

How to get Zeal

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: 21 August 2022

[0 : 00] John chapter 2 from verse 13. Talking about zeal, challenging the lukewarm church.! John chapter 2, verse 13. 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. Our Lord demonstrated zeal here. He demonstrated zeal in dealing with what was an offence to the Almighty, where there was a corruption and a disobedience in how they acted within the temple. It had become a merchandising, a business-making venture. And he urged them that the Father's house should be a house of prayer, a house of prayer. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

[1 : 25] Our Lord showed zeal here. He demonstrated it. And he calls us too, to zeal. He calls us to that zeal, to be zealous.

Just using that as a launching pad, we're going to look at some verses that speak about zeal and apply them to our lives, I trust. In Revelation 3 verse 19, our Lord addresses the lukewarm church, the church of Laodicea.

And it reads in Revelation 3 verse 19, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent. Interesting that God loves the Laodiceans enough to rebuke and to challenge them.

So even God loves this lukewarm church enough to tell them the truth, to urge them to zeal, to urge them to repent. He says that he rebukes and he chastens those that he loves.

And our Lord challenges us in this world, in this time where it seems many are lukewarm and churches by and large are increasingly lukewarm to shake off that complacency, that lethargy, that lukewarmness, to leave the comfort zone and to be zealous, to be zealous.

[2 : 47] What does the Bible tell us about zeal? It's fitting, I think, that such a church of Laodicea, which is reflective of these latter days I put to you, that there's a judgment.

And 1 Peter 4.17 tells us, For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. It's a time to be stirred, to be challenged, to leave the comfort zone.

So what does the Bible tell us about zeal? Zeal in the Bible refers to spiritual truth, I put to you.

Number one, spiritual truth, knowledge. Christianity has been described as the truth on fire.

This is the burning truth, the word of God, isn't it? He says, it's not my word like as a fire. This is burning. This is hot stuff. It's a red hot book.

Spiritual truth is really critical to zeal. Because we can have zeal without truth. That's a big problem, isn't it? If you have zeal without truth.

[3 : 59] And there's a quote that says, Taking the line of least resistance makes rivers and men crooked. There's some churches that are taking their line of least resistance.

So they don't want to offend anybody. They don't want to offend the woke culture or to speak against the things that the Bible clearly says are sin. Because the world wants to accommodate that and just excuse that.

It's the same for you and me, isn't it? We can accommodate that which is sinful or wrong and excuse it in our lives. But we'll get crooked. Rather, stick with the truth. Sadly, there's some various fringe Christian cults that are full of foolishness in the name of God.

I don't know if people have seen some of the examples of that online lately. It's some wacko teaching. There's one particular lady that's gone to heaven and supposedly describes it as like Santa's there and all sorts of crazy ideas.

Just some crazy visions and dreams she's had. And people are swallowing it. She's writing books about it. Probably making lots of money out of such foolishness.

[5 : 08] She's got a zeal but it's not according to knowledge. There's a lot of foolishness out there. There's a lot of churches that are teaching false things. False salvation. False doctrine galore.

And people are following that. It's mind-boggling how many millions of people are following such false teachings as Mormonism, for example. And some people will swallow anything.

Now, there's one time Julie took some children to the zoo. And she had this school group that she was kind of minding, I think it was at the time. And they had some assignments to do.

They had various school assignments. And one of the children, they had this petting zoo type part of the zoo. And one of the children fed her assignment sheet to a goat.

Now, it's kind of a bit reflective of the world we're living in, where some people will swallow anything, isn't it? You know, the Bible talks about God's people as being sheep.

[6 : 06] And the others as being goats. The unsaved, who will swallow just about anything. And sadly, in some churches, the pastors feed the goats. They spend a lot of time feeding the goats.

And they're starving the sheep. And that's a big problem, isn't it? We want to feed the sheep. And so we need zeal for the truth. Luther said, I simply taught, preached, wrote God's word.

I did nothing. The word did it all. As we get the word, the word will do it all. And we must be sure that the zeal is according to the word, according to truth. Paul writes to some that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Friends, there's people that are more zealous than us that are out there working hard. We think of Jehovah's Witnesses, of Mormons.

