

Study in Romans

Doctrine > God's Plan for Israel > Divine Sovereignty in Israel's Future >
God's Grace is Preserving a Remnant of Israelites
Romans 11:1-6

When you hear the word, "jealousy," what do you think about? Is jealousy sin? Surely not since Scripture ascribes this character trait to God (cf., Ex. 20:5, 34:14; Deut. 4:24, 5:9, 6:15; Josh. 24:19; Eze. 36:5-6; Nah. 1:2). Additionally, in this chapter of Romans, Paul will disclose that God employs a strategy of provoking Israel to jealousy. James 1:13 tells us that God neither sins, nor tempts others to sin, so there must be more to jealousy than simply sin.

You may ask, "But doesn't the 10th commandment forbid coveting? Isn't that the same thing?" It does forbid coveting (cf., Ex. 20:17 and Deut. 5:21); however, the command also provides a context for understanding the desires that are forbidden. Not all desiring is wrong, just a certain kind. The key in the commandment is the phrase, "your neighbor's _____." Coveting is strongly lusting for something we cannot have and have no business cultivating a desire for, such as our neighbor's spouse. Jealousy, by contrast, is desiring to have what is legitimately ours, but has been lost or taken away.

In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words (cf. Strong's "covet" H183, H2530, G2206, G1937; "jealous" H7067, compare to H7072, G2205) translated as "covet" and "jealous" are both related to very similar root meanings and therefore depend on context to help us fully understand them. Coveting is related to beauty, something greatly beloved, lusted for. Jealousy is related to the concept of heat as in a figurative way of describing zealous desire. It is a close cousin to anger, an emotion that also leads to heat. Like anger, jealousy, if misused, can lead to a sinful response; however, this does not necessarily mean it has to in all cases.

Working Definitions

Covetousness

A strong, cultivated desire for something that you do not have and should not legitimately have.

Jealousy

A strong, cultivated desire for something that you should legitimately have, but do not for some reason.

In this chapter, God's use of jealousy is a strong theme in Paul's explanation to us of God's sovereign plan for Israel's future. With these working definitions as a backdrop, let's dive into what Paul discloses as God's ultimate purpose for the nation Israel.

1. Another question: Has God rejected all the Jews? (v. 1a)
2. Two illustrations showing He has not (vv. 1b-4)
3. God is preserving a remnant (v. 5)
4. God point: It's His gracious choice, not our glorious works (v. 6)