

Zealous In a Good Thing.

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome to the service this morning. Are we ready to fly away? We had some good songs this morning.

Ready to fly away and to be, to cross that river, to be at that golden shore. For Ben brought up in our prayer requests, we have another man needing a triple bypass heart surgery.

Our family, we've just recently gone through this with my father-in-law, so I thought I would just give a quick update on that. He is still in the hospital in Edmonton. The plan was, if everything went well after the surgery, he would spend about two days in ICU and then be transferred to just another room for another four or five days until he was well enough to go home.

And so the surgery was a week ago, Friday already, and so he is still there. He is actually still in ICU. So for the past week, he's been struggling with oxygen levels, really up the doses of oxygen they were giving him, and still the oxygen levels in his body were not where they needed to be.

And so they've kept him in ICU. The last couple of days, they've been able to bump the oxygen levels down, and he's improving there. And so if all goes well, sounds like today they might be able to move him out of ICU into, stay different, a regular room for a couple more days.

[1 : 4 6] So thank you for all of your prayers, and just ask that you continue to pray for him and for my mother-in-law as well as they're there in Edmonton.

So this morning, we'll be continuing again working through the book of Galatians. And so we're into chapter 4, and we're continuing on in the letter where Paul is dealing with faltering churches.

Not a single church, but a number of churches. The book of Galatians is addressed to the churches in the region of Galatia. Galatians 3, and so he has been defending the gospel at the start of the letter, that there is only one gospel.

And the issue with the false teachers bringing in a different gospel. And so he's clarifying that there is only one.

And as well, he was defending his apostleship as these false teachers were discrediting him and trying to get the people to believe that Paul wasn't who he said he was and that his message was off.

[3 : 0 8] And so the letter is written, you know, in response to the report that Paul has received about these false teachers, you know, them swaying the churches, what is going on there.

And so he's not only defending himself and the gospel, but he's reminding them that their salvation is by faith, not the law.

And so he clarified the purpose of the law, and he's continuing to do so throughout chapter four as well, and that the law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come.

And he just, you know, lots of reminders. He reminds them that they have been freed from the law by faith in Christ. They have tasted this freedom. And so he questions, now why do you want to turn back into bondage?

And so in the passage we'll look at this morning, he brings to remembrance their conversion, and I also encourage them to be zealous in a good thing.

[4 : 25] When I was preparing, working on preparing the message, doing my study and so on, I had thought to just take the rest of the chapter into one service.

And as I was telling Ben this morning already, at the end of the week here, as I, you know, telling him what the passage is and the title and so on, is that I need to cut it back.

I can't go to the end of the chapter. That's just a bit too much. It's a bit too long then. And so we'll look at verses 12 through 20 this morning.

And so the title for the message, Zealous in a Good Thing. Let's just again read verses 12 through 16.

So in continuing to build his case, to plead with the Galatians, Paul reminds them of his first visit, to recall that to memory, to the point in time where, you know, they heard the gospel message and they were converted.

[6 : 18] He says, Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You know, despite the report and hearing of them faltering, Paul still calls them brethren.

This shows Christian character. He's not ripping into them, tearing them down for faltering in their faith. Instead, in love, he continues pleading for them to remain true to the Savior that they had committed themselves to.

He says, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You know, that points to 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

And let's turn there this morning. So I urge you to become like me. 1 Corinthians 9 kind of explains what he's talking about there.

So 1 Corinthians 9 verses 19 to 23. 1 Corinthians 9.

[7 : 55] To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

So we have here Paul's method of evangelism. He's meeting people at their level. He's meeting people at their level. You know, in order to cultivate a relationship with them so that he can better understand them and where they are at and, you know, find those open doors to share the gospel with them.

He's not coming down to the level that he partakes of the sins that they are involved in. But rather just in getting to know them, to understand them, and to find that opportunity to share the good news of salvation.

And he gives his reason for doing so in verse 23. It wasn't to be involved in what the world offers.

It was for the gospel's sake. Paul's heart was for the lost. He longed for them to have the freedom that he had in Christ.

[9 : 23] That together with them he could partake of that freedom. Walking in the light. Going back to our text.

It says, I urge you to become like me. For I became like you. His intent is not to become like other people.

You know, to share the good news with them. And just to have them remain where they are at. He meets them at their level. To gain opportunity to share the gospel.

And as they respond to the gospel, they are to be changed. There needs to be that maturation. You know, becoming more Christ-like.