They're very active, incredibly active. There's some that are hugely active on social media, putting out, pumping out a whole lot of dross, really, truly.

[7 : 09] They've got a zeal of God, but it's not according to knowledge. And so the zeal must be tempered. It must be constrained. It must be directed by spiritual truth and insight.

There's a lot of deception around. It's like we see there's some who are called shepherds, pastors, that are really butchers. There was a time where there was a medical student who would spend their summer holidays working as a butcher in the daytime.

And then at nighttime, they worked as a medical orderly in the evening time. So both of the jobs involved wearing a white smock. And one evening, this medical orderly, he wheeled a patient on a stretcher into the surgery.

And she opened her eyes and she said, oh no, it's my butcher. Butcher. So there's some that are like a shepherd, but they're a butcher. They're butchering. There's a lot of damage done when there's shepherds, so-called spiritual shepherds, pastors, that are feeding people falsehoods.

And the Bible talks about my people should perish for lack of knowledge. People don't want the truth, do they? Start to tell someone the truth and they'll switch off. They'll reject it outright.

[8 : 20] And when we are saved, the spiritual truth that we have leads us to service. So we see the fact of spiritual truth and then we see spiritual service.

So the zeal should be according to knowledge, spiritual truth, and then that spiritual truth should lead us to spiritual service. To labours more abundant. To good works, in other words.

A people zealous of good works. In Titus 2, 14. He wants us to have spiritual service. And in Romans 12, verse 1, it tells us that we should be not slothful, in other words, lazy in business, but we should be fervent in spirit.

In other words, glowing, hot, on fire. God wants us not to be slothful, lazy, but to be fervent, to be on fire. Hot for God. Serving the Lord.

And Paul says, it's good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. So zeal is good if it's for a good purpose. How is our zeal?

[9 : 26] Is it directed for a good purpose? Do we have a zeal for that which matters? The word of God? Living for our saviour? Putting our Christian life into action in our shoe leather as we walk it out.

Zeal is good if it is for a good purpose. Now we often hear the expression, oh, he or she has the voice of an angel.

Who's heard that before? The voice of an angel. Now there was a preacher who got to wondering, well, what does an angel sound like? And so this preacher, they did some research and they discovered that an angel's voice sounds remarkably like a person saying, hurry up.

Hurry up. Get up and hurry. These are the words that angels speak to men as reported in the Bible. For example, an angel comes to Peter in jail and says, rise quickly.

An angel says to Gideon, arise and go in this thy might. An angel says to Elijah, arise and eat. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream when Herod is slaughtering the infants and says, go quickly.

[10:40] An angel appears to Philip and says, arise and go. Interesting, isn't it? If we had our ears tuned to the heavenly angels' voices, what would they be telling us?

And really the angels are monotonous talkers. They always say the same thing. Arise, hurry. Now a fire bell can be monotonous, can't it?

Ding. Or, you know, the burglar alarms, the monotonous. But they have to get our attention. And it's a good idea to let an angel occupy the pulpit on Sunday.

There's a sense where, hurry up. You know, get up. Do something. There's a sense where we should be stirred. To get up and go for God.

Amen. If you have an angel come to you tonight, he'll give you a dream or vision. They'll be saying, get up and hurry up. Do something for God. You know, that's, they wouldn't be telling you about Santa Claus in heaven and such rubbish.

[11:43] There was a woman who had a massive piece of family silver, but it was dreadfully tarnished. And she says, I cannot keep it bright unless I use it. Now I know I've still got in my crazy hoarding ways, I've still got a little spoon that I had as a little baby.

That's my first spoon as a little baby. A little silver spoon, especially curved. I should have brought it to show you. But I'd imagine it's quite tarnished at the moment. But it's kind of a little, lovely little spoon that I've got as a little baby boy.

Occasionally I have actually got the, call it the brasso, and given it a shine and it's beautifully shining. Bright. Bright. But left on the shelf, in the drawer, it just tarnishes.

