

# (Power From on High) 22. God's Jealous Love

by A.B. Simpson

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*The Holy Spirit's love for us is a jealous love that constantly guards our loyalty and devotion to Christ, and seeks to educate and develop us for our higher usefulness and service.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:10, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:25-27, Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:5, 1 John 2:15-17, Revelation 19:7-9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Fidelity", "God's Jealous Love"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes God's jealous love as depicted in James 4:5, illustrating how the Holy Spirit yearns for our fidelity to Christ, akin to a bride's devotion to her groom. He draws parallels between the biblical narrative of Rebekah and the Church's relationship with Christ, highlighting the Spirit's role in guiding believers towards deeper union and sanctification. Simpson warns against spiritual adultery, urging believers to forsake worldly distractions and embrace their identity as the Bride of the Lamb, prepared for Christ's return. He encourages a life of consecration, emphasizing the Holy Spirit's work in refining and educating us for our eternal purpose. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a response to the Holy Spirit's jealous love, leading to a life of deeper faith and service.

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## Transcript

"The Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." James 4: 5.

In the marginal reading of the Revised Version, we find this verse translated: "The Spirit that He hath made to dwell in us yearneth over us unto envy." A still more happy rendering is, "The Holy Spirit, that dwelleth in us, loveth us to jealousy."

This is a little gem in a mass of rocks, a little flower in a wilderness, a little bit of poetry and sacred sentiment embosomed in the great epistle of common sense. One would almost as readily expect to see a rose in a wilderness or a blossom on a glacier, as to find this exquisite little bit of sentiment in the epistle of the most practical of all the apostles.

For James has really struck the keynote of the entire system of revelation. This is the golden thread that runs through the whole Bible, from the bridal of Eve to the Marriage of the Lamb. The love life of the Lord -- this is the romance of the Bible, and the golden chain of Revelation.

The story of Rebekah is a kind of idyl, setting forth the whole idea in her romantic wooing and wedding. Just as Abraham sent his trusted servant to bring a bride for Isaac, and just as old Eliezer faithfully discharged that trust, finding, wooing, and then bringing home the beautiful Rebekah, and at last presenting her to the arms of Isaac, waiting for her in the eventide; so the Holy Ghost has been sent by the Father to call from this sinful world a Bride for His beloved Son, and, having called her, to bring her home, to educate her, to robe her, and gradually to prepare her for her glorious meeting with her Lord, in that sublime event which is to be the consummation of the age -- the Marriage of the Lamb.

Now, the Holy Spirit is represented in this passage as loving us to jealousy, and holding us sacredly to our blessed Bridegroom and Lord. In the context we read about the friendship of the world and the sin of adultery. The true reading of this passage, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses," is simply, "ye adulteresses." It is wholly in the feminine gender. He is not speaking about the earthly marriage bond, but about the fidelity of the Bride of the Lamb to her heavenly Lord. The Church is represented throughout the Scriptures as a wife, and the sin of unfaithfulness to Christ as spiritual adultery. Therefore, it is the adulteress that is mentioned here, and she is asked in the most solemn manner, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Compromise with the world is unfaithfulness to Christ and adultery in His sight. It is in this connection that our text is introduced. "The Spirit that dwelleth in us loveth us to jealousy." He is constantly guarding our loyalty of heart and our single and unqualified devotion to Christ alone.

Now, the Spirit which is given to each of us is holding us true to Christ. He first wins and woos us to Christ and then holds us true to Him, and leads us on until we shall be prepared to meet Him at His glorious coming.

This figure could be much better understood in eastern countries and ancient times than now. Almost every Oriental marriage has a go-between, a friend of the bridegroom and the bride, who arranges the preliminaries, and brings the parties together, just as Eliezer brought Rebekah to Isaac. This is the high mission of the Holy Spirit, and in its discharge He is so true to Christ that the least spot upon our holy character, the least compromise in our allegiance and devotion awakens in His heart a holy jealousy. He has devoted Himself to bringing about our union with Jesus, and to fitting us for it in the highest possible measure.