Growing in the knowledge of the Lord and His ways. And this is what should have been happening in the Galatian churches.

[10 : 29] And it wasn't. He had remained in that infant stage for some time.

And were vulnerable to these false teachers coming in. Bringing a different gospel. And they were about to fall for it. The last part of verse 12.

You have not injured me at all. You know, Paul has been very direct with how he has addressed the Galatians.

And so he's addressing that as well. He's called them the foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you? And so on, right? He's been very direct with them. And now, kind of just giving...

Kind of coming back to that a bit. It wasn't because of personal feelings that he was talking to them this way.

[11 : 31] He wasn't running on emotions with the way that he was confronting them. You know, this too was for the gospel's sake. A desire to see them grow in their faith.

It's not because that you have hurt my feelings that I'm talking to you this way. It's... You know, there's concern for them. He is zealous for them. We'll get to the definition of zealous here in a bit.

Continuing on in verse 13 and 14. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject.

But you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. So some interesting information here. Paul gives the reason why he had come to be in the region of Galatia and preaching the good news.

It had been because of sickness, of illness, physical infirmity. Physical illness. Doesn't reveal what the illness is here.

[12 : 49] But that had been the reason that he had come to pass through that area. And even in that illness, he continued about his work of sharing the gospel.

And it's interesting too, the Galatians did not despise or reject Paul in his illness. You know, illness was often, you know, if we look at it in Scripture, it was often connected to sin in that person's life or in someone else's life.

There was a direct relation, you know, that the illness was there because of sin. He must have done something that he was ill. You know, there's the example in John chapter 9 where even the disciples in this thought pattern, they asked Jesus, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

It was in reference to the blind man that Jesus healed. You know, even the disciples questioned, you know, who had sinned that this man was blind?

Was it he himself or was it his parents? What was the reason for his blindness? So we see that that was a common thing. And so here, when Paul first visited the region of Galatia, there was a situation where they could have found excuse to dismiss anything that Paul had said to them.

[14 : 20] He was suffering physical ailment. It would have been easy just to disregard him, but they didn't. It says that they had received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Not to the effect that they viewed Paul as Christ, but in the sense that he was sent from God to them to bring this message to them.

And they had willingly received it. And so receiving him in this manner, they responded to the gospel, and they did put their faith in Christ.

Verse 15, What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that if possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? And so, in reminding the Galatians of this point in time, he confronts them.

[15 : 33] He puts a question to them. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? You know, upon their conversion, you know.

And even, you know, a question for us today. Was there a blessing when we came to faith? Were we thrilled and full of joy?

We were. Were we not? The peace that we received as our burden of sin and guilt was lifted away, that was a blessing, was it not?

We hear that over and over again as people share their testimonies. How they come to faith. They rejoiced.

The peace, the relief, the joy that they felt in that moment. And how they wanted to share it with everyone. This was so real and it was worth rejoicing over.

[16 : 35] That was the case with the Galatians as well. Paul's questioning, what was the blessing you enjoyed? So it was obvious there had been a blessing.

There had been rejoicing. The peace and the joy that they had felt had bubbled over. And others had seen it, had witnessed it, heard it.

And yet now, they're being swayed by false teachers. Being tempted to turn to the law, to return to bondage. It's obvious that that joy has died down.

Paul's desire is for that joy to be stirred up, to be stirred back up. He wants them to think back to that point in time, to remember that joy that they felt, that blessing that they had received.

You know, what of that blessing? What are you doing with it? Where is it now? You know, and he wonders, have I become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth?

[17 : 46] Do you resent hearing the truth? Does it offend you? It brings to mind, you know, off and on we hear how someone has come to a church on Sunday morning and sitting there listening to the message.

And afterwards, it's, you know, that preacher was talking only to me. He was pointing right at me. He was just talking to me. Are you offended at hearing the truth?

Was the pastor talking directly at you? I'm here to tell you today that I'm not singling out any one person and talking to them.

As I prepare message during the week, you know, putting down notes as they come to mind, you know, there's the Spirit guiding and leading, giving me the words to share.

And so if that touches anyone's heart personally, it's not me speaking to that person alone. It is the Holy Spirit convicting. I think that goes for, if not all pastors, the vast majority of them.

[18 : 57] And so the Galatians are struggling with this, you know, and Paul is wondering, have I become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth?

Is what I'm telling you offending you, and why is that? And even this morning, is there anyone here today who feels that their joy has died down?

