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Zeal, but Not According to Knowledge - Part 1

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feeble words for the accomplishment of His purposes.

We write our resolutions and debate each phrase, assured in our simplicity that God needs our devisings! God does not need our plans or resolutions! We need rather, by piety of lives, by largeness and compassion of our hearts, by simplicity of faith, to fit our lives into those greater plans and resolutions of our God.

So let us come and go, full mindful of the importance of our task to change the world, not so much by holding in our hands our lettered resolutions, but rather holding *by* our hand the hand of the Omnipotent, and holding in our hearts the greater resolution to live our lives in close communion with our God, expressing His vast love, in service to mankind.

The Catch Is Still the Prize

It is so easy, Lord, to take this net
I cast, then haul to shore, by tides beset,
And think my net is holy, and forget
The catch is still the prize.

Let me, like that old servant long ago
Whose eyes were closed and so he did not know
The hills with holy angels overflow,
Be made to realize

God's work is holy, not a blind career.
Ah, let me hear Thy voice speak to my ear,
"Put off thy shoes, the ground is holy here."
So I am made aware

There are no jobs to fill within Thy fold,
No money-changing sacrifices sold,
But stories of Thy love that must be told.
This is my humble prayer.

Zeal, but Not According to Knowledge*

EDWIN R. THIELE

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PAUL in his letter to the Romans (10:2) speaks of his countrymen as possessing a zeal that was not according to knowledge. Such zeal is not confined to the enemies of God but is often witnessed among those who are endeavoring to carry on the work of the Lord. The result is never good. Zeal not according to knowledge may be a thing of danger as well as weakness. It prompts a man to move, but often in the wrong direction. It results in tearing down rather than building up, and frequently causes a man to do the work of the enemy rather than of God. Paul was zealous but wrong at a time when it would have been a virtue for him to be less zealous but right.

Zeal not according to knowledge may nullify the effectiveness of a man's service for God, for his judgment does not exceed his knowledge. It may result in personal embarrassment, as was the case with Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, who in his zeal outran Cushai but was asked by David to step aside because he had no tidings. To a

much greater degree than we are willing to admit, our lack of power in the work of God is often directly due to our lack of knowledge.

Zeal not according to knowledge may involve a man in many needless difficulties and perplexities, may cause him to think unkindly and unjustly of God, and may cause him to bear an untrue witness of the Lord. Such was the case with Job when he declared, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (Job 1:21), not realizing that it was Satan and not God who had taken away his children and his goods. It was Job's lack of knowledge of the workings of both God and Satan that caused him to complain that the arrows of the Almighty were within him (chap. 6:4), that the Lord had broken him with a tempest and had multiplied his wounds without cause (chap. 9:17), and that He "destroyeth the perfect and the wicked" (verse 22). It was lack of knowledge that caused Job to be "full of confusion," believing that the Lord hunted him as a fierce lion and also showed Himself marvelous to him (chap. 10:15, 16).

We must admire the fidelity and integrity of Job although we cannot admire his knowledge when he declared that he would

* This study was given to the workers of the Lake Union Conference at its tenth quadrennial session held at Detroit, Michigan, March 9-12, 1959.

trust the Lord even "though he slay me" (chap. 13:15). And we can only pity him in his ignorance when in his pain and bitterness he cried, "He teareth me in his wrath . . . : he gnasheth upon me with his teeth. . . . God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked" (chap. 16:9, 11).

It was Job's lack of knowledge, causing him to justify himself rather than God, which kindled the wrath of the Lord's spokesman Elihu (chap. 32:2) and drew from him the blunt rebuke that, "Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. . . . Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge" (chaps. 34:35; 35:16).

When "the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" it was with the piercing question: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (chap. 38: 1, 2). It was then that the Lord set before Job the fierce dealings of leviathan, the seven-headed monster which to the ancients was a symbol of Satan and was "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34).

Then at length the eyes of Job were opened and he saw what he had not seen before—that it was Satan and not God who had brought to him all his woes, and that at length drew the belated admission: "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (chap. 42:3, 6). Of what did Job repent? It was his zeal without knowledge, drawing from him his bitter complaints and his misleading testimony concerning the nature and works of God.

In discussing this question today it is not our purpose to dampen the ardor or quench the zeal of any spokesman for God, but to increase the effectiveness of our witness by helping to make sure that our zeal is accompanied by knowledge.

