

Where is your Zeal?

Are you Zealous for God?

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Where is your Zeal?

When one is converted, does that mean it's over? The converted Christian just sits on the sidelines and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus? What kind of attitude should a Christian have after the conversion stage is over?

A Christian Mind Set

The first century Christians took their Salvation very, very, seriously. Salvation was not something you just do to have all the bases covered. It is something they lived and applied in every aspect of life. They knew the words of the Old Testament that said, "Ye shall *diligently* keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee" (Deut 6:17). Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines "diligent" as, "characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort : painstaking <a diligent worker>" God wants his people to be *diligent* when it comes to his word in their lives. To live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4; Deut 8:3).

Jesus spoke of a follower of God as being one who, "...do hunger and thirst *after* righteousness:" (Matthew 5:6). These people are "blessed" and will be "filled." One must go "after" righteousness like one who has been on the brink of starvation and depravation of water-when he sees it goes after it because his or her life depends on it to live. A Christian must go after righteousness in the same way. This must be the *mindset* of the Christian.

Notice what the Apostles told Paul when he came into Jerusalem, "And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, *how many thousands of Jews there are which believe*; and they are all *zealous of the law*:" (Acts 21:20). These converts that God had called, and chose to be in his church were full of zeal to keep the law of God! To live by every word of God!

The New Testament church knew what Jesus did for them, and in turn God expected something from them as well. The Apostle Paul notes, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself *a peculiar people, zealous of good works*." (Titus 2:14). God expects us to be Zealous of his law, and to live righteously.

Jesus told his church, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be *zealous* therefore, and repent." (Rev 3:19). We must repent and be *zealous*; if we sin we must get back on track, on the pathway of God's law with all zeal as the church was in Acts, because the law of God leads to eternal life.

Notice what the Apostle Paul says, "For Christ *is* the end [Grk. "Telos" (Strong's #5056) meaning "goal" or "purpose"] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. "For Moses describeth the *righteousness which is of the law*, That the man which doeth those things shall *live by* [Grk "en" "Because of" (Strong's #1722)] *them*." (Rom 10:4-5). The goal, the purpose of the Law is to be righteous *like* Christ, *his* righteousness which is the law of God (Psalm 119:172), and the righteous receive eternal life (Matthew 25:46).

But what does being Zealous mean?

Where is your Zeal?

Zeal for God

The word "Zeal" has the same meaning a "diligent." "fervor for a person, cause, or object; eager desire or endeavor; enthusiastic diligence;" (Dictionary.com). This is what the Old Testament Saints and the New Testament saints had, a Zeal for God!. They had a goal, a purpose and were diligent in fulfilling that purpose. Solomon said, "Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he." (Prov 29:18). This is true of nations and the church today! If there is no goal, no purpose, how can one be zealous to achieve that goal? The Law of God, keeps you focused on that goal of eternal life.

Besides salvation, what are others goals the church should achieve? "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:19-20). Not only were you called to "get" salvation, but you were also called to "give" the knowledge of salvation to others as well. If we lose sight of this, the church will die out, and Jesus will, "remove thy candlestick out of his place..." (Rev 2:5).

The church of God has a great work to achieve on this earth. The great commission Jesus gave to his church of preaching the Gospel, and preaching a "testimony against them" (Matthew 10:18).

The work of the Watchman to the nations of Israel, another important work that must be accomplished by the church as well. Jesus warned his church, "*Watch ye therefore*: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

"Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

"*And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*" (Mark 13:-35-37). Are we not to be zealous of this great commission? Or we not to take the words of Jesus seriously?

Old Testament Examples

In the Old Testament one can notice that every time Israel became complacent, they sinned in God's sight.

Remember Israel was called the "church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). Everything that happened to them, were examples for God's church in our day as well, "Now all these things happened unto them for *ensamples*: and they are written for *our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Corinth 10:11).

In Exodus 12, 13, and 14 we read how the children of Israel came out of Egypt with a high hand. They left sin. As they left, Israel was figuratively baptized in the Red Sea. This pictures a Christian coming out of sin and being baptized (1 Corinth 10:1-4).

In Exodus 15, Israel was jubilant and exulting. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Where is your Zeal?

“The Lord is my strength and song, and *he* is become my salvation: HE IS *my* GOD” (vv. 1, 2).

Read through verse 19 for the rest of this song. Here was great understanding! Here was real trust in God! How typical of a Christian when he first comes out of sin. But what happened to Israel? They QUICKLY fell from this belief in God. Israel had become so *spiritually lax*, they fell from the depths of understanding they seemed to grasp at Passover time. They lost their zeal!