Tarnishes. Covers with corrosion. And it's the same way with faith, isn't it? Our faith can be tarnished. But rather put it into action, it will shine brightly.

Keep your faith bright. Use it. Use it. Get up and do for God. As I talked earlier, the blessed hope is yet to come.

[12:55] We're looking for it. The glorious appearing of our Saviour. And he's looking for a people, peculiar people, zealous. Zealous. There's that word again. Of good works. In other words, eager to do right.

People with a zest for good works. Let me underline here, I'm not saying you're saved by works. It's the overflow, isn't it? It's the outflow. When you're saved, wow, how can we not love him?

How can we not be at his disposal for his service? As he tells us, as he commands us to, to be a people, zealous of good works.

There should be a zest. There should be an eagerness, a wanting to. Paul says in Colossians 3, Whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men. You serve the Lord Christ.

We're not working for men. We're working for God. Whatever you do for God. Those unseen things. Those unspoken things. Are we active and busy or inactive?

[13:58] We've seen the truth of spiritual truth. Of spiritual service. And another thing, spiritual gifts. It's interesting, spiritual gifts are another area for zeal.

Paul writes to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12, 31. But covet. In other words, set your heart on this. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

And yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Of course, he goes on to speak about love. He says we should set a heart on that which the Spirit want us to have. His gifts.

We should be Spirit-empowered. And it reads on, follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts.

There's that zeal again. Interesting, this word desire in the Greek, as much as we don't emphasise the Greek, but the word desire is zeal.

So get zeal-oad about spiritual gifts. Get some zeal there about spiritual gifts. But rather that you may prophesy. There's a sense we should desire it. It should be something we want.

[15:03] We should have a zeal for it. And it goes on to say, be zealous of spiritual gifts. Excel. God wants us to be eager, to zeal, to have a spiritual gift, to employ our God-given calling and abilities.

Set your heart on it. Covet it. And be zealous of spiritual gifts. To excel. To build up the church. To strengthen it. And of course we read on, covet to prophesy.

In other words, deliver the word. To prophesy really is to speak God's word, which we do when we read it. When we give attention to reading, we're giving attention to reading the prophecy, the word of God.

The more sure word of prophecy. As we impart it, as we read it, as we declare it. There's that sense where we're coveting to deliver the word of God. In that holy zeal.

To speak God's word. You can do that in your witnessing, in your Christian service. Speak God's word. Have a zeal for that. Covet to prophesy.

[16:13] 1 Corinthians 14.39. So, we need a holy zeal. His truth. His gifts. His service. Think of it for yourself. Are you willing to be at God's disposal?

A man of God, George Mueller. A man known for trusting Christ. For great supply. For his life of faith. Of his life of prayer. And Mueller testified this.

He said, There was a day when I died. Died to self. My opinions. Preferences. Tastes. And will. Died to the world. Its approval or censure.

Died to the approval or blame. Even of my brethren or friends. And since then, I have studied. Only to show myself. Approved. Answering. God. Amen.

George Mueller. There was a day. When. I died. We put our. Flesh. Ourselves.

[17:14] To that crucified life. And we come alive. We come. Truly alive. To live for Christ. We're called to be.

Zealots. Right? What are the characteristics. Of a zealot? I put to you. Just three things. Here. Focus. Fight. And fire. Focus. Fight. And fire.

A zealot. Has focus. We see. Of our Lord. It tells of him. As there was two crucified with him. On either side. One. And Jesus. In the midst.

Christ. In the centre. Will we make. What. Jesus. Our Lord. Wants. The focus. That. The Lord. Jesus. Will be the focal point. For what we do.

All that we do. Is Christ. And pleasing him. Your focus. Christ. For me to live is. Christ. That's life. Do we make Christ.

[18:12] And pleasing him. Our focus. Or is he just a casual interest. Think of it. When someone has a focus. You think of someone. Who's a mad. Footy fan.

Or whatever. Sport. You might follow. When someone has a focus. What do they do. They talk about it. They talk about it. They don't tire about telling of it.

