

# Provoking the Lord to Jealousy in the Worship of God by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

1 Cor. 10:22

## I. The Text Opened

### A. 1 Cor. 10:22

1. 1 Cor. 10:22, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"
2. The apostle Paul, having insisted on many arguments dissuading the Christians in Corinth from eating things offered to idols, in chapter 10, and the two foregoing, now draws to a conclusion what he had to say on that subject.
  - a) He puts them in mind of the holy and terrible displeasure of God to enforce the advice he had given and the other argument's motives he had used.
  - b) In the verses foregoing, he had been arguing that they would make themselves partakers with the heathen in their heathenism and idolatry if they eat "things offered to idols," for they would have fellowship with devils and would be partakers of the table of devils as much as the Israelites that ate of the sacrifice were partakers of the altar, or, as they that eat and drink at the Lord's table were partakers of his body and blood.
    - (1) *And in the verse preceding the text, he argues the absurdity of partaking of both the Lord's table and the table of devils. "Ye cannot," etc.*
3. Jesus Christ, the holy Master of Christians, in opposition to those demons that were worshipped by the heathen, were of a very contrary nature one to another.
  - a) They were enemies.
  - b) The argument is to what the apostle says in another place, 2 Cor. 6:14-15, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"
  - c) Christ and devils are the greatest enemies, and there were pretended Christians that had communion and fellowship with those they would by this provoke Christ to jealousy.
  - d) When his disciples or friends pretend, and sit at both tables, he is provoked to jealousy.
  - e) To have their souls to have so much to do with his enemies and to be seen at his table, deny the visible honor of Christ, and expose themselves to this holy jealousy.
    - (1) *Is such friendship?*
    - (2) *Instead of being accepted and treated as friends, they might well expect that Christ would look on them as false and treacherous, and as real enemies, and so have the mighty strength and power of Christ engaged against them as against other enemies.*
    - (3) *For, although the power of Christ is exercised for deliverance and salvation, and the deliverance of those that are truly his people, yet he will fight against his enemies with his great power.*
4. Christ and his children are forever fighting against the opposite side, the enemies of Christ, the army of Satan.

- a) These two are ever fighting one against another ever since the church was first erected and set up in the world according to what God pronounced after the fall, "I will put enmity between thy seed and his seed and her seed."
- b) This is where you see the strength of those two armies opposed to one another.

## II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: They that are so daring as to provoke God to jealousy would do well to consider whether their strength is sufficient to oppose his.

1. I will explain, 1. What is God's jealousy? 2. In what ways is God provoked to jealousy? 3. Why it concerns such to consider whether or not their strength is sufficient to oppose to his.

2. 1. What is God's jealousy?

a) Answer. It is that tenderness and zeal that he has for his own glory by which he is disposed to be angry with, and revenge, any who gives any other than honor and regard which is due to him alone as God.

b) God is frequent in instructing us in his word that he is a jealous God, as in the second commandment, For I the Lord thy God, am a jealous God."

(1) *Yes, he alone is God.*

c) But he tells us that his name, or one of his names, Exod. 34:14, "is a jealous God."

(1) *It is evident that jealousy is predicated of God.*

d) In this sense, in which we will now explain, viz., for that perfection of his nature by which he will not endure a rival in the honor and regard of his creatures as God.

(1) *He does this by its manner of it being attributed to him in essence.*

(2) *It is generally subjoined to some prohibition of idolatry as giving divine worship to any other god.*

(3) *He says in Exod. 34:14, "for thou shalt worship no other God." For the Lord's name is a jealous God.*

(4) *So, he says this in the second commandment, "thou shalt not bow down thy self to them nor serve them for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."*

(a) *And again, Deut. 6:14-15, "ye shall not go after other gods for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."*

(5) *And Joshua 24:18-20, "And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."*

(a) *And so, in our text the apostle in this place is speaking to exhort those he wrote to from participating in idolatry.*

e) God's jealousy is exercised towards any of the children of men that give the honor of or respect to any other than that which is to be done to him alone.

(1) *But he is especially this way towards his visible people.*

(2) *God is, as it were, married to them as the matter is very often represented in holy Scripture.*

(3) *So, idolatry in the midst of God's visible people is often called whoredom or playing the harlot, and compared to a man's wife being unfaithful to him and prostituting herself to be another's.*

(4) *Jeremiah 3:1, "They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD."*

(5) *So, the relation that Christ stands to the Christian church is compared to that of marriage, a marriage between husband and wife.*

(a) *Such a union causes this jealousy of God.*

(b) *Therefore, the fire of God's jealousy is especially kindled when, by the unfaithfulness and treachery of his visible people, that they give their hearts to any other object but him.*

(c) *Therefore, Christ says to his spouse in Song of Songs 8:6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart."*

