

Freedom from Jealousy and Ambition

I. Intro

- A. We've been talking about freedom, but the other side of that coin is captivity.
- B. I've been intentional about how I frame this series, wanting to do it positively instead of negatively.
- C. But captivity, the need for deliverance and freedom, is a real thing
- D. Jesus is called our Deliverer (Ps. 40); Moses foreshadowed and pictured this
- E. The NT says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and that when he finished this redemptive work, he transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light
 - 1. We are talking about living in the light instead of the darkness
 - a) Freedom from darkness, free in the light
 - 2. We are talking about freedom from captivity
 - 3. We are talking about freedom from the things of the world (the kingdom of Satan) vs. the kingdom of God
 - 4. We are talking about being rescued from all the things that would bind us, hold us, destroy us, lie to us, define us
- F. Some of the things we have been talking about are thought processes. Some are lies. Some are habitual sins. Some are demons. Sometimes hard to tell. What we are going to talk about today, the Bible clearly states, is demonic.
 - 1. Demonic in nature, catalyzed by demons, and demons feed on it.
 - 2. If you struggle with it, and many probably do, you don't have a character flaw. You have affliction. You don't need to white knuckle and stop
 - a) You need to lay hold of your authority in Christ and tell the enemy he's not allowed on your property (topos) any longer
- G. What are we talking about today? Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition

II. JAMES gives us a Biblical Understanding of Bitter Jealousy and Selfish Ambition

- A. What would it be like to be Bronny James, living in your dad's shadow?
- B. James, who wrote this wisdom letter, was the brother of Jesus
- C. As the brother of Jesus, I think James knew something about jealousy... can you imagine? Comparing yourself? The pressure to perform? Expectations
- D. *James 3:13–18, [13] Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.*
- E. V13, Wisdom → the application of truth/knowledge
 - 1. Proverbs says that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord
 - 2. Proverbs says that wisdom is to hate evil
 - 3. James describes what wisdom looks like... meekness
 - 4. *Meekness: the fact or condition of being meek; submissiveness. Ex: "All his best friends make fun of him for his meekness".*

- a) *Synonyms: resignation, gentleness, mildness, softness, docility, diffidence, modesty, humility, unpretentiousness, lowliness, submissiveness, submission, compliance, acquiescence...*
 - b) Every bro in the room is like, "I don't want that to be my reputation"
- 5. Wisdom on display looks like that... that's Kingdom Character
- 6. What about the world? What does the world's character look like?
- F. *[14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. [15] This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.*
 - 1. First, let's focus on the part that's easy to gloss over → earthly wisdom is demonic wisdom
 - a) Does it work? Yes. Will it make you rich? Yes. Will it get you stuff? Yes. Will it get you more toys, more girls, more vacations? Yes.
 - b) It also might get you demonized (daimonizimai) // afflicted or oppressed by a demon (not possessed, Oppressed)
 - c) **Earthly...** it is rooted in the temporal, human-centered realm.
 - (1) C.f. God's wisdom, which is heavenly and eternal
 - d) **Unspiritual...** soulless, driven by fleshly desires like an animal not made in the image of a spiritual God (God is Spirit).
 - e) **Demonic...** meaning of or inspired by demons.
 - f) Jealousy and ambition mirror Satan's nature—prideful, divisive, deceptive, self-seeking, manipulative, acrid.
 - 2. Bitter jealousy... lit: poisonous, toxic zeal (for self vs. God)
 - a) Bitter jealousy is harsh, corrosive envy rooted in comparison
 - b) What does it do? Poisons relationships, views others as threats
 - 3. Selfish ambition...
 - a) Ancient Roman politicians campaigned by speaking directly to citizens, much like modern candidates who knock on doors
 - b) The Roman term *ambitio* (from *ambire*, "to go around") described this door-to-door canvassing.
 - c) Over time, *ambitio* came to mean the desire for power, and when it entered English as *ambition*, it was seen as an insult
 - d) Only in modern years has ambition taken on a positive meaning (worldly wisdom... demonic wisdom)
 - e) But biblically, Selfish ambition is a self-seeking drive to gain power or recognition at the expense of others or God
 - f) It leads to vision, manipulation, and hidden agendas.
 - 4. Let me tell you something of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition:
 - a) Our culture promotes it (social media, comparison, make a name for yourself)
 - b) You easily deceive yourself that it's admirable or spiritual
 - c) Social media is only fuel for the fire

