

MR. D'S NOTES ON ZEAL



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INTRODUCTION:

When we were living in Wyoming between ministries, I began this study. The study was near to my heart and thinking, but time and a move to the west coast set the study aside.

Recently while digging through a ton of old floppy disks in the garage I ran across the disk containing my preliminary work. Surprisingly I feel that the study is even more relevant now than it was ten years ago.

Our Christian society has declined shockingly in recent years and being excited about your faith is even more adverse to the norm than in previous years.

I trust that the term does not scare people away from the study for the fear they may have is certainly unfounded, or founded on a false understanding of zeal.

Respectfully,

Stanley L. Derickson April 2002

OUTLINE:

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III. CONCLUSIONS

BOOKLIST:

Unger, Merrill F.; UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY; Chicago: Moody Press; 1961

Vine, W.E.; Kohlenberger III, John R., editor; THE EXPANDED VINE'S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS; Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers; 1984 (6820 Auto Club Rd, Minneapolis, MN 55438)

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary; Merriam-Webster Inc.; Springfield, Mass: 1986

I. ZEALOTRY EXAMINED

The idea of the zealot is normally, in our day, negative in connotation. The zealot is one that is equated with the fanatic. We need to take a look at the term and the true meaning of the thought before we move on.

Even the Webster dictionary leaves the negative taste in the reader's mind. The negative, in my opinion, arises all too often from the desire to mask the real motivation of the zealot. The zealot is zealous for something that is important to him individually. Others oft times know that their own zeal for the correct consuming factor of life is diminished, thus they must cover up their own lack by negating that which they find offensive to their own shortcomings.

A. NORMAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE ZEALOT

The normal understanding of the zealot may actually be the normal misunderstanding of the zealot. The zeal of the zealot is often well placed, well intentioned, well directed, and well needed, however the recipients of that zeal often turn that zeal into the negative thought of "ZEALOT" and discard all that is said by the one they condemn.

Just a few illustrations: Ralph Nader has been with us for many years, crusading against and for so many items, one must wonder if he can number them. Ralph Nader has been termed a zealot, I am sure by those that he opposes as well as many of those that he would desire to inform.

I recall the first time I saw him on television, I thought he was a radical nut. I don't recall what cause he was laying before the public at the time - that was in the days of the Corvair - who remembers ancient history - anyway he was being portrayed, tongue in cheek, as a fanatic that was going to save the world.

I don't think that I hinder Mr. Nader's reputation at all to call him zealous, nor to label him a zealot, however I use the term zealot in the best of connotations - a man that aims his zeal toward those things he believes in.

Mr. Nader has, over the years, moved from the radical to the almost accepted. In the year 2000 we saw him running for president of the United States, and many seriously followed him. Not that they have been misled by the man or his philosophy, but because many have realized many of the things he has championed over the years were serious business and that he was correct in being zealous about changing things.

In his case a move from zealous radical to accepted force to be reckoned with - in short some finally started taking him seriously instead of labeling him derogatorily because he was excited about his mission.

I trust that as you progress through this study you will remember that Mr. Nader overcame his

dissenters - even though it took many years - and so can you if you choose to accept some of the principles set forth in this work. It will not be well accepted by the norm of Christianity if you follow these principles, but then they didn't accept the excitement of many of the zealots of history.

One further point - Mr. Nader was ahead of his time - as are most "zealous" Christians. His causes were ahead of normal thinking thus fanatical. Many believers that have been labeled zealots were willing to say and do what they believed - misunderstood by the masses - rejected by leaders of the church - finally understood after their passing.

There were a few stalwart souls that accepted and saw the benefit of education by extension a number of years ago while the norm was to soundly reject and ridicule thus "new kid on the block" as picking up a piece of paper.

Today the norm for those in ministry seems to be to take their education by extension.

B. Historical understanding of the Zealot

I am not an expert on history but have studied church history a time or two. The reformation gives us a good illustration of some of what I am trying to say.

The Catholic Church labeled the reformers as radical, as zealots for their cause, if you will. Not to argue - the reformers were zealous. Imagine if you will that you have just discovered that you can find salvation outside of the church - that you can receive salvation directly from God. Wouldn't you be a tad excited and be willing to do anything possible to share this new knowledge with the world? You most likely would be as the reformers - a zealot!