3. God will by no means endure in the love and honor of his professing people if he does not hold them guiltless that suffer to give him his due, or rob him of his honor, to give it to any other.

a) *Isa. 42:8, "I am the Lord: that is my name, and my glory I will not give unto another." Isa. 48:11, "for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory to another."*

b) *In divine worship, giving God's glory to another will awaken God's fury to assert his right, vindicate his righteousness, and destroy those that forsake him to set up something else in his place.*

c) *Who are those that God is especially provoked to jealousy?*

(1) *We shall take notice of some of those ways of men by which they provoke God to jealousy.*

d) *Answer. Those men that have the knowledge, and those of the visible church who make profession of the true God, and yet live in contempt of him.*

(1) *They set their hearts on giving that respect to his enemies that is due to him alone.*

(2) *All that give their hearts to other beings, and things besides God, provoke and pay those regards to the creature that is due to the Creator.*

(3) *These provoke God to jealousy.*

(a) *God is provoked to jealousy by the idolatry of the heathen nations that are unacquainted with the true God.*

(b) *But God is provoked to jealousy by any of the sins of his people that have the light of the gospel and knowledge of the true God.*

e) *This kind of sin argues for a lack of due love and honor towards God, and too great a respect to other things.*

(1) *These kinds of people not only do not truly love God, but condemn him and show that they neither love him nor are afraid of him.*

(2) *They are neither drawn by a sense of his divine excellency nor are terrified with his threatenings.*

(3) *Those that wholly neglect God and religion, and live regardless of such things as not being worth their mind, these people especially provoke God to jealousy.*

4. There are some people that have no true spirit of love to God that yet are religious and conscientious.

a) *They desire true sense of the excellency of religion but yet they live wholly regardless of it.*

b) They do not slight the threatenings of God's word to any great degree, but only that they are afraid and deeply care and are concerned about what they think is important.

(1) *These are people spoken about in Psalm 10:4, "that will not seek after God."*

(2) *God is not in all his thoughts.*

(3) *These are those spoken of in Job 21:14-15, "Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, we desire not... what is the almighty," etc.*

(a) *These are devoted to those things that are enemies of God.*

(b) *People like this are the most remote from giving to God that honor that is due to him as God.*

(c) *They live in contempt of him, and set his enemies to be their gods, and devote themselves to those things that he hates.*

(4) *These people have their affections and concerns surrounding the world, and they set up their lusts as gods.*

(a) *They live to devote themselves to their gods, loving them, serving them and living devoted to them.*

(b) *They neglect to seek the salvation of their souls in an observance of God's duties of religion and ordinances of religion, and instead indulge in ways of wickedness contrary to that light and knowledge which they have of the true God.*

(c) *They will not follow his commentary and the plain instructions which they have of his word and will.*

(5) *No matter how they have been born and brought up in a land of love and light, no matter if they have been dedicated to God in their baptism, and call themselves Christians, such as these are those that by whom God is especially provoked to jealousy.*

c) Those that are devoted to their lust in pursuit of the objects of their lusts, and serve their lusts, serve Satan, and do in effect set up and make Satan their god.

(1) *The devil is their god.*

(2) *Such people as these join the name and rank of Christ, and give a pretense of friendship with him.*

(3) *But their real worship and service is of the devil, and they incite the jealousy of the fire of God.*

(a) *Christ's jealousy is kindled by such in their so doing.*

5. We must consider whether or not their strength is sufficient to oppose God's strength.

a) I give this answer, because those who provoke God to jealousy will come to the final trial before God.

b) They provoke omnipotence.

c) God's power is ready to execute his wrath, and fully, against such as provoke him to jealousy.

d) They are engaged in a war with God.

e) They are bold to appear as his enemies and to enter the fight with Jehovah so that God's strength and their strength are opposed to each other.

f) And if they dare to be appear as God's enemies, they must speedily quit their arms and humble themselves, submit and beg for mercy.

g) They must examine themselves before God, because they will quickly find out who is the stronger, them or God.