They don't tire about. They'll talk your ear off about their team. Or whatever their interest is. Their hobby. Their. Whatever they're. All about. People that might do photography.

Or some. Other. Endeavour. They just want to talk about it. To everybody they need. It's a focus. Isn't it. They talk about it. They study it. They learn. They know.

They. Think of the knowledge of a fan. They could tell you what. What. The results were. Two or three years ago. Who won. Who. Who scored the winning goal. Whatever it is.

[19:09] They learn. They know it. A fan's knowledge. They know their stuff. Back to front. And inside out. What about us. Do we know it.

Do we care. Do we know it. The word of God. Do we study it. They live it. They eat it. They drink it. They sleep it. They breathe it.

They're addicted. What about you and me. Are we zealous. Do they love their sport. More than we love our saviour. They love it.

Don't they. They love it. Just obsessed. They spend. They devote time on it. Money to it. They don't care where their team's playing.

Could be the other side of the continent. They'll go there. Oh. I'm not going to miss the match for anything. I'll make my. I'll pay for that. To get to the other side. I'll reserve my hotel.

[20:06] And I'll get the best seats. Because they love it so much. They spend. They devote time on it. Oh. I'm not going to miss that for anything. They won't care about the costs.

They give. They devote efforts. They take pains. They make great effort. Don't they. Think of it.

What about us. Spiritually. I wouldn't miss that for anything. To get together with God's people.

They work at it. They work at it. It's been said to three kinds of people. Those who make things happen. Those who watch things happen. And those who wonder what happened. It's a bit like that in church sometimes.

Isn't it? Let's be among those who make things happen. Amen. They work at it. They hunger for it. They've got a desire. An eagerness. A craving.

A willingness. An earnestness. A willing mind and heart. Friends. Satan wants to deter you. To distract you. To discourage you. So you don't maintain that focus.

[21 : 07] He wants your focus to be shifted. To be focused on anything but Christ. And him crucified. Anything but. To take away that focus out of your life and heart.

Order Christ to be our motivation. Our burden. Our work. There was a heathen convert. In some missionary continent. And he said to the preacher.

Send us men. With hot hearts. That's what people need to be. Isn't it? To take the message. To whoever we can.

To have hot hearts for Christ. So I urge you this morning. Make Christ your focus. Make him ever so more the focus. Of serving him. Of loving him. That your life would be constructed around that.

Maybe there's missionary aspirations. Or considerations. Learn the language. Learn the Bible. Volunteer so you can learn and grow.

[22 : 10] And be more prepared. For greater serving. So focus. Secondly fight. Think of someone with zeal. They are like a fan. Who strongly barracks for their team.

And they do fight at the game sometimes. Don't they? They defend and they support their team.

They'll fight for it. They'll argue that their team's the best. They'll defend it.

They'll support it. What about us? Where's our fight gone? Have we got any left? A believer can be aggressive.

Uncompromising. Unbending. In Jude. He writes. Of earnestly contending. For the faith. He says. You should earnestly contend.

There's a fight there. There's a time for fighting. For rebuke. And we can be fighting against all the odds. We know. There's situations where it's hard for people.

[23 : 04] To stand for Christ. Your home setting might be difficult. But you can stand for Christ. Resolutely. Fight. The good fight. So focus. Fight. Thirdly. Fire. We see that John was a burning and shining light.

John the Baptist. In John 5. 35. Would it be good to be called a burning and shining light for God? You can be. God will help you to be.

To burn brighter. To shine brighter. To be a burning and shining light. That others can rejoice in that light. It's the zeal of God. We can know that.

Yes. I love Jesus so much. I can't contain it. I've got to tell. I've got to burn. Burn brighter. The preacher Wesley was known for big crowds and his open air meetings.

And he was once asked how come so many crowds came. He was asked how he got the crowds.

And he says I set myself on fire and the people come to see me burn.

[24 : 07] That's what we need to be, isn't it? The burning and shining light. Friends, we can be. By the grace of God. And zeal speaks about total commitment. About haste.

