

BE ZEALOUS.

THOUGHTS ON GALATIANS IV. 18.

BY THE

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The following Tract is founded upon a Sermon preached by me, on behalf of the Colonial Church and School Society, at St. Dunstan's in the West, London, in the month of May.

I feel it due to the Committee, who did me the honour to ask me to preach the Sermon, to recommend the Society most strongly to the readers of this tract, as the best existing instrument for sending the Gospel to our brethren in the Colonies of Great Britain.

J. C. RYLE.

JUNE, 1852.

“BE ZEALOUS.”

GAL. IV. 18.

“It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing”

READER,

There is a subject before your eyes of vast importance. I mean the subject of religious zeal.

It is a subject, like many others in religion, most sadly misunderstood. Many would be ashamed to be thought “zealous.” Many are ready to say of zealous people what Festus said of Paul, “They are beside themselves,—they are mad.” (Acts xxvi. 24.)

But it is a subject which no reader of the Bible has any right to pass over. If we make the Bible our rule of faith and practice, we cannot turn away from it. We must look it in the face. What says the Apostle Paul to Titus? “Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zealous* of good works.” (Titus ii. 14.) What says the Lord Jesus to the Laodicean church? “Be *zealous* and repent” (Rev. iii. 19.)

Reader, I say plainly, I want to plead the cause of zeal in religion. I am not afraid of it. I love it. I admire it. I believe it to be a mighty blessing. I want to strike a blow at the lazy, easy, sleepy Christianity of these latter days, which can see no beauty in zeal, and only uses the word “zealot” as a word of reproach. I want to remind Christians that “Zealot” was a name given by our Lord to His Apostle Simon as a mark of honour, and to persuade them to be zealous men.

Come now and give me your attention, while I tell you something about zeal. Listen to me for your own sake,—for the sake of the world,—for the sake of the Church of Christ. Listen to me, and by God’s help I will show you that to be zealous is to be wise.

I. Let me show you, in the first place, *what is zeal in religion?*

II. Let me show you, in the second place, *when a man can be called rightly zealous in religion?*

III. Let me show you, in the third place, *why it is a good thing for a man to be zealous in religion?*

I. First of all, I propose to bring before you this question, “What is *zeal* in religion?”

Zeal in religion is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way. It is a desire which no man feels by nature,—which the Spirit puts in the heart of every believer when he is converted,—but which some believers feel so much more strongly than others, that they alone deserve to be called zealous men.

This desire is so strong, when it really reigns in a man, that it impels him to make any sacrifice,—to go through any trouble,—to deny himself to any amount,—to suffer, to work, to labour, to toil,—to spend himself and be spent, and even to die,—if only he can please God and honour Christ.

A zealous man in religion is preeminently *a man of one thing*. It is not enough to say that he is earnest,—hearty,—uncompromising,—thorough-going,—whole hearted,—fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing,—he cares for one thing,—he lives for one thing,—he is swallowed up in one thing, and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies,—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness,—whether he is rich, or whether he is poor,—whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offence,—whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish,—whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise,—whether he gets honour, or whether he gets shame,—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God’s glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it,—he is content. He feels that like a lamp, he is made to burn, and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such a one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, and work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes! if he is only a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill. If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till

help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean, when I speak of zeal in religion.

You know the habit of mind that makes men great in this world,—that makes such men as Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar, or Oliver Cromwell, or Peter the Great, or Charles XII, or Marlborough, or Napoleon, or Pitt. You know that they were all men of one thing. They threw themselves into one grand pursuit. They cared for nothing else. They put everything else aside. They counted everything else as second-rate, and of subordinate importance, compared to the one thing that they put before their eyes every day they lived. I say that the same habit of mind applied to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes religious *zeal*.

You know the habit of mind that makes men great in the sciences of this world,—that makes such men as Archimedes, or Sir Isaac Newton, or Galileo, or Ferguson the astronomer, or James Watt. All these were men of one thing. They brought the powers of their minds into one single focus. They cared for nothing else beside. And this was the secret of their success. I say that this same habit consecrated to the service of God, becomes religious zeal.

You know the habit of mind that makes men rich,—that makes men amass mighty fortunes, and leave millions behind them. What kind of people were the bankers, and merchants, and tradesmen, who have left a name behind them, as men who acquired immense wealth, and became rich from being poor? They were all men that threw themselves entirely into their business, and neglected everything else for the sake of that business. They gave their first attention, their first thoughts, the best of their time, and the best part of their mind, to pushing forward the transactions in which they were engaged. They were men of one thing. Their hearts were not divided. They devoted themselves, body, soul, and mind to their business. They seemed to live for nothing else. I say that, if you turn that habit of mind to the service of God and his Christ, it makes religious zeal.

