

Zeal for the Lord

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 January 2011

[0:00] Zeal. Zeal. People can have zeal for all kinds of things. I know there's some real zealous people down at the footy field.

They go and play down there, whether rain, hail, sleep or shine. There's some people that queue for hours to get a ticket to go to watch their favourite event, to fly their team colours, to train rigorously in long and hard conditions.

And people can have a zeal for famous people. They can love famous people. I know there's some people that plaster the walls of their room with movie stars or film or sports stars.

They'll go and spend great lengths of time in queues to get tickets for events. Some people have got a great zeal for politics or for various issues that they hold dear to their hearts.

They've got a zeal for their national pride or their heritage about loyalties, about a zeal for work. Some people are workaholics. We know some people like that. People who work hard, devoting many hours. Could be to gain qualifications or to earn money. Sometimes we can have misplaced zeal.

[1:18] What about a zeal for the things of God? A zeal for the Lord's work? A zeal for what really counts? I know there's some real live wires I know. There's a man called Vic that I know. He just can't stop talking about the Lord Jesus.

And he's got a zeal and I admire him for that. But sometimes we can use the weaviest excuse, the weakest reasons why we will not commit, why we will not follow Jesus.

Some would think, oh, just take Christianity lightly. Take it easy breezy. Take it carelessly and casually. Just ease up. Don't get so fired up about it. Just go easy.

But this is not God's plan. God's plan we read of in here in Titus 2. From verse 14, it speaks of our Saviour who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

This is God's best for you. It's God's best for you. It's God's best for me to be a people zealous of good works, of God's work. It's God's best, isn't it?

[2:32] And Paul elsewhere writes in Galatians 4 verse 18, he says, It is a good thing. It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.

And I just pray, I yearn for that, that our church, that we as a church would aspire to that, to be a zealous people, zealous of God's work, zealous of good works.

A church of God's design, of his making, not diluted, not polluted, not compromised. The church of God, what is it meant to be? We're not meant to be tame or timid. We're meant to be fearless and on fire.

We're meant to be vibrant and full of life, not indifferent and inactive, not unmoved and uncaring. The church of God is meant to turn from deadness, to turn from staleness, to turn from coldness and lukewarmness.

This is not God's plan for us. What is God's plan for his church? That it be a purified people, a peculiar people, a powerful people, a zealous people.

[3:40] The question is, why is it not? Why is the church of God so careless, so sloppy, so slack, when we ought to be a people zealous, zealous, a church alive with his power, with his glory, praying for that revival of true godliness with that dynamic of God himself, a church alive, consumed with zeal for the Lord, a church that has got back to the Bible, to purity, to separation, with God's invigorating, with God's indwelling presence of his Holy Spirit?

Friends, I want to urge you today to that, to aspire to that, because God would urge you for that. God wants that, his best for you. To be a man like Apollos, we read of him Wednesday night,

fervent in spirit, fervent in spirit.

Are you that today? You can be. It was said of him, it can be said of you. I like what I've said also of John the Baptist, he was a burning and a shining light.

There was something about him, he was on fire, there was a burning, there was a fire there. You want to be a zealous people, energetic, vibrant, vitalised, forceful, fervent, consumed with him, consumed with him.

That's what he wants for you, for me. Think of it now, be honest now. What is it that consumes you? What is it that fills your life, that fills your time, your energy?

[5:21] It's been said, if a person has never been saved, they will never have a passion for prayer, for Bible study, for worship, for ministry, for witnessing, for giving.

Do you desire God? Are you hungry? Now we've got a lunch on so you can get hungry. But are you hungry for spiritual truth, for spiritual food?

Paul speaks of his own passion in Colossians 1 verse 29. He says, Whereunto I also labour, striving. That doesn't sound like a casual, easy breezy.

Take it or leave it kind of Christianity. Striving. Striving. According to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

There was a fire in his bones, in his belly. Is he working in you mightily today? Are you zealous for good works?

[6:21] The Lord wants us to be, to be that kind of people. Arden, burning, vibrant, stirred. Have you lost the dry? Have you lost the fire?

Have you ever had it? Zeal. It changes people. Now of course we know that some of us have zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. It needs to be a zeal that's led by his spirit, but it's according to his word.

A zeal that is diligent, that's willing. Ask yourself, am I fired up or have I given up?

We need to disturb and be disturbed. The word of God needs to prompt us. One area for zeal is prayer.

Prayer was referred to earlier in something that was said. In James 5, verse 16. Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you be healed.

[7:20] The effectual further prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man subject to light passions as we are, and he prayed casually.

No, that's the modern version. He prayed, get it right. He prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

It says he prayed earnestly, earnestly. A man of light passions. Effectual, fervent, fervent prayer.