Let us analyze this situation for a moment. We have agreed that the reformers were zealous, but weren't those killing the reformers quite zealous?

In this historical situation we see that zealousness is a possibility within all sorts of situations and seems to be determined by ones commitment to his/her beliefs. The Catholics thought they were right and were zealous for their belief. The reformers thought they were right and were zealous for their belief.

The zealotry would be good or bad depending on what truth is. The Roman church desired purity within its ranks while the reformer wanted to expose the false teachings of the Roman church. Both based on strong belief in their belief system. Thus we must assume that the rightness or wrongness of zealotry is determined upon the truth of the belief.

C. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE ZEALOT

Shall we begin with a look into the Scriptures relating to zeal? I would like to just run through

some passages and see how the term is used in the Word of God.

2 Samuel 21:2 "And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites [were] not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)"

The thought seems to be "a jealous care for," rather than a selfish desire for self. Jealous in our culture is a negative word, but not so in this text. It is used elsewhere of the man that is upset about another man giving attention to his wife. The proper idea of jealous or zeal in this Biblical context relates to the husband that is jealous and zealous about keeping the wife from harm.

The pastor should be jealous of his parishioners - have a strong desire to care for them. The shepherd should have a strong jealousy for his sheep - have a strong desire to care for them and keep them from harm.

2 Kings 10:16, "And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot." Zeal for the Lord would relate to the total desire to do for God. This zeal may be misdirected, as in the case of unconverted Saul of Tarsus, but it can be quite properly directed as in the case of the converted Saul of Tarsus, Paul.

2 Kings 19:31, "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD [of hosts] shall do this." We see God's zeal in this passage. We will consider this more completely later.

Psalms 69:9, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." This depicts the man that is totally committed to something. This verse is used to speak of Christ cleaning out the money changers as well. (John 2:17, "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.")

This shows a consuming zeal - one must be careful that zeal not be over consuming. There is a possibility that zeal can have a detrimental effect if the zeal becomes a TOTALLY consuming point of life. When zeal turns to a force within your life that hinders your proper living and/or health, then zeal has gone wrong. Zeal that consumes ones life's work IS NOT WRONG.

Psalms 119:139, "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words."

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of [his] government and peace [there shall be] no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

God Himself has as a part of His nature zeal - just how negative can this trait be? Zeal is

something that is positive in its proper understanding. It isn't that zeal cannot be wrong but that zeal properly existing is not wrong. The stalker that follows and troubles a woman does his work with zeal, yet it is totally wrong and illegal. Proper zeal on the other hand is just as right and correct as it can be.

Isaiah 37:32, "For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this." Again we see God's own zeal in action. Again, we see the zeal in "care of" - God cares for Israel with zeal!

Isaiah 59:17, "For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance [for] clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." Zeal is a part of proper spiritual battle! (Just a side note a study of this passage in relation to Eph. 6:12-17 might be of interest.)

Isaiah 63:15, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where [is] thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?" An application of this verse might be that zeal is something that is, and should be controlled. This relates to zeal gone amiss. The individual must find that balance in his or her life where zeal is the consuming point of their life, yet zeal must not consume the life.

Ezekiel 5:13, "Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken [it] in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them."

Zeal may well act in an aggressive manner when founded on a correct basis. In this context, God's justice is that basis. If we act, based on God's Word, it is right. If the Word be our guide then we can and must act. If strong action is required, then strong action should be the result.

Within this action, we must realize that our Godly action may be outside of the laws of the land we live in. We must act, but we should also anticipate and endure the results of our actions within the legal system we are under.

Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." This passage illustrates a misdirected zeal for God. Paul is speaking of Israel and their zeal for God that was based on incomplete information.

2 Corinthians 7:11, "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, [what] clearing of yourselves, yea, [what] indignation, yea, [what] fear, yea, [what] vehement desire, yea, [what] zeal, yea, [what] revenge! In all [things] ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

2 Corinthians 9:2, "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many."

Zeal is something that Paul felt he could boast of and it is something that should provoke others into action. What a responsibility! Each of us should be so zealous of our God as to provoke others to zealous action!

Philippians 3:6, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

Paul speaks of his own misguided zeal as an unsaved Pharisee attempting to eradicate the followers of Christ.

