

# The Zeal of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to start by asking a question. How much do your emotions drive what you do in your life?

! Some people are very emotional people. They react in most circumstances to what they're feeling at that moment.

! Other people are more measured, more controlled, more objective in how they react. They react to the facts, not by emotions right away.

Which are you more like? I'm pretty sure the husbands will say, oh my wife is like that, the first type, and I'm the second type. You know, she's more emotional and I'm more controlled.

But if we ask the wives about their husbands, I'm not sure they would agree. We like to think we're in control of our emotions and yet maybe not. So which are you? Because everybody is somewhere on that spectrum. Do you react more out of your emotions or do you react more just out of facts and logic?

[ 1 : 11 ] Here's another question. Which do you think God is? Which do you think God is? Maybe you've never even considered God as being emotional at all.

Maybe you've always considered God as this cold, rational, logical force in the universe. But the Bible reveals something quite different. Even though God is infinitely rational and wise in what he does, the Bible also reveals to us that our God is deeply emotional.

I mean, if you think about it, we're made in his image. And just the fact that we're emotional comes from God. Right? Emotions come from God in whose image we're made in.

He is deeply, he is a deeply emotional being. And we forget that when we think about God. And often that doesn't form part of how we understand God. But we see it right here in this passage.

In Isaiah 9. We've read it probably about four or five times this month. But I wonder if you've noticed right at the end of this passage, Isaiah 9 to 7.

[ 2 : 29 ] Because after telling us all that God is planning to do, which is fulfilled at Christmas, Isaiah then tells us why he is doing it all, right at the end in the very last phrase. In 9 verse 7.

After telling us all about what Jesus is going to do and what God is planning to fulfill for this world. To bring peace and freedom and joy and truth. He then says at the end of verse 7. Look at these words. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Zeal is an emotion. Zeal is a very deep emotion. And it's an emotion that apparently drives God to do what he does in the world.

And that's why today we're just going to concentrate on that one word. Zeal. That last, very last bit of this passage.

That says the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. And ask ourselves, well what is that? What is God's zeal? And what exactly does God feel?

[ 3 : 41 ] Because when we understand what God feels, what's actually on his heart that drives him, well then it'll help us to see just what that zeal means for us and how we are to live in his world.

And so let's examine this word. Firstly, what exactly is zeal? What is zeal? Now we might use that word, we might not use that word in our day-to-day lives.

But in the Bible it's a very special word. And the original word is exactly the same word used for jealousy. It's the same word for the word jealous.

When you see the word jealous, especially in the Old Testament, it's the same underlying word for zealous. They even sound the same, jealous and zealous. But we don't like the word jealousy.

Because it's not a good emotion.

Jealousy is a bad thing, right? And yet in the Bible what's really interesting about that word, that concept of jealousy, is that it has two versions. Not just the version we're used to when we use it

today.

[ 4 : 46 ] It's got two versions. The first version is the bad version, the one we're used to, which is being envious, right? It's the feeling you get when you see someone with something that you really want but you don't have.

And we've all felt it, haven't we? You've felt that feeling that grows within you when you see someone enjoying something that you want to enjoy. Maybe this month. Maybe you've seen your friend sharing on social media the wonderful holiday they're having in the Bahamas. And you're still stuck at work. And you want to be happy for them. But deep down inside, there's this feeling that just goes, man, I want that.

That's envy. That's jealousy. And it's ugly. And we often feel that about things. The feeling we get, the emotion we get when we want something we don't have.

But did you know there's another version of jealousy in the Bible? And it's the same feeling, but it's not to want something you don't have.

[ 5 : 58 ] It's to keep something you do have. It's a feeling you have for something you already own and you have a right to. And it's the deep feeling and emotion to protect that and to preserve it and to keep it as yours.

And it's used in the Bible, for example, for a husband, for his wife, who might be being threatened or seduced by someone else.

And the marriage is threatened. Or a wife whose husband is being seduced by some loose woman. And that feeling that arises is a rightful desire to maintain, to keep your spouse that you have a right to, that is committed to you and you're committed to.

And so that's one way that this word is used. This zeal to protect and preserve one's marriage, for example. Another way it's used is a soldier fighting for his country.

And he's got zeal for his country that's being threatened by an outside force. And he's going to fight for that and risk his life for that out of the zeal, out of this good jealousy to keep it, to protect it.

[ 7 : 09 ] And so you see that this word, which is translated either jealous or zealous in the Bible, has two versions. And this second one, this good jealousy to keep something you do have, that is a key emotion that God feels.

