

I reminded you last week, that from v9 to v21, there are over 20 directives or commands—so far we have been considering them individually—this morning I want to consider the next three together under three main headings—the text explained, summarized, and enlarged...

- I. The Text Explained
- II. The Text Summarized
- III. The Text Enlarged

I. The Text Explained

1. Before I briefly examine each of these statements in turn—let me say there's an evident connection between them...
2. This connection is best captured by the NIV—"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord..."
3. Thus—I want to condense these three under the second heading—but here I want to briefly examine each one...
4. [1] Not lagging in diligence—that is—not being slothful or lazy with regards to the way we conduct ourselves...
5. The Gk word rendered "diligence" (NKJV), "business" (KJV)—literally refers to—an earnest or zealous conduct...
6. It here includes the various activities that a Christian will conduct—both with regards to others and to God...
7. Gill—"Business means spiritual business; the affairs of piety and religion, the service of God, private and public, to which we should not be backward, nor slothful in the performance of..."
8. The Gk word rendered "lagging" means—to be slothful or lazy—be not hesitant or slothful—in your zeal...
9. Gal.6:9—"let us not grow weary while doing good" 2Thess.3:13—"but *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good..."
10. Thus this first phrase means—let us not grow lazy in the manner—in which we zealously go about our business...
11. [2] Fervent in spirit—this is the opposite of the former phrase—"not being lazy"—but—"fervent in spirit..."
12. The Gk word rendered "fervent" literally means—"to boil over with heat"—it refers to—"an ardent zeal or fervor..."
13. Paul exhorts us—"be fervent in spirit"—that is—in our spirit, heart or mind—it's a spiritual or hearty zeal...
14. Barnes—"Be fervent in spirit—In your mind or heart. The expression is used to denote a mind filled with intense [warmth and heat] in whatever it is engaged..."
15. Acts 18:25—"being fervent in spirit [his spirit], he [Apollos] spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord..."
16. Thus—to be fervent in spirit—is to have a heart on fire for God—a heart warmed or heated with love for God...
17. This is the remedy to a lazy and lagging diligence—FERVENCY is the steam—that gives power to the train...
18. If there's no heat within the soul—then there's little diligence or zeal in the performance of Christian duties...
19. [3] Serving the Lord—the Gk word rendered "serving" literally means—"to be a slave" or "to be enslaved"...
20. It fundamentally refers to the service of a slave to his master—it here refers to our service to the Lord Jesus Christ...
21. Rom.14:18—"for he who serves Christ" Rom.16:18—"for those who are such do not serve our lord Jesus Christ..."

22. Slaves are no longer concerned with themselves—they now live to serve and obey the will of their master...
23. Thus—we are not to be lazy in our zeal or diligence, by which we fervently, serve our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ...
24. Or—we are to fervently, diligently, and zealously—serve the Lord—from the heart—as His willing bond-slave...

II. The Text Summarized

1. Here I desire to summarize or condense—the major themes found in v11—into a simple and single statement...
2. Christian service should be diligent, hearty and unto the Lord—or—Christians should be zealous in their service to Christ...
3. Now—here I want to take a few minutes and explain a few of the primary or major words within this statement...
4. [1] Christians—that is—what I'm here referring to, and our text is teaching, is a distinctly Christian service...
5. I don't know if this can ever be emphasized too much—all the zeal in the world—will never make you Christian...
6. [2] Zealous—the word zealous—underscores the intensity, earnestness, and fervency of our service to Christ...
7. Now—it's important to remember—that Christian zeal begins within the heart or soul—be fervent in spirit...
8. Thus—Paul is NOT telling us to do more things—he's telling us to have more zeal—that we would serve better...
9. Samuel Ward—"In plain English, zeal is nothing but heat...It is a spiritual heat wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Ghost, improving the good affections of love, joy, hope, etc., for the best service and furtherance of God's glory..."
10. Christian zeal is fervency of affection—it's the FLAME by which our hearts are heated or inflamed for God...
11. J.C. Ryle—"Zeal in Christianity is a burning desire to please God, to do His will, and to advance His glory in the world in every possible way..."
12. [3] Service—that is—our obedience to Christ—must ever be infused with a sense of our relation to Him as Master...
13. Everything we do—we do in service to Him—and—is to be done conscious of who we are in relation to Him...
14. Eph.5:22—"wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" Col.3:20—"children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord..."
15. Col.3:23-24—"[slaves] whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ..."
16. Thus—everything we do—privately, domestically, vocationally, or ecclesiastically—we do—as to the Lord...
17. Thus I suggest this doctrine—CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE ZEALOUS IN THEIR SERVICE TO CHRIST...

III. The Text Enlarged

A. The MEANS to Christian zeal

1. Here—I simply want to suggest three broad or generic means, through which, Christian zeal can be increased...
2. But before I do that—let me remind you what "means" can and cannot do—byway of a simple illustration...
3. If Christian zeal—could be likened to a fire within the soul—we are NOT responsible for creating that fire...