Now, reader, this habit of mind,—this zeal was *the characteristic of all the Apostles*. See for example the Apostle Paul. Hear him when he speaks to the Ephesian elders for the last time, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts xx. 24.) Hear him again, when he writes to the Philippians, “This one thing I do; I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iii. 13.) See him from the day of his conversion, giving up his brilliant prospects,—forsaking all for Christ’s sake,—and going forth to preach that very Jesus whom he had once despised. See him going to and fro throughout the world

from that time,—through persecution,—through oppression,—through opposition,—through prisons,—through bonds,—through afflictions,—through things next to death itself, up to the very day when he sealed his faith with his blood, and died at Rome, a martyr for that Gospel which he had so long proclaimed. This was true religious *zeal*.

This again was *the characteristic of the early Christians*. They were men “everywhere spoken against.” They were driven to worship God in dens and caves of the earth. They often lost everything in the world for their religion’s sake. They generally gained nothing but the cross, persecution, shame, and reproach. But they seldom, very seldom, went back. If they could not dispute, at least they could suffer. If they could not convince their adversaries by argument, at any rate they could die, and prove that they themselves were in earnest. Look at Ignatius cheerfully travelling to the place where he was to be devoured by lions, and saying as he went, “Now do I begin to be a disciple of my master, Christ.” Hear old Polycarp before the Roman Governor, saying boldly when called upon to deny Christ, “Four score and six years have I served Christ, neither hath he ever offended me in anything, and how then can I revile my King?” This was true *zeal*.

This again was *the characteristic of Martin Luther*. He boldly defied the most powerful hierarchy that the world has ever seen. He unveiled its corruptions with an unflinching hand. He preached the long-neglected truth of justification by faith, in spite of anathemas and excommunications, fast and thickly poured upon him. See him going to the Diet at Worms, and pleading his cause before the Emperor, and the Legate, and a host of the children of this world. Hear him saying,—when men were dissuading him from going, and reminding him of the fate of John Huss, “Though there were a devil under every tile on the roofs of Worms, in the name of the Lord I shall go forward.” This was true *zeal*.^v

This again was *the characteristic of our own English Reformers*. You have it in our first reformer, Wickliffe, when he rose up on his sick bed, and said to the Friars, who wanted him to retract all he had said against the Pope, “I shall not die, but live to declare the villainies of the Friars.” You have it in Cranmer, dying at the stake, rather than deny Christ’s Gospel, holding forth that hand to be first burned which, in a moment of weakness, had signed a recantation, and saying as he held it in the flames, “This unworthy hand!” You have it in old father Latimer, standing boldly on his faggot, at the age of seventy years, and saying to Ridley, “Courage, brother Ridley! we shall light such a candle this day as, by God’s grace, shall never be put out.” This was *zeal*.

This again has been *the characteristic of all the greatest Missionaries*. You see it in Mrs. Judson, in Carey, in Morrison, in Schwartz, in Williams,

in Brainerd, in Elliott. You see it in none more brightly than in Henry Martyn. This was a man who had reached the highest academical honours that Cambridge could bestow. Whatever profession he chose to follow, he had the most dazzling prospects of success. He turned his back upon it all. He chose to preach the Gospel to poor benighted heathen. He went forth to an early grave, in a foreign land. He said when he got there, and saw the condition of the people, "I could bear to be torn in pieces, if I could but hear the sobs of penitence,—if I could but see the eyes of faith directed to the Redeemer!" This was *zeal*.

But, reader, to look away from all earthly examples,—this, remember, is preeminently the characteristic of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. Of Him it was written hundreds of years before He came upon earth, that He was "clad with *zeal* as with a cloak," and "the *zeal* of thine house hath even eaten me." And His own words were "My meat is to do my Father's will, and to finish his work." (Psalm lxvi. 9. Isaiah lix. 17. John iv. 34.)

Where shall we begin, if we try to give examples of His *zeal*? Where should we end, if we once began? Trace all the narratives of His life in the four Gospels. Read all the history of what He was from the beginning of His ministry to the end. Surely if there ever was one who was *all zeal*, it was our great Example,—our Head,—our High Priest,—the great Shepherd of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reader, if these things are so, you should not only beware of running down *zeal*, but you should also beware of allowing *zeal* to be run down in your presence. It may be badly directed, and then it becomes a curse;—but it may be turned to the highest and best ends, and then it is a mighty blessing. Like fire, it is one of the best of servants;—but like fire also, if not well directed, it may be the worst of masters. Listen not to those people who talk of *zeal* as weakness and enthusiasm. Listen not to those who see no beauty in missions,—who laugh at all attempts at the conversion of souls,—who call Societies for sending the Gospel to the world useless,—and who look upon City Missions, and District Visiting, and Ragged Schools, and Open Air Preaching, as nothing but foolishness and fanaticism. Beware, lest in joining a cry of that kind you condemn the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Beware lest you speak against Him who has "left us an ensample that we should follow his steps."

Alas! I fear there are many professing Christians, who if they had lived in the days when our Lord and His apostles walked upon earth, would have called Him and all His followers enthusiasts and fanatics. There are many, I fear, who have more in common with Annas and Caiaphas,—with Pilate

and Herod,—with Festus and Agrippa,—with Felix and Gallio,—than with St. Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. I pass on now to the second thing I proposed to speak of. *When is a man truly zealous in religion?*

There never was a grace of which Satan has not made a counterfeit. There never was a good coin issued from the mint, but forgers at once have coined something very like it. It was one of Nero's cruel practices first to sew up Christians in the skins of wild beasts, and then bait them with dogs. It is one of Satan's devices to place distorted copies of the believer's graces before the eyes of men, and so to bring the true graces into contempt. No grace has suffered so much in this way as zeal. Of none perhaps are there so many shams and counterfeits abroad. We must therefore clear the ground of all rubbish on this question. We must find out when zeal in religion is really good, and true, and of God.

