

Zeal for the Lord

“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, **The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.**”

John 2:13-17

Introduction:

1. We live in perilous times of the last days, when the passion of Christians is for pleasure rather than God, and when religion is a form rather than fervent pursuit of His approval and glory (II Tim 3:1-5).
2. The threat to souls, families, and churches is not Islam or Mormonism, but compromise and lethargy!
3. The average and typical Christian today is lazy, selfish, and devoid of most any spiritual conviction.
4. If the Bible is half true, what level of effort do God and His commands deserve? Nothing but the best!
5. If the Bible is half true, what is your goal for serving God? Greatness? Mere mediocrity? Or failure?
6. You must ask yourself, (a) Am I putting forth the effort the Lord expects? (b) If I lose my soul or a child to the world, will I be at fault? (c) How easy do I take the spiritual threats in my life? (d) How low will I go toward the world? (e) How high will I aim for Christ? (f) How close do I want to get to sin? (g) How far away should I be? (h) What do I expect of my children in light of scripture?
7. No matter what part of life i.e. athletic training, your schooling, or a job requires reminders to effort.
8. No matter what part of life i.e. your marriage, your family, or your soul requires reminders to effort.
9. If we had real persecution or trouble, it would shrink Christianity and turn the very elect into zealots.
10. You know that severe trouble in your life makes you more zealous, but we should do so out of love!
11. God chose us for these perils, and we must redeem the time, because the days are evil (Eph 5:16).
12. How many of our girls will be like Sarah, Hannah, Abigail, Mary, Anna, Lois, Eunice, Priscilla, etc.?
13. How many boys will be like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, Daniel, John, Paul, etc.?
14. Only a few “get it,” because abounding iniquity causes the love of most to wax cold (Matt 24:12).
15. The issue is not “what” we should be doing, but “how” we should be doing what we already know.

What Is Zeal?

- A. It is best illustrated by Jehu’s destruction of Ahab’s house and Baal worship (II Kings 9-10).
- B. It is best illustrated by Jesus Christ’s purging of the temple of moneychangers (Jn 2:13-17).
- C. What is *zeal*? It is a word of the Holy Ghost (I Cor 2:13). **Zeal.** Intense ardour in the pursuit of some end; passionate eagerness in favour of a person or cause; enthusiasm as displayed in action. **Ardour.** Heat of passion or desire, vehemence, ardent desire; warmth of emotion, zeal, fervour, eagerness, enthusiasm.
- D. What is *fervent*? It is a word of the Holy Ghost. **Fervent.** Ardent, intensely earnest.
- E. The Bible also speaks of “vehement desire” (II Cor 7:11), “vehement flame” (song 8:6-7), “spirit was stirred” (Acts 17:16-17), “burning fire” (Jer 20:9), “heartily” (Col 3:23), “heart was lifted up” (II Chr 17:6), and “with all his heart” (II Chr 31:20-21), and so forth.
- F. Common synonyms of these two Bible words are ardent, eager, earnest, enthusiastic, excited, fervor, fiery, gusto, hot, impassioned, intense, passionate, and spirited.
- G. Zeal is all out, committed, convicted, drastic, extreme, intense, passionate, radical, severe.
- H. Zeal opposes average, comfortable, cautious, indifferent, lethargic, moderate, normal, usual.
- I. Zeal requires assuming that axiom by Elijah upon which you base your life (I Kings 18:21)!
- J. Men get zealous for all kinds of things, and many things eat them up, but how many are eaten up by zeal for the Lord? God knows these things, and He calls us to real glory (Jer 9:23-24).

Zeal Is Glorious!

- A. Our glorious God is a God of zeal (II Kings 19:31; Isaiah 9:6-7; 37:32; 59:16-17; 63:15; Ezekiel 5:12-13; Zechariah 1:14; 8:2).
- B. God cannot stand dispassionate (Revelation 2:1-5) or lukewarm (Rev 3:14-16) worshippers.
- C. The only way to do any thing in life is to do it with your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Col 3:23).
- D. The great men of Scripture certainly had faith, but they showed their faith with great zeal.

Jesus Christ had Zeal for the Lord

- A. The zeal of God's house ate Him up, which drove Him to drastic measures (John 2:13-17).
- B. He was always thinking about doing His father's business – dying for us (Luke 2:49; 9:51).
- C. He did not want night to come in the daytime of his life to stop His work (John 4:34; 9:4).
- D. He is set down at the right hand of God with rewards for being zealous for God (Heb 12:1-3).