Like the Galatians, where is the blessing that they enjoyed? Is there anyone here wondering, where is that blessing that they have enjoyed? The fire that blazed so hot in your heart is almost burned out.

Maybe there's only a small ember left flickering there. That blessing of receiving salvation is a distant memory. I want to tell you this morning, don't go on with your head hanging down.

Lift your head up. Turn your eyes toward the heavens. The Lord is not as far away as He feels. He is closer than you think.

[20 : 09] He is only a prayer away. If this is you, this is the way you feel, talk to Him.

Talk to the Lord. Share all your troubles with Him. He wants to carry your burdens, for He is able to. He wants to bless you.

To rekindle that ember. To feed it and to bring it back to a roaring fire again. Seek Him and allow Him to do that.

You will be blessed. Continuing on in verse 17 forward, Paul is now shifting his focus to the problem at hand.

The false teachers in the midst of the Galatian churches. And so he uses the word zealous to describe them. He says, they zealously court you, but for no good.

[21 : 19] And so what does zealous mean? The definition of zealous is warmly engaged or passionate in the pursuit of an object.

So I was thinking of that, you know, to bring about a couple of examples to make it more real to us. A couple of examples that I came up with.

A few weekends ago, we gathered, a number of us gathered together in Heith at the community center for some volleyball. You know, and so were we zealous for playing volleyball?

Were we warmly engaged or passionate to come out there? And, you know, we made the effort to go out. And as we step onto that gym floor, we're going after that ball, right?

We're zealous. Another example, we have a ladies choir group meeting here off and on to practice some songs.

[22 : 28] I hear them singing as I do the baptism class on Thursday evening. And so being zealous in that, you know, making the effort to come out and putting your heart and your voices into singing, into sharing the gospel message in song.

Just a couple of examples. And so of these false teachers, they zealously courted the Galatians.

But for no good. And so Paul uses the imagery of courting. You know, the beginning stages of a relationship between a young man and a young woman.

And so while the false teachers were enthusiastic in pursuing a relationship with the Galatians, it wasn't for the right motives or the right reasons.

You know, the thing is, the Galatians were already engaged to be married. The same goes for all believers today.

[23 : 43] We are engaged to be married. The church is the bride of Christ. And we look forward to being married to Christ.

A future event coming up. And Pastor Wayne has touched on that on his series on the end time teaching. So that means that there's a problem.

If there's any teachers coming in promoting anything but Christ, why are they courting someone who is already engaged?

Paul tells us here, yes, they want to exclude you that you may be zealous for them.

It says they want to exclude you. Or in other terms, to alienate you. They want to separate you from your fiancé.

- [24 : 50] Plainly put, they want to destroy the relationship. Let's turn to Matthew chapter 1. Christmas is coming fast, so I don't think we're far out of line on sharing a passage like this.
- I think we can share that any time of year. Matthew chapter 1. And I want to look at verses 18 and 19.
- Regarding courtship and so on. Being engaged. Matthew 1, 18 and 19. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows.
- After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.
- So we have an example in Scripture here. Mary and Joseph. They were betrothed. It means they were engaged to be married.
- [26 : 05] And Mary is found to be with child. What is Joseph's reaction?
- His belief is that another man must have been courting Mary and she has been unfaithful. In Joseph's mind, the relationship is over.
- It's done. And because he's a good man and he doesn't want to make a scene of it, he intends to end the engagement quietly.
- Now we know that in the next verses, the angel of the Lord comes to Joseph and sets the record straight that this child that Mary is bearing is of the Holy Spirit.
- He is the Messiah. And Joseph has things set straight and so he goes ahead and he marries. He is married to Mary and the relationship is not lost.
- [27 : 11] And yet so as we go back to Galatians, you know, the scenario like that, the Galatians are betrothed. They are engaged to be married. These false teachers, they are courting, and it says zealously, people who are already engaged.
- And the false teachers' desires to exclude or to alienate them from their espoused partner. Why are they doing that?
- We have the wording here that you may be zealous for them. Did you catch that?
- You see how the tables have turned? It says, they zealously court you that you may be zealous for them.
- The false teachers begin, at first, you know, they're zealously courting the Galatians that they might alienate them or separate them from Christ whom they are engaged to.
- [28 : 26] That the Galatians might be zealous, not for Christ, but for them, the false teachers. And so just in the context here, the full picture, the false teachers, they're courting the Galatians, they're establishing a relationship with them, and they're introducing a teaching where the Galatians were to turn to the law.
- A Christ alone is not enough for their faith. They need to follow the law as well. And so once this would be accomplished, the Galatians would be back under bondage, under the law, and they would be under the thumb of these false teachers.
- The Galatians would be trapped, having to be zealous for or pursuing these false teachers. These false teachers would be able to hold the law over their heads, saying, uh-uh, you must do so and so.
- Be careful. I'm watching you. Do we face such things today? Are there still false teachers like that out there?
- Absolutely there are. You know, just looking at the scenario that we have in these churches in Galatia, the imagery of courting and excluding that Paul is using here, you know, we would think that's just wrong, right?