1. Reader, if zeal be true, it will be a *zeal according to knowledge*. It must not be a blind, ignorant zeal. It must be a calm, reasonable, intelligent principle, which can show the warrant of Scripture for every step it takes. The unconverted Jews had zeal. Paul says, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, *but not according to knowledge*." (Rom. x. 21.) Saul had zeal when he was a persecuting Pharisee. He says himself, in one of his addresses to the Jews, "I was *zealous* toward God as ye all are this day." (Acts xxii. 31.) Manasseh had zeal in the days when he was an idolater. The man who made his own children pass through the fire,—who gave up the fruit of his body to Moloch, to atone for the sin of his soul,—that man had zeal. James and John had zeal when they would have called down fire on a Samaritan village. But our Lord rebuked them. Peter had zeal when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. But he was quite wrong. Bonner and Gardiner had zeal when they burned Latimer and Cranmer. Were they not in earnest! Let us do them justice. They were zealous, though it was for an unscriptural religion. The members of the inquisition in Spain had zeal, when they tortured men, and put them to horrible deaths, because they would not forsake the Gospel. Yes! they marched men and women to the stake in solemn procession, and called it "An Act of Faith," and believed they were doing God service. The Hindoos, who used to lie down before the car of Juggernaut, and allow their bodies to be crushed under its wheels:—had not they zeal! The Indian widows, who used to burn themselves on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands,—the Roman Catholics, who persecuted to death the Vaudois and Albigenses, and cast down men and women from rocks and precipices, because they were heretics;—had not they zeal! The Saracens,—the Crusaders,—the Jesuits,—the anabaptists of Munster,—the followers of Joanna Southcote,—had they not

all zeal? Yes! Yes! I do not deny it. All these had zeal beyond question. They were all zealous. They were all in earnest. But their zeal was not such zeal as God approves,—it was not a “zeal according to knowledge.”

2. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal *from true motives*. Such is the subtlety of the heart, that men will often do right things from wrong motives. Amaziah and Joash, kings of Judah, are striking proofs of this. Just so a man may have zeal about things that are good and right, but from second-rate motives, and not from a desire to please God. And such zeal is worth nothing. It is reprobate silver. It is utterly wanting when placed in the balance of God. Man looks only at the action. God looks at the motive. Man only thinks of the quantity of work done. God considers the doer’s heart.

There is such a thing as zeal from *party spirit*. It is quite possible for a man to be unwearied in promoting the interests of his own Church or denomination, and yet to have no grace in his own heart,—to be ready to die for the peculiar opinions of his own section of Christians, and yet to have no real love to Christ. Such was the zeal of the Pharisees. They “compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, they made him two-fold more the child of hell than themselves.” (Matt. xxiii. 15.) This zeal is not true.

There is such a thing as zeal from mere *selfishness*. There are times when it is men’s interest to be zealous in religion. Power and patronage are sometimes given to godly men. The good things of the world are sometimes to be attained by wearing a cloak of religion. And whenever this is the case, there is no lack of false zeal. Such was the zeal of Joab, when he served David. Such was the zeal of only too many Englishmen in the days of the Commonwealth, when the Puritans were in power.

There is such a thing as zeal from the *love of praise*. Such was the zeal of Jehu, when he was putting down the worship of Baal. Remember how he met Jonadab the son of Rechab, and said, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.” Such is the zeal that Bunyan refers to in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, when he speaks of some who went “for praise” to mount Zion. Some people feed on the praise of their fellow creatures. They would rather have it from Christians than have none at all.

Ah! reader, it is a sad and humbling proof of man’s corruption, that there is no degree of self-denial and self-sacrifice to which men may not go from false motives. It does not follow that a man’s religion is true, because he “gives his body to be burned,” or because he “gives his goods to feed the poor.” The Apostle Paul tells us that a man may do this, and yet not have true charity. It does not follow because men go into a wilderness, and become hermits, that therefore they know what true self-denial is. It does not

follow because people immure themselves in monasteries and nunneries, or become sisters of charity, and sisters of mercy, that therefore they know what true crucifixion of the flesh and self-sacrifice is in the sight of God. All these things people may do on wrong principles. They may do them from wrong motives,—to satisfy a secret pride and love of notoriety,—but not from the true motive of zeal for the glory of God. All such zeal, let us understand, is false. It is of earth, and not of heaven.

3. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal *about things according to God's mind, and sanctioned by plain examples in God's Word*. Take, for one instance, that highest and best kind of zeal,—I mean zeal for our own growth in personal holiness. Such zeal will make a man feel incessantly that sin is the mightiest of all evils, and conformity to Christ the greatest of all blessings. It will make him feel that there is nothing which ought not to be done, in order to keep up a close walk with God. It will make him willing to cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, or make any sacrifice, if only he can attain a closer communion with Jesus. Is not this just what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.” “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.” (1 Cor. ix. 27, Phil. iii. 13, 14.)