4. That would result in an external, man-made zeal—BUT we are responsible to fan and increase the flames...
5. [1] Prayer—this is where we must begin—we must plead with God that He would stoke the flame of devotion...
6. Remember—Christian zeal is the flame which heats up our affections—which in turn, motivates our wills...
7. Thus—if Christian zeal is the fire—only the Holy Spirit can supply the wind necessary to keep the fire burning...
8. Joel Beeke—"If we sincerely wish to be inflamed with zeal for God, we must humble ourselves before Him, believe His Word to be truth, acknowledge our need and His bounty, confess our sin and His mercy and our unworthiness and His grace, and ask Him, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, to give us this grace to enliven us and inflame all our affections by His Holy Spirit who indwells us, that we might pursue His glory all our life..."
9. I fear the primary reason behind our lack of zeal—is that we simply fail to ask for it, in faith, in Christ's name...
10. Lk.11:13—"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him..."
11. Oh brethren—let us remember that, if left to ourselves—we lack the ability to stir up the flames of our hearts...
12. But—let us believe—that God will, for the sake of Christ, as we seek fresh grace for His glory, open His hands to us...
13. Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 116)—"Why is prayer necessary for Christians? Because it is the chief part of the gratitude which God requires of us, and because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who sincerely beseech him in prayer without ceasing, and who thank him for these gifts..."
14. [2] Scripture—to continue the imagery—if zeal is a fire, the Holy Spirit wind, then Scripture would be the wood...
15. Simply put—there is no, true, prolonged, Christian zeal—without a daily intake and assimilation of Holy Scripture...
16. The Scripture, in all of its various forms of intake—hearing it, reading it, meditating it, and memorizing it...
17. In ALL of these forms—the Word of God—is essential to the obtaining and maintaining of Christian zeal...
18. This can be seen in the various imageries used to describe Scripture—it's bread, milk, and honey for our souls...
19. Thus—just as our bodies need food—otherwise they grow sluggish—so too—our souls need the word of God...
20. [3] Fellowship—that is—the fellowship of brethren, especially on the Lord's Day, but also throughout the week...
21. Again—think of a set of hot coals—if either coal is separated from the others—it more quickly grows cold...
22. But—if the coals are kept together—they feed off of one another—and before long—flames begin to return...
23. Richard Baxter—"Live among warm and serious Christians; especially as to your intimate familiarity. There is a very great power in the seal of one to kindle zeal in others; as there is in fire to kindle fire. Serious, hearty, diligent Christians, are excellent helps to make us serious and diligent. He that travels with speedy travelers, will be willing to keep pace with them..."
24. Heb.10:24-25—"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching..."
25. Here we are commanded—not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together—to increase each other's zeal...

B. The MOTIVES for Christian zeal

1. Here—I want to provide three of several possible motives or incentives—to excite us diligently use the means...
2. [1] Zeal imitates Christ—that is—Christ perfectly exemplified Christian zeal—both in His life and His death...
3. In fact—we can trace our Savior's zeal back to eternity past—when He agreed to become surety for His people...
4. But then—when He came to earth and walked among men—His ministry was characterized by a fervent zeal...
5. Think how He labored for the good of poor sinners—how His heart was moved with mercy for the multitudes...
6. Think how His heart was earnest in His obedience to His Father's will—even though it included a rugged cross...
7. Joel Beeke—"Christ was aflame with love for souls, aflame with hatred for sin, aflame with compassion for the hurting, aflame with grief for the obstinate, aflame with love for His sheep, and aflame with delight for the Father's will. Where then is your zeal?..."
8. Ps.69:7-9—"Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me..."
9. Now—most of you know—that John records in John 2:17, that the disciples applied v9a to the zeal of Christ...
10. Furthermore—Paul applies v9b to Christ in Rom.15:3—thus this entire passage—records the words of Christ...
11. Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up—that is—zeal for His Father's glory—in the salvation of His people...
12. Oh brethren—how can we fail to be zealous for Him—when in fact—He was consumed with zeal FOR US...
13. [2] Zeal ascribes worth to Christ—that is—it portrays Christ worthy of the GREATEST love, zeal and service...
14. Many Christians are very zealous about things that really don't matter—sports, food, movies, fashion, and politics...
15. But—let me ask you—how important are these—how can we be so zealous for things that have no eternal value...
16. Whatever we are most zealous about—that is what we value the most—we get excited about things that matter...
17. My friend—I think it's shameful to contemplate—how the world is more zealous for sin than we are for Christ...
18. [3] Zeal is one purpose of redemption—that is—Christian zeal was bought by the atoning blood of Christ...
19. Tit.2:14—"who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works..."
20. Notice—Paul specifically describes two reasons or purposes behind His sacrificial death—to redeem and purify...
21. [a] To redeem—"He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed [lawlessness or iniquity]..."
22. He died to redeem or deliver us from all our sins—that is—from the guilt of our sins or from the penalty of sins...
23. [b] To purify—"He gave Himself for us, that He might...purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works..."
24. Here's my point—the more zealous we are for good works—the more we answer the purpose of His death...
25. He didn't give Himself for us—that we would be zealous about trifle and temporal things that simply don't matter...
26. But—He gave Himself for us—that we would be a zealous people—who are zealous in our service to Him...