Others had Zeal for the Lord

- A. Moses showed zeal against an Egyptian and Israel's golden calf (Exodus 2:11-12; 32:15-29).
- B. Phinehas was commended by God for his public zeal against fornicators (Numbers 25:1-15).
- C. Caleb had such zeal he sought the greatest challenge in Canaan (Joshua 14:6-14; 15:13-17).
- D. Joshua was zealous to serve the Lord with his family regardless of others (Joshua 24:14-19).
- E. Jephtha and his daughter both showed sacrificial zeal for worship of God (Judges 11:29-40).
- F. Samuel showed his zeal for the Lord in the presence of two kings (I Samuel 15:32-33).
- G. Jonathan showed his zeal by challenging a Philistine garrison with only two (I Sam 14:1-15).
- H. David showed zeal against the blaspheming Goliath (I Sam 17:26-29), for the Ark of the Covenant (II Sam 6:12-19), against the irreverent Michal (II Sam 6:20-23), for the Lord's house (II Sam 7:1-2; I Kgs 8:17-18), for the worship of God (II Sam 24:18-25), in building the temple (I Chron 22:5), and against those who rejected God's words (Psalm 119:139).
- I. Elijah had a spirit of zeal commended by Gabriel (I Kings 18:17-40; 19:10,14; Luke 1:17).
- J. Jehu was commended by God for furious zeal against Ahab's family and Baal (II Kgs 9-10).
- K. Asa is a good example of hearing a warning and getting zealous for God (II Chron 15:1-19).
- L. Josiah is a good example of increasing zeal for the Lord's worship (II Chron 34:1 – 35:19).
- M. Nehemiah showed zeal several times against regathered Judah (Neh 13:10-11,15-21,23-28).
- N. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered Nebuchadnezzar with brave zeal (Da 3:16-18).
- O. Micah received power, judgment, and might from God's Spirit to be a prophet (Micah 3:8).
- P. John the Baptist had Elijah's spirit and power (Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 6:17-20; Luke 1:17).
- Q. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were named sons of thunder by Jesus (Mark 3:17).
- R. Apollos was fervent in spirit and mightily convinced the Jews of Christ (Acts 18:24-28).
- S. Paul had zeal before and after conversion (Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6; I Timothy 1:12-13).
- T. Paul worked harder than any other apostle, and he was not boasting to say so (I Cor 15:10).
 - 1. Nearing death, he knew he had fought well, finished well, and kept well (II Tim 4:7-8).
 - 2. Some thought Paul beside himself, but he was for the Lord's sake (II Cor 5:13-15).
 - 3. Paul pursued first place, not first, second, or any other finish to his race (I Cor 9:24-27).
- U. Epaphras, an elder from Colosse, was very fervent and zealous for the Lord (Col 4:12-13).
- V. The Thessalonians were so zealous that their reputation went everywhere (I Thess 1:6-10).

Zeal for the Lord is a Good Thing

- A. The LORD our God is a great King and deserves our very best in service (Malachi 1:6-14).
- B. The first and great commandment is loving God with all we have, so let's do it (Mark 12:30)!
- C. If anything is worth doing, then it is worth doing all out, especially for our Lord and Saviour!
- D. Whatsoever you find to do should be done with your might, especially religion (Eccl 9:10).
- E. Paul told Galatia that zeal in a good thing is good, as long as it continues *always* (Gal 4:18).
- F. God commands New Testament saints to be zealous at their jobs (Rom 12:11; Col 3:22-25).
- G. Jesus Christ despised loss of first love or being lukewarm, so beware (Rev 2:4-5; 3:14-16).
- H. The Bible compares great Christians striving for excellence to great athletes (I Cor 9:24-27).
- I. We have a great cloud of witnesses to run our race, and it should be run well (Heb 12:1-3).
- J. The kingdom of heaven is taken by those who press in by violence (Luke 16:16; Matt 11:12).
- K. The kingdom of God should be our first priority, not our second or the leftovers (Matt 6:33).
- L. Paul was not content until Ephesus was filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:14-19).
- M. Delighting yourself in God is a level of religion beyond faith by virtue of "also" (Ps 37:4).
- N. Exceptional widows are supported by the church; God honors performance (I Tim 5:1-16).
- O. The parable of the talents reminds us of God's severity at poor performers (Matt 25:14-30).
- P. The parable of the sower has no fruit, temporary fruit, little fruit, or much fruit (Luke 8:4-18).
- Q. David's response to his brother is still valuable today, "Is there not a cause?" (I Sam 17:29).
- R. The cure for a lukewarm spiritual condition is to be zealous and repent (Revelation 3:19).
- S. Since everything is to be done to God's glory, it must be done with zeal (I Cor 10:31).
- T. Jesus died for His people to purify to Himself a people zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).
- U. Even matters like prayer (James 5:16-17) and charity (I Peter 1:22; 4:8) require fervency.
- V. It is not how much you have to give, but how much of what you have you give (Luk 21:1-4)!