Over and over again in the Bible, you see this word, zeal or jealousy, good jealousy, describing what is on God's heart. And of all the emotions, it's one of the strongest and most aggressive emotions in the Bible.

And it's described of God over and over again that he feels this. But also, you know, it's not just that he feels it from time to time. It's actually described as a core character trait of God.

So in Exodus 34, verse 14, we read this. The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God. His name is jealous. I thought his name was Yahweh. No, well, this is another way of seeing or understanding God as being defined by this emotion.

[ 8 : 36 ] It's quite a big thing to say his name is jealous. That this is the emotion that characterizes who God is. This is a God who feels deeply.

We need to understand this about God. He has deep emotions to keep what is his, to preserve it. And that is what drives him to do what he does.

And if you really want to know God, you need to know this about him. That he is a God who, deep in his heart, is this burning zeal for what is his.

So that's the first question, what is zeal? But the second question I want us to consider is, why does God feel? Is what causes zeal? And the zeal of God in particular.

The short answer is love. Love is what causes zeal. Zeal is something, zeal is an emotion that comes when you love something that you don't want to lose.

[ 9 : 50 ] Right? Just like the husband who loves his wife or the soldier who loves his country. The zeal they feel, the burning zeal that might cause them to do aggressive things, is actually rooted in love.

And so what God loves, He doesn't just love logically or rationally.

He loves with a deep zeal. What God has chosen to love, He loves with zeal. This is the emotion that comes with that love.

Okay, so now, I guess the next question we've got to ask is, what does God love? Have you ever considered that? That's a really good question, actually. What does God love?

He doesn't love all things. In fact, He hates a lot of things. What does He love? What is the object of God's zeal? Because if this is the emotion that drives the God of the universe, and it's the thing that causes Him to do what He does, a vital question for us to ask is, well, what does He feel this for? [11:03] What is God's love? Well, if you want to know what God loves, if you want to really know what God loves, you've got to look in the Bible for a special word, and that word is the word covenant.

Covenant. Now, we've often spoken from here about covenants, and you sometimes come across that word covenant in the Bible. A covenant means an agreement to commit to something or someone.

But when we think that word covenant, we think it's a theological word. We think it's cold and formal, but actually, it's deeply emotional.

A covenant is a commitment to something or someone that you deeply love. It's like a marriage. You don't think of a marriage covenant as something cold and formal.

A marriage covenant, when it's done right, is driven by, motivated by this deep love that exists there. And it's the same with God's covenants.

[12:07] When we come across covenant in the Bible, it's not this cold, formal theological term. It's God expressing His love and commitment for something. And it's very important.

God makes covenants in the Bible to show us what He loves. Now, what is the first time we come across a covenant in the Bible?

Many of you might say, Ah, Abraham and Moses. But no, it was before that. The first time we come across a covenant in the Bible is actually right back in Genesis chapter 9.

Turn there with me, because this is a very important chapter that we often overlook. But this is the first time in the whole Bible that we come across this word covenant, where God starts to express to us what He is zealous for.

And if you look at where it is in context, it's just after the flood. Remember Noah? The flood. And the reason for that is because humanity has descended by this point after the fall into complete depravity, which leads to God's inevitable judgment in the flood.

[13:25] And yet what He does is He doesn't judge every single human. He preserves one family and the animals to restart life on earth after His judgment.

And then what He does, very importantly, we normally skip over that because we've done the big exciting story of the ark and we move on to Abraham and Israel. But before we get there, there's this really important part in Genesis 9 where God makes a covenant with this family, Noah's family, but not just with them.

I want you to notice as I read it what else God makes a covenant with. Genesis 9 from verse 9 or from verse 8, God said to Noah and to his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you.

That's interesting. God made a covenant with the animals. You see that? The birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you, every living creature on earth, I establish my covenant with you.

Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. And so here is the first time in the Bible that God expresses his commitment to what he loves and we see what he loves and he expresses his commitment to is the world, the creatures, and the people that make up his world.

[15:11] And we see here his zeal, his emotional desire, deep desire to preserve it. Even though it's broken, even though it's messed up, he's got this desire to keep it.

He's got this deep, good jealousy for his world and the people and the animals in it. He's got a zeal for this world we live in. He's got a deep zeal for it.

And so how does God preserve his good plans for this world? How is God's zeal in the world displayed?

That's our next question. How is God's zeal displayed? Well, we're not going to like it. God's zeal is displayed in judgment.

Judgment of what threatens this world and what he wants for this world. Throughout the Bible, we see God judging. And people don't like that. It's very uncomfortable.