Epaphras is a man praised by Paul in Colossians 4, a servant of Christ.

Paul says of him, always laboring fervently for you in prayers. He has a great zeal for you. It's interesting, when the church prayed in Acts 12, Peter was locked up.

It says prayer was made fervently. In the King James, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

[8:29] And that same word, without ceasing, is elsewhere translated fervently. Always laboring fervently. Can we be like Epaphras?

Can we be like the early church? What happened when they prayed? Without ceasing? What happened when they prayed fervently? Peter was released from jail. God unlocked the doors when prayer moved the hand of God.

Earnest prayer, zealous prayer. We can have zeal. You can have zeal in prayer. Fervent prayer. You can have zeal in the priorities of your life.

Think of the priorities of your life. And who should set those priorities? We read of our Lord, but here's our model.

We should walk in His footsteps, we read. Here's our example. It says of Him in John 2, 17, His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

[9:34] He was consumed with that zeal. He was set on fire like John the Baptist, a burning and a shining light. He was zealous for the cause. There was a singleness of purpose.

We read of our Lord that He set His face like a flint to head towards the cross. He was determined to go to the cross for you. He was determined to go to Calvary for you. He was consumed with the cross for you.

He was consumed with the blood shedding for you. With the love of Calvary's cross for you. He was consumed with the cause. That singleness of purpose.

What about you? Oughtn't we to be like Him? To have that zeal that would eat us up. There is no greater cause that we can champion.

There is no loftier goal, no higher aspiration that we can set for our life than this. Then to have that zeal, to be a zealous people.

[10:35] A writer said, Awake my soul, stretch every nerve and press with vigour on. A heavenly race demands thy zeal and an immortal crown.

This is a race in which we should strive and stretch every muscle, every fibre, the very core of our being. Let's not take our Christianity carelessly and flippantly.

Think of your priorities. Is the Lord a priority in your life? If you call Him Lord, then He must be. If you truly call Him Lord, your master, your passion, your priority, your goal, your aspiration.

One we should be passionate about. Not careless about. Not unheeding. Passionate. In our walk, in our witness, in our church.

The zeal of God, it should urge us on to strive to do His perfect will. To carry on His work, to be pleasing unto Him in every part of our life.

[11:41] To do all to the glory of God. Friends, think of it. In 1 Peter 1 it says, Also of fervency, seeing then that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit unto unfaded love of the brethren, seeing that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently.

That's the kind of love we should have. A love for the brethren. A love for the fellowshiping. A love for the people, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Priorities.

It's about priorities. And we ought to be untiring and unyielding in that zeal to serve Him, to live for Him. A zeal in prayer. Fervent.

Fervent prayer. Unceasing. Salus prayer. A zeal in our priorities. We're not consumed with those second-rate things.

I mean, you might still have a footy team you like to watch now and again. But it's just rubbish in comparison, isn't it? It's just wasted.

[12:54] Wasted energy, isn't it? In comparison. I'm not saying that there's not a time for some diversion. But let it not divert you from that zeal.

Let it not take away from that zeal. If it does, then trash it. Bin it. Burn it. Think of that. A zeal in prayer. A zeal in priorities. Think of a zeal in the power.

The power of God. A zeal of His empowerment. Of His enabling. Of His equipping in all that we do. That prompts us to a boldness. To a courage. To an action. In the word we read in 1 Corinthians 14. To be zealous of spiritual gifts. We should have a zeal. To find and be that which God has gifted us and equipped us to be. To find how God can empower you.

And use you as His instrument. In some way. In some fashion. In some form. That God has put a calling on your life. He's given you abilities. He's given you His empowerment.

[13:57] By His Spirit. We should be zealous of spiritual gifts. The zeal of God should be something we want to be about. A people harnessed by Him.

Unleashed by Him. Not slothful in business. Fervent in spirit. Serving the Lord. We read in Romans 12:11. There's a lot of things I've said here about work.

About the work of the Lord. Here's some quotes about work. And I know this is very, very true. You could say it's very true in the church of God.

It's a shame to confess it. But here's a quote. After all is said and done. A lot more will have been said than done. You know.

To people who want to serve the Lord. They say yes I'll serve Him. Yes I'll follow Him. But when it comes to the crunch. When the rubber hits the road. They don't show up. It's like Thomas Edison said.

[14:56] Opportunity is missed by most people. Because it's dressed in overalls. And looks like work. Another quote. Hard work spotlights the character of people.

Some turn up their sleeves. Some turn up their noses. And some don't turn up at all. What about the work of God? Shouldn't we be zealous of good works?

I know there's a lovely couple in this church. Who turned up and swept up some leaves outside.

