

1 Corinthians 10:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Analysis

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?—Two rhetorical questions expecting obvious negative answers. **Provoke to jealousy** (parazēloumen ton kyrion, παραζηλοῦμεν τὸν κύριον) alludes to Deuteronomy 32:21, where Israel's idolatry provoked God's jealous wrath. Divine jealousy isn't petty possessiveness but righteous covenant love that tolerates no rivals. God's jealousy guards His glory and His people's exclusive devotion.

The second question—**are we stronger than he?** (mē ischyroteroi autou esmen, μὴ ἵσχυρότεροι αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν)—exposes the folly of presuming on God's patience. To deliberately provoke the Lord while assuming He won't judge is functional atheism—acting as if we're stronger than God, as if we can get away with covenant betrayal. This is cosmic madness, the ultimate hubris.

Paul's questions expose the Corinthians' irrationality: you're provoking the jealous covenant-keeping God to wrath while thinking you're strong enough to withstand His judgment. This is suicidal folly. The One who overthrew Israel in the wilderness (vv. 5-10) hasn't lost His power or His holiness. Deliberate sin that provokes divine jealousy invites the same catastrophic judgment Israel experienced. Don't test whether God will really discipline His people—you'll lose that contest.

Historical Context

Israel's covenant with God was often described in marital terms (Hosea, Ezekiel 16). Idolatry was spiritual adultery that provoked God's jealous anger, resulting in exile and judgment. The Corinthians, as the new covenant people, faced the same danger: provoking Christ to jealousy through spiritual adultery (demon-fellowship) while presuming His grace would prevent consequences. Paul warns this presumption is deadly.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. In what ways might you be provoking the Lord's jealousy through divided loyalties or spiritual compromise?
2. How does the reality of God's jealous love for you change your understanding of obedience—is it legalism or covenant fidelity?
3. What areas of sin persist in your life because you're presuming God won't really discipline His children?

Interlinear Text

ἢ	παραζηλοῦμεν	τὸν	κύριον	μὴ
Do we provoke	to jealousy	G3588	the Lord	stronger than
G2228	G3863		G2962	G3361
ἰσχυρότεροι	αὐτοῦ	ἐσμεν		
G2478	he	are we		
	G846	G2070		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:21 (Parallel theme): They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Deuteronomy 32:16 (Parallel theme): They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

Hebrews 10:31 (Parallel theme): It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Ecclesiastes 6:10 (Parallel theme): That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

Ezekiel 22:14 (References Lord): Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it.

Isaiah 45:9 (Parallel theme): Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Psalms 78:58 (Parallel theme): For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

Job 9:4 (Parallel theme): He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

Exodus 20:5 (References Lord): Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

Exodus 34:14 (References Lord): For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: