

## Is Zeal For The Lord Consuming You?

Luke 19:45-48

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Zeal for Christ and His Cause is not optional in the life of a Christian. As those who have been redeemed by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to be a people who are “**zealous** of good works” (Titus 2:14). The Lord Jesus leaves believers no option in this matter when He commands in Revelation 3:19, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: **be zealous** therefore, and repent.” Zeal is a fervent (hot) passion for Christ as opposed to a complacent lukewarmness for Christ. When the Lord Jesus (early in His ministry) found the merchandisers and money changers in the Temple, He manifested a zeal (a holy and hot passion) for His House by making a whip of sorts and literally chasing these men and animals out of the Temple. After witnessing this incident, His Disciples remembered that it was written, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:17). Is a holy and passionate zeal for Christ consuming your heart and life, or has rather a lukewarmness (or coolness) taken up residence in your heart and life due to your preoccupation with so many things in this life that you have little to no time for Christ (and therefore have left that first love for Christ that you once had)? Is Christ and spending time with Him in private worship been crowded out by forgetfulness, neglect, busyness, procrastination, or lack of desire? Has Christ become just a part of your life, or is He your life and reason for living every day? Is a former zeal for Christ now only some smoldering embers, and even those appear ready to go out? Now is the time, dear ones, to repent of that lukewarmness (or coolness) for Christ in your heart, to renew that first love you once had for Christ, and to be consumed with a holy zeal for the Lord and His Kingdom.

The main points from our text are these: (1) Zeal For God's House Manifested By Christ (Luke 19:45); (2) Zeal For The Nations Proclaimed By Christ (Luke 19:46; Mark 11:17); and (3) Zeal For The Lord Despised By The Religious Leaders (Luke 19:47-48).

## **I. Zeal For God's House Manifested By Christ (Luke 19:45).**

A. Let me first begin with some contextual background leading up to our text.

1. After the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem on the first day of the week, Mark 11:11 states that the Lord entered the Temple and "looked round about upon all things." What He beheld with holy indignation will be revealed in our text today. When evening fell upon Jerusalem on the first day of Christ's passion week, the Lord returned to Bethany for the night (about 2 miles from Jerusalem). On the second day of Christ's passion week (i.e. Monday), Christ and His disciples arrived in Jerusalem, and they ascended the heights of Mount Zion where worshippers were gathering in droves in order to celebrate the great feast of the Passover later on that same week. As the Lord approached the Temple, and walked through the gates, the first courtyard which He would have entered was known as the "Great Court" or "The Court of the Gentiles" (according to Josephus). The Court of the Gentiles was an immense open area wherein God-fearing Gentiles were permitted to pray, to be instructed, and to seek the one true living God. They were not permitted to go beyond this area. On the other side of this wall and up some stairs, the Gentiles could hear the prayers of both the men and women of Israel pouring out their hearts to God from the Court of the Women and the Court of Israel.

2. When Christ had entered the Temple the day before, He looked around upon all things that were within this very portion of the Temple (i.e. the Court of the Gentiles). We now learn in Luke 19:45 what

He saw—a profaning of the temple by making it an actual market place wherein live animals were being sold, and foreign money being exchanged (at a profit) to pay for sacrificial animals (cp. Mark 11:15-16).

a. According to the Talmud (cp. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 403), there were already four market places close enough to the Temple (there on the Mount of Olives) where animals might be purchased for sacrifices, and money exchanged. However, these four other markets were apparently not under the jurisdiction of the High Priest, but rather under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. Apparently, the High Priest, not wanting to miss out on the financial gain to be made from the influx of worshippers on feast days like the Passover, had established his own market place within the Temple itself sometime shortly before 30 a.d. (acc. to Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 403).

b. The establishment of the market place within the Temple by the High Priest would likely have just preceded the Lord's cleansing of the Temple the first time at the beginning of His ministry (in John 2:13ff). It is now over three years later, and the market place had been re-established within the Temple between the first cleansing (in John 2) and this second cleansing (here in Luke 19). Most likely, the High Priest had only recently brought the merchandisers, animals, and the money changers back into the Temple (since there is no references in the Gospel accounts of the Lord having cleansed the Temple during the intervening years).

B. Having now considered this background information, let us see the holy zeal of Christ in action.

1. First, Christ cast out all those who were buying and selling in the Temple (and presumably forced them to take with them all the animals which they were selling). The word for “cast out” in Luke 19:45 (“And he went into the temple, and began to cast out”) is not a passive

word, but a very active word—in fact, it is the same word that is used of Christ casting out demons from people. The Lord did not politely ask these buyers and sellers if they would please mind leaving the Temple and take all their goods with them. To “cast out” is to force or drive them out of the Temple (in John 2: 15 the same Greek verb is used, and is used with a whip). No smile was seen at that time on Christ’s face. No gentleness was observed in Christ’s actions as He chased these profaners of God’s House out of the Temple and into the streets.