What a humble work. Who would care about a few leaves in the car park?

But they cared. They cared enough to show up. To do something about it. To do something. A humble work. But a needful work. To serve the Lord with gladness.

That's how we should serve Him. With gladness. Not out of compulsion. Not out of being badgered. Not out of being rostered even. But wanting to serve Him.

[15:52] With gladness. It's our privilege. Peter Marshall, an old time preacher said. Small deeds done. Are better than great deeds planned.

You might think. Oh one day I'm going to be trained up enough. And qualified enough. And holy enough to serve Him. But for the meantime. I'll just potter along.

One day I'll serve Him. Small deeds done. Are better than great deeds planned. Serve Him now. Serve Him in the capacity that you have now. Don't wait for some tomorrow.

Today. Another quote. Thank God every morning when you get up. That you have something to do that day. Which must be done. Whether you like it or not.

Being forced to work. And forced to do your best. Will bring in you temperance. Self-control.

Diligence and strength of will. Sharefulness and contentment. And a hundred virtues.

[16:50] Which the idle never know. You know I visited a man. Our brother Ralph. In hospital. And he's about the only one I've got to say. Just cool it down a bit Ralph.

You're working too hard. Amen. Sometimes we can work too hard. I know that can be true. But friends. I don't think there's too many here that I can say.

You're working too hard for God. I know I'm not working too hard for Him. There's much much more.

That any one of us can truly do. But we know there's sometimes limitations. But God will help you.

If you're willing. You know. Paul writes to Timothy. To stir up the gift. It's got the sense of. Fan it into flame. You know those old fashioned bellows.

They used to use. With the stoves. To make them glow again. To make them spark again. To curl flame again. Fan it into flame. The gifts that God has given you.

[17:47] Every Christian. Has something they can do. Every Christian.

Every one of you. Has something you can do. Don't be idle in the marketplace. It says of some.

They're idle in the marketplace. They're just. Their lives have nothing to show. For their. Breath they've got. Given.

And I was just thinking. And brother Ralph. I was just. I was so glad that he's. Coming around.

Because he was in a coma. And I thought. Well he's going to have to hang up his work boots. But. Maybe he's going to put them back on again soon.

But. You know. God knows the time. That we've got. I know. Another old time brother. A friend of mine. Years ago. He was in his late 80s. And he was. Going out there.

For meals on wheels. He died with his boots on. He died with his boots on. Don't you want to be like that. Yes. There's no time to retire. It's time to refire. To refire.

[18:42] And so. How do we get this zeal. This zeal that we're talking about. Is this just some theoretical thing. Why are we not. A church. Zealous. Of good works.

It says we can be. It says we ought to be. Why are we not. Because we've accommodated the spirit. Of this age. We've accommodated the world. God has.

Got crammed out. With everything else. That takes his place. What is the answer. Revelation 3. Be zealous therefore. And. Repent.

Repent. As many as I love. I rebeer can chase him. Be zealous therefore. And repent. To repent. It means to have sorrow. For our sin.

To be pain. For our sin. Our violation of God's holy law. Our dishonour of his character. Of his government. Our foulness. Our ingratitude. For his goodness to us.

[19:38] His grace. Be zealous. And. Repent. Comes hand in hand. Zeal. And repenting. You know. When God moved. The people of God. Repented.

When God moved. In the old time. When the people. Got zealous. For good. For good works. For God. We read. For example.

Of Jehu. He said. Come and see my zeal. For the Lord. What did he do? He demolished. The temple of Baal. He turned it into a toilet. In 2 Kings 10.

27. Asa. He. Also. Destroyed. The idols. Jehoiada. He smashed the idols. The altars of Baal. Josiah. He removed the false religions from the temple.

Josipha. He reaped the land of idols. And he set his heart on seeking God. Hezekiah. And Manasseh. They removed the false gods. And they. Re-established.

[20:37] God's principles. Ezra. Led the people. To bring their marriages into obedience to God's law. Nehemiah. Nehemiah. Restored to worship. In honour of the Lord.

Their zeal was evident by their actions. And so should it be for you. For me. The zeal of God. Should prompt us to repentance. Should prompt us to reviving. Of that further.

Of that enthusiasm. Of that readiness to stir. As God's people. We are called to be a zealous people. A zealous people. Now some people would think. Oh you know.

To get so. Fanatical. And yet you see them down at the footy field. They're absolutely bonkers. For their football team. They're absolutely fanatical.

They're absolutely radical. You know. And they don't care what they look like. With their stupid colours all over them. And they paint it all over their ugly faces. And they think that that is.