Notice, "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel *murmured against* Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

"And the children of Israel said unto them, *Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*" (Ex 16:, 2-3). How long does it take you to forget all the wonders God has done for you *and lose your Zeal?* That's one reason why God instituted the Sabbath every seven days. We need constant reminders, constant exhortation, constant encouraging to get "back to the faith once delivered."

Then at Sinai, at Pentecost, God presented to Israel his law, and Israel was zealous for God once again, "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

"And all the people answered together, and said, *All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.* And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD." (Ex 19:7-8). Once again, Israel seemed ready to go all the way with God. They had God's conditions rehearsed in their ears. They had "counted the cost" and had decided to obey God and be zealous for him.

God gave Israel the ten commandments and various judgments (Ex 20-23)

Again, how interesting a parallel with each of our lives when we first step out to obey God. We are ready to obey God at any cost-no matter what the terms, we have tremendous zeal for God.

But soon after this, Israel became complacent again, and spiritual laxness led to disobedience. Israel lost sight of the purpose and vision. This led to the sin of the golden calf (Ex 32:1). Israel repented (v.10) however, and became zealous for God once again.

Now the tribe of Levi received a *special* blessing of becoming priests and ministers of God for Israel because they did *not* become spiritual lazy in God's sight but *remained* "...zealous for my sake...[and] for his God" (Num 25:11, 13). During the time when all of Israel lost their zeal for God, the tribe of Levi remained Zealous for God. Israel as a whole were to be a "kingdom of Priests" (Ex 19:6), but because they lost their zeal for God, Levi became the priests for Israel instead.

Moses, after receiving the instructions to build the tabernacle, put Israel to work on it. Notice how generously the Israelites supported and involved themselves in the work of God, "And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people *bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make.*

"And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman *make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.* So the

Where is your Zeal?

people were restrained from bringing." (Ex 36:5-6). *What a great problem to have, to have no lack* for the work of God. This is the kind of giving spirit God wants from his church when giving to the work of God, a joyful spirit.

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity*: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinth 9:7). If one gives grudgingly, or of necessity because they just want to be blessed financially, instead of giving joyfully for the work of God, (*the intent is to give to God, not to get*) how can God bless them financially when they *tithe*? What is your intent, your attitude? If you give grudgingly, you are better off keeping your tithes because obviously your heart is not in the work, as Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). If your intent to tithe is just for financial gain, or out of obligation, and *not* to give to God and do his work, do not expect financial gain or success.

King David is a great example of one who had zeal for God and his work, and *gave to God*, in turn, because of *his true intentions*, God bless him, as he says, " For the *zeal of thine house* hath eaten me up..." (Psalm 69:9). Even after God told him, that he could not build his temple (1 Kings 5:3; 2 Sam 7:13), David did not just lie down and do nothing, instead he made all the preparations for the building of the temple instead, "...I will *therefore* now make preparation for it. So David prepared *abundantly* before his death." (1 Chron 22:5). David couldn't do enough for God. Shouldn't this be our motivation for building the work of God? To do for God, and not what God can do for us?

Today I fear the attitude has changed. People want things from God, but what about what you can do for God! Are you like David? Do have the attitude like John F. Kennedy? "Ask NOT what your country can do for you; But what *you can* do for your country." Today, people are lining up do "get" from the government, and the leaders are catering to this mindset of the populace, which will us lead towards bankruptcy. This Kind of attitude Solomon spoke about, "The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give." (Prov 30:15). Sucking the strength out of the horse, and today we see that from the people of the west. If God sees the right intent and attitude, God will bless that person indeed. We must have the right spirit like David, having a zeal for God and the work of God, in turn God will bless you.

What Can We Do?

First, one must recognize that human nature can quickly take over our minds and cause us to became spiritually lazy and lose sight of our purpose and goal.

Secondly, we must have the DESIRE to *fight* spiritual laziness. Christ said: "If you *know* these things, happy are you if you DO THEM!" (John 13:17). Knowledge is *not* enough.

Action is necessary!

But God's Spirit will not drive you or force you. You are a free moral agent. God's spirit is in you *full of Zeal* but **you** have to take the steps and walk in them.

Where is your Zeal?

Thirdly, you have to use the tools at your disposal. Daily prayer, Bible study, meditation, fasting when necessary. You need contact with God. Otherwise you WILL become spiritually lax. Stay focused on God, this is done by *keeping his law*. David said, "O how love I thy law! it is my *meditation all the day*" (Psalm 119:97).

But it takes effort to maintain contact with your Creator.

It takes constant, persevering diligence.

But the promises God offers are *beyond our imagination*. They are worth all the effort and work!

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and *precious promises*: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, ***giving all diligence***, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, ***give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:***" (2 Peter 1:4-10).

Let us maintain our Zeal for God-our salvation depends on it!