Colossians 4:13, "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them [that are] in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis." Paul is speaking of Epaphras in this text. A study of Epaphras will show him to be a very correct, and committed believer that is serving God to the very best of his ability. Paul does not call him a radical or a zealot, but seems to commend the zeal of Epaphras.

There are also other places the Greek words appear but are translated in different ways in the English Bible. Some are listed for your further interest/study: indignation/Acts 5:17; envy/Acts 13:45; envying/Rom. 13.13; I Cor. 3:3; Jas.3.14; Jas 3:16; fervent mind/II Cor. 7.7; jealousy/II Cor. 11.2; envyings/II Co 12.20; emulations/Gal 5:20; indignation/Heb 10.27.

Some other related texts:

Acts 21:20, "And when they heard [it], they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:"

Acts 22:3, "I am verily a man [which am] a Jew, born in Tarsus, [a city] in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, [and] taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."

1 Corinthians 14:12, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." Wow -- be excited about helping in the church!

Back in the 70's there was a time when the church seemingly discovered spiritual gifts. Pastors were preaching about gifts, Sunday school classes were studying the gifts, fellowship times were spent talking about the gifts. It was akin to the worldly people talking about what astrological sign they were born under.

It is regrettable that all this zeal did not translate into action within the church as the people discovered what their gifts were. It seemed like a lot of froth on top of the cup. Loads of talk but little activity.

Galatians 1:14, "And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation,

being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

Titus 2:14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Again, wow - zeal about doing good works - good works aren't a four letter word!

Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." And again, wow - be zealous to correct your walk with God! Repent of sin - get onto a proper footing with your God.

Galatians 4:17, "They zealously affect you, [but] not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. 18 But [it is] good to be zealously affected always in [a] good [thing], and not only when I am present with you."

There were men in the time of the Maccabees (in the times between the Old and New Testaments) which adhered to the Mosaic Law and were called Zealots. They used violence to protect their brand of religion. This is most likely where the term zealots, zeal etc. obtained a negative connotation.

We witnessed this sort or zealotry gone amiss in the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon - people that were willing to die for their cause and willing to die to bring others to their point of view. Their zeal is to be commended, but certainly not their actions.

In the sixty ninth Psalm David makes it very clear that his zeal was wrapped up in and with his many trials and testings. Don't allow testings or adversity to diminish your zealous action and motivation.

We can pick up a couple of items of interest here. Zeal may well cause troubles to the person wishing to make it a part of their lives. We also see clearly that acting righteously is part of a zealous person.

And one final application we might suggest from David in his zeal for the Lord's temple - keeping the Lord's house in proper order and use is right and proper.

We could take a chapter or two on the application of that truth in our own day. The ability to walk into a church and find a quiet worshipful atmosphere has almost been taken away from the American Christian by the many pastors that have opted for the "let's reach the lost at all cost" method of doing church. One leader in one of the Baptist associations called it the Burger King method of worship - give it to them their way! (Just one of the leftovers of the old millennium!)

It has been of interest to me that the many upbeat contemporary service changes that have been made to draw in the young has really failed in many churches while I see conservative traditional

services with lots of young folks - I have also noticed that many times it is the preaching of the Word that draws all ages into a church.

I must temper the previous comments and warn that we ought not be zealous in the effort to keep that which is tradition and not Biblical - we need to move on from some of the traditions of men at times. Gal. 1:14 "And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

Paul is clear in II Cor. 7:10,11 godly sorrow will result not only in zeal, but will result in repentance, will result in fear and in general will straighten out a persons life. Note that this is not just now and then that someone gains a little zeal, but Paul is speaking to all the believers at Corinth - ALL of the believers at Corinth brought forth zeal as a result of their godly sorrow.

This seems to fly in the face of most of the Christianity that I have been privileged to live through. Zeal has always been something that only a few were expected to have, and they were often looked down upon for having it in their lives.

In Ps. 119:139 the psalmist mentions, "My zeal hath consumed me, Because mine adversaries have forgotten thy words." Many are the times that I have heard it said, indeed many are the times that I have uttered the words, "Sometimes I want to give up - the world is getting so corrupt!" It seems the passage would move us to be more zealous in reaching the world rather than giving up on it! May God forgive us of our shortcomings!

