loved, and you are accepted, and you are precious, and you are important as you are. He has given you what you have, and He has made you with your distinctive gifts and abilities, as He has seen fit, and He will nurture them, and develop them, and mature them, as you allow Him to do that.

Where you are, you will open the way for you in your life because you are precious to Him. But if your life is full of jealousy and envy and bitterness because of that, basically, spiritually, what you are saying is, I could not care less for the inheritance you have given me.

[22 : 29] I do not care a hoot that you love me, and that you will not forsake me. I want to be something else. It is really saying that we hate God, and we hate what God has made us, and we hate others because they have got what we want.

Jealousy and envy is such a destructive characteristic for the Christian because its basic and fundamental position is one of faithlessness and dissatisfaction and unhappiness with God, that God was wrong, that God should have made me differently, and God should have given me what I do not have.

And it is a lack of contentment, and unhappiness is self-centered, isn't it? Because we are the center of our universe, and it is not by nature loving towards others.

We cannot be happy for what others have because we want it. We cannot be happy for them. We are envious and jealous.

It means we are unhappy with ourselves, that our redemption is a cheap and fairly meaningless thing, something that maybe will apply one day in glory, and maybe the judgment day will be significant.

[23 : 55] But not just now, it is not important. It is something that has happened, but it does not seem to be making any difference. We will not understand the love and the transformation and the grace that He gives.

And because as we are wishing our life away, it is challenging God to say that where we are is hopeless, that we cannot serve God where we are, that we do not want to serve God where we are, that the people around us, that God is places among, we could not care less for because we want to be somewhere else.

We do not have a concern for their souls. I concern to see every aspect, every part of our lives, every job, every exam, every student that we live with, everything in our lives is being given by God for that period.

God is giving us that we are here by His blessing and by His grace. We are discontent with Him at that level. But there is no man's debtor. Jealousy recoils from that position of faith.

So our duty and our privileges is to seek first His kingdom. And all these things will be added to us.

[25 : 11] It is a change of priority. It is desiring God and then recognising that God will give us the desires of our heart. Delight in God, He says in verse, Trust in the Lord and do good, do well in the land and enjoy safe paths.

Delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart. Why? Because as we delight in Him and know Him and serve Him and love Him, then our desires begin to change to meet the kind of things that He wants us to have.

So we commit our ways to the Lord and we trust in Him, we seek Him first. And that is, can I say just in conclusion, that is good jealousy.

See there is bad jealousy in the Bible, there is also good jealousy. The bad jealousy is the kind of jealousy that we have been speaking about. It is wanting something we don't have that we haven't been given and we resent others because they may have it.

Good jealousy is having a zeal for what we do have and protecting it. Now God talks about being jealous for His people.

[26 : 20] Solomon talks about being jealous, love is jealous in a good protective way. It protects what is being given, protects it in a loving and passionate and zealous way.

So God says that bad jealousy is envying and being jealous for things that you haven't been given and your good jealousy is protecting and being protective of grace, developing that relationship with God, protecting the home that you've been given, protecting your friendships, being loyal within them, being jealous in your marriage, protecting that marriage, your wife or husband, your job by doing your very best in His service, being jealous for His honour in your work, jealous for grace as it's outworked.

And recognise all of these things, recognise the gift of salvation, that trusting in the Lord, delighting in Him through prayer, through the Word, through their penance.

And then we find as He goes on throughout the Psalm to say that that will give us as righteous people patience, verse 4, perspective, verse 9, meekness in verse 11, contentment in verse 16.

Because the way of the righteous is laid out in the Psalm and it's not envious and jealous and divisive and bitter and unhappy and angry at God.

[28 : 05] So that in every part of our lives we are putting into practice the way of righteousness. So we find that Christian truth, the Christian faith is absolutely practical.

It's absolutely practical for everyday living that we are not to spend our lives wishing we weren't Christians. With what Alcoholics Anonymous call the poor meese, that my life's miserable and everyone else is great, therefore it's worth having a bottle of whiskey to drown my sorrows.

We don't have that, but rather we recognise what we have. We delight in what we have. We nourish and protect what we have. We think about what we have.

We live the righteous life and we recognise that much of what we sometimes envy and are jealous of belongs to those who don't have and don't possess what we have.

And we'll like the noonday sun, the grass that burns on the noonday sun, will disappear on God's day of judgment.

[29 : 28] We don't have, we shouldn't be envious of others. That's the reality or that's the spiritual truth. The reality is that I'm very often the opposite.

I come and bend and kneel and ask for forgiveness for being blind again. To remind myself and I hope that you remind yourself of the destructive nature of envy and jealousy, destructive in the Christian community, destructive in the workplace, destructive in that private relationship with the living God.

We'll work through these characteristics, the invisible characteristic of jealousy. It's not adultery, it's not public drunkenness. It's not these seemingly graded sins that we tut tut.

But it's that invisible cancer that can eat at our life and our relationship with God and with other people. Amen. Let's bow our heads and pray.

For God teachers we pray not to be envious, particularly of those who have no faith. Remind us of the strange nature it must seem like before God.

[30 : 54] As God looks down on us, as he recognizes the outstanding commitment of God in Christ to us and the price it was paid that we would sit in our lives and be envious of people who don't have the gift of eternal life that we've been given.

And we grumble and complain and live as practical atheists. Forgive us, we pray, help us to be honest, help us to find the mirror of Scripture both uncomfortable, challenging and hopeful as we seek forgiveness and to move from a position of jealousy and envy.

Because we know in being forgiven our hearts we pray we'll be transformed and we will find contentment and we will find satisfaction in Jesus as we are with the gifts and the talents that we've been given.

Many or few. Lord God this is your will and your choice for us. We will be willing to develop and mature our gifts but not seek what is wrong for us to seek our envious of others who may have different gifts from us.

So bless as we pray and give us more faith and deal with our unbelief we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.