Take, for another instance, zeal for the salvation of souls. Such zeal will make a man burn with desire to enlighten the darkness which covers the souls of multitudes, and to bring every man, woman, and child he sees to the knowledge of the Gospel. Is not this what you see in the Lord Jesus? It is said that He neither gave Himself nor His disciples, leisure so much as to eat. (Mark vi. 31.) Is not this what you see in the Apostle Paul? He says, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. ix. 22.)

Take, for another instance, zeal against evil practices. Such zeal will make a man hate everything which God hates, and long to sweep it from the face of the earth. It will make him jealous of God's honour and glory, and look on everything which robs him of it as an offence. Is not this what you see in Phinehas, the son of Eleazar?—or in Hezekiah and Josiah, when they put down idolatry?

Take, for another instance, zeal for maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel. Such zeal will make a man hate unscriptural teaching, just as he hates sin. It will make him regard religious error as a pestilence which must be checked, whatever may be the cost. It will make him scrupulously careful about every jot and tittle of the counsel of God, lest by some omission

the whole Gospel should be spoiled. Is not this what you see in Paul at Antioch, when he withstood Peter to the face, and says he was to be blamed? (Gal. ii. 11.) These are the kind of things about which true zeal is employed. Such zeal, let us understand, is honourable before God.

4. Furthermore, if zeal be true, it will be a zeal *tempered with charity and love*. It will not be a bitter zeal. It will not be a fierce enmity against persons. It will not be a zeal ready to take the sword, and to smite with carnal weapons. The weapons of true zeal are not carnal, but spiritual. True zeal will hate sin, and yet love the sinner. True zeal will hate heresy, and yet love the heretic. True zeal will long to break the idol, but deeply pity the idolater. True zeal will abhor every kind of wickedness, but labour to do good even to the vilest of transgressors. True zeal will warn as St. Paul warned the Galatians, and yet feel tenderly, as a nurse, or a mother over erring children. It will expose false teachers, as Jesus did the Scribes and Pharisees, and yet weep tenderly as Jesus did over Jerusalem, when He came near to it for the last time. True zeal will be decided as a surgeon dealing with a diseased limb; but true zeal will be gentle as one that is dressing the wounds of a brother. True zeal will speak truth boldly, like Athanasius, against the world, and not care who is offended; but true zeal will endeavour in all its speaking, to speak the truth in love.

5. Furthermore, if zeal be true, *it will be joined to a deep humility*. A truly zealous man will be the last to discover the greatness of his own attainments. All that He is and does will come so immensely short of his own desires, that he will be filled with a sense of his own unprofitableness, and amazed to think that God should work by him at all. Like Moses, when he came down from the mount, he will not know that his face shines. Like the righteous, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, he will not be aware of his own good works. Dr. Buchanan is one whose praise is in all the churches. He was one of the first to take up the cause of the perishing heathen. He literally spent himself, body and mind, in labouring to arouse sleeping Christians to see the importance of missions. Yet he says in one of his letters, "I do not know that I ever had what Christians call zeal." Whitefield was one of the most zealous preachers of the Gospel the world has ever seen. Fervent in spirit, instant in season out of season, he was a burning and shining light, and turned thousands to God. Yet he says after preaching for thirty years, "Lord help me to begin to begin." M'Cheyne was one of the greatest blessings that God ever gave to the church of Scotland. He was a minister insatiably desirous of the salvation of souls. Few men ever did so much good as he did, though he died at the age of twenty-nine. Yet he says in one of his letters, "None but God knows what an abyss of corruption is in my heart. It is perfectly wonderful that ever God could

bless such a ministry.” Ah! reader, where there is self-conceit, there is little true zeal.

Reader, I ask you particularly to remember the description of true zeal, which I have just given. Zeal according to knowledge,—zeal from true motives,—zeal warranted by Scriptural examples,—zeal tempered with charity,—zeal accompanied by deep humility,—this is true genuine zeal,—this is the kind of zeal which God approves. Of such zeal, you and I never need fear having too much.

I ask you to remember the description, because of the times in which you live. Beware of supposing that sincerity alone can ever make up true zeal,—that earnestness, however ignorant, makes a man a really zealous Christian in the sight of God. There is a generation in these days which makes an idol of what it is pleased to call “*earnestness*” in religion. These men will allow no fault to be found with an “*earnest man*.” Whatever his theological opinions may be,—if he be but an earnest man, that is enough for these people, and we are to ask no more. They tell you we have nothing to do with minute points of doctrine, and with questions of words and names, about which Christians are not agreed. Is the man an earnest man? If he is, we ought to be satisfied. Earnestness in their eyes covers over a multitude of sins. I warn you solemnly to beware of this specious doctrine. In the name of the Gospel, and in the name of the Bible, I enter my protest against the theory that mere earnestness can make a man a truly zealous and pious man in the sight of God.

