

Zeal And The Christian

If we were to ask at random 100 religious people to state what they considered to be external evidence of a mature Christian, 90% would include in their list “zeal.”

The dictionary lists the use of the word “zeal” as persons with ardent and active interest, enthusiasm.

Surely this should describe a Christian, and the better the Christian the more accurately it should apply.

The devout Christian should be fervent actively pursuing the things of God.

The attitude of a Christian towards Jesus Christ should manifest fervent love and a burning devotion.

All of the above seem to be expressing zeal.

True, while a Christian should be zealous, it is also possible to be zealous and not a Christian.

Zeal proves only one thing, that the person manifesting this zeal is healthy, energetic and actively interested in something.

The most zealous religionists I’m aware of are the wrongly-named Jehovah’s Witnesses.

If zeal indicates godliness, then these ardent devotees of error are Christians of the first order, a notion that could hardly be entertained by anyone who knows them intimately.

Muslims pray oftener than the best Christians and are zealously making converts to their faith in many parts of the world much faster than the following of Jesus Christ.

Fascists, Nazis and the Communists have given to this world the most convincing demonstration of zeal.

There are also a certain number of people who cannot rest until they are making a great noise and stirring up the dust. Their temperate demands that they are “burnt up” about something.

The truth is that though all godly people are zealous, **not** all zealous people are godly.

Isaiah 9:7 [NIV] *“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”*

It is with great zeal that Jesus Christ will accomplish all that is planned for His reign on earth and the whole universe.

2 Corinthians 7:9-11 [NIV] *“yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”*

It was with zeal that the Church at Corinth repented.

2 Corinthians 9:2 [NIV] *“For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.”*

The zealous support of the needs of other Christians had provoked many to follow their example.

Isaiah 42:1-4 [NIV] *“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope.”*

The zeal that Jesus Christ has is not boisterous and loud inspite of its greatness.

Romans 10:2 [NIV] *“For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”*

Zeal can be misguided, it is not the quantity of zeal that matters to God but the quality and direction.

The zeal that the Church at Corinth applied to their acts of repentance greatly pleased God as Paul confirmed.

Revelation 3:15-20 [King James] *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*

To the lukewarm, neither hot or cold, God’s command through the apostle John was to be zealous.

The zeal that leads a person to restitution, penitence and amendment to their lives is pleasing to the Creator God.

The zeal that drives people like Moses, Daniel and Ezra to their knees in intercession for others, is also pleasing to our Saviour and Creator.

But there is a kind of zeal that gives to humanity such misshapen religious examples as Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy.

Matthew 5:6 [NIV] *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*

What zeal every true Christian needs is this hunger for righteousness, that is a pain-filled longing to be Christ-like and Holy.

We need zeal that is loving, self-effacing and lowly, no other kind will be acceptable to our Saviour and Creator God.

The pure love for the Creator God and all other human beings which expresses itself in a zealous burning desire to advance God’s glory.

Bringing more people to know Him, worship Him and love Him, thus blessing them with what God desires to give them, eternal life getting to know Him in greater and greater depth. [**John 17:3**]

Such zeal as this will certainly be approved by our Creator God.

But the self-centred and ambitious religious leaders who are full of zeal, are just as certainly offensive to our Creator God, for they will at last be proved to be injurious to the lives of countless human beings.

Be zealous but as a true Christian you must know where that zeal will lead you.

If your zeal brings only fame to yourself as godly person and acknowledged good “*Christian*” be careful and calm down and think again.

If the only motive is to bring glory to our Saviour and Creator God, fine, you have as a humble servant His full approval.

Always remember that it is **not** the quantity of our zeal that matters to our Creator God but the motive and the quality.