[30 : 03] You don't go messing around with someone who's already in a relationship. Maybe we even think, you know, how could the Galatians not see through this?

And we must remember that this isn't in the physical sense. These false teachers, they're not physically targeting engaged people to try and destroy their relationship.

This is in the spiritual sense. These false teachers are targeting the church as a whole and they will single out the weaker people in an effort to get them on their side and as they get on their side, more and more will be attracted.

But they're targeting the church, those who are engaged to Christ with the purpose of destroying our relationship with our Savior. And they don't go about being bold about what they're doing just as they weren't that bold about it with the Galatians.

They courted the church. You know, courting, it's not a one-time thing, right? It goes on for a period of time. What did we do when we courted?

[31 : 31] The wording here in my notes is to us that are already married, those that are courting right now, those who are looking forward to courting, you know, what do we do?

You know, we are zealous in finding out about this person that we're interested in. We want to be around them, to get to know them, you know, what their interests are, what do they like to do?

You know, that meant, it means that we do the things that the other person likes doing. We want them to like us, to enjoy the time we spend together and to cultivate that desire that they want to spend more time together with us, right?

That is what these false teachers do. They come in, they're friendly, they're nice, they say and do the right things, they work hard to get people to like them and over time they win them over and it is only when they have won them over to their side that they introduce their teaching and more often than not it'll strike very close to the truth but off just enough to lead them astray just as the serpent did with Eve, right?

He struck so close to the truth and he led her astray and it is that same serpent the devil who is working behind the scenes using these false teachers they are employed to him you know and for those who fall into the trap the end result is always that they are zealous for or pursuing this false teacher time and again it's revealed it's always been personal motives on the part of the false teachers and just you know brings to mind you know in history past and it's still going on today but we hear of these big cults especially down in the states how a person has won people over and he's gained a great following and they've had this cult and you know because it's something that's been in the past and it all fell apart it's been exposed what had been going on but we see that it had always been about this false teacher it was always about himself and those things they're still going on to this day they've been going on for a long time and they're continuing but today you know the Galatians had the false teachers in and among them personally working in their midst today there is an added element we call it technology these false teachers don't necessarily have to physically be here to come and cultivate that relationship with us anymore although they are here they're sitting in our pockets even this morning we have the YouTube preachers the WhatsApp sermons and so on now they're not all bad there's a lot of great teaching out there but it is up to us to be discerning holding up everything that we hear everything we listen to we need to hold it up to Scripture making sure that it lines up with what the Word of God says and so being zealous doesn't have to be a bad thing it can be good and Paul tells us that in verse 18 but it is good to be zealous in a good thing always and not only when I am present with you let's look at 1st

[36 : 11] John chapter 4 1st John chapter 4 looking at verses 1 to 6 beloved do not believe every spirit but test the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets have gone out into the world by this you know the spirit of God every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of the Antichrist which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world you are of God little children and have overcome them because he who is therefore they speak as of the world and the world hears them we are of

God he who knows God hears us he who is not of God does not hear us by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error and so it talks here about testing every spirit and so it's talking about us being discerning every message that we listen to the words that the speaker is telling us is it from God does it line up with his word 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 21 says test all things hold fast what is good so here too even in that verse we have instruction to be zealous we are to hold fast or to cling to to pursue to be zealous for what is good so be zealous in a good thing going back to our text continuing in verse 19 my little children for whom

I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone for I have doubts about you throughout Paul is showing that he is zealous as well for a good thing he was zealous for them at the first when he shared the gospel with them he came and he courted them as well he became like them got to know them and looked for opportunity to share the gospel and they responded and even now as he hears the danger lurking in their midst he continues to be zealous for them so he wants them to stand in their faith to have Christ formed in them for them to mature in their Christian walk my little children so referring to them in the sense of a young child right laboring again laboring in birth again until