These idolaters of earnestness would make out that God has given us no standard of truth and error, or that the true standard, the Bible, is so obscure, that no man can find out what truth is by simply going to it. They pour contempt upon the word, the written word, and therefore they must be wrong.

These idolaters of earnestness would make us condemn every witness for the truth, and every opponent of false teaching, from the time of the Lord Jesus down to this day. The Scribes and Pharisees were in earnest, and yet our Lord opposed them. And shall we dare even to hint a suspicion that they ought to have been let alone? Queen Mary, and Bonner, and Gardiner were in earnest in restoring Popery, and trying to put down Protestantism, and yet Ridley and Latimer opposed them to the death. And shall we dare to say that as both parties were in earnest, both were in the right? Devil-worshippers and idolaters at this day are in earnest, and yet our missionaries labour to expose their errors. And shall we dare to say that earnestness would take them to heaven, and that missionaries to heathen and Roman Catholics had better stay at home? Are we really going to admit that the Bible does not show us what is truth? Are we really going to put a mere

vague thing, called “earnestness,” in the place of Christ, and to maintain that no earnest man can be wrong? God forbid that we should give place to such doctrine! I shrink with horror from such theology. I warn you solemnly to beware of being carried away by it, for it is common and most seductive in this day. Beware of it, for it is only a new form of an old error,—that old error which says, that a man “Can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.” Admire zeal. Seek after zeal. Encourage zeal. But see that your own zeal be true. See that the zeal, which you admire in others, be a zeal “according to knowledge,”—a zeal from right motives,—a zeal that can bring chapter and verse out of the Bible for its foundation. Any zeal but this is but a false fire. It is not lighted by the Holy Ghost.

III. I pass on now to the third thing I proposed to speak of. Let me show you *why it is good for a man to be zealous,*

It is certain that God never gave man a commandment which it was not man’s interest as well as duty to obey. He never set a grace before his believing people which His people will not find it their highest happiness to follow after. This is true of all the graces of the Christian character. Perhaps it is preeminently true in the case of zeal.

Zeal is good for a Christian’s own soul. We all know that exercise is good for the health, and that regular employment of our muscles and limbs promotes our bodily comfort, and increases our bodily vigour. Now that which exercise does for our bodies, zeal will do for our souls. It will help mightily to promote inward feelings of joy, peace, comfort, and happiness. None have so much enjoyment of Christ as those who are ever zealous for His glory,—jealous over their own walk,—tender over their own consciences,—full of anxiety about the souls of others,—and ever watching, working, labouring, striving, and toiling to extend the knowledge of Jesus Christ upon earth. Such men live in the full light of the sun, and therefore their hearts are always warm. Such men water others, and therefore they are watered themselves. Their hearts are like a garden daily refreshed by the dew of the Holy Ghost They honour God, and so God honours them.

I would not be mistaken in saying this. I would not appear to speak slightly of any believer. I know that the Lord takes pleasure in all His people. There is not one, from the least to the greatest,—from the smallest child in the kingdom of God, to the oldest warrior in the battle against Satan,—there is not one in whom the Lord Jesus Christ does not take great pleasure. We are all His children;—and however weak and feeble some of us may be, as a father pitieth his children, so does the Lord pity them that love and fear Him. We are all the plants of His own planting;—and though many of us are poor, weakly exotics, scarcely keeping life together in a foreign soil,—yet as the gardener loves that which his hands have reared, so

does the Lord Jesus love the poor sinners that trust in Him. But while I say this, I do also believe that the Lord takes special pleasure in those who are zealous for Him,—in those who give themselves body, soul, and spirit, to extend His glory in this world. To them He reveals Himself as He does not to others. To them He shews things that other men never see. He blesses the work of their hands. He cheers them with spiritual consolations, which others only know by the hearing of the ear. They are men after His own heart, for they are men more like Himself than others. None have such joy and peace in believing,—none have such sensible comfort in their religion,—none have so much of heaven upon earth,—none see and feel so much of the consolations of the Gospel as those who are zealous, earnest, thorough-going, devoted Christians. For the sake of our own souls, if there were no other reason, it is good to be zealous,—to be very zealous in our religion.

Reader, as zeal is good for ourselves individually, so it is also *good for the professing Church of Christ generally*. Nothing so much keeps alive true religion as a leaven of zealous Christians scattered to and fro throughout a Church. Like salt, they prevent the whole body falling into a state of corruption. None but men of this kind can revive Churches when ready to die. It is impossible to over-estimate the debt that all Christians owe to zeal. The greatest mistake the rulers of a Church can make, is to drive zealous men out of its pale. By so doing they drain out the lifeblood of the system, and hasten on ecclesiastical decline and death.

Zeal is in truth that grace which God seems to delight to honour. Look through the list of Christians who have been eminent for usefulness. Who are the men that have left the deepest and most indelible marks on the Church of their day? Who are the men that God has generally honoured to build up the walls of His Zion, and turn the battle from the gate? Not so much men of learning and literary talents, as men of zeal.