2. The second act that proved the zeal of the Lord was that He overturned the tables upon which the moneychangers made their profit and upon which cages of doves were placed. Consider that the same Divine power with which He drove out the moneychangers and the merchants could have been used by a mere word to send them forth if He had so desired. If the Lord could cause the multitude of soldiers who came to arrest Him in the Garden to all fall down like a row of dominoes at His mere word, “I AM” (the Great I AM that appeared to Moses in the burning bush), then certainly the Lord could simply have uttered a word, and all these profaners of God’s House would have fled in fear. Dear ones, if Christ could have accomplished the cleansing of the Temple by a mere word had He chosen to do so, why did He use force in driving them out, and overturn their tables? Because this was a visible demonstration of God’s holy indignation with those who profane His House. It graphically displayed the holy passion and zeal that God has for His House. Obedience to a mere Divine word would certainly demonstrate the power of Christ, but it would not demonstrate as clearly His burning zeal for men to love, serve, and obey Him as He has appointed in His Word.

3. The third act that demonstrated the zeal of Christ for God’s House was that He would not allow anyone to carry a common, ordinary vessel through the temple (“And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple” Mark 11:16). For only those

vessels that were specifically set apart for holy use were to be employed within the temple. To bring an ordinary or common vessel into the holy place of God was to profane the Temple by treating it as ordinary and common rather than as holy and set apart unto the Lord.

a. Dear ones, profanity is not only to utter blasphemous words of hatred toward God, but is also to treat the most holy God (and that by which He makes Himself known) as common or ordinary (rather than as uncommon, as extraordinary, as to be set apart for holy use). To profane God's name is to trivialize the Most High God (or that which He calls holy). It is to have a room or compartment for the Lord in your life, but not to daily give Him your whole life as a living sacrifice that is wholly devoted to Christ. To profane the Lord is to make Him a part of your life, but not your life and reason for living.

b. Thus, we may profane the name of the Lord by using His name to punctuate our sentences (God, Lord, etc.). We may profane the name of the Lord by bringing into worship that which is not ordained by the Lord in His Word for New Covenant worship (whether man-made hymns, instruments, images, choirs, holy days, wandering thoughts, lukewarm hearts, faith in man, faith in outward ordinances rather than faith in the living God). We may profane the name of the Lord by our careless, worldly speech and conduct on the Sabbath day. We may profane the name of the Lord by disowning or neglecting lawful covenants by which we are bound, because God owns lawful covenants as His (whether marriage covenant, baptismal covenant, personal covenant, or national covenants). We may profane the name of the Lord by using our bodies, our eyes, our ears, our words, or our minds for vile purposes (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

C. Before leaving this first main point, I would like to answer a couple questions.

1. Christ drove out those who profaned the Lord's House,

whose responsibility is it to do so now? It is specifically the responsibility of those who are lawfully called as officers in Christ's Church (which is the New Covenant Temple of the Lord according to 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22). However, it is not to be done with physical force for the House of God uniquely belongs to Christ—He had the right to do so (Luke 19:46), and the sword of coercion and force is not given to Church officers to use in the Church. To His ministers, Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom to instruct in love and to cast out of His House (the Church) the obstinate, the profane, and the scandalous (who willfully continue in their sins). Just as the High Priest and the subordinate priests were primarily responsible for the corruption of God's House then, so the ministers and elders who tolerate corruption within the Church now must stand and give an account before Christ who had such zeal for the House of the Lord that He cast out those who profaned it (1 Corinthians 3:17). This responsibility lies upon parents within the home (do your children see in you a fervent zeal for Christ in your affections, speech, and conduct?), and this duty also lies upon the civil magistrate as well (for he is to uphold both tables of the Law). However, it is generally the responsibility of all believers to see that they examine themselves (that they search their own hearts) that they do not profane God's name by their thoughts, words, or deeds within their own body (which is the Temple of the Holy Spirit according to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

2. How is your zeal for the Lord to be manifested? It is to be manifested by knowledge of Christ and fervent love for Christ in word and deed (cf. the zeal of the Jews in Romans 10:2). Zeal for the Lord cannot be hidden. It is the fruit that Christ produces in the life of a Christian (not a fruit for just the super saint, but for every Christian). Zeal for the Lord is manifested when the reproaches cast upon Christ become our. Zeal for Christ is manifested in our suffering for Christ. Zeal for Christ is manifested in communing with Christ in that secret place of the Most High. Zeal for Christ is manifested in our swift and loving obedience to