Some overall conclusions relating to the Biblical idea of a zealot.

Vine defines zealot as, "an uncompromising partisan." He further states that zealot, "was a name applied to an extreme section of the Pharisees, bitterly antagonistic to the Romans." Vine goes on to say that Josephus said of them as the "forth sect of Jewish philosophy. (Vine, W.E.; Kohlenberger III, John R., editor; THE EXPANDED VINE'S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS; Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers; 1984; p 1261; Josephus: (Aniq. xviii. I. I, 6; B.J. ii.8. I)

It seems very evident that a zealot in the Biblical concept is one that is totally committed to something or someone. This commitment may be misdirected as in the case of the Jews that continued to be zealous of the law after Messiah had come. It is also the case of unconverted Saul as he persecuted believers.

King Saul in the Old Testament was zealous, but with the incorrect motivation, just as we have seen in the life of the apostle Paul (II Sam. 21:2; Ac 22:3,4; Php. 3:6).

Paul mentions also that Israel was in the same state, Rom. 10:1-3 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness,

and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Years ago when entering Bible college I picked up a little booklet called "TRUE DISCIPLESHIP" by William MacDonald. I would say that this booklet was one of the most influential works in my life. In this work Mr. MacDonald mentioned a member of the Communist party that had written a letter to his fiancée. In the letter the young man explained his all-consuming desire to serve his party. He explained that others in his group would give all they had to further their cause. He also mentioned this was the reason that he could not marry the love of his life.

Such zeal but so very misdirected!

This misdirected zeal is not something that is derogatory nor bad in and of itself. The result may be negative in that they were lost and on their way to hell. Their zeal on the other hand is not what is wrong - the direction of that zeal was wrong.

Zealousness is not wrong. Misdirected zeal may be wrong, and may well lead to wrong. Zeal itself cannot be wrong unless it is detrimental to the individual possessing it. Even then it is not zeal that is wrong - the person's relationship to it is wrong.

We need to rearrange our concepts to allow for zeal and those that are zealous to be pictured as being positive in nature.

Zeal is a four-letter word but it is not as other four letter words. It does not denote only something terrible and evil - an idea that seems foreign to our Christian society today. If a Christian today is zealous, he is often if not always labeled fanatic or trouble. We want to challenge that thinking in this study, because I believe that it is inherently incorrect.

II. Zealotry understood

Now that we know what the Word of God says on the subject and it's view of the zealot, let us define the term zealot and the term zealotry.

Zealot can be the word used of a person that is totally committed to a cause that is his life's passion, whether that commitment is properly directed or not. (Example: A composer, an athlete, a theologian, an environmentalist, a murderer, an artist, or any other trade or profession.)

Most of us have heard of the Iron Man Triathlon. It is a grueling race consisting of swimming, biking, and running. Only a zealous person can ever hope to compete much less finish. Only one that is willing to lay all aside for the quest of becoming fit enough physically/mentally may compete.

Zealotry then can be defined as the practice of complete passion and commitment toward a life's direction.

Being a zealot can be wrong or correct, depending on the undertaking of the individual. The person that is totally committed to a good cause can be a zealot and should not be looked upon as in error. Indeed, looking up to that person might be the norm. The person totally committed to a bad cause can also be a zealot, but must not be lifted up, nor viewed as proper.

Illustration: The world normally looks up to people like Mother Teresa for her commitment to helping people, however the world normally looks down upon the actions of the person that is totally committed to harming people. Only the twisted or warped mind can look up to the zealot, Hitler, yet the world looks up to the zealot, Michelangelo. Both men were committed to their chosen direction in life.

The commitment is not wrong, but that which was the target of their commitment was good in the case of one and wrong in the case of the other.

The term fanatic is often related to the term zealot. Again, in our culture and time, we view fanatic as negative, yet are not the athletes of our day fanatical about their occupation, are not business tycoons fanatic about their business? We do not denigrate either sector of our society in these two cases.

A person then that is fanatical about the Lord and his service to the Lord might be a zealot, and might be a fanatic. Should we view them as inferior, or below our honor and respect? I can't imagine why, yet this is sadly the case in modern American Christianity.

