

## In a Word - Zealous

### Introduction

- Zealous: A Definition
  - Adjective – Having “zeal”
  - “Showing great energy, eagerness, or enthusiasm in pursuit of a cause, activity or objective.”
- People can have “zeal” concerning many things
  - They can be zealous toward work, school, past-times, and of course, religion.
- Occurrences: “zeal” and “zealous”
  - AKJV – 26; NKJV – 42; ESV – 26; NASV – 49; NIV – 50
  - From the number of occurrences, it seems the later versions used the words more often
- Although it doesn’t occur often in our English bibles, the thought of being “zealous” toward God and service to Him is a very important one.

### I. Zealous Toward God

- a. God desires those who serve Him to be zealous in fear and respect.

Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day. (Proverbs 23:17)

Do not let your heart envy sinners, But live in the fear of the Lord always. (NASV)

- b. Don’t envy those who sin. Sin is fun, enjoyable, and gives one pleasure. Sin can also be prosperous, making life seem easy.
  - i. Christians should be careful not to lose their zeal while observing the ungodly.
  - ii. “Then do we wonder, why others prosper, living so wicked year after year.”
- c. Being zealous in respect for God will cause us to sacrifice our own desires.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

- d. We must also be zealous in the sacrifice of worship...
  - i. Not like the Old Testament sacrifices because...

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

- ii. New Testament worship is to be in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)
  - 1. “in spirit” – some versions render this as in the Holy Spirit, according to the word
  - 2. “in spirit” – could also mean the correct attitude or with zeal (opinion)
- e. The Hebrew writer speaks of the new sacrifice of worship...

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (16) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:15–16)

- i. Keywords of this passage: “continually” steadfastly, with eagerness, and zeal.
- ii. “fruit of our lips” – worshiping verbally, singing, praying

(18) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (20) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (21) submitting to one another in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:18–21)

- iii. Note: The things are to be done while submitting to each in the fear of the Lord which is to be done with zeal according to Proverbs 23:17, which began this discussion.

## II. Misguided Zeal

- a. We can become zealous for the wrong reason and wrong things
  - i. Worldliness (idolatry)

(15) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (1 John 2:15–16)

- ii. We can exchange a blank for the word “world” in this passage to describe any activity or object with which we may become zealous or obsessed with
- iii. Our jobs, pastimes, or the love of money (material things) are the top three
- iv. We can become zealous for pleasure, addicted to “feeling good”

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

- v. We can have misguided zeal for the world.

- b. When it comes to religion, we can have a misguided zeal...
  - i. Because of a lack of knowledge...

Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. (2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. (Romans 10:1–2)

- ii. We can become zealous for religious tradition rather than truth

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

c. Paul said...

(I was) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; (6) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (Philippians 3:5–6)

- i. Saul was zealous when it came to Judaism and destroying the church (Galatians 1:13-14)
- ii. He was misguided and zealous for the wrong reason

### III. Zealous for the Good

- a. Eager and enthusiastic to do what is right...
  - i. To the lukewarm church of Laodicea, Jesus said

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

- ii. The church was neither cold nor hot, they were not zealous
- iii. They were materially and financially well-off and had become complacent
- iv. Their faith was dead because it lacked action...

(15) If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? (17) Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:15–17)

- b. God wants us all to have a benevolent heart...
  - i. Those in the Great Judgment of Matthew 25 received the inheritance of the kingdom because they had been kind and merciful, helping the helpless.

Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:13–14)

- c. We are created in Christ for good works (Ephesians 2:10)
  - i. We are to be ready and alert at every opportunity (Galatians 6:10)
  - ii. We do not possess zeal for good works to receive mercy and grace but because of it!

### IV. In a Word: Zealous

- a. We must not lose our zeal...

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding (being zealous) in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)