[16:16] We don't like to think of God as a judge. It's very non-PC in our current world to think of God as a judge. We want God to love everything and love everyone. And we've seen that he has a

deep love and a deep zeal, but he also judges.

And those two things are actually connected. His zeal drives him to judge. And his zeal will drive him to judge in future because God still has judgment planned for this world.

We heard about it earlier and we're going to hear about it again in this passage I'm about to read, which is a really shocking passage. I don't know when last you read Zephaniah for your quiet time. But it's pretty sobering. And part of it talks about his judgment over people back then and God's judgment that has already come in many what we call days of the Lord in history.

But then in the last chapter it talks about his judgment to come. And I want to read to Zephaniah 3 verse 8. I see many of you still trying to find in your Bibles.

[ 17 : 23 ] Don't worry. I'll just read the I'll put it we'll put it on screen as well. Zephaniah 3 verse 8. He says Therefore wait for me declares the Lord for the day I will stand up to testify.

I have decided to assemble the nations to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them. All my fierce anger.

The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger. It's pretty heavy.

Right? But that word there jealous it's zeal. The whole world will be consumed by God's zeal is what he's saying there. His jealous anger we don't like that.

We hear that phrase we don't like that do we? We don't like to think of God as being angry and judging. It's uncomfortable to think of God as this judge that sends wrath and fire to the earth.

[ 18 : 31 ] But you know what? There's something far worse than God judging this world. You know what it is? It's God being indifferent. God not caring about this world.

That's far worse than judgment. I mean imagine I was walking with my daughter in the street and then some thug comes and attacks her. and I went well it's not my place to judge.

You know he can do what he wants. He's free to live his life. No. That would be far worse than reacting in wrath and anger. God does not do that for what he loves.

He judges because he cares. Because he's made a covenant. Because he set his love upon this world. And he's not going to be indifferent to it. But his zeal will burn for what he wants this world to be.

And he will aggressively oppose anything that threatens that. That threatens what he wants this world to be. He will oppose with wrath and aggression and it's right and it's good.

[ 19 : 38 ] And the real reason we're uncomfortable with that is because we know we threaten that. As sinners. When we push against what God intends for this world.

When we hold grudges and when we slander others and when we take what doesn't belong to us and when we lie whenever we sin we are the things that threaten what God wants for this world. And who is zealously the world that he is zealously committed to. We we become the things that threaten what God loves.

That should scare us. Picture for a second. a mother who is cleaning her house and she's making her home immaculate.

She's cleaning all the floors and she's dusting and she's polishing everything up and she wants this home to be the prettiest most beautiful home.

[ 20 : 40 ] Okay. And she's spent all day making it like that and cleaning it up. But then as she's cleaning imagine her 12 year old son and all his friends who have been playing out in the mud barge in to her immaculately clean house.

What's going to happen? What is the reaction to that? Well you're going to see some zeal there right? From mom. And so God responds with zeal to whatever messes up the world that he loves.

And that should scare us that God's the outworking of God's zeal is this is this judgment but but the only reason we're still around is because that's not all God's zeal does.

because this world around us is not all that God loves. Mom is not actually going to kill her son and their friends.

She's not going to destroy them because she loves them too. She might feel like killing them in that moment and she might discipline them but the whole reason she's making her home clean is so her family can enjoy it including her kids and so she'll go the extra mile to clean them up too so that they can enjoy her clean home without messing it up and that is what God has done for us in Jesus.

[ 22 : 24 ] That's what God does in the gospel because God doesn't only love the world even more so he loves people in it and so he's zealous to preserve and to save us too even though we threaten what he loves and that is why he has done all he's done.