Not all missionaries are zealots, but the majority I have had the privilege to meet over the years were, yet a major Christian university a number of years ago took a survey of their student body. The students were asked to rate church workers in order of their importance. In every case the

missionary was listed last on the list - janitors rated higher.

Might our Christian priorities be messed up?

A. The Purchase

Most reading this work will know Christ as personal Savior and know the good news of Christ. The question might be posed however, do all of us really know what the good news really means apart from our ticket to heaven?

God, in His Word, pictures the work of Christ as a purchase. Now, we are getting somewhere! We all know how to purchase quite well don't we! We purchase about everything we have a desire for then sell it at our garage sales for a total loss of investment when we find how unimportant the item was.

Christ on the other hand made a serious one-time purchase that is of utmost importance and of complete profit, not only for God Himself, but for us, His children.

Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." This is the same term that is used in Acts 1:18 "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

Quite obviously a purchase - a paying of a price for the acquisition of something!

This purchase seems quite important in this passage when Paul tells the elders of the church at Ephesus to take heed in relation to their duties within the church. It seems that he is saying, this was a particularly precious purchase so be real careful how you handle these people.

Some other related passages: I Pet. 2:9 "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:"; Gal. 4:5 "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."; Tit. 2:14 "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

A peculiar people! The term translated peculiar is a term that is used of a hiding place for valuable items. A safe if you will - Christians are very valuable to their purchaser!

Vine states of the word translated purchase "signifies to gain or get for oneself, purchase" I Tim. 3.13 "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Vine suggests of the term translated redeem, "denotes to buy out, especially of purchasing a slave with a view to his freedom." Rev. 5.9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;" (see Rev. 14.3,4 as well)

Christ bought us - purchased us - redeemed us - so that we could sit on our chairs of ease and await His coming with no further thought to doing anything for Him - right - WRONG!

How dare we as purchased believers feel we are adequately recompensing our purchaser by allowing Him our presence in church a few times a week! How dare we feel we have repaid Him adequately with anything less than a life given over to Him for His use!

B. The Price

I have no intention of making this into an extension of a theological discussion about the crucifixion. I do however wish to just mention some of the cost of this purchase - it was not a two for one sale that Christ went to, it was a cost for each and every one that accepts His work for them on the cross.

We need to mention the physical pain alone. I am not a doctor but have read descriptions of the crucifixion by medical doctors - not a pretty picture indeed. There was great physical suffering and pain involved in our purchase.

We need to mention the spiritual pain as well. Christ was in spiritual turmoil before the cross - not that He did not know the course, nor that He was not committed to the course, but that He knew what was coming and on a physical level did not desire to face it.

We need to mention the lowering of Himself to become man. Almighty God placing the tremendous limitations upon Himself of becoming human - being required to eat and drink, to sleep, to tire, to hunger, to hurt and all that is wrapped up in humanity.

Not a small price to be sure. He was quite willing to do all these things and to suffer all these items that He might purchase us.

One question - was it because we are such good bargains? Not hardly, He purchased us because He loved us and desired our worship, service and fellowship.

C. The Possession

Fact. He purchased us - we are His. End discussion. We are not our own. We are His. That is the long and the short of it, yet Christianity has rationalized this major truth into a minor inconvenience. Well, we may be His, but He wants us to be happy, He wants us to prosper, He wants us to relax, He wants us to have that new car, He wants us to have that huge new house -

enjoy life is the line of thought today.

Might I ask a question? (Guess I just did ;-) Where in Scripture does it tell us that He purchased us for our ease and enrichment? Where in Scripture does it tell us that He purchased us so that we could be rich and enjoy big homes and cars? Where in Scripture does it tell us that He purchased us so that we could go on vacations, and relax instead of labor for Him? Where is Scripture does it say that a trip to the Holy Land is the only way to really be spiritual as many seem to believe.

I recently heard a pastor proclaiming the glory of kneeling in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane - where in Scripture are we told we must walk in the footprints of Jesus to become spiritual? NEVER!

D. The Position

Another plain truth of Scripture is that we are not only purchased, but that we are servants, we are laborers, we are His workers.

I don't think in 2002 I need to belabor this point - show me the LABORING workers in any church - they will be few when related to the overall size of the church.

We as believers today have no concept of being owned by Christ. We as believers today have no concept of being servants of Christ.

