**Nurturing Zeal**

**Introduction**

1. Zeal is a quality God requires of His children – **Revelation 3:14-16, 19** – church of the Laodiceans guilty of being lukewarm.
   1. They needed to repent by being zealous again.
   2. Zealous – *zēloō*; to have warmth of feeling for or against. (Strong)
   3. From – *zēlos*; properly, heat, i.e. (figuratively) “zeal.” (Strong)
   4. God is not pleased with the Christian who is not “all in,” but dispassionate and going through the motions.
2. God requires our entire self in our service to Him – **Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37** – all of every part of us.
   1. Deuteronomy 6:5 – “strength” – adverb – exceedingly, greatly – much, “muchness.”
   2. THERE SHOULD BE NO MILDNESS IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD.
   3. Proper zeal – **cf. Romans 10:1-2** – must be according to the knowledge of God and His will.
      1. There is a need for the coexistence of toeing the line of God’s law with the fervid desire, and pleasure of doing so.
      2. Zeal without knowledge is not acceptable. (EX: Paul)
3. Zeal is something that must be nurtured.
   1. Someone might say, “If I have to work at being zealous about something that won’t be genuine but manufactured.” – THIS IS FALSE.
   2. Some believe that such zeal is produced by the Holy Spirit, apart from any action of our own. – THIS IS NOT GOD’S DESIGN.
   3. The fact of the matter is it is not only possible, but likely that our fervidness about a matter will diminish over time if that is not fed.
   4. THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE WITH OUR LOVE AND SERVICE FOR GOD.
   5. ZEAL, PASSION, AND ARDOR ARE MATTERS WHICH TAKE CAREFUL MAINTENANCE.
4. What are ways we can nurture our zeal and remain on fire for the Lord?
5. Spend Time with God
6. The reason people become passionate about each other, and each other’s own passions is because they are involved in each other’s lives.
   1. We cannot expect to “be on fire for the Lord” if we’re never involved with Him.
7. Our study of God’s word will strengthen our feelings for Him.
   1. Peter encourages/commands growth in God’s word – **2 Peter 3:18**
   2. This is how we come to know God – **1 Corinthians 2:11-13**
   3. Paul’s response to knowing God’s wisdom – **Romans 11:33-36**
8. When we study God’s word often, those matters become important to us as they are to Him.
   1. **Psalm 119:137-144** – The Psalmist has spent much time with God in His word and has come to know it’s value. (**v. 139** – filled with righteous indignation for those who despise God’s word)
   2. **John 2:13-17** – Jesus cleanses the temple – Jesus was deeply moved by the sight because He was deeply invested in the things of God.
      1. Began at a young age by study – **Luke 2:52** – after amazing the teachers with His questions and answers in the temple at age 12.
      2. WE NEED TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THE THINGS OF GOD IN THE SENSE THAT THEY BECOME INVALUABLE TO US – **cf. Proverbs 23:23**
9. Spend Time with God’s People
10. Iron Sharpens Iron
    1. **Proverbs 27:17** – when we’re with those who are likewise zealous for God, or seeking that zeal, we will be sharpened toward that end.
    2. Peter speaks of Christians as those of like precious faith – **2 Peter 1:1**
       1. Obtained to something we know is precious.
       2. WHEN PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR INTERESTS SPEND TIME TOGETHER THOSE INTERESTS GROW! (Clubs for activities, etc.)
    3. This is why our new birth translates us into a fraternity of love – **1 Peter 1:22** – “obeying the truth…in (eis – to or into) sincere love of the brethren”
11. The Assembly is designed to stir these things up.
    1. **Hebrews 10:24-25** – The exhortation is to come together so the zeal for the works of God we are to have will be ignited.
    2. Opposite – **1 Corinthians 15:33** – when we are around those who don’t have such interest, our interest wanes.
    3. Example of Elijah:
       1. After gaining victory on Mt. Carmel for God in dramatic fashion, and killing the prophets of Baal – Jezebel sought his life.
       2. **1 Kings 19:4, 9-10** – was zealous, but then discouraged because he thought he was all alone.
       3. **1 Kings 19:18** – God saw it fit to assure him there were others. (Get up and go to work! There are more than just you.)
12. Remember Your First Works
13. When things are new and fresh it is easier to be zealous about them. After much time has passed those times of old must be remembered so the fire is maintained.
14. We need to reflect on our beginning as Christians often in order to maintain our passion for God.
    1. The church of Ephesus – **Revelation 2:2-5** – they were doing everything right in form, but their fire had died out.
       1. **(v. 5)** – Jesus’ instruction to regain zeal was to REMEMBER THE FIRST WORKS – those which they were involved in at the beginning of their walk with God.
    2. Our initial salvation is followed by rejoicing – **Acts 8:39** – why does that stop? It shouldn’t! – **cf. Philippians 4:4**
       1. The reason these feelings stop is because we don’t take time to reflect on them.
       2. **Philippians 4:8** – Paul says to dwell on these kinds of matters!
    3. Paul reminisced about the past which summoned joy and thanksgiving – **1 Timothy 1:12-16**
       1. This encounter with God’s grace drastically changed Paul – **Galatians 1:21-24** – His zeal was now according to knowledge.
       2. These are the first works Jesus is talking about remembering – WHEN YOU WERE ON FIRE FOR THE LORD, AND EXCITED ABOUT MATTERS OF FAITH, AND WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR GOD.
15. Meditate on the Prize
16. It can be hard to be passionate about something that doesn’t benefit you in any way. God saw the value of incentive and promised a reward which surpasses all we know to be good. We would do well to think about it!
17. Thinking of the end of our faith will make us fervent about our faith.
    1. **1 Peter 1:3-9** – God has promised us an inheritance and keeps us until the end by faith to receive it.
    2. This is why Paul was willing to die for Jesus:
       1. **Acts 21:12-13** – after the Spirit prophesied about trouble in Jerusalem.
       2. **Philippians 1:19-24** – to die is gain – HE LONGS FOR THE REWARD.
          1. But also – TO LIVE IS CHRIST.
          2. He is excited about going to be with the Lord but is also zealous to stay and serve in His kingdom!
       3. **Philippians 3:7** – Paul counted all loss for Christ.
          1. He is rightly described as a religious zealot!
          2. **Philippians 3:12-14** – His zeal came, in part, from longing for the prize!
          3. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27** – His desire to win the prize led him to drastic measures of self-discipline. (Zeal in service to God – TO WHAT SOME OF LESSER FAITH WOULD CALL EXTREMISM.)
    3. Jesus’ zeal was likewise motivated by His reward – **John 9:4; Hebrews 12:1-2** – we need to look to Him as an example.

**Conclusion**

1. God calls us to fervent service of faith. We are to be zealous – **Titus 2:14** – His special people zealous for good works.
2. We cannot think that this zeal will just happen. We must work on it and cultivate it.
3. Truly, zeal is a matter to be nurtured.
4. If we are not protecting our zeal for God we will lose it.