B. Here more particularly.

1. 1. While they are using their strength to cast off the yoke of God's government, God will still exercise his strength to maintain his dominion over them.
  - a) These wicked men refuse to subject themselves to God, or to submit to his government.
  - b) They are rebels against God.
  - c) They will not own him as their King and Lawgiver and refuse to pay him that respect, submission and obedience that he challenges them with.
  - d) They are willful and obstinate in this.
  - e) God insists that they keep his commandments, and is often repeating them, but they still refuse obedience.
  - f) They say of Christ, "we will not have this man to rule over us," so that they do what they can to cast off the yoke of God's government.
  - g) Psalm 2:2 (and 3), "Let us break their bands in sunder and cast their cords from us."
  - h) They use their strength to break the bands of God's sovereign dominion over them.
  - i) They show that it is not for a lack of will if they do not obey him.
  - j) They will not be active and voluntary in their subjection to God.
  - k) But, no matter how much strength they have, God will be exerted to maintain his dominion over them.
  - l) They do not like the idea that he is against them, and that their wills are to be subject under him.
  - m) They refuse to be active in their subjection to his will.
  - n) If such people could ever get out from under God's will, it would show that they are stronger than he is.
    - (1) *But, unless their strength is sufficient to resist God's, God will make his dominion over them to be manifest though they are not actively pursuing it.*
  - o) There are other ways by which God's absolute power and dominion over them may be shown besides their willful obedience.
    - (1) *It may appear by their suffering.*
    - (2) *The dominion of a king is over his prisoners as though they are rebels.*
    - (3) *This appears especially to a king who has dominion over his prisoners as much as over his loyal and obedient subjects.*
    - (4) *His power over them appears because they are his prisoners being brought to his bar to be judged, and they have his will executed on them as if his will were fulfilled and executed by them.*
    - (5) *So that unless the strength of wicked men is sufficient to resist the strength of God, God will maintain his dominion over them forever no matter how disinclined they show themselves to be, or fail to acknowledge him and submit to him as their Lawgiver, King and Sovereign.*
2. If God is stronger than they are, 2. While their strength is exercised to diminish God's glory, God's strength will be exercised to maintain and advance it.
  - a) They refuse to give God that glory that belongs to him and are doing what they can of their own power to dishonor God.
  - b) They endeavor to rob God of the glory which he designed himself in creating the world, and in creating them in particular.
  - c) But if God is stronger than they are, he will maintain his own glory notwithstanding what they do to dishonor him.

- d) He will obtain what is due him.
  - e) "God hath made all things for himself," he has created them for his own glory and he works to this end.
  - f) If his strength is sufficient he will obtain and see his own end, and he will have his designed glory from them.
  - g) Though they show a disposition not to live to his glory, and do what they can to dishonor God, they will not have such glory, but rather dishonor.
  - h) Yet, God will glorify himself on them.
  - i) Their being shall exist forever for God's glory.
  - j) If God's strength is sufficient he will glorify his majesty, holiness and justice in their eternal destruction.
  - k) God will get himself a great name by his awful and terrible vengeance on them.
  - l) He will do this in his presence and appearance to them; the bright appearances of his justice and terribleness in his dealings with them will gain him the glory though they actively give no glory to him.
3. 3. While they endeavor with their strength to seek their own happiness, the strength of God will be employed and exercised to disappoint them.
- a) The wicked men in their wicked practices and courses are seeking their own happiness.
  - b) They entertain a vain imagination that they think they will obtain in pleasure and profit.
  - c) But in such courses, they flatter themselves in their own eyes and think they are better off than those that seek and serve God.
  - d) The proud man dreams of happiness in his way of seeking earthly honor and greatness.
  - e) The sensual and covetous man expects happiness in riches; he thinks he shall be happy in the gratification of his sensual appetite.
  - f) They desire and hope for the continuance of their earthly happiness for a very a long time.
  - g) But they are actually separated from happiness their whole life.
  - h) In the next world they will have as strong desires after happiness as ever they had.
  - i) But seeing that they are enemies to God, and provoke him to jealousy, God's power is greater than theirs, and they shall never be happy.
  - j) God will disappoint them in what they aim at in sinning and living in sin against him; and in setting themselves devotedly as enemies against him.
  - k) God suffers them to enjoy temporal pleasure in this world, yet the time is hastening when, if God is strong enough, he will cut them off from all good.
  - l) All good will be taken away no matter how much they seek it, and shall not be able to obtain any complete pleasure or comfort of their soul or body.
  - m) They shall obtain nothing.
  - n) Nothing will ever be truly sweet or pleasant to them.
  - o) They will know no gratification of any desire or appetite, and no longing of their souls shall ever be satisfied.
  - p) They shall wish and long for these things in vain to all eternity.