Zeal for the Lord must be Guided

- A. Zeal can blind a man from prudently considering all the circumstances (II Samuel 21:1-2).
 - 1. Jesus warned the multitude following him to count the cost of zeal (Luke 14:25-33).
 - 2. Paul warned the Corinthians to direct their zeal toward edification (I Cor 14:12).
- B. Zeal can blind a man from a proper consideration of mercy and patience (Luke 9:51-56).
- C. Zeal can blind men to exercise hypocritical judgment (II Sam 12:1-6; II Chron 28:9-11).
- D. Zeal in judging others may turn against you by hypocrisy (II Kings 10:29,31; Hosea 1:4).
- E. Zeal can exist without knowledge, therefore it is not proof alone of truth (Romans 10:2).

Godly Zeal Has Enemies

- A. Fear squelches zeal, for true zeal has no fear in its passionate intensity to perform well.
 - 1. If David had listened to the criticism and condemnation of Eliab (I Samuel 17:28-29), which is characteristic of the response of those who have their dead religion exposed by another's zeal, he would not have defended his God by facing Goliath.
 - 2. Peter had zeal for loyalty to Jesus (Mark 14:29-31), but he lacked the matching courage.
- B. False humility is an enemy of zeal by men who cover their deadness by it (Col 2:18-23).
 - 1. For those who are dead will cover and excuse their effeminacy by claiming humility and accusing the zealous man of pride and self-righteousness (I Samuel 17:28).
 - 2. What would these "fems" do with Paul (I Cor 15:10; II Cor 11:5; 12:11-12; Gal 2:11)?
- C. Prosperity is an enemy of zeal, for it leads to complacency and over-confidence rather than self-examination and repentance and revenge (Deut 32:15; II Cor 7:10-11).

- D. We live in a weak age where God has neutered men by removing their spirit (Isaiah 3:1-5), therefore zeal will appear abnormal to one's own self and to all others.
- E. We live in perilous times when constant compromise by others crushes zeal (Matt 24:12).
- F. We live in perilous times where attacks against zeal are greatly increased (II Tim 3:1-5,12).
- G. We understand the glory of Christ and the proper place of zeal more than most, so we are responsible to show a greater degree of zeal than most (Luke 12:48).
- H. Why try to save your life? If you do so, you will lose on both ends, so give it up (Mat 10:39)!

Godly Zeal Is Contagious

- A. Zeal can provoke others by giving them an example of a fervent spirit and shaming them for their apathetic and lukewarm spirit (II Corinthians 9:2; II Kings 10:15-16).
- B. Zeal brings God's blessing and defers His judgment, since He hates lethargy and slothfulness (Psalm 37:4; Matthew 6:33; Revelation 2:1-5; 3:14-19).

Applied Zeal Is What Counts

- A. This is the key point! Are you zealous for the priorities God has already set for your life?
- B. You likely know what you should be doing in your life. Zeal gives you the force to do it!
- C. If you are not eaten up with zeal for God's house like our Lord, then pray for it (John 2:17).
- D. Getting up in the morning to read should be as automatic and certain as an athlete training.
- E. Job considered the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food (Job 23:12).
- F. What kind of a woman are you? The Bible is plain (Pr 31:10-31; Titus 2:3-5; I Peter 3:1-6).
- G. Rather than zeal against Zionism, Hillary Clinton, abortion, sodomy, and so forth, let us see our zeal against amoral family life, lethargic church life, television abuse, evil speech, etc.
- H. There is a more excellent way to serve God than any apostolic gift (I Cor 12:28 – 13:13).
- I. We need more zeal in personal holiness, God's house the church, and family leadership, which are areas of life that have great enemies to hinder the zeal of all but a very select few.
- J. How high are you aiming for your soul, your spouse, your children, your church, etc.?
- K. Each man has 10 parts of life for zeal ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/practical/mighty-man.htm>.

Conclusion:

- 1. Here is the bad news: you will give an account of your life to God (Rom 14:10-12; II Cor 5:9-11).
- 2. The conviction and power for a zealous life come from Jesus by the Spirit (Phil 4:13; I Cor 12:18).
- 3. It has been well said, "Only one life, it will soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last."
- 4. If you have slipped from your steadfastness, then be zealous and repent ... today (Rev 3:19)!

For Further Study:

- 1. The sermon outline, "A Mighty Man's Life," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/bible/practical/mighty-man.htm>.
- 2. The sermon outline, "Priorities of Life," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/priorities2.pdf>.
- 3. The sermon outline, "Forgotten Sins," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/forgotten-sins.pdf>.
- 4. The sermon, "He Deserves Better," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/he-deserves-better-than-that.pdf>.