God's commandments. Zeal for the Lord is to love what Christ loves, and to hate what Christ hates. Though we find two times in which Christ cast the merchandisers and the money changers out of the Temple (John 2:13ff and Luke 19:45-48, and its parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark) let us remember that Christ's zeal was ordinarily manifested in faithful preaching and teaching the ignorant, in showing mercy to those who acknowledged their need of God, and in ministering to the sick. There will be no zeal for Christ where there is no time for Christ. A zeal for Christ and His Cause that is according to knowledge and truth comes from a heart that is set on fire through time spent with Christ in prayer. True biblical zeal is not just heat, but is a heat that is illuminated by the light of God's Holy Word (like that of John the Baptist whom Jesus said "was a burning and shining light", John 5:35). There are professing Christians that are burning lights (a lot of heat and passion, but little knowledge of the truth and commandments of Christ in doctrine, worship, and government). There are also professing Christians that are shining lights (a lot of light and knowledge, but little zeal and passion and intimate communion with Jesus Christ). Christ calls us as Christians to be both burning and shining lights.

## **II. Zeal For The Nations Proclaimed By Christ (Luke 19:46; Mark 11:17).**

A. Not only had the High Priests and merchants profaned the Lord's Name (which is the supreme offence here), but they had as well excluded the earnest seekers of Jehovah among the Gentiles from the House of God by setting up their market within the Court of the Gentiles. Apparently these merchandisers believed the Gentiles could be excluded for the sake of their profit, but they would not think of setting up their markets in the Court of the Women or the Court of Israel. Not only had God's holiness been trampled underfoot, but the Gentiles had been

trampled underfoot within the Church. Christ's words here come from Isaiah 56:7 where the promise of God's grace to the Gentiles is prophesied.

B. Dear ones, we must never forget that zeal for the Lord's House will not only be evidenced in our desire for pure worship, but also in our prayers and work for the ingathering of the nations and the return of Israel to the Lord and in our zeal to see the lost to come to Christ. Our zeal for the Lord must be demonstrated in yearning that Christ fill His wedding feast with strangers, foreigners, with harlots, and publicans who know and acknowledge their desperate need of Jesus Christ. Christ did not come to save the righteous (who believe they are just fine the way they are, who are comfortable in their outward forms of righteousness), but Christ came to save sinners (who believe they are not righteous, but have offended a holy God and will suffer His eternal judgment apart from faith in Jesus Christ alone for eternal salvation). Parents, this truth must be taught and lived before your children. They must not see us as snobs who don't want to get our hands dirty (in helping and ministering to others), but rather as seeking to win to Christ those who are unclean (just as we all were once unclean before being cleansed by Christ).

**III. Zeal For The Lord Despised By The Religious Leaders (Luke 19:47-48; Mark 11:18—“And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine”).**

A. Finally, we consider the consequences of following in the footsteps of Christ in living a life that is zealous for Christ and for good works in reforming His Church. There will be those who will seek to destroy our testimony, to slander us, and to persecute us. There will always be opposition to true reformation in the Church of Jesus Christ.



How comfortable and coddled we have become when we consider what our faithful fathers in the faith were willing to suffer to bring reformation to the Church (and what many faithful Christians are suffering even now): exile, isolation, privation, fleeing, imprisonment, mockery, torture, and death. Why? For their zeal for Christ and His Church.

B. But even in their seeking to extinguish our lives, they cannot extinguish our testimony (Revelation 12:11). It was Martin Luther who said:

A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing, and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.

One Reformation pictorial emblem I recall seeing of the zeal manifested by our faithful and zealous Reformed forefathers for Christ and His Cause were two hands lifting up a heart that was set ablaze with fire to God. That, dear ones, is what should be emblazoned upon our minds if zeal for Christ would consume us. Our heart, our affections, and our entire lives are set on fire unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear ones, I remind you that a passionate zeal for Christ and His Cause is not optional in the Christian life—it is commanded and is portrayed for us in Christ, John the Baptist, and the faithful witnesses of Christ. What is hindering and cooling your zeal for Christ, dear Christian? Busyness, other priorities, pleasure, worldliness, a mere profession of the truth, a besetting sin? Now is the time to flee to Christ as your only help and hope in this life and to cast upon Him your need to be zealous for the Lord. You can do nothing without Him, but you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

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