This is the purpose of all His dealings with us, this is the meaning of all the discipline of our life, to call us to Christ, and then qualify us for our high calling, as the Bride of the Lamb.

I.

First, He seeks and finds us, and brings us to Jesus in conversion. He sees in us those qualities which God created for Himself, and which Satan is prostituting for our shame and ruin, and He sets His heart on winning us for our heavenly Lord.

This will explain the fact that must often have occurred to many of us, that God revealed Himself to us in mercy many a time before we knew Him as a Savior, and a Father, and answered many of our prayers when we really had no claim upon His promise. He was wooing us to His love. He was trying to make us understand that He was seeking us. He was presenting to us the jewels of Isaac that we might be drawn from the gifts to the Giver and led to listen to His overtures of grace. He was treating us in advance as His friends and His children. He was leaping over the intervening years of sin and unbelief, and anticipating

the hour when we should love Him, and weep with bitter sorrow that we did not sooner understand and accept His love to us.

O, beloved, He is calling some of you now! He is longing for you with a jealous love. You belong to Him by God's eternal purpose, you will some day love Him and live for Him with all your heart, and then you would give the world to be able to undo the years of your present sin and folly. Oh, let Him reach your hearts; let Him win your affections; let Him draw you to His bosom and make you His beloved!

II.

But secondly, even after we come to know Him as a Savior, He is pressing us forward to a deeper union and a closer fellowship. We have come to Him for refuge from judgment, and from guilt; we have accepted Him as a Deliverer from condemnation and from fear; we have fled for refuge, like the little bird pressed by the storm upon the deck of the passing steamer; but He wants us closer; He wants us to put away our doubts and fears, and to enter into His confidence and fellowship. And so the Holy Ghost is loving us into the life of entire union with Jesus and unreserved consecration to Him.

Thousands of Christians know Him only as a shelter between them and their guilt and danger; He wants to take them into the innermost chambers of His heart and make them partakers of His deepest love. And so the Holy Spirit is wooing the children of God, and drawing them to the very bosom of Jesus. He is saying to them "Hearken, Oh daughter, and consider, forget thy kindred and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him."

He wants us to turn away from every earthly idol, and give Him our whole heart, that He may give us His in return, and make us the partakers and the heirs of all His riches and His glory. This is what consecration means. This is what the baptism of the Holy Ghost is. In this His jealous love is calling some, even as they read these lines.

III.

But even when we thus yield ourselves to Christ in full consecration and receive Him by the Holy Ghost as an indwelling Savior and the Ichi of our heart, we have only begun Rebekah's homeward journey, and the Holy Ghost, like Eleazar, has to lead us on through all the way, educating and preparing us for our meeting with our Lord.

And all through this life of discipline and experience, He is still loving us with a ceaseless and tireless devotion, and pressing us forward with jealous solicitude into God's highest and best will. And so He becomes our Sanctifier. He is preparing our wedding garments and fitting them to us, so that the King's daughter shall be "all-glorious within." "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework." She shall be robed not only in garments white, but garments bright, the wedding robes of the Marriage of the Lamb.

When we receive Christ as our Sanctifier, there is a sense in which we are wholly sanctified from the beginning. We have accepted all the will of God, and God counts us fully obedient. Our will is utterly surrendered and His will is our unqualified choice. But oh, how much there is for us yet to learn, how much more light, how much more realization, how all these things have to be wrought into the very fibre of our being! As that young lady takes the pattern of embroidery that has been stamped in its minutest details upon the fabric, in one sense she has the whole pattern from the beginning. But now she goes to work

with worsted, and silk, and threads of gold, and puts in many a stitch, with patient, delicate needle. She works into that pattern every tint and color and costly material, until it is not only a stamped pattern on the canvas or the silk, but a beautifully inwrought figure with every tint of the rainbow, and with all the brilliant sheen of satin and silk, and silver and gold, and perhaps with precious pearls skillfully wrought into the glowing design. So the Holy Ghost stamps the image of Christ upon us from the beginning; He then goes to work to burn it in and work it in, until our clothing shall be of wrought gold and finest needlework. So He is loving us to jealousy in His deeper work of sanctifying grace, sensitive to every spot, guarding against every slip and failure, and aught that could mar the fullness and perfection of God's great purpose of grace within us.

