

Renew Your Zeal 8-13-17 PM

When Jesus gave John a message for the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2, He told them that they had left their first love. There is an old song that says *"You've Lost that Loving Feeling"*. That might describe what had happened to this congregation. We might describe this as zeal: Passion, strong interest; the energy and enthusiasm in pursuit of an ideal. When our zeal leaves us we are less likely to accomplish the work of growth, and we are more likely to stray or fall away.

To understand how important zeal is, we might consider our faith as though it is a ship. Our understanding is meant to be in charge, like the captain of a ship. All of our determination ought to come from the knowledge of the truth (2 Peter 1:3). But the actual power comes out of the engine (under the captain's command). Zeal is like that engine; it must be under the control of the captain, and cannot be what controls us; it must be under control. But without zeal, our ship does not move. It drifts (Heb. 2:1) and is brought into the reefs and rocks (Jude 12) that cause shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19).

Why do church or individual Christians lose their zeal? Sometimes other things take over or get in the way. Imagine the engine suddenly having to divert power; the ship then comes to a stop. Sometimes we struggle with worldly measurements of spiritual things. Maybe it is that root of almost all sin, selfishness, which takes away our power. Without distinction, we have no zeal. Finally, when we are in emotional turmoil, we are without zeal.

In 2 Chronicles 34 we read about a time when Judah had lost both its zeal and its understanding. When King Josiah came, he sought to fix this. First we read that he tore down the idols in the land. Second, he restored the temple. Finally, when he found the Word of God, he repented and clung to it. This is a pattern of restoring our zeal for God.

First, we need to remove the idols which deflate our zeal. In Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5 we see that covetousness is idolatry. When we have other things draining our zeal, we lose power and ultimately control. We need to strive to keep obstacles out of our way.

Second, we need to restore the temple. Both the church and our own bodies are called the temple of God. We need to be dedicated to God, or rededicated as the case may be. In Romans 12:1-2 we are told to renew ourselves. This is necessary to do constantly, not just once.

Third, we need to be doers of the word of God, not hearers only. In James 1:23-25 we are told that some hear what God has said and do not act. Imagine our engine getting the order for full speed ahead, but not working on that end. We need to be disciplined enough to follow directions.

Renewing our zeal is a constant effort. When a runner prepares for a marathon, they do not simply practice and then stop when they know they can make it. They must keep up their training until the day of the marathon. Every day that they do not exercise is a day that works against them. We are in a race too, and we need to constantly renew our strength to finish.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 1 Corinthians 9:24