Bishop Latimer was not such a deeply read scholar as Cranmer or Ridley. He could not quote fathers from memory as they did. He refused to be drawn into arguments about antiquity. He stuck to his Bible. Yet it is not too much to say that no English reformer made such a lasting impression on the nation as old Latimer did. And what was the reason? His simple zeal.

Baxter, the puritan, was not equal to some of his contemporaries in intellectual gifts. It is no disparagement to say that he does not stand on a level with Manton or Owen. Yet few men probably exercised so wide an influence on the generation in which he lived. And what was the reason? His burning zeal.

Whitefield, and Wesley, and Berridge, and Venn were inferior in mental attainments to Bishops Butler and Watson. But they produced effects on the

people of this country which fifty Butlers and Watsons would probably never have produced. They saved the Church of England from ruin. And what was one secret of their power? Their zeal.

These men stood forward at turning points in the history of the Church. They bore unmoved storms of opposition and persecution.—They were not afraid to stand alone.—They cared not though their motives were misinterpreted.—They counted all things but loss for the truth's sake.—They were each and all and every one eminently *men of one thing* and that one thing was to advance the glory of God, and to maintain His truth in the world. They were all fire, and so they lighted others.—They were wide awake, and so they awakened others.—They were all alive, and so they quickened others.—They were always working, and so they shamed others into working too.—They came down upon men like Moses from the mount.—They shone as if they had been in the presence of God.—They carried to and fro with them, as they walked their course through the world, something of the atmosphere and savour of heaven itself.

There is a sense in which it may be said that zeal is contagious. Nothing is more useful to the professors of Christianity than to see a real live Christian—a thoroughly zealous man of God. They may rail at him.—They may carp at him.—They may pick holes in his conduct. They may look shy upon him.—They may not understand him any more than men understand a new comet, when a new comet appears;—but insensibly a zealous man does them good. He opens their eyes. He makes them feel their own sleepiness. He makes their own great darkness visible. He obliges them to see their own barrenness. He compels them to think, whether they like it or not—“what are we doing? Are we not no better than mere cumberers of the ground?” It may be sadly true that “one sinner *destroyeth* much good;” but it is also a blessed truth that one zealous Christian can *do* much good. Yes! one single zealous man in a town,—one zealous man in a congregation,—one zealous man in a Society,—one zealous man in a family, may be a great, a most extensive blessing. How many machines of usefulness such a man sets a going! How much Christian activity he often calls into being which would otherwise have slept! How many fountains he opens which would otherwise have been sealed! Verily there is a deep mine of truth in those words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, “your zeal hath provoked very many.” (2 Cor. ix. 2.)

But, as zeal is good for the Church and for individuals, so zeal is *good for the world*. Where would the Missionary work be if it were not for zeal? Where would our City Missions and Ragged Schools be if it were not for zeal? Where would our District-Visiting and Pastoral Aid Societies be if it were not for zeal? Where would be our Societies for rooting out sin and

ignorance, for finding out the dark places of the earth, and recovering poor lost souls? Where would be all these glorious instruments for good if it were not for Christian zeal? Zeal called these institutions into being, and zeal keeps them at work when they have begun. Zeal gathers a few despised men, and makes them the nucleus of many a powerful Society. Zeal keeps up the collections of a Society when it is formed. Zeal prevents men from becoming lazy and sleepy when the machine is large, and begins to get favour from the world. Zeal raises up men to go forth, putting their lives in their hands, like Moffatt and Williams in our own day. Zeal supplies their place when they are gathered into the garner, as Weitbrecht was not long ago.

What would become of the ignorant masses who crowd the lanes and alleys of our overgrown cities, if it were not for Christian zeal? Governments can do nothing with them: they cannot make laws that will meet the evil. The vast majority of professing Christians have no eyes to see it: like the priest and Levite, they pass by on the other side. But zeal has eyes to see, and a heart to feel, and a head to devise, and a tongue to plead, and hands to work, and feet to travel, in order to rescue poor souls, and raise them from their low estate. Zeal does not stand poring over difficulties, but simply says, "here are souls perishing, and something *shall* be done." Zeal does not shrink back because there are Anakims in the way: it looks over their heads, like Moses on Pisgah, and says, "the land *shall* be possessed." Zeal does not wait for company, and tarry till good works are fashionable: it goes forward like a forlorn hope, and trusts that others will follow by and bye. Ah! reader, the world little knows what a debt it owes to Christian zeal. How much crime it has checked! How much sedition it has prevented! How much public discontent it has calmed! How much obedience to law and love of order it has produced! How many souls it has saved! Yes! and I believe we little know what might be done if every Christian was a zealous man! How much if ministers were more like Bickersteth, and Whitefield, and M'Cheyne! How much if laymen were more like Howard, and Wilberforce, and Thornton, and Nasmith! Oh! for the world's sake, as well as your own, resolve, labour, strive to be a zealous Christian!