Modern Christianity, unfortunately, is largely divided into two camps—one that places its emphasis upon blind faith in preference to a serious pursuit of knowledge, and the other, that regards the traditional faith of our fathers as an outmoded relic which is to be replaced by a modern, scientific, materialistic but basically godless technology. Many believe that it is necessary to make a choice between Biblicalism

and intellectualism—between an anti-Biblical scholasticism and an anti-intellectual Biblicalism. This is tragic, for there is no basic conflict between faith in God and His Word, and the highest intelligence. There is no need of making a choice between piety and knowledge. Both are Christian, and both are eminently Godlike.

What is needed in this age of increase of knowledge is a Christlike union between holiness and learning, between a search for godliness and an earnest search for truth, between a respect for character and integrity as well as for scientific realities.

What is needed more than ever before is such a high regard for truth and such an eager passion for knowledge that men will be willing to pay the price, whatever it may involve in the expenditure of effort, time, or money, that will secure the essential, unanswerable evidence needed in our modern age to make truth secure against the attacks of the most learned skeptics.

It is unfortunate that so often we have allowed ourselves to act as if we regard zeal to be a substitute for knowledge, as if prayer can replace earnest inquiry and research, or as if pulpit eloquence can take the place of right or reason.

Let it be remembered that a diligent, honest, persistent inquiry for, and insistence upon, truth constitutes one of the most proper and urgent activities of the true child of God. There exists no necessity for drawing a line between saints and scholars, between holy men of God and competent, informed, intelligent leaders. Daniel, trained for three years in the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans, was as much a saint as were the untutored fishermen of a later age. Moses, who was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, was no less a man of God than if he had been clothed in a leather girdle or had subsisted on a diet of locusts and wild honey. Paul, who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, was as true and effective a follower of Christ as were the unlettered Peter and John.

God never places a premium upon righteousness at the expense of reason, nor does He ask men to underestimate intelligence in order to secure a proper respect for integrity. We are never asked to substitute a shallow and hollow piety for brains, or a zeal without knowledge for a rigorous endeavor at investigation and verification of all facets of truth.

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the message. Next, we aim to give the flock an enlarged vision of assisting the home church in the task of evangelism for this hour of history. Most of our gatherings accomplish well this purpose. But while the workers center their attention on helping the laymen, they must always be conscious of their own need of grace and reviving. No pressure of work should cause them to neglect themselves. There is great need of a continuous infilling of the Spirit if we are to minister to the flock acceptably.

The Bible instructor also needs the spiritual uplift of the early morning devotional meeting. She should lend the influence of her personal example to the Sabbath school and those planned meetings that bring a definite response or witness from the membership. Here we meet struggling members who come to camp meeting to learn from the leaders and from their fellow Christians. As we move among the constituency, encouraging the disheartened, strengthening the weakening hands, and lifting the eyes of worldlings upward, it will mean much to each person we serve.

In the apostles' day Lydia of Thyatira found time to attend Paul's prayer band by the riverside. One wonders if there she made contacts that soon necessitated the organizing of a church that first met in her home. To the alert Bible instructor the annual camp meeting will provide added opportunities for Bible and personal work. We, with many others, deplore the trend that ties down our skilled Bible instructors to routine tasks, which in themselves are very important to our people but which could be accomplished by laymen who are not as busy with the essential spiritual responsibilities of the flock. Lay sisters would be willing to assist us if we would take the time to teach them.

Here we wish to cautiously venture a suggestion: While the Martha type of Bible instructor is much needed at camp meeting, the Lydia and Priscilla type—teaching and establishing new believers in the gospel message—must not decline in our ranks. Perhaps in the organizing and managing of worker personnel in the future this problem might receive a little closer study. Today we are not as hard pressed for helpers to manage lodges and cafeterias as in the earlier days of our work, and while we are studying to make our camp meetings profitable and spiritual seasons for all who attend, we would be happy to see the services of the Bible instructor used more effectively. Until our conference leadership opens the way for this, however, our Bible instructors will work with the management to make the camp meeting an enjoyable feast for all who attend. The point here

is that we should be alert to give the greatest efficiency to God's work, and the Bible instructor is one of the team who leads in making the camp meeting all God expects it to be.

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On the other hand, it should also be made clear that knowledge can never substitute for holiness, nor reason for righteousness. The one must never be critical of the other. Both are necessary, both are Christian, and both are intrinsic attributes of God. And both must coexist in the life of the man who would be re-created in the full image of God. The true Christian will be an informed and intelligent Christian, and the most effective witness for Heaven will be the man who can give the most effective testimony to the certainty and value of truth.

