

BIBLE STUDY LESSON

“DEVELOPING A ZEAL FOR GOD”

AKA

“LEARNING TO DEAL WITH ZEAL”

SCRIPTURE TEXTS: “PSALMS 106: 28-31” – “COLOSSIANS 3: 23” AND “ROMANS 12:11”

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INTRODUCTION:

“Eaten Up”. You can be eaten up with a goal. It's when you want something so badly that it 'consumes' you.

ILLUSTRATION: “Hero Worship”. This is when you want that sandwich more than anything. [Hero!] No. I've noticed that there's a very large crowd that, whenever they hear the President speak, they will eat up anything he says, even if it sounds crazy. I've heard it in churches, when there is an “Entertaining” Preacher speaking and an engaged crowd full of “Amens” and Vocalizing. He/She can say just about anything and they will eat it up. “People are Dying and Going To Hell” (People Respond 'Hallelujah'!)

We get eaten up with something we want. They say in the world of ‘Sales’ that once a person is emotionally attached to that car, electronic gadget, etc., You've Got Them 'Eating Out Of The Palm Of Your Hand'.

I wish we had that kind of Zeal for the things of God.

Zeal Means Passion or Enthusiasm. “Zealous” is related to “Jealous”, in the sense that you are willing to protect something at all costs.

The Difference Between Zealous and Jealous

There are two words in English that are very alike, Zealous and Jealous. To be either Zealous or Jealous is to have a fire in the heart. But They Are Very Different Fires. Generally, we think of being Jealous as an Evil Kind of Fire that Destroys what is Good; whereas generally we think of being Zealous as Burning With Fire In A Good Way. Let's be Zealous and Not Jealous. Let's Burn With Zeal and Not With “Jeal.”

(Cont. 2)

I hear you say, **“Bishop Turner, There's No Such Thing As Jeal.”** And You're Right, and **Neither Should There Be!**

We should have Zeal for The House Of God because it is a testimony to the world around us.

A major mark of a child growing up and maturing is discovering the importance of their body. Isn't it fun to watch a baby discover its body? One day it discovers its fingers and will play with them all day long and will suck on them. Same with the toes! Then one day it learns its legs are good for something and they can walk, and its tongue can make it talk. And we were so eager for them to walk and talk and then we want them to ... **“Sit Down and Shut Up!”**

It's a mark of their maturity that they recognize the importance of their body. And the older we get, the more we appreciate and try to take care of our body...it's a mark of maturity...and so, maturing Christians recognize their importance as the body of Christ, and appreciate the rest of the body, and do their part to take care of the body!

And so the person who places no importance on the church is likely not saved...or at least very spiritually immature.

What is the driving force in your life and what are you passionate about?

I. DEVELOPING A ZEAL FOR GOD (PSALMS 106: 28-31)

They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor and ate sacrifices made to the dead

Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds and the plague broke out among them

Then Phinehas stood up and intervened and the plague was stopped

And that was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore

Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We all have a Zeal for something and a desire to be passionate about.

(Cont. 3)

This is not a romantic passion, but a passion for living and desiring to have a passion in life. We are passionate about work, striving to make a success. We are passionate about possessions, striving to want more and better stuff.

We are passionate about our sports teams and we spend all our time, energy and money on things that we are most passionate about, but the question is have we got a passion for God? The Bible has a lot to say about our zeal for God.

A. Those With A Passion For God

1. David (Psalm 42:1-5)
3. The Apostles
5. Paul (1st Corinthians 2:2)
2. Caleb (Josh 14:6-14)
4. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
6. Martin Luther King Jr.

7. JESUS CHRIST

B. The Zealous Spirit (Num 25:1-13)

1. God command the people not to interact or to have relations with the heathens.
2. Despite this command Israel committed idolatry with the women of Baal Peor (Num 25:1-3)
3. This was done in rebelling against God's will and violating His commands
4. God commanded Moses to kill all those who committed this sin and to hang their bodies in the sun so everybody could see.
5. While they are killing them, Zimri brings a Midianite into the camp so that he can commit adultery with her. This creates a righteous zeal within Phinehas
6. Phinehas heard that Zimri had taken Cozbi into his bedroom to commit adultery with her. He grabbed a javelin and drove it through their bodies, killing both of them.
7. God withdrew His wrath because of this act of righteous zeal.
8. Because Phinehas had courage and Zeal, God made a Covenant of Peace as well as an Everlasting Covenant of The Everlasting Priesthood with Him.

(Cont. 4)

C. Lessons From The Life Of Phinehas

1. Godly Zeal has its source from the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer
2. The seat of Godly Zeal is in the heart
3. The object of having a Godly Zeal is good works
4. What we are interested in and what we value creates a passion
5. Go against the norms of this world and proclaim God's holiness
6. We need people to be raised up to walk like Phinehas walked in the fear of God.