[21:31] You know. Something wonderful and great. They're absolutely sold out to the cause. You know. They don't care how many hundreds of dollars they pay. To go to see the next final. Or travel across the other side of the nation.

If it be. If it be their team. Ought we to have a zeal for what really counts. We ought to. We ought to be revived. In that zeal. To be zealous of good works.

Not stifled. Not restrained. Not half-hearted. Repent of your half-heartedness. Repent of your lukewarmness. And I'm saying this to myself. Friends.

We ought to repent. And be zealous of good works. I read some good advice lately. Date your wife. I need to take that advice.

Fellowship with your family. Hug your kids. Serve the Lord. Don't miss a single moment. While you yet have breath in your body. That's a good word.

[22:27] It's a good word to look after your wife and family. It's a good word to serve the Lord in practical ways. In day-by-day ways. While you've got breath in your body.

I was thinking. As I said. Referring back to Ralph again. I thought I'm going to have to start preparing a funeral to preach. You know. His breath is going. Almost gone.

He's in a coma. And yet God restored him. And think of it for yourself. We've heard of deathbeds here today. The deathbed is coming. That breath you breathe is going to stop one day.

Let everything that have breath praise the Lord. Let everything that have breath praise him. Use that voice. Use your life. Use that breathing, living body while you've got one.

To serve him. To be a spirited people. A dedicated people. A zealous people. Tireless. Ask God again to ignite that urgency.

[23:25] That intensity that you knew when you were saved. I was listening lately to some testimony videos. Videos of some pretty rough times. They were pretty rugged blokes.

And yet you could see God has changed them. From the inside out. And there's something about their testimony. And I know for a sister in this church. I saw her testimony recorded on video too.

And it really spoke to me. Where God has brought her from. Out of the muck and mire. Out of the gutter. Lifted her to be his child. And think of what he's done for you.

And shouldn't it make you want to love him more? Shouldn't it make you want to have that zeal again? Friends, just to close. What are the hindrances to that zeal today?

Ask yourself. Be honest to God today. Ask yourself. What's stopping me? What's stopping me from serving him? What's stopping me from being a man of zeal?

[24:24] What's stopping me from being a woman of zeal for God? Galatians 5.7 Paul writes, You did run well. Who did hinder you?

Who did hinder you? That you should not obey the truth. What's holding you back? What's hindering you people today? What's hindering us today? Whatever your excuses, you can turn it around.

You can turn your struggles into strengths. You can re-fire. You can revive. Revive. Don't hold back. Don't let up.

Repent of your backslidings. I'm saying this to me. Act now. Apply yourself. Take personal responsibility. It's a personal thing.

I can't speak for you. I can't repent for you. You can't do the same for me. But we all need to ask ourselves, Be honest before God. Stand in your own shoes.

[25:23] One day you'll be standing before him without shoes. You'll see him face to face. You'll have to give it a count. Every man, every woman, every soul will give a count of himself to God.

Make it personal now. While you have time now. Don't wait till it's too late. It's been said, I must do something always solves more problems than something must be done.

You might look at this church and think, That needs improvement. This needs improvement. This needs improvement. Something needs to be done. Rather say, I must do something.

I must do something. Make it personal today. What can I do? There's no time for half measures. We must decide today. God calls us to be a zealous people.

Zealous of good works. To get back to his word. To do all things for the glory of God. To let go of an easy going kind of Christianity. A Christianity that makes no demands.

[26:26] That carries no crosses. Think of it. If you went to work Monday morning and they could see that you're a Christian.

Jehu said, Come and see my zeal for the Lord. He wasn't ashamed. He wasn't afraid. Let's be that zealous people. A gutsy, earnest, passionate people.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that your word does urge us to be that people zealous of good works. That we know of our own working we can deserve nothing of heaven.

Yet, Lord, we know heaven prompts us to be a people prepared. Lord, that we might be a people ready to do that which you have us to do. Those gifts, those abilities, that prayer that we can pray, those priorities we can set.

Lord, for that power of the Holy Spirit within. Empowering us, gifting us, equipping us, sending us.

Lord, let us hear your voice. We ask each one, Lord, for each one of us personally, that you would have your way with us.

[27:31] That you might be glorified. If there's any present who know you're not, Lord, we know there's no hope for them other than you. There's no hope for us other than you.

Other than Calvary's cross, other than the bloodshed. There's no hope for any of us. Lord, we claim that, that precious faith, that precious life of the blood.

That you took our sin, our shame, our guilt, and paid for it completely there. And Lord, what can we do but love you? What can we do but want to serve you, to live for you?

Lord, we thank you. While we have breath in our body, help us to live a life that would be glorified to your name. We ask in Jesus' name.

I love to tell the story of hunting things of God.