The church has bought into this whole "I am important" concept of Humanism. The average believer today is interested only in self-improvement, and has no thought to what he/she should be doing for God.

E. The Prostration

And we come to the final aspect of our relationship to Christ as we view zeal. We are not only purchased by Christ, but we are owned by Christ. Based upon this we are to be His servants - we are to be His for His use.

There seems to be a voluntary element to this relationship and that is the problem. We voluntarily take ourselves for ourselves rather than submitting to His ownership and Lordship. He is in fact owner and Lord, but we just don't live like it for the most part in Christian circles today.

Might we all consider how much of a servant we are to our Lord and Savior? Might we all consider how much of a Lord we consider Christ to be? Might we all consider how we relate to Christ - do we have the attitude that we are His or do we have the attitude that we are our own?

Might we all consider His purchase, the price He paid for us, and then how we are going to relate to Him and His work for us. Are we going to be satisfied with less than being a zealot? I trust not.

F. The Practice

How does the preceding information work itself out in our lives? I think it works itself out as a total commitment to do what God leads us to do for no other reason than that we are His to use as He sees fit.

Years ago I saw a tract that mentioned we should tell God that we are a blank check to be filled out by Him. We are not to consider what the ramifications are for our lives, we are to seek His leading and follow as He directs. If you do this - don't allow your check to bounce!

A number of years ago I was interviewed for a position in a large church. One of the men at the interview asked me a question. He wanted to know how I related how I live my life with the rewards that I would receive in heaven.

The question really took me by surprise. I had never thought of it before - I had never considered how I follow the Lord to be related to reward in heaven.

I told the man that I knew that there was probably a connection, but that reward had never crossed my mind in relation to my service to God. I related that we are purchased - that we are His - we are to do as He leads and that if there is to be a reward He would take care of it. I further related that reward was not a motivation to me, that just being in eternity with Christ would be more than adequate.

How can we, the servants, the purchased, the owned, be concerned about being rewarded? We are at His disposal for His use. Reward is strictly a concern of His, not ours.

III. Zealotry illustrated

At this point I would like to just list some people I have read about or met over the years that I would consider zealots, believers that were willing to do everything they could for their Lord and Savior.

There are a number of pastors that fit into this category. One comes to mind that ministers in a small community where there is little room for large growth in his church. He is actually a good example of many in our country that serve the very best that they can. Very low pay as with many men in similar situations. He is involved in other side ministries as well as his main ministry of pastoring. Not only is there the usual preaching and teaching but there is a heavy load of administration and gardening.

Odd how we can see the gifted man of God as one that is called to cut the grass and fertilize the lawn - don't seem to remember this in the list of Spiritual gifts but then maybe I'm just being to literal.

He is involved in a few combined ministries with other churches of like faith. He is married and attempting to coordinate all of his ministries with the responsibilities of caring for a family.

Eighty hour weeks are not a drag on him, he enjoys ministering to those God has called him to serve. However his fatigue often brings on illness, he plugs away anyway in an effort to assure all is done for his flock. (Acts 20:28 seems to relate to his fervor.)

All zealots are not in full time ministry. We had the privilege of knowing a couple that were active in their local church. He was on the church board, he headed up the visitation program, he was head of the missions committee, he was involved in about everything that he could be involved in. His wife likewise was active in the women's ministry, choir and other activities of the church.

The couple knew their Savior and desired to serve Him the very best they could.

A committed man many years ago was teaching a Sunday school class. One of the church leaders approached him about teaching a different class. The man sensed an ulterior motive so asked if there was something inadequate about his teaching. The leader assured him very profusely that there was nothing wrong, that they just wanted to use his talents in a different class.

A short time later the man approached his pastor and asked what problems there were with his teaching. The pastor proceeded to become upset and told him what was wrong with his teaching.

Of course the teacher confronted the pastor on the reassurances the church leader had given him about his excellent teaching - BOOM!

The teacher ultimately was labeled a troublemaker - mostly because he had taken a stand in his Sunday school class and that he had confronted the lie of a church leader.

Let me assure you that one that is zealous for his/her Lord does not have to spend their entire lifetime doing only spiritual things. Many people that have families and full time jobs can be zealous for God. They often are those that are involved in the spiritual upbringing of their family physical as well as their family spiritual.