Jesus's Passion was for us to be drawn closer to God and our thoughts need to be aligned with the Word of God so that when we talk about God to non-believers, the Holy Spirit can do His work of convicting them of wrong thoughts. What are you passionate about because everything else will fade but the Word of God will stand forever?

II. THE DEAL WITH ZEAL (ROMANS 12:11)

If you know that you lack, and you want to get back, then you can't slack.

Over the last several years, I've tried to take popular spiritual slogans and analyze them from the perspective of Scripture. Let me tackle another one: **"Let Go And Let God."** Now, I understand the heart behind this. For many of us controllers, we're holding on to way too many things when God calls us to surrender to Him. But in another sense, this phrase is way too passive. We can't just sit kick back on our couch and hope to grow in character or in Christ-likeness. The Bible speaks of an imperative urgency and the need for disciplined diligence. We can't be spiritual slackers.

Many of us are way too passive either because we no longer care or maybe we think that somehow, we'll just become this super Christian with the passing of time.

(Cont. 5)

I listened to a sermon this past week from. The Minister made a statement that I haven't been able to shake and I hope it sticks with you as well: "Life will not give you what you want, neither will it give you what you think you deserve, life will give you what you're willing to settle for."

He Used An Illustration To Make His Point:

"A college freshman named Smitty became the field goal kicker for the football team. At the end of a game he was called on to go in and kick a game-winning field goal but Smitty wanted to make his mark so he changed plays in the huddle. The ball was hiked directly to him and he started running and was clobbered and fumbled the ball.

The ball was picked up and the opposing player started running toward the other end zone. The other players couldn't catch him and then out of nowhere someone starting gaining ground on him. He was running like a streak of lightning. It was Smitty! He caught up to the other player and tackled him before he could score.

The assistant turned to the head coach and remarked, "Did you know Smitty had wheels like that? He beat our best athletes and made the tackle!" The head coach replied, "I'll tell you why. The other guys were running because they were supposed to. Smitty was running because his life depended on it." My Brothers and Sisters, you and I must live like our life depended on it. And we must live wholeheartedly for Christ because the lives of others depend on it.

I want to propose that if you know that you lack, and you want to get back, then you can't slack.

Please turn in your Bible to [Romans 12:11](#): "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

Our Lesson Outline today comes right from this verse.

1. "Never Be Lacking In Zeal." This is a warning about not being a spiritual slacker. "The literal translation is 'in Zeal, do not be lazy.'

(Cont. 6)

The word 'Zeal' carries with it the idea of intense effort and motivation, doing something whole-heartedly, or with great enthusiasm. It is an attitude that leads to action..." One commentator put it like this: **"Whatever is worth doing in the Christian life is valuable enough to be done with enthusiasm and care."** This is reflected in [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#): **"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..."**

Sometimes crazy things are done in the name of zeal. It's easy to become zealous about a whole bunch of things like brats and cheese but we're cautioned in [Proverbs 19:2](#) to make sure our zeal is tied to truth: **"It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way."**

Literally the first part of [Romans 12:11](#) reads this way, **"In the diligence not slothful..."**

Let me list some words that go along with diligence to help open up the meaning: speed, haste, passion, seriousness, urgency, eagerness, readiness, and dedication. One pastor offers a super definition: **"The persistent and passionate pursuit of divine directives in spite of discouraging difficulties."** The word **"Lacking"** can be translated as slothful and has the idea of hesitating, delaying, idle, and lagging behind or being as slow as a sloth. Did you know that slothfulness is one of the seven deadly sins?

[Derek Kidner](#), in his commentary on Proverbs, identifies four signs of the sluggard. A sluggard is an idle, slothful person. See if you have any of these tendencies.

(1) He will not begin things. He does not commit himself to a refusal, but deceives himself by the smallness of his surrenders. So, by inches and minutes, his opportunity slips away. We see this in [Proverbs 6:9-11](#): **"How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man."**

(2) He will not finish things. The rare effort of beginning has been too much and the impulse dies.

(Cont. 7)

So his quarry goes bad on him (12:27) and his meal goes cold on him (26:15). One of my favorites is found in [Proverbs 19:24](#): “The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!”

(3) He will not face things. The sluggard comes to believe his own excuses, rationalizes his laziness, and makes a habit of the soft choice. We see this in [Proverbs 20:4](#): “A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.” We know that we’re being a spiritual sluggard if we keep putting off dealing with habits and sins that are harmful to our spiritual lives.