Some day we shall thank Him for His love, when we stand with the glorious Bride of the Lamb, presented faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy, while the wondering universe shall come to see the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, with robes more radiant than all the gems of earth and colors more glorious than a thousand rainbows or a thousand suns.

No thoughtful mind can fail to appreciate the importance and the reality of this deeper work of the Holy Ghost. It is one thing to have love, but it is another to have the love that suffereth long and is kind; that never faileth; that is not provoked. It is one thing to have patience, but it is another to "let patience have her perfect work that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It is one thing to have forbearance and longsuffering, but it is another thing to be "strengthened with might unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." It is one thing to have the things that are just and right, but it is another thing to have the "things that are lovely and of good report," not only the useful and the necessary, but the beautiful and the decorative qualities of Christian life. It is one thing to have the graces of the Holy Ghost in form; it is another to have them in maturity. It is one thing to have the grapes of June or July; it is quite another to have the mellow purple fruit of September or October, ripe and ready for the vintage.

We have seen the Holy Ghost thus leading on a soul, here adding a touch, there subtracting an excess, there deepening a line, there ripening and mellowing a quality. Silently, gradually, day by day and moment by moment, we have seen the picture growing more complete, more symmetrical, more deep, and full of strange indescribable expression, until at last we felt somehow that the work had been wrought into the depths of life, and that the soul was ripe and ready for the Master's coming.

#### IV.

Along with this work of sanctification, there is also a work of separation, and crucifixion. That anything may grow, something must die. He is separating us from the influences of the alien world, and the thousand forces that could distract or counteract His gracious purpose. It is here that His jealous love is most manifest. It is here that He has often to break our idols, and sever the cords that bind us, which would weaken our character, or hinder our highest growth. But the deeper and higher we are to grow, the narrower must our range of earthly sympathy become. And so He has not only to separate from sin, and from the ungodly and unholy world, but to separate us from a thousand things that touch the life of self, and that enter in as hindrances between us and our Lord's highest purpose.

We may not see it ourselves, but He sees it, and He loves us too well to let it hurt us. It may be some dear friend; it may be some innocent and what we regard as an absolutely holy affection. But He may see that that love, or that friend is taking His place, and instead of becoming an attachment to the Head, it becomes a barrier between us and our living Head. Instead of a fruit-bearing branch it becomes a

parasite, drawing away our life, or a prop on which we lean instead of rooting more strongly in Him, and so He gently detaches us from it.

It may be that our ambition, or our literary taste, or our fondness for some artistic delight, our beautiful home, our refined friendships, our higher pursuits in the lines of aesthetic taste, are absorbing much of the strength of our life and making Him and His work less. And, so the flashlight falls upon this, and the surgeon's probe detects it, and the deep cathode ray goes through the very flesh and bone, till it reaches the very intents of the heart, and brings to light the hidden danger; then He tests our loyalty and love and calls upon us to surrender it to Him.

Yes, it may be even our Christian work that is absorbing our affection and enthusiasm and leaving Him out. It may be for an idea or an ambition that we are working, rather than for our Lord, and so His jealous love sometimes must destroy the vision that He may save His child. We are reminded of the apprentice boy, who saw his master gazing intently at the beautiful fresco that he had just completed upon the ceiling, and gradually stepping backwards to admire it, until he was on the very edge of the scaffold and another movement would have dashed him to the pavement below. Suddenly the faithful apprentice dashed forward, seized the painter's brush and dashed it over the beautiful fresco, daubing it, and destroying it with one ruthless blow.

The master sprang forward with a cry of agony, but in a moment he stopped and looked at the pale, trembling boy, pointing with his finger backward to the scaffold where he had stood, and then he understood it all. He took the boy into his arms and in a paroxysm of tears he embraced him, and thanked him that he had spoiled his work and saved his life.

So the blessed Holy Ghost has marred the vision of our past, and has desolated the hopes of our future that He might save us for something better. Let us trust Him to the end; let us let Him love us as much as He wants to; let us never doubt His faithful will, nor question the commandments which are "for our good always."