5. Demonic wisdom → bitter jealousy & selfish ambition → Every vile practice. Want proof?
6. Biblical Examples:
 - a) Satan
 - b) Adam and Eve
 - c) Cain and Abel
 - d) Tower of Babel
 - e) Abraham and Sarah ("Sleep with my maidservant")
 - f) Sarah and Hagar (jealousy)
 - g) Ishmael and Isaac (jealousy)
 - h) Rachel and Leah treating Jacob like a prostitute
 - i) Joseph bragging (ambition)
 - j) His brothers selling him (jealousy)
 - k) Moses trying to deliver on his own (selfish ambition)
 - l) Aaron and Miriam (jealous of Moses)
 - m) Should I keep going?
 - n) Saul and David
 - o) Michael and David
 - p) David and Bathsheba
 - q) David and Absalom
 - r) Ahab, Jezebel, and Naboth's garden
 - s) Haman in Esther
 - t) The Pharisees
 - u) King Herod
 - v) Pontius Pilate
 - w) Ananais and Saphira
 - x) Simon the Magician
 - y) The false teachers and prophets of the early church
 - z) Phil 1 and Paul's foes who preach out of selfish ambition
7. Yes, even good things, like ministry, vocation, hobbies, families, can become toxic if they are rooted in demonic, worldly wisdom
 - a) If you derive your ID from it instead of Christ, it's evil
8. Friends, what do you notice? Can you think of many examples where jealousy and selfish ambition were not the root of every vile practice?
9. It is a challenge b/c demonic influence → demonic wisdom → bitter jealousy and selfish ambition → every vile practice

III. What do we do from here?

A. Story from Church Planting Bootcamp

1. *John 3:26–30, [26] And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." [27] John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. [28] You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' [29] The one who has the bride is the*

bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease." (ESV)

a) God determines your domain. You determine your faithfulness

- b) Never in 1,000,000 years did I think those messages were for me.
- c) Why did I view them as irrelevant? B/C I would succeed. I was ambitious. I was ignorant.

B. The Way Out Is Down — Humble Yourself

- 1. We've seen today how bitter jealousy and selfish ambition don't just make life hard—they are rooted in demonic wisdom. They corrupt families, friendships, ministries, and even our walk with God. This isn't a personality flaw. It's a spiritual foothold.
- 2. What is the antidote to this toxic, acrid poison? Humble yourself.
 - a) Not once. Not in theory. But as a way of life. And you do it in three directions:

3. Humble Yourself Before God → Surrender

- a) This is the starting point of all true freedom. You let go of control. You lay down your striving. You stop fighting for position or recognition. You come before God not as a competitor, but as a child in need of grace.
- b) You realize that fighting for your name is to plunder his glory
- c) Everything is for HIS name, not yours
- d) *He leads me in the right path for HIS name's sake (Ps 23)*

4. Humble Yourself Before Yourself → Honesty

- a) This is where the mask comes off. Ask God to reveal whom you are jealous of (friendships, family, ministry, vocation, \$, body, etc)
- b) You name the comparison. You name the bitterness. You admit how deep the ambition goes—and how much it's stolen from your peace. You confess the vile things it has caused you to do
- c) Stop pretending it's not there. Don't manage it—repent of it.
- d) Be brutally honest with your own heart, because the Holy Spirit can only heal what you're willing to reveal and acknowledge.

5. Humble Yourself Before Others → Meekness

- a) This is where jealousy dies and community is restored. This is how you rip out the demonic tick that's pumping poison into your soul
- b) You stop competing and start celebrating others. You stop trying to outshine and start lifting others up.
- c) You choose the path of meekness—not weakness—but quiet strength that trusts God with your name, your future, your reward.
- d) *"In humility count others more significant than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)*

6. Until a few weeks ago these were just words on a page... until the Lord convicted me. And then he showed me...
 - a) The past... Striving... Nations... Church Planting...
 - (1) It was tethered to a desire to prove... a need to show the world I was worthy... to prove to those around me and to God who I was... until I wasn't
 - b) Recently... beginning of March... God convicted me
 - (1) I saw that jealousy and ambition (even in ministry) were demonic
 - (2) I asked the Lord to speak to me and show me what needed to be released
 - (3) I wrote or sat down with everyone I was jealous of, and I told them. I confessed. I asked for forgiveness.
 - (4) And guess what? I was set free. The demonic affliction went away, and it's stayed gone
 - (5) How do I know? B/C I love differently... I see differently... I am helping differently... I am able to come alongside and lead others to deeper freedom when before I didn't know it was an option
- C. Do you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition? Of your friends, their relationships, of \$, of jobs, of successful kids, of someone else's gospel impact? Humble yourself.
 1. Before God → Surrender. It's about HIS fame, not yours.
 2. Before Yourself → Honesty. This isn't godly. It isn't a good drive. It's demonic.
 3. Before Others → Confess. Ask for forgiveness. Find freedom.
- D. The way out is down. He must increase. I must decrease.
- E. And in that low place of surrender and death to self, there is freedom.