(4) Consequently, he is restless with unsatisfied desire according to [Proverbs 13:4](#): “The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”

Kidner concludes: “The sluggard is no freak, but, as often as not, an ordinary man who has made too many excuses, too many refusals and too many postponements. It has all been as imperceptible, and as pleasant, as falling asleep.”

God calls out his watchmen who were supposed to be alert in [Isaiah 56:10](#): “...They lie around and dream, they love to sleep.” Jesus spoke strong words to the one who did not use what was given to him in [Matthew 25:26](#): “**You wicked, lazy servant!**” Someone has defined laziness this way: “The tendency to remain where we are in life instead of moving to where we could and should be.” With that definition, who among us is not lazy? What are we going to do about it?

III. ZEAL FOR GOD (COLOSSIANS 3:23)

[Colossians 3:23](#): “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Webster defines the word 'Zeal' as 1. Eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something. 2. Two synonyms are Fervor or Passion. In our text this evening the apostle Paul uses the word 'heartily'. The word "heartily" literally means "from the soul."

(Cont. 8)

People are passionate or zealous about many things. We are passionate about work, striving to succeed. We are passionate about possessions, striving to have more. We are passionate about hobbies and interests. We are passionate about our sports teams. Think of this... We always have enough time, energy and money for those things about which we are passionate.

The real question is: **“Are We Passionate About That Which Is Most Important?”** **“Are We Passionate About God?”** The Bible has much to say about our 'Zeal' for God.

In [Numbers 25:11](#), God speaks of **“Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.”**

God describes Himself as passionate and zealous. Several times in the OT we read, **“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”**

Jesus is described as zealous. [Isaiah.59:17](#) prophesied of Him, **“For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.”**

The disciples understood [Psalms 69:9](#) spoke of Him, **“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”**

Jesus' Passion was His Father's will. He said in [St. John 4:34](#), **“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”**

The Bible also encourages believers to pursue a passionate or zealous relationship with God.

[Proverbs 13:4](#) The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

(Cont. 9)

[Ecclesiastes 9:10](#) Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

[Galatians 4:18](#) But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

[1st Corinthians 14:12](#) Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

Paul speaks of his own passion in [Colossians.1:29](#), “Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

[Titus 2:14](#) speaks of Jesus “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Paul said to Timothy in [2nd Timothy 1:6](#), “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”

Our Spiritual Passion Or Zeal Is Like A Fire. As long as we pile on the wood, the wind of the Spirit will fan the flames and the fire will be so hot even a rainstorm of adversity won't douse it. However, when we don't feed the fire it will smolder.

[John Wesley](#) was once asked why so many people came to hear him preach. He said, “I just set myself on fire and the people come to watch me burn!”

Are we '**On Fire**' for God? If not, why not? Get on fire for God and men will come to see you burn. If there is something missing in our relationship and our service to God, chances are it is our passion...our zeal!

[A. Why We Lack Zeal for God.](#)

1. Some Do Not Know God.

a. If a person has never been saved, they will never have a passion for prayer, Bible study, worship, ministry, witnessing, giving...

(Cont. 10)

b. The zeal for these things comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

c. Do you remember the zeal that you had when you were first saved?

d. You couldn't wait to get to church; to read the Bible, to pray, to talk about God...

2. That Which Should Be Precious Has Become Too Familiar.

a. We are all familiar with the phrase, **"Familiarity breeds contempt."**

b. Our enemy can't steal our salvation; he'll just make us forget what it was like to be lost.

c. We'll grow accustomed to prayer and thereby not pray.

d. Worship will become commonplace and Bible study optional.

e. What about us? Have we become so familiar with the things of God that we have allowed the 'precious' to become 'common'?

3. We Live In A "Me-First" Society.

a. We want what we want when we want it!

b. Many view every facet of life - work, school, home, play, church - as a means to satisfy themselves!

c. Because everyone around us is so self-involved it is easy to get sucked into their lifestyle and let the fire of our passion cool.

4. We grow more Apathetic with Age.

a. For many, the older we get the less our zeal.

b. We adopt an attitude that says, **"Let someone else do it...I have put in my time."**

c. Caleb was one of the 12 spies who wanted to take the Promised Land.

d. He was 40 years old then. When he was 80, Israel marched across the Jordan.

(Cont. 11)

e. When the land was divided, he was 85.

f. Listen to the zeal in his words from [Josh.14:11-12a](#).

“As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain...”

5. We want Acceptance and Approval.

a. Sometimes our desire for popularity pours water on our zeal.

b. We don't want to be considered a fanatic (a nut).

c. So we try to keep things on the 'down low' when it comes to our faith in God.

d. The danger is in becoming like the Laodicean believers, “**Lukewarm... neither hot or cold?**”

B. Why Being Zealous For God Should Be Our Priority.

1. God Desires Passionate Believers.

a. Look at [Titus 2:14](#).