4. 4. Their strength must be tried whether or not it is sufficient to keep them from suffering the fierceness of God's wrath when God shall exercise his strength to make them suffer.
- a) It must one day be tried whether or not they are able to maintain a battle with God, or whether they can get the victory over him, or stop his hand when his wrath is kindled.
  - b) The time is coming when almighty God will, as it were, arise and awake as one that awakens out of sleep.
  - c) He will rise up to execute vengeance.
  - d) He will sharpen his glittering sword and his hand shall take hold on judgment to render vengeance to his enemies, and to reward them with judgment who hate him.
  - e) It behooves wicked men to consider whether or not, when that time comes, they shall be able to resist God's mighty thunder, or to turn aside his glittering sword that it would not be plunged into the depth of their heart.
  - f) Unless they have strength to defend and deliver themselves, they must be utterly destroyed and consumed by God's fiery wrath.
5. 5. Their strength must be tried whether or not they are able to support themselves under God's wrath.
- a) There will be a trial of their strength in bearing God's wrath.
  - b) They will find out if they have sufficient strength to uphold themselves, so that they shall be able, in any tolerable way, to bear the vengeance of heaven.
  - c) When God shall execute his wrath in omnipotence, it will be seen whether they can keep up their courage, or whether or not their spirits will not utterly sink and fail in all their strength.
  - d) It will be seen whether or not God's strength is not so much above theirs as that they shall be immediately crushed under the weight of his wrath.

### III. The Text Applied

A. Let me give a word of application, as a use of exhortation to those that live in a way of provoking God to jealousy in worship and in their life, and for them seriously to consider how unequal their strength is to God's strength.

1. How insufficient is it as a match against God?
  - a) Is your strength sufficient to oppose or resist the strength of God?
  - b) Have you examined all this completely?
  - c) You have been sufficiently informed that God is the enemy of all people who provoke him to jealousy.
  - d) He will forever be their enemy that continue in this way and will execute his wrath on them with his great power.
    - (1) *And you act as if you were not very concerned, and so act that you will be able to resist him and defend yourself.*
    - (2) *You do this by continuing and adding to your provocations.*
    - (3) *You go on infuriating and provoking him more and more every day, and, as it were, you dare God to do his worst.*
    - (4) *But, consider seriously how the case is in truth.*

2. Consider how great God's strength is and what men's strength is.
- a) 1. Consider what God's strength is and how great it is.
    - (1) *Consider what it appears to be by the works of God that we behold God.*
    - (2) *Who is this God which we behold? How much of the power of God appears in the works of nature in thunder and lightning earthquakes, etc.*
    - (3) *By God's power, creation was stretched out, the heavens made, the founding of the earth was set in the vast globes and motions in space, and God even punished Satan, casting him down out from heaven.*
    - (4) *"Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness," (Psa. 74:14).*
  - b) Consider what men's strength really is.
    - (1) *The children of men sometimes proudly lift themselves up and are very daring and presumptuous.*
    - (2) *But if we consider their strength, what is in man, it is crushed like a moth.*
    - (3) *The least thing in nature is sufficient to give man insupportable pain and uneasiness, and to bring him to destruction.*
    - (4) *How little it is that man can do, and how little that he can bear how small a weight will sink him down utterly and crush him.*
    - (5) *The pain of an aching tooth or finger may oftentimes be enough to take away all the comfort of a man's life.*
    - (6) *How a small matter will bring his nature to a dissolution, where sometimes crosses and disappointments about some particular earthly enjoyment will cast him into such sorrow as he shall be seen drinking up his spirit as he pines away under it.*
    - (7) *And how little a thing will sink and bring his frame to dissolution, sink him into the grave, and cover him forever in the dust until time shall be no more.*
    - (8) *Man is but a worm, Job 25:6, "Man that is a worm and the son of man that is but a worm.*
    - (9) *" What then is such a creature as man that he should oppose his strength to that of the Almighty? Alas, what will you do? Can a wicked man do anything in the day when the Lord God Almighty rises up? Can you stop his hand? Can you stand in his sight when he is angry? (Psalm 76:7).*
      - (a) *It is God.*
3. You do not need to stir up all his wrath to consume you if he is angry but a little.
- a) His anger is kindled, but a little of his wrath will be sufficient to make you most extremely miserable.
  - b) He can easily tear you in pieces and there is no one that can deliver out of his hand.
4. God is a consuming fire and it is in vain for the briars and thorns to set themselves in battle array against such devouring flames; for they will go through them and burn them together.
5. And in Isa. 27:4, if a fire is kindled in God's anger it will burn to that lowest hell for all and anything that men may and can do to put a stop to those devouring flames.
- a) How soon will your courage fail and your soul be utterly swallowed up when God's wrath comes on you as flames of brimstone out of heaven.
  - b) If your strength were the strength of brass and stones, and your flesh like brass itself, you could not endure everlasting burnings.
  - c) God shall burn up the wicked as stubble.

- d) “Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney,” (Hosea 13:3).
- e) They are consumed in God’s wrath as his fire burns up the fat of lambs in a furnace.
- f) And consider, this is that God who designs to glorify his power in the destruction of wicked men.
- g) It is he that intends how mighty his wrath will be seen in such people.
- h) Rom. 9:22, “What if God, willing to show his wrath,” etc.
- i) Therefore, consider these things all you that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there are none to deliver you.