“If Jealousy Is a Sin, Why Is God a Jealous God?”

If jealousy is a sin, then why does God say He is a jealous God?

Great question. Not understanding this distinction was Oprah’s point of departure from orthodox Christianity, when she heard that God is a jealous God, and her reaction was, “What? God is jealous of *me?*”

There is a difference between holy jealousy and sinful jealousy.

Holy jealousy means that one is appropriately possessive of something that belongs to him or her. For example, I am not willing to share my husband’s heart or body with any other woman because he is mine. I’m happy to share his gifts and energies with the body of Christ and the larger world, and I even love to see that happen, but I want his heart and soul to be exclusively mine. That is a kind of holy and entirely appropriate jealousy.

Sinful jealousy is the desire to have something that *doesn’t* belong to us; another word is envy. When we want something God has not given to us, such as other people’s fame, or material goods, or a job, or favor, or a spouse, that is a sin. Sometimes we see this in a jealous person who wants *all* the attentions of their loved one to be directed to themselves. I have seen people who fly into a rage when they learn that their spouse or significant other has talked on the phone with anyone, or had any kind of conversation with a third person. Such a jealous person desires to have a level of exclusivity that doesn’t belong to them.

God exhibits holy jealousy because our love and adoration rightfully belong to Him; He is jealous with a holy jealousy

when we love and worship false gods in idolatry. His kind of jealousy is not sinful because we belong to Him and He created our hearts to belong to Him as well.

For a fuller description of these ideas, check out these articles at GotQuestions.org and Bible.org:
Why Is God a Jealous God? [www.gotquestions.org/jealous-God.html]
A Jealous God [bible.org/seriespage/jealous-god]

Hope you find this helpful.

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"What Will Keep Us From Being Jealous About Others' Rewards in Heaven?"

If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people's reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy. But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven? How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn't mind control us, because Angels in heaven were once good, but Satan turned bad. How can an angel turn bad? If God wasn't able to prevent angels from turning bad, how can He prevent people in heaven from turning bad without

mind controlling them?

Boy, lots of questions! Let me do my best:

> *If Christians in heaven are given different amounts of rewards in heaven, what prevents us from being jealous over other people's reward in heaven? I know that our body, mind, and soul all changed after we have got into heaven and that we should have no thoughts about jealousy.*

The best way to understand this that I have encountered is this: When we become a Christian, God gives us a new heart, and He comes to dwell in our spirits. Our spirits are the part of us that were designed to be indwelled by God, but ever since the fall of Adam, all of us were born with our spirits dead. At salvation they become alive.

Now imagine that He plants a tiny seed of new life in our spirits at salvation. As we trust and obey Him, as we learn to love Him, as we pursue growth through prayer, Bible study, discipleship and submission, our spirit grows. Some people's growth is much greater than others who are content to coast along in spiritual mediocrity. (That has something to do with the differing rewards in heaven, too.) So our spirits can grow bigger and stronger inside. On the outside is our flesh, that part of us that functions apart from God—our own strength and power. This is the part of us where jealousy dwells (as well as other fruits of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21).

It has been suggested that at death, our flesh disappears, leaving our spirits and souls (personalities) to enter heaven. (That would make sense, since our flesh is unholy and only holy things can be in heaven.) So there we are in heaven, with whatever level of spiritual maturity and growth we had attained at death. No matter how "big" our spirits are, there is nothing in those God-indwelled, God-built spirits that can be jealous like our flesh was. It's sort of like what happens after you have an appendectomy or a tonsillectomy—there's

nothing there to get infected anymore, so you can't get appendicitis or tonsillitis. It's gone forever. Our flesh is "infected" with sin, so after the flesh falls away at death, there's no spiritual infection anymore.

> *But if that is true, are we just like dummies, where we just think about good things? Are we prevented from thinking about jealousy in heaven?*

Let's go back to my appendectomy illustration. Would you remember the pain of appendicitis after your appendix is out? Sure. Would you want your appendix back? Not usually! We'll remember feeling jealous like all our other sins, and we'll be delighted to be rid of the infection of our sin. It will be like returning to health after a long illness, except that it will be more like gaining a new dimension of health we have never experienced on earth. It's not that we'll be robots, unable to think anything but "happy thoughts". . . We will be free to ONLY think good thoughts and ONLY do good things, for the first time in our lives. That will be true freedom—to be the people we were created to be, without the dragging, disgusting, difficult influence of sinful flesh.

Or, to give another illustration, have you ever had a shopping cart with a wobbly wheel that kept veering off course when you wanted to go straight? It takes a lot of energy to make it go in the direction you want to go because of that corrupt, wobbly wheel. In heaven, it will be like having four perfect wheels that always take you where your true self wants to go—in ways that always glorify and please God. And you!

> *How can God prevent us from ever sinning again in heaven if He doesn't mind control us?*

This is a great time to point to the Lord Jesus as the perfect example of what mankind was supposed to be. The First Adam sinned and became so much less than what God intended us to be; but Jesus, the Second Adam, showed us what Adam's

character would have looked like without sin. How did God the Father prevent God the Son from sinning when He was on earth? He didn't have to: the very nature of God the Son was to do the will of God and GLORY in that obedience and fellowship with the Father. Just as the nature of a fruit tree is to bear fruit and the nature of a domestic dog is to love and be loyal to its master, the true nature of man is to love God and enjoy Him forever. When we're in heaven, all the things that prevent us from being the people God made us to be will have been taken out of the way, and we will be free to be who we really are. There won't be anything in heaven tempting us or influencing us to sin, because the part that is vulnerable to sin (our flesh) will be gone. Just like the inflamed appendix.

> *because Angels in heaven were once good, but Satan turned bad. How can an angel turn bad? If God wasn't able to prevent angels from turning bad, how can He prevent people in heaven from turning bad without mind controlling them.*

The angels, like us, had the gift of choice, to serve and obey God, or to rebel. God gave them the choice for the same reason He gave US the choice: because He wants to be freely wanted and pursued and loved, just like we do! They made their choice sometime between the creation of the world and the fall of Adam. They have been living with the eternal consequences of that choice ever since, either for good or for evil. When we're in heaven, we will be living with the delightful eternal consequences of our choice to trust Christ. It's not a matter of God mind-controlling us—it's a matter of God saying, "OK, the fight is over, now enjoy the freedom that comes with having made the right choice on earth. Your true heart's desire to BE good and DO good won't be compromised by your flesh here in heaven. Enjoy!" That's a long way from making us puppets. It's like my privilege as a parent to say to my about-grown kids, "I'm so glad you chose to spend the weekend here with us instead of out carousing with people bent on self-indulgence and destruction. I've made your favorite

dinner and I’d like to take you to your favorite store and get you a gift. Enjoy the fruits of your wise choice!” That’s not controlling my sons—it’s lavishing love on them. You could ask them if they feel that their dad and I are controlling them, and they’d look at you like, “Huh?”

I hope this helps.

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