**“Be Zealous”**

1. **Be Zealous**

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline therefore be zealous and repent” (v. 19).

1. **What does Zealous mean?**

2a) A dictionary definition of Zealous: “enthusiastic, passionate, earnest, burning, keen, devoted, eager, militant, ardent, fervent, impassioned”.

2b) In our society where “tolerance” is the highest goal, zeal is often seen as something negative. You can be enthusiastic about anything so long as you keep it within society’s accepted boundaries and don’t bother anyon

e else with it. If you go beyond those lines, you are branded an extremist, a trouble maker. A zealot.

1. **Jesus was zealous**

3a) Jesus gave up a stable job with a good income to become an unpaid itinerant preacher

3b) He left his behind home, family and community, more than that, he challenged the accepted values of his society, stepping outside of the behaviour that would ensure his acceptance.

3c) He organised his lifestyle so that everything he did would help further his cause; Jesus fasted 40 days. He got up whilst it was still dark and worked hard all day long for days upon end ministering to thousands of people, often without even time to eat or see his natural family who complained that he had gone mad. When he wasn’t busy ministering to crowds, he would go into lonely places and spend countless hours seeking his father and praying.

3d) Jesus was also zealous in speaking out against evil, often risking his own safety top do so. For example, he denounced the pharisees as “hypocrites”, “a brood of vipers”, or white-washed tombs full of decay and uncleanness” (Matt. 23, 27).

When Jesus’ disciples saw him cleansing the temple, they remembered the prophecy of Isaiah; “Zeal for your house will consume me” (John 2, 17).

3e) In the end he gave his life rather than backing down or compromising on what he believed in

3f) He told some to sell all that they had and follow him (Matt. 19, 21). To others concerned about their family he advised to leave the “dead to bury their dead” (Matt. 8, 22). He said; “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ (Mark 12, 30)

1. **Many others in the Bible were zealous**

4a) Moses burned with anger in Pharaoh’s presence (Exod. 11, 8).

4b) David burned with indignation when he heard Goliath’s taunts and as a untrained shepherd teenager stepped out to fight a huge, fully armed professional warrior. He danced before the Lord with all his might and said that he longed for God as a deer pants for steams of water and wrote “earnestly I seek you; my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.” (Psalm 63, 1).

4c) Jeremiah said that God’s word burned in his heart like a fire shut up in his bones and he could not keep it in” (Jer. 20, 9)

1. **How different modern believers are from the Biblical pattern**

5a) The average western believer might read the bible or pray for a few minutes on a good day. They live a comfortable life and rarely put themselves out for God. They tend to keep quiet about their faith, not wanting people to think that they are strange.

5b) The old pioneers of AOG were zealous. Most weren’t paid a salary. They started their churches from nothing, often working a full time job in the day time and another full time job as a pastor in the evenings and weekends. Many built their church buildings with their own hands, by faith and paid for out of their own pockets. Very few had college degrees or formal theological training. Yet they preached with conviction, challenged the lost with uncompromising words about their eternal destiny, healed the sick and saw many saved.

5c) How different from the modern Pastor who won’t take a job unless he’s guaranteed a good salary with 5 weeks holiday maybe even a comfortable manse or a car provided. Then we would not be happy if he was expected to work more than 40 hours a week, or give up more than 2 or 3 evenings.

5d) “I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. **24**Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. **25**Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, **26**I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. **27**I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. **28**Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11, 23-28)

5e) “Imitate me”, said Paul, “as I imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11, 1). Those are the words of a Zealous man.

1. **What do zealous people do?**

6a) Zealous people do things that most people would say were extreme or unreasonable.

6b) Zealous people would actually try to live out every verse of the Bible, even the ones that are difficult. Like that verse of scripture that is one of the most ignored commands in the whole Bible, to “**meditate on God’s word day and night** (Josh 1,8; Ps 1,2)”.

Eg. Smith Wigglesworth who would not allow any newspapers into his home because he wanted to protect his family’s minds from pollution and distraction. **He never went more than 15 minutes in any day without reading something from the Bible.** He used to say; “***Firstly, read the Word of God.  Secondly, consume the Word until it consumes you.  Thirdly, believe the Word.  Fourthly, act on the Word.   I never consider myself fully dressed unless I have a copy of the Word of God in my pocket”.***

6c) Zealous people pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5, 17). They get up early to pray and (as the scripture commands us), they give themselves no rest and give the Lord no rest until He comes in answer to their prayers (Is. 62,7).

Like the Moravians who started a prayer meeting for the lost which went on day and night, 24 hours a day without ever ceasing for over 100 years. Out of that prayer meeting came awakenings that swept through multiple countries of Europe including the weslyan revival in our own nation, and hundreds of missionaries were sent to the ends of the earth.