Beware, I beseech you, of checking zeal. Seek it. Cultivate it. Try to blow up the fire in your own heart, and the hearts of others, but never, never check it. Beware of throwing cold water on zealous souls, whenever you meet with them. Beware of nipping in the bud this precious grace when first it shoots. If you are a parent beware of checking it in your children;—if you are a husband, beware of checking it in your wife;—if you are a brother, beware of checking it in your sisters,—and if you are a minister, beware of checking it in the members of your congregation. It is a shoot of

heaven's own planting. Beware of crushing it, for Christ's sake. Zeal may make mistakes.—Zeal may need directing.—Zeal may want guiding, controlling, and advising. Like the elephants on ancient fields of battle, it may sometimes do injury to its own side. But zeal does not need damping in a wretched, cold, corrupt, miserable world like this. Zeal, like John Knox pulling down the Scotch monasteries, may hurt the feelings of narrow-minded and sleepy Christians. It may offend the prejudices of those old-fashioned religionists, who hate everything new, and (like those who wanted soldiers and sailors to go on wearing pigtails), abhor all change. But zeal in the end will be justified by its results. Zeal, like John Knox, in the long run of life, will do infinitely more good than harm. Oh! reader, there is little danger of there ever being too much zeal for the glory of God. God forgive those who think there is! You know little of human nature. You forget that sickness is far more contagious than health, and that it is much easier to catch a cold than impart a glow. Depend upon it, the Church seldom needs a bridle, but often needs a spur. It seldom needs to be checked, it often needs to be urged on.

And now in conclusion let me try to apply this subject to the conscience of every person who reads this tract. It is a warning subject,—an arousing subject,—an encouraging subject,—according to the state of our several hearts. I wish by God's help to give every reader his portion.

1. First of all let me offer a warning to all who make no decided profession of religion. There are thousands and tens of thousands, I fear, in this condition. Reader, if you are one, the subject before you is full of solemn warning. Oh! that the Lord in mercy may incline your heart to receive it!

I ask you then in all affection, where is your zeal in religion? With the Bible before me, I may well be bold in asking. But with your life before me I may well tremble as to the answer. I ask again, where is your zeal for the glory of God? Where is your zeal for extending Christ's Gospel through an evil world? Zeal, which was the characteristic of the Lord Jesus,—zeal, which is the characteristic of the angels,—zeal, which shines forth in all the brightest Christians,—where is your zeal, unconverted reader,—where is your zeal indeed? You know well it is nowhere at all. You know well you see no beauty in it, You know well it is scorned and cast out as evil by you and your companions. You know well it has no place, no portion, no standing ground, in the religion of your soul. It is not that you know not what it is to be zealous. You have zeal, but it is all misapplied. It is all earthly. It is all about the things of time. It is not zeal for the glory of God. It is not zeal for the salvation of souls. Yes! many a man has zeal for the newspaper, but not for the Bible,—zeal for the daily reading of the "Times," but no zeal for the daily reading of God's blessed Word. Many a man has zeal for the ac-

count book and the business book, but no zeal about the book of life, and the last great account,—zeal about Australian and Californian gold, but no zeal about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Many a man has zeal about his earthly concerns,—his family, his pleasures, his daily pursuits, but no zeal about God, and heaven, and eternity.

Reader, if this is your case, awake, I do beseech you, to see your *gross folly*. You cannot live for ever. You are not ready to die. You are utterly unfit for the company of saints and angels. Awake! be zealous and repent.—Awake to see the *harm* you are doing. You are putting arguments in the hands of infidels by your shameful coldness. You are pulling down as fast as ministers build. You are helping the devil. Awake! be zealous, and repent.—Awake to see your childish *inconsistency*. What can be more worthy of zeal than eternal things,—than the glory of God,—than the salvation of souls? Surely if it is good to labour for rewards that are temporal, it is a thousand times better to labour for those that are eternal. Awake! be zealous, and repent.—Go and read that long-neglected Bible. Take up that blessed Book which you have, and perhaps never use. Read that New Testament through. Do you find nothing there to make you zealous, to make you earnest about your soul? Go and look at the cross of Christ. Go and see how the Son of God there shed His precious blood for you,—how he suffered and groaned, and died for you,—how He poured out His soul as an offering for sin, in order that you, sinful brother or sister, might not perish, but have eternal life. Go and look at the cross of Christ, and never rest till you feel some zeal for your own soul,—some zeal for the glory of God,—some zeal for extension of the Gospel throughout the world

2. Let me in the next place say something to arouse those who make a profession of being decided Christians, and are yet lukewarm in their practice. There are only too many, I regret to say, in this state of soul. Reader, if you are one, there is much in this subject which ought to lead you to searchings of heart.

Let me speak to your conscience. To you also I desire to put the question in all brotherly affection, where is your zeal?—Where is your zeal for the glory of God, and for extending the Gospel throughout the world? You know well it is very low. You know well that your zeal is a little feeble glimmering spark, that just lives, and no more;—it is like a thing ready to die. Surely, there is a fault somewhere, if this is the case. This state of things ought not to be. You, the child of God—you, redeemed at so glorious a price,—you, ransomed with such precious blood,—you, who are an heir of glory such as no tongue ever yet told, or eye saw;—surely you ought to be a man of another kind. Surely your zeal ought not to be so small.