I was told by a young man that his mother dedicated her entire Monday evening to praying for missionaries. She understood the needs of God's workers and found that an evening a week was the least she could do to share in their labors. This same woman was involved in her church and family, but set aside one evening to remove herself from the television and other interests to spend time with her Lord on the behalf of others.

One might look to church history for many zealots. Judson, Taylor and Carey come quickly to mind. Men that were called by their God to go to distant lands to minister the gospel to those in need. Men that cared little for their own profit and health, and went forward to serve their God even though many scoffed at their endeavors.

I believe it was Carey that had written many manuscripts and had done much translation work. His work was stored in a warehouse when it burned to the ground. He did not throw up his arms in defeat, he just went back to writing and translating. He gave all that he had to give so that he might serve God in the best manner possible.

I wonder if one can read the following passage and come away with the feeling that we are free to do as we will with our lives, our mind and our time? Are we really free to be what we want to be? Not an easy task if at all possible in light of the following. Matt. 22.37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment."

I Cor. 4.9-16 9 "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10 We [are] fools for Christ's sake, but ye [are] wise in Christ; we [are] weak, but ye [are] strong; ye [are] honourable, but we [are] despised. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, [and are] the offscouring of all things unto this day. 14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn [you]. 15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [have ye] not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

If Paul can be a fool for Christ why not each and every one of us? This is a small sample of what Paul was willing to go through for Christ. Let's just read a little more of his efforts on the Lord's

behalf.

II Cor. 11.23 "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I [am] more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

III. CONCLUSIONS

Might we spend some time considering why we label people fanatics or zealots? It seems to be the obvious case, that when we see someone doing what we know we ought to be doing, we get nervous and tend to label them something that makes us feel more comfortable.

When we know we should be spending more time with the Lord in our quiet times, it is easy to label the prayer warriors of the past as fanatical.

When we know we ought to be at church Sunday evening it is easy to label those that make it to every service as habitual church-goers.

When we know we ought to ---- you fill in the blank, we find it easy to claim that those doing correctly are only zealots!

There is another reason why we mislabel people. We often become nervous around people we don't understand. The person that is a nominal Christian cannot understand the person that desires to be at church every service, they cannot understand the person that desires to be at visitation, at the church work day, at the home Bible study on Thursday, etc.

Don't label someone you don't understand! Take time to get to know them and begin to understand why they are the way they are. Some of it might rub off and you might find that you could be a zealot.

In conclusion I would like to bring our minds to modern day zealots that are praised, lifted up and rewarded, while others are condemned for their devotion to their life's work.

The pastor, missionary or committed layman may find themselves condemned or looked down upon for their commitment yet in our world we lift up and prize highly the athletes that commit the vast majority of their day to practice and body building so that they can perform for us.

We praise the ball player that in public bows to pray in the end zone, but never consider the pastor that spends hours in prayer for his flock. We praise the ball player that in public thanks God for a win, but never consider the pastor that has just shared the Gospel with a lost soul.

Is the super star not a zealot? In any form of definition I have found, an athlete is indeed a zealot. In fact many go beyond zealotry and commit themselves totally to their chosen field.

To these modern day "good" zealots, we give praise, honor and respect, not to mention the millions of dollars. They are the height of our society and looked up to by most everyone.

Just how much honor do we give to the missionary? Most retire to Social Security, if they didn't opt out of it, and very little more. They often are "too old" to do anything in the local church, so

are relegated to spend their declining years with the rest of the old folks that aren't allowed to do anything in our churches.

Just how much reward do we give to the missionary? Many spend more time raising support than they do in gaining their education. Once they gain their support they live their life wondering how God is going to raise up all the needed support to replace all the support they lost because of the church splits, new pastors, and new buildings that were more important than the missionaries.

Just how much praise does the missionary gain? Often they move on toward their next meeting with no place to stay. Just how much praise does the pastor gain? These people commit their lives to assisting others in their spiritual lives yet seldom are recognized as being of value in our churches.

It seems to this man that if spending 8-10 hours a day learning to go to the Olympics is right and proper, then the Christian worker doing the same to bring souls into heaven ought to receive at least a nod of approval instead of the condemnation that many receive.