V.

The jealous love of the Holy Ghost is also educating us, and seeking to enlarge our vision and our thought, so that He can better fit us to be the eternal companion of our glorious Bridegroom. He is trying to make us understand the majesty of His purpose, and to bring us into partnership with Him in His glorious plans to save the world, and in the ages to come, to lead out His redeemed ones into the highest and grandest services for the universe. His heart is often grieved and disappointed, to find us so narrow, so self-bound, so unable to enter into His glorious purposes, and His eternal designs.

There is a sad story told of a young couple who became betrothed in early life. Afterward the young man went to college, and acquired a liberal education, and then went abroad and traveled for years in a foreign country, finishing his studies and widening his views of life and men. All the while they kept up their correspondence and their engagement, and at last one day he came back to meet his beloved and claim her as his bride. But, alas, he found that while he had grown, she had remained stationary. He loved her still, and her whole life was bound up in him. But she was not able to understand him; she was not able to enter into his higher thoughts and plans, and she was not able to be the companion of his magnificent mind. He wedded her, but more and more, from day to day, he saw that the breach was widening. Her horizon was no wider than her neighbor's fence and her neighbor's farm; her world was scarcely bigger than the kitten on the hearth, the lambs that gamboled in the field, and the milk-pan and kitchen range.

He never told her, and she scarcely understood the shadow that had fallen upon his life, but, day by day, he pined and wasted away, until at last he died of a broken heart.

Ah, friends, our beloved Bridegroom with His glorious mind, His sweeping vision of the universe and His mighty purpose, not only to redeem this world, but to glorify His Father's name in every star and constellation of yonder space through His redeemed ones by-and-by, must often be grieved to find us so slow to understand Him!

You sit down in your corner grocery to make a petty fortune; you work away at your farm in order to make a scant living and some day have a farm for your boys, and you get absorbed in your little circle, and perhaps your little bit of a church. You never think of the great world that is waiting to be saved, the millions that have never heard of Jesus, or the high purpose of His heart to make you, with Him, the queen not only of the millennial years but of the whole redeemed universe. Let us rise to meet His thought; let us get out beyond our self-bound, earth-bound life, and enter into His plan for the world, and speed His glorious coming, and His mighty purpose for all mankind.

VI.

And so again, the Holy Ghost is leading us out, and developing our faith and thus preparing us for the higher life of the world beyond. For faith is just the wings by which we are some day to sweep across the abyss and soar amid the heights of the ages to come. Even after we receive the Holy Ghost we are content to move on in small planes and small circles, and we do not want to be disturbed or pushed out to harder, higher things; therefore, the Holy Ghost has to come and just compel us by His love to develop into spiritual strength and energy of which we thought ourselves incapable.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them upon her wings, so the Lord alone did lead Him." And so He stirs up our nest and pitches us out in mid air, helpless and defenseless orphans, and we think that it is to destroy us, but it is only to constrain us, that we may strike out the little wings of faith and learn to fly in the great unseen. And when we get a little weary, He stretches out His mighty pinions and bears us up again until we are ready for another lesson. And so through hardship, through the discipline of trials, through new circumstances into which He brings us, through difficulties for which we feel unequal He is developing us, throwing us upon Him, teaching us to claim His grace and educating us for the higher energies, and the nobler manhood of the life to come. Oh, how He delights in us when we yield to Him! How disappointed He is in us when we refuse! How sad when the clay will not let the Potter fashion it, and He has to throw it aside! Beloved, let us trust His love, and yield to His high and holy purpose of love and blessing.

VII.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is yearning for our higher usefulness, and training us for service. The life of God is an unselfish life; the employment of the ages to come will be wholly benevolent and self-forgetful. Our service for Christ today is a great investment through which we are laying up treasures beyond, that are to constitute our everlasting riches and reward. And so the Holy Ghost is pressing us forward to make the most of present opportunities; He is trying to get us to plant the seeds of usefulness and to invest the things that we hold dear in sacrifice and service, which yet will bear immortal flowers and plant the heavens with trees of righteousness and fruits of glory.

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