I deeply feel that this is a painful subject to touch upon. I do it with reluctance, and with a constant remembrance of my own unprofitableness. Nevertheless, truth ought to be spoken. The plain truth is that many believers in the present day seem so dreadfully afraid of doing harm that they hardly ever dare to do good. There are many who are fruitful in objections, but barren in actions;—rich in wet blankets, but poor in anything like Christian fire. They are like the Dutch deputies who would never allow Marlborough to venture anything, and by their excessive caution prevented many a victory being won. Truly, in looking round the Church of Christ, a man might sometimes think that God's kingdom had come, and God's will was being done upon earth, so small is the zeal that some believers show. It is vain to deny it. I need not go far for evidence. I point to Societies for doing good to the heathen, the colonies, and the dark places of our own land, languishing and standing still for want of active support. I ask *is this zeal?* I point to thousands of miserable guinea subscriptions which are never missed by the givers, and yet make up the sum of their Christian liberality. I ask, *is this zeal?* I point to false doctrine allowed to grow up in parishes and families without an effort being made to check it, while so-called believers look on, and content themselves with wishing it was not so. I ask, *is this zeal?* Would the apostles have been satisfied with such a state of things? We know they would not.

Reader, if your conscience pleads guilty to any participation in the shortcomings I have spoken of, I call upon you, in the name of the Lord, to awake, be zealous, and repent. Let not zeal be confined to Lincoln's Inn, the Temple, and Westminster;—to banks, and shops, and counting houses. Let us see the same zeal in the Church of Christ. Let not zeal be abundant to get gold from Australia, and rescue Franklin from thick ribbed ice, but defective to send the Gospel to the heathen, or to pluck Roman Catholics like brands from the fire, or to enlighten the dark places of the colonies of this great land. Never were there such doors of usefulness opened,—never were there so many opportunities for doing good. I loathe that squeamishness which refuses to help religious works if there is a blemish about the instrument by which the work is carried on. At this rate we might never do anything at all. Resist the feeling, reader, if you are tempted by it. It is one of Satan's devices. It is better to work with feeble instruments than not to work at all. At all events, try to do something for God and Christ,—something against ignorance and sin. Give, collect, teach, exhort, visit, pray, according as God enables you. Only make up your mind that all can do something, and resolve that by you, at any rate, something shall be done. If you have only one talent, do not bury it in the ground. Try to live so as to

be missed. There is far more to be done in twelve hours than most of us have ever yet done on any day in our lives.

Think of the *precious souls* which are perishing, while you are sleeping. Be taken up with your inward conflicts if you will. Go on anatomizing your own feelings, and poring over your own corruptions, if you are so determined. But remember all this time souls are going to hell, and you might do something to save them by working, by giving, by writing, by lagging, and by prayer. Oh! awake, be zealous, and repent.

Think of the *shortness of time*. You will soon be gone. You will have no opportunity for works of mercy in another world. In heaven there will be no ignorant people to instruct, and no unconverted to reclaim. Whatever you do must be done now. Oh! when are you going to begin? Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of *the devil*, and his zeal to do harm. It was a solemn saying of old Bernard when he said that “Satan would rise up in judgment against some people at the last day, because he had shown more zeal to ruin souls than they had to save them.” Awake! be zealous, and repent.

Think of *your Saviour*, and all His zeal for you. Think of Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary, shedding His blood for sinners. Think of His life and death,—His sufferings and His doings. This He has done for you. What are you doing for Him? Oh! resolve that for the time to come you will spend and be spent for Christ. Awake! be zealous and repent.

3. Last of all let me encourage all readers of this tract who are truly zealous Christians.

I have but one request to make, and that is *that you will persevere*. I do beseech you to hold fast your zeal, and never let it go. I do beseech you never to go back from your first works, never to leave your first love, never to let it be said of you that your first things were better than your last. Beware of cooling down.—You have only to be lazy, and to sit still, and you will soon lose all your warmth. You will soon become another man from what you are now. Oh! reader, do not think this a needless exhortation.

It may be very true that wise young believers are very rare. But it is no less true that zealous old believers are very rare also. Never allow yourself to think that you can do too much,—that you can spend and be spent too much for Christ’s cause. For one man that does too much I will show you a thousand who do not do enough. Rather think that the night cometh, when no man can work,—and give, collect, teach, visit, work, pray, as if you were doing it for the last time. Lay to heart the words of that noble-minded Jansenist, who said when told that he ought to rest a little, “What should we rest for? have we not all eternity to rest in? “

Fear not the reproach of men. Faint not because you are sometimes abused. Heed it not if you are sometimes called bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, mad man, and fool. There is nothing disgraceful in these titles. They have often been given to the best and wisest of men. If you are only to be zealous when you are praised for it,—if the wheels of your zeal must be oiled by the world's commendation, your zeal will be but short-lived. Care not for the praise or frown of man. There is but one thing worth caring for, and that is the praise of God. There is but one question worth asking about our actions, "How will they look in the day of judgment?"

Reader, I lay these thoughts before you, and I ask you seriously to consider them.

If you are not yet a zealous man, I pray that God may make you one. If you are, I pray that your zeal may increase more and more to your life's end.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.