About urgency. About liveliness. About animation. About exertion. And under God's constraining. Not self and fleshly straining.

But God-given activity. So think of these activists, these zealots, these fans. What about us? Do we have that kind of zeal?

Do we keep learning? Or do we kind of get a bit shallow? Stagnant? Stale? God wants you, brother, sister, to be on fire. On fire.

Flaming hot. Fervent. Red hot. And you can do that even if you might be a quieter person in those settings where you're maybe less able.

[25 : 05] Physically able. You can still shine. You can still shine bright. And be a blessing. Be a burning and shining light for God. Now we see of the apostle Peter.

We can best appraise Peter. It's been said in the glow of three fires. Peter. We see him by the fire. Consorting with the enemies of Christ.

You know, there he was. That cold night. Christ was being accused and trialed. The trial was happening for Christ. And Peter was there just kind of being a bit inconspicuous on that cold night.

Huddling up to the fire with the enemies of Christ. And then we see Peter under fire. Oh, you are with him. You're one of them. You're a Galilean.

You're with Christ. And he said, no, no. He disowned and denied his Lord. He was a denier of Christ. And then we see the third fire where he was on fire.

[26 : 05] There was the flames of fire. He was on fire. Preaching with power. 3,000 souls saved. Which Peter are we going to be? We may still be the one under fire.

But hopefully we won't deny or disown our Lord. But we'll be on fire for God. Now, the early Christians had no political influence. They didn't have worldly power. And the authorities kept on locking them up. But they were so filled with God's power that no prison was strong enough to hold them. Friends, what about you and me? Can we get that zeal again? Zeal speaks of devotion. And the Lord calls us to that. Now, Florence Nightingale is a well-known character of history. Now, I'm not sure of all her doctrinal views necessarily. But Florence Nightingale was a well-known activist. Did much good in her time. And she was asked for her life's secret. [27 : 06] And she says, well, I can only give one explanation. That is, I've kept nothing back from God. That's a good motto, isn't it? Keep nothing back from God. There's another man of God, Baxter, said, Lord, what thou wilt, where thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

What thou wilt, where thou wilt, and when thou wilt. That's Baxter. Another one, John Knox cried out, Give me Scotland, or I die. He had that zeal, didn't he?

Friends, there's lots of things we could think about. And you might be hearing me today and think, well, maybe there's some room for improvement in me. Maybe I could get a bit more zeal again, that I'll be burning and shining, a burning and shining light.

There was a preacher one day, an evangelist, who held some revival meetings. His revival meetings were called quitten meetings. And so he would preach primarily to Christians.

He'd urge them to give up those questionable things in their lives. And he was very effective. Many people said, well, I'm going to promise to quit swearing, quit drinking, quit smoking, quit lying, quit gossiping, or anything else that was displeasing as they were convicted.

[28 : 16] They were wanting to give that up, to quit, that which they wanted to quit. And on one occasion, Jones asked a woman, she came forward to respond to the appeal, and she said she wanted to quit something.

And he says, well, okay, ma'am, just what is it that you are quitting? And she says, I'm really, I'm guilty of not doing something. And I'm going to quit doing that too.

She was guilty of not doing something. You know, that was her bad habit, that she just wasn't doing anything, basically. She wasn't actively living to please God. She says, I'm going to stop being like that.

I'm going to stop not acting. Stop not actively living for God. It's a good decision, isn't it? Instead of not actively living, I'm going to start actively living to please my God.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that your word calls us to zeal. Your will is that we be a people zealous of good works, Lord. We know as saved people we can.

[29 : 22] At times burn a little less brightly, Lord. Help us to be refreshed in our zeal, to be more zealous, to be more actively living for you, Lord, to quit not actively living for you and to start being more so actively living for you.

Lord God, we pray each one might be stirred in their own individual setting as to how we can have that greater focus, that greater fire, Lord, that we can have that willingness to go and enter even the fight.

We'll be so zealous, we'll be more zealous than the footy fans down at the Oval today, that we'll actually have something that's worth shouting about. And we pray, Lord, that you'd give us that grace.

In Jesus' precious name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.