In all the years that I have ministered, I have had few times in life where those I ministered to and for, treated me as if I were somewhere near human in status. In the 90's God asked me to be janitor at a large printing company while we were between ministries. It shouldn't surprise you to know that for the most part I was treated with more respect by the workers there than I have been in most of my ministries. Some of the folks actually felt that I was intelligent enough to carry on a conversation with.

Christians, do we really understand our ministers and missionaries? Do we really view them as having proper abilities and intelligence enough to use those abilities? Do we really honor them as we ought? Do we really appreciate the hours of labor they give to the Lord on our behalf? Do we praise them in our daily conversations the same as we praise Magic, Kelley, Montana, Bo and the like (those are some of the sports heroes of the past if you don't recognize the names ;-)? Do we have the same respect for them as we do the Olympic gold winners?

Zealous is not a bad word. Let me illustrate. Zealous zealots zealously zap zits. We don't get upset with someone that spends time getting rid of zits, nor do we admonish the avid gardener for spending time going after weeds each and every day. The business executive that spends hour upon hour in the office is never discouraged from spending his life amassing fortunes.

Why then do we allow our minds to find fault with the person that spends his or her life doing the Lord's work. Just let a pastor work the hours of the business executive and he will be admonished to not be so zealous. Just let the missionary skip a furlough and the fur will fly because he thinks more of his nationals than his supporting forces.

Now, do you understand all those that have been condemned as super saints, zealots, radicals,

over-committed, etc. through the ages.

Zealous people are not fanatics - weirdos - they are only servants attempting to do their very best for the Lord that gave so much for them.

Lordship is not an option for the believer, it is the logical result of the actions of Christ on the cross. Once this is properly understood, zealotry will become the norm, not the abnormal.

It is of interest to me to note some people in Scripture that were said to have zeal. They are not the quarterbacks and prize-fighters of life - they are run of the mill folks that just followed their God to the logical extent of their love for Him. I will just list some of these men - all worthy of some serious study in their own right. Phinehas Nu. 25:11,13; Josiah (zeal is not mentioned specifically, but it is obvious in the text) 2Ki. 23:19-25; Epaphras Col. 4:12,13.

Just a little further information if you want to study further. Torrey in his "NEW TOPICAL STUDY BIBLE" suggests that zeal "SHOULD BE EXHIBITED: In spirit Ro. 12:11; In well-doing Ga. 4:18; Tit. 2:14; In desiring the salvation of others Ac. 26:29; Ro. 10:1; In contending for the faith Jude 1:3; In missionary labours Ro. 15:19,23; For the glory of God Nu. 25:11,13; For the welfare of saints Col. 4:13; Against idolatry 2Ki. 23:4-14."

One final and closing thought. Paul suggests to the Corinthian believers that their zeal has been contagious (2 Co. 9:2)! Might we ask ourselves sometime in the quiet of our thoughts, when was the last time that we were so zealous of serving God that others observed and moved in like manner to commit themselves to God?

As an incoming freshman at Bible College I was required to take a Bible knowledge test. I was informed that I had the distinction of gaining the lowest score in the history of the school. Even though I had little knowledge of the Scripture, I had gained many of the insights that I have put down in this work. In retrospect, I don't know where these principles for living came from, but I know that as I read MacDonald's book "TRUE DISCIPLESHIP" I found a complete validation of what I had been feeling in my life.

It seemed to confirm and galvanize my commitment to live a life given to the Lord and to maintain that focus as best I could throughout my life. I thank Mr. MacDonald for that validation, as I have run across a myriad of detractors over the years.

Rom. 12.1 is a simple straight forward verse - yet so many believers have not grasped the truth - we are to be sacrifices! "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,[which is] your reasonable service."

The reader might want to search the Old Testament for just one sacrifice that crawled down off the altar after being sacrificed. Not one that I know of and yet there are multitudes of New Testament saints that are far from the alter upon which they offered themselves! Many there are,

also that have never taken the trip to the altar!

I think that Moses stated the thoughts in a single sentence. Deut. 6:5 "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." The same thought is restated in the Gospel of Luke 10:27 "And he answering said, thou shalt love the lord thy god with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

I am told that the Jewish people recite Deut. 6:4-9 daily. Not to try to start Christian rituals, but to remind ourselves of this commitment might be a great way to start the day!