Christ is formed in you so they're still stuck in that infant stage and he is zealous he desires to see them grow and to mature in their faith and so even now as he writes this letter to them there's nothing Paul says that points to him doing this for personal gain it's not about himself it's all for the Lord and even in verse 20 the desire he longs to be with them I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone for I have doubts about you and desires to be with them you know to change my tone if I was there I could ask questions and have you respond now it's he's writing a letter they're not he's not physically with them he can't have that interaction but he longs for that that he could have that interaction to find out exactly what's going on and that he can ask questions and have them respond and you know he could change his tone he could talk differently to about the gospel that they needed to grow in their faith but that he could talk to them in a way that would you know just to be there to be a one on one thing and to instead of it having to be so general that he can pinpoint issues and help them to work through it he says

I have doubts about you he has concerns and he longs to better understand the situation and to help them to overcome and so this morning in closing as I consider for us what should I be zealous in I just figured in closing that we would turn to a passage in 2 Peter 2 Peter chapter 1 looking at verses 5 to 10 things to consider things to be zealous in but also for this very reason giving all diligence add to your faith virtue to virtue knowledge to knowledge self control to self control perseverance to perseverance godliness to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love for if these things are yours and abound you will neither you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our

[43 : 16] Lord Jesus Christ for he who lacks these things is short sighted even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins therefore brethren be even more diligent to make your call and election sure for if you do these things you will never stumble for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so says for this very reason giving all diligence you know diligence means constant effort so give constant effort to these things he says to add to your faith virtue so he begins you know the first part you know coming to faith that is that's elementary right the first thing a good beginning but we must not stay there and even for the Galatians they must not stay there but for us as well we can't stay there add to your faith virtue which is moral excellence and so to virtue or moral excellence we add knowledge to knowledge self control to self control add perseverance or patience is another word and to perseverance we add godliness to godliness brotherly kindness to brotherly kindness love so it's something we continually growing we add more and more as we grow in our faith verse nine says he who lacks these things is short sighted even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins that describes the

Galatians you know lacking the they were lacking these things you know and therefore they were short sighted even to blindness they didn't recognize these false teachers in their midst you know and even to the point that he was cleansed from his old sins Paul's question to them what was the blessing that you enjoyed forgotten that they had been cleansed from that the blessing that had been there and yet we so to be zealous in these things to continue growing in our faith and we have a wonderful promise in verses 10 and 11 therefore brethren be even more diligent to make your call and election sure so even more diligent even more zealous to make your call and election sure for if you do these things you will never stumble for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ so if we do these things if we are diligent in them if we are zealous we pursue them we are engaged in them and growing in that to make our call and election sure doubts be pushed away they will be vanishing we will never stumble it says that for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly entrance will be supplied you know that guarantee of our home in that everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that kingdom that he has gone and he is preparing a place for us and he is coming back soon to bring us there to be there together with us and us with him let's close in prayer heavenly father we bow before you again this morning lord we we thank you for our faith you know that elementary stage where we we accepted the gospel as we heard it and it touched our heart and you worked in us and we we came to faith we accepted that we thank you for the blessing that we received in that moment and the joy that we felt as we had the

Holy Spirit come us lord what a moment that was lord i just i trust that even today that fire that we felt when we were born again that that fire is still burning today this very hour that it is not merely a flickering ember but that it is a strong flame and if there are those here where it is only an ember lord touch their heart tug on their heart strings lord draw them back to yourself that they come back to you and they seek you to have that fire reignited that blessing is remembered and go forward in joy and lord help us to be zealous to be zealous in a good thing to pursue good things lord the passage that we looked at here in in second peter lord we are not to remain in that elementary stage by coming to faith that is only the beginning lord we have a list of things to add as we grow in our faith there are things to be added into our lifestyle into how we live for you and so lord help us to be zealous in adding these things to our life as we seek to grow in our faith to mature lord that we do not remain infants blinded and unaware of danger around us for it is around us lord help us to be zealous in following you and seeking you and serving you that we are aware of the dangers around us and that we do not stumble but we stand strong in our faith with our eyes on you and not allow ourselves to be swayed and that we look forward to that eternal home that you are preparing for us lord just thank you for each one here this morning and just as we go forward in our day lord continue walking with us and helping us to be zealous for you in

Jesus name we pray amen to to to do what do to