[Titus 2:14](#) “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

b. Look at [Romans 12:11](#).

[Romans 12:11](#), “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”

c. Some people think Christianity is some inward journey, that it should be seen and not heard.

d. Our faith should be “**Fervent**” or boiling over for God.

e. Some think church should be a place for quietness. [shhhhhh]

f. But God admonishes us to be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.

2. Zeal is the First Step toward accomplishment.

(Cont. 12)

- a. We accomplish that which motivates us.
- b. Whatever we are passionate about we will 'make it happen'.
- c. The question again is, what drives us?
- d. We will accomplish what drives us.
- e. If we develop zeal for God, we will grow spiritually.
- f. If we become a church with a zeal for God, we will grow!
- g. A passionate church that reaches its goals for God is a church made up of passionate individuals.
- h. We are a link in this chain! How's our zeal?

3. Zeal Changes People.

a. First, it will change me.

1a.) It changes how I think, how I feel about myself, how I preach, how I care, how I love...

b. Second, It Will Change Others.

2a.) People can see the difference.

2b.) Your family, co-workers, neighbors, etc

2c.) Fellow believers will see it.

2d.) And lost people will see it!

2e.) If we become passionate for God, people will be saved... every time!

4. Zeal For God Protects You And Me From Sin.

a. When did David get into trouble...when he decided to sit out the battle.

b. The same is true for us.

c. I have seen it countless times in the lives of believers...

(Cont. 13)

d. They begin to lose their zeal for God...things become routine...before long they aren't as involved as they once were...

e. Next thing you know they are out of church and their life is no different from someone who is lost.

C. How To Regain Our Zeal For God.

1. Be Filled With The Holy Spirit.

a. Zeal comes from within, from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

b. We must be filled with His power daily.

c. Paul challenges us in Ephesians 5:18

Ephesians 5:18 says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"

2. Pray For Passion.

Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"

James 5:16b "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

1stThessalonians 5:17 "Pray without ceasing."

3. Return To Our First Love.

a. In Revelation 2:1-7, We Read Jesus' Message To The Church At Ephesus.

3a.) He had many praises for them but in v4 He said, "... I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

3b.) It seems that the Ephesians had the fire once, but they had let it go cold.

3c.) They left their "First Love"

b. Jesus told them, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first work..."

c. Apathy is not a condition of the mind, but of the heart.

(Cont. 14)

4. Associate With Passionate People.

- a. People will affect you.
- b. A poker gets hot when it is put in the fire.
- c. If we will build relationships with people who have a zeal for God...it will cause us to desire the same.

5. We Must Make This A Priority In Our Lives.

- a. Be Passionate about our Walk with God.
- b. Be Passionate about our Witness for God.
- c. Be Passionate about our Church.

CONCLUSION:

The Zeal of Phinehas for God stood as an atonement for the monstrous disobedience of Israel.

The Result Was In Itself A Reward. To a man of the stamp of Phinehas it must surely have been no small joy to see the plague stayed. May we not presume that even the leaders escaped their doom, as in a most comprehensive amnesty? **But there is a specified reward beside.**

Phinehas Has Shown His Fitness To Wear Aaron's Robes; No, in a sense he has worn them, seeing he has made atonement. The real reward for every one faithful to his present opportunity is to enlarge his opportunity and give him more and higher service. He who has the joy of faithfulness in present and perhaps humble duties cannot have a greater joy than that of faithfulness in all of larger and more conspicuous service that may come before him.

Our Lord himself, being Zealous For His Father on earth, cleansing His Father's House from profane and even unrighteous uses, was advanced to still higher service in the glorious opportunities belonging to a place at God's right hand.

(Cont. 15)

Among Men There Is Lamentable Waste, Humiliating and Ridiculous Failure, Because Men Are So Seldom Proportioned To The Offices They Fill. The fit man in the great multitude of instances does not seem to get his chance. But in God's service every one really gets his chance. Phinehas got his chance here. Everything depended on himself. The act was the outcome of his honest, fiery, devoted, godly heart. He had not to go to his father or to Moses, saying, **“Think you I should do this thing?”**

If There Is Zeal In Us, Occasion Will Not Be Lacking. Phinehas had been required to show the zeal of the destroyer, and it proved to be also the zeal of the preserver. **We have to be Zealous For A God who is not only Righteous and Holy, and Jealous Of Rivalry From Any Other God Whatsoever, But Also Loving, and Who Desires Not The Death Of A Sinner.**

The Zeal that can do nothing but protest, denounce, and destroy, God will never approve or reward. The Becoming, Fruitful, and Praiseworthy Zeal Under The Gospel is that which, following in the train of Paul, Is All Things To All Men In Order To Save Some. Amen.