

March 1, 2019



## **Galatians 4:18 But it is good to be zealous always in a good thing.**

All of God's people are instructed to be *fervent in spirit* as we serve the Lord.

*Romans 12:11 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, **fervent in spirit**, serving the Lord.*

Passion and zeal are important traits, especially in leaders. If leaders are not moved with zeal in pursuing something God has shown them, it will be hard for them to move others. Charles Spurgeon refers to this place of zeal in leaders, "Set a man on fire and people will come and watch him burn."

One of the metaphors used in the Bible to describe the Spirit's work is *fire*. When Holy Spirit dwells in God's people that element of fire will be in them. We must be vigilant to tend that fire. This is part of our calling to be salt and light (Matt 5:13-16). The light Jesus refers to in that passage is fire. It is a burning light. He goes on to explain, "a burning light is not to be put under a vessel but on a table so all can see it" (Matt 5:16 BBE).

I wish maintaining passion was as simple as finding a new breakfast cereal. If I could create one that would stimulate zeal and keep passion alive in my everyday life, I would call it "Spiritual Motoflakes." One bowl in the morning and God's zeal will be with you all day. Unfortunately, this isn't the way motivation and zeal work.

Passion and zeal come primarily from one source - Jesus Himself. John's personal encounter with Jesus is recorded in the first chapter of Revelation, and one characteristic that ignited passion was the fire in His eyes; "His eyes were like flames of fire" (Revelation 1:19).

## **Jesus didn't give His life for perfect people, but He did give His life to perfect passionate ones.**

*Titus 2:13-14... our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous (on fire)** for good deeds.*

The opposite of zeal is apathy. Apathy is defined as "Without emotion, lack of interest, or indifference." (Webster New World Dictionary). Jesus referred to it as being "lukewarm" (Revelation 3:16).

"Christ did not die to make good works merely possible or to produce a half-hearted pursuit. He died to produce in us a passion for good deeds. Christian purity is not the mere avoidance of evil, but the pursuit of good." — **John Piper,**

Dr. Laurence M. Gould, president of Carleton College once said, "I do not believe the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I don't think our civilization will end that way. I think it will die when we no longer care." In short, it is apathy.

## **Steps that feed passion and zeal in our lives**

Motivation that arises from zeal is something that prompts us to action, yet we all face times when motivation seems to elude us. We all know the difference between when it seems to be there and we act one way, and when it is absent, and we drift back into a lethargic state. When this is our experience, we need to take a spiritual and Biblical approach toward the subject of motivation.

***Romans 12:11*** *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, **fervent in spirit (to boil with heat)**, serving the Lord.*

This scripture seems to put the issue of motivation more on our shoulders, making it a **responsibility** rather than an elusive emotion, whim, or feeling. In other words,

we have a part to play in maintaining fervency and motivation. We must feed it! Here are some steps that feed passion and zeal.

- **Have face time with the source of passion, Jesus.** The last revelation of Christ in the NT is in Revelation chapters 1-3. Jesus is seen as having “fire in His eyes.” When we consistently speak with Him, face to face, that fire gets in us.
- **Treat positive and negative feelings as potential impostors.** Emotions are real but not always right. We must understand that when we feel “up,” it may not be rooted in reality any more than when we feel “down.” The true indicator of how we are doing spiritually is what we are doing.
- **Consistently practice right spiritual things.** This is the principle of sowing and reaping from the Spirit (Galatians 6:8-9).

As we continue to sow (practice right spiritual things) it will eventually bear fruit as Galatians 6:9 indicates, “in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” The right spiritual things that move us towards passion are prayer, reading the Bible, and fellowship with others who have a zeal for God.

- **Remove from your eye things that will cool spiritual motivation.** All stimulation we receive motivates our lives for something. If we find spiritual motivation lacking, we must shut down the things that do not motivate us toward spiritual things.

*Psalms 101:2-3 I will give heed to the blameless way...I will set no worthless thing before my eyes.*

A sad statistic I once heard is that most Christians in pray on average about 7 minutes a day. In contrast to this a 2017 study shows that the average person spends 135 minutes a day on social media.

- **Make sure you have time with passionate people.**

David and the writer of Hebrews speak of this need to be around passionate people.

*Psa 101: 2 I will give heed to the blameless way...I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. 3...I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me. 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. 5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure. 6 **My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me** (TLB I will make the godly of the land my heroes and invite them to my home) 7 He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me...*



**Heb 10:23-25**...d let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, (25) not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Passion and zeal are an essential trait for God's people. We need to consistently take steps that lead towards fanning the flame of Spiritual passion in our lives.

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