Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers…" (Acts 13:32)

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Zeal is Contagious

(Jerry Fite)

We usually try to stay away from things that are contagious. Various illnesses, such as measles or the flu are connected with the word "contagious." But there are good things that can pass from one person to another. For example, a person's laughter can spread through a tension filled room causing others to laugh and relax. Like laughter, zeal is highly contagious.

Zeal is a necessary characteristic of the Christian. Jesus died and purchased with His blood a people who are to be zealous. Jesus "*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).* Like a laser beam, zeal focuses on the works God authorizes and burns with passion to see the works accomplished in their lives.

Zeal for good does not subside even in the face of persecution. *"And who is he that will harm you, if you be zealous of that which is good?" (I Peter 3:13).* Being zealous for good is not a magic wand waving away personal harm, because the next verse brings us back to reality: *"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed..." (I Peter 3:14).* Be zealous for good, do not fear. Keep a good conscience, while serving the Lord from an undivided heart, knowing it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Zeal, when manifested in the life of a single Christian, can have a beneficial effect upon many, even one's enemies *(cf. I Peter 3: 15-17).*

When the need arose to help the poor saints in Jerusalem, Paul used the zeal of the brethren in Corinth to stir the saints in Macedonia into action. Paul writes, *"For I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them" (2 Corinthians 9:2).* Their enthusiasm towards this benevolent cause affected people in other cities. It was a good deed made known becoming contagious through the spoken word.

Enthusiastic devotion in a person towards the cause of Christ can cause others to become excited for the Lord's work. For example, a teacher's single mindedness for excellence manifested in one's lesson plans and presentation can move students to want to learn more of God's Word. When other teachers see the zeal for excellence in teaching being manifested around them, they are moved to raise their own teaching standards. Teachers and students in our Bible classes should be constantly growing in knowledge and love of God's Word. Zeal when seen, can initially spur and continually sustain this essential growth.

Enthusiasm in a person for the saving of souls will have a beneficial effect on other laborers. When I know my brethren are talking to others about their souls, and striving to teach them the saving Gospel, it gives me a boost in my determination to reach others. I think again of people I can invite to worship services when I see our young people bringing their friends to worship with us. Zeal can pass from old to young, and young to old.

Because zeal s contagious, we need to make sure it is connected with knowledge of the revealed Truth of God. Like Jews in Paul's day, we can *"have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2).* But enthusiasm tempered with knowledge is something contagious that we all need to catch!