6d) Zealous people go to the ends of the earth to save the unreached, like the 300 missionaries who were sent out from that 100-year prayer meeting. Many of them got on the boats with their possessions packed in coffins. Some even sold themselves into slavery so that they could reach the slaves working in the sugar plantations in the west indies.

6e) Zealous people are not easily swayed, diverted or put off. They don’t quit. When they meet opposition or difficulties, they don’t argue or complain, but they give thanks to God in all circumstances. Like Paul and Silas who sang hymns of praise to God after having been whipped and chained up like common criminals in the jail at Philippi.

6f) Zealous people do not count the cost. They give their all so they can see God’s kingdom come through them, remembering Jesus’ words “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8, 34-35).

**How can we change to become zealous?**

1. Stir up your own zeal.
2. Remove those things that quench the Spirit
3. Catch fire with the fire of God
4. **Stir up your own zeal**

7a) Zeal is a decision of the will. We often don’t feel like praising God or serving Him.

7b) We shouldn’t follow our feelings. We should follow God’s word. Your feelings will lie to you. They will contradict God’s word. They will tell you; “Sorry. You can’t have peace today. Life’s too difficult”. “You can’t be happy today”. You can’t be free from guilt today, not after what you’ve just done. You can’t be healed today.

7c) We are not called to be “Feelers” but “Believers”.

7d) God’s word is true for ever and isn’t over-ruled by our difficult circumstances or the adverse trends of society. What God says is a higher truth than whatever your feelings are telling you. God is still on the throne, so we have no need to be downcast, stressed or worried.

7e) Sometimes we need to shepherd our feelings into line with what God’s word commands them to feel. That’s why Jesus commands you to “Be Zealous”. “Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.” (Psalm 57, 8 & 108,2).

7f) “I don’t ever ask Smith Wigglesworth how he feels!” I jump out of bed! I dance before the Lord for at least 10 to 12 minutes – high speed dancing. I jump up and down and run around my room telling God how great he is, how wonderful He is, how glad I am to be associated with Him and to be His child.” (Quote of Smith Wigglesworth

1. **Remove those things that quench our Zeal**

8a) You can’t light a fire unless you have combustible fuel and you remove all the non-flammable items from the flame because they will put the fire out. Non flammable items such as sand, foam or water are used to put fires out.

8b) Much of our life is made up of non flammable material, things that God can’t set on fire for Him.

8c) Many of the things that God could touch, like our working hours or our relationships with non-church people, we don’t want to bring Him into those things in case someone doesn’t like the fire and objects to us bringing God into their orbit.

8d) The only parts of our lives that God can touch is church bit and that is so small in comparison to the other parts that its like having one dry stick surrounded by a mound of wet wood. With wrong priorities, our lives will never catch fire.

8e) We need to increase the amount of fuel we put on our spiritual fire.Add up how many hours you spend reading your bible and praying and coming to church meetings in the week. Then add up how many hours you spend on other things.

1. **Attitudes that quench our Zeal (quench the Spirit)**

9a) “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5, 19).

9b) Just like sand, water or foam will extinguish a fire, there are certain attitudes common to God’s people that will extinguish the flame of God’s zeal within us.

9c) Fear; we don’t open our hearts because we are not sure if we will be able to cope.

9d) Focus on self

9e) Unbelief

9f) Love of pleasure

1. **Why would I want to be more zealous when I feel stressed with what I’m doing already?**

10a) One of the things that hinders our zeal is a lack of balance. This doesn’t mean compromise. Like a plane that’s designed to be stable, if we live life in God’s way we should always be strong and refreshed (Isaiah 40, 29-31)

We need to balance our work and rest, our giving out and taking in. God commanded us to do no work on one day a week, and to take quite a few weeks holiday (festivals).

10b) Zeal is not about what you do. It’ about who you are.

1. **Catch fire with the fire of God**

11a) God is burning with zeal (Zechariah 8, 2) “Our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12, 29). “God’s throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him….”. “though the bush was on fire it did not burn up” (Exod. 3, 2)

11b) Fire is always hungry and always flowing outwards. God is burning with passion for His people, hungry for relationship and always moving to try and reach them.

11c) We are called to be like God. “He makes his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104, 4).

11d) In “The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe, C.S. Lewis describes how the white witch has turned the beautiful land of Narnia it into a perpetual frozen winter land. Anyone who opposes her is turned into statues of ice.

11e) The Devil is trying to turn much of our lives into frozen ice, without us even realising that it’s not meant to be that way.

11f) There’s a beautiful scene where Aslan (who’s a picture of Jesus) comes into the witch’s castle and breathes on the ice statues, and they melt and come back to life.

11g) Jesus wants to turn your heart of stone into something living, feeling.

11h) Jesus doesn’t want to destroy your life by making you work harder. He wants to set you free from your cold and selfish heart of stone and create in you a heart of flesh, full of love and fire.

11i) Spend time close to the fire, and you will catch fire.