You see the whole plan of salvation in the Bible God has put together so that he can preserve what he loves but he can also save us too even though we threaten it and it wasn't easy to do that but all that God did and all the covenants that he made which culminated in what Isaiah tells us here God's ultimate zeal led to to do for us at Christmas which was to and this is the only way he could preserve his world that he loves but also preserve and save people that he loves even though they are dirty and mess up his world is by becoming one of us by entering into the mess and to take that sin on himself as Jesus so that he can save us from it and clean us up see and that is why in Jesus more than anywhere else we see God's deepest zeal on display and we also see it in Jesus as he as he interacted with people as he wept when he saw people suffering the brokenness of this world as he looked down at Jerusalem and he cried his heart out Jesus was deeply emotional and Jesus is expressing is the expression of God's deep zeal for this world and for what he loves in Jesus we see God's zeal in the flesh we see God's deepest zeal on display and especially when he goes to the cross and he dies you don't suffer and die for something that you don't feel deeply for God did that because he feels deeply for you and me listen to Romans 5 verse 8 but God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us he demonstrates his love this is his love language I don't know if you've heard of the love languages and people express their love in different ways you know how God expresses his love on the cross that's his love language sacrifice is God's love language and he demonstrates his love and his what he feels for you what he actually feels for you he wants you to know and he demonstrates it on the cross of Jesus and that is how we see God's zeal God's zeal is seen in both judgment for those who threaten his good plans for the world but also in salvation of people from that judgment so that they can be part of those good plans those are the two ways we see God's zeal working itself out in this world okay so now that we've seen what zeal is and how God's zeal comes out we need to know how to respond to that in our lives how do we respond to this emotion of God that drives him to do what he does how do we respond to God's zeal well firstly we respond to God's zeal by trusting in Jesus by trusting in what God did on the cross for us to display his love and his zeal for us we experience God's love for us there we trust in Jesus experience God's zeal in Jesus so that you don't have to experience it in judgment because everybody is going to experience God's zeal every living person is going to experience God's zeal one way or the other listen to Psalm 32 verse 10 many are the woes of the wicked but the [ 27 : 07 ] Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him that word unfailing love we've come across it before it's covenant love it's the love that he's set upon people who are in covenant with him because you see when you trust when you trust in Christ when you truly trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and your your savior you enter into covenant with God it's exactly what we remembered here in the Lord's supper this morning it's a covenant sign it's what Jesus said at the last supper he said this cup is the new covenant in my blood and when you're in covenant with God through faith in Jesus then look what this verse!

covenant love surrounds you think about that you might be going through a tough time and I'm sorry and we all do and you might be going through a tougher time than I can ever understand but if you're a Christian if you're in covenant with God covenant love surrounds you you know what that means that means that you have become the focus of his zeal you have become the one who he is committed to love and preserve and save no matter what's happening to you covenant love surrounds you remember that this year as you go through the trials and tribulations that you will go through that despite that if you are in covenant with God through Christ covenant love always surrounds you and God is zealously committed to saving you and preserving you and giving you life and so are you in covenant with him that's the most important question that you could ever ask yourself in this life have you entered into covenant with

God so that you know his love is for you that you will experience his zeal in salvation rather than in judgment if you don't know if you're in covenant with God yet you need to sort that out quickly you need to speak to a pastor that's why we're here but if you are if you know that you're in covenant with God you you've taken Jesus in you believe in him well that's why also there's another way we are to respond to God's zeal and that is with our own zeal for him and what he wants listen to Titus 2 14 it was read for us earlier but I want to read that verse at the end again Titus 2 14 God gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and look at this and to purify for himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is good that word eager is literally the word zealous we respond to

God's zeal by being a people who are zealous for him that is the result of being truly saved now you can say I believe and I'm a Christian and I come to church but how do you know you are this is you know that you are one of the people that God has purified for himself when you are zealous for what he is zealous for because when you love someone when you truly love someone you become passionate for what they are passionate for right in a marriage when you enter into this close loving relationship with someone and the two become one you take on their passions you take on their interests it's the same with us in covenant with God that if we are truly saved if we are truly in covenant with God we will become passionate for what he is passionate for and we become zealous like him because that is the emotion that sums up who

God is and for someone in covenant with him it becomes the emotion that sums them up and that people around them can see that that person is zealous for God and your life becomes focused on him and what he wants great Bible teacher J.C.

[ 31 : 52 ] Ryle writes this on Christian zeal I quote zeal in a Christian 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 is not natural to men or women it is a desire which the spirit puts in the heart of every believer when they are converted to Christ this desire is so strong when it really reigns in a person that it impels them to make any sacrifice to go through any trouble to deny themselves anything to suffer to work to labor to toil to spend themselves and be spent and even to die if only they can please God because that's what zeal does you see it's an emotion that leads you to be willing to die for what you love and that's what it did for

God someone said zeal means being all in being all in well that's the zeal that God has showed for you and he showed it on the cross if you're a Christian he showed that he is all in for you so in 2026 will you be all in for him let's pray oh Lord we thank you for your zeal for us Lord we praise you that you are a God who feels deeply for what you have set your love upon and we thank you that in Christ we can know that you have set your love upon us and your zeal led you to give yourself for us and so Lord help us to respond by being zealous for what you are zealous for help us to respond by being all in for you in the coming year would you lay your zeal upon our hearts Lord we know we can't drum this up in ourselves we need your Holy Spirit to give us this zeal and so we pray zealous for you as you were zealous for us in Jesus name Amen