He who will come closest to God must not only possess faith, but he must add to his faith virtue, and to his virtue knowledge. The one who climbs highest on the ladder of godliness will be the one who advances farthest in the realms of clear, sound Christian thinking as well as Christian living.

True Christian leaders will be men of competence as well as compassion, of enlightenment as well as reverence, of proficiency as well as piety. The freedom to know is as much a right and as much a duty as the freedom to believe.

God is as much a God of knowledge as a God of love, of power as of mercy, and the secret of His power lies in the supremacy of His knowledge. Love without knowledge is blind and weak. Without knowledge God would never be in a position to play His omnipotent role as Ruler of the universe. It is His omniscience that is the secret of His omnipotence. He can do all things because He knows all things, and He does all things well because of His wisdom as well as His love.

The knowledge of God is thorough, correct, intimate, and infallible. The perfect knowledge of God constitutes the first and greatest challenge to man to be diligent in his pursuit of knowledge. The better we know God the better we can be His witnesses. The better we know the Word of God the better can we preach that word. The more we know of the love of God the better we can preach and live that love.

And the better we know the message for these times, the better will we be able to proclaim that message and finish God's work.

Every unsolved problem of our age is a challenge to greater knowledge. Every unfinished task constitutes a challenge to a more diligent seeking of knowledge. The many amazing accomplishments by men of the world should constitute a powerful stimulus to men of the Word to acquire

greater knowledge that they may accomplish a greater work. The increasing magnitude of our problems and the growing intensities and perplexities of our times constitute a challenge to the acquirement of greater knowledge. Only as we realize this and only as we give ourselves diligently to the acquirement of knowledge will we be in a position to effectively carry out our great commission and complete the task before us.

BOOKS -- For Your Library



***The Temple of Jerusalem*, André Parrot, Philological Library, New York, 1955, 112 pages, \$2.75.**

The author is curator in chief of the French National Museums, professor at École du Louvre, Paris, and director of the Mari Archaeological Expedition. A scholar in his field, he also authored *Discovering Buried Worlds, The Flood and Noah's Ark, The Tower of Babel, Nineveh and the Old Testament, and Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*.

The building program as portrayed in this book throws much light on the glorious era when Solomon built the first Temple at Jerusalem. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the temple of Ezekiel, its altar, the spring of living water, the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah, the profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes, and the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey, furnishing interesting detail in the light of modern archeology. Chapter 4 describes Herod's Temple, supplying the background for many of Jesus' teachings and miracles. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is vividly portrayed, with many new points for the reader's study.

The last section of the book, under the title "The Haram Esh-Sherif," carries the reader through the Byzantine Era, the coming of Omar, the Crusades and the return of the Moslems, closing with stimulating information on the present conditions in the Holy Land. A revealing bibliography adds value to this work, as well as many maps and illustrations. The author's solid spiritual tone and Biblical emphasis recommend his book. Ministers, teachers, and Bible instructors will find it a source of good information.

LOUISE C. KLEUSER

***It Began on the Cross*, Guy Schofield, Hawthorne Books, Inc., New York, \$5.00.**

A former editor of the London *Evening News*, Mr. Schofield has done an expert job in painting a picture of events between the end of the book of Acts and the death of the last man to have

known one of the twelve apostles personally, or from about A.D. 39 to A.D. 155.

Here is a swift-moving historical narrative with deft pictures of the chief characters of three generations. Here are traditions and legends from which the well-read and much-traveled author picks what secular history seems to suggest as the truth. This is a period on which the New Testament is silent and of which we know next to nothing—the travels of the apostles (apart from Acts), the astonishing spread of Christianity, the conflict with Roman imperialism, the persecutions, the graphic end of Jewish nationhood in A.D. 70, the deaths of the first Christian leaders, the cynicism of a dying world, the sweetness of noble souls in an ignoble age. All this is brought together, the publishers claim, for the first time.

"Here are the Roman emperors strutting on their imperial stage—Caligula, the slaving lunatic; megalomaniac Nero with his calculating mistress, Poppaea; Vespasian, the rough, homespun soldier; Domitian the paranoiac; Trajan, who conquered *wherever his sword flashed; restless, quizzical Hadrian.*"

You will not readily leave this story of the heroes and heroines who, unknown to history, eagerly passed on the torch of truth from Peter and Paul while the personal influence of Jesus of Nazareth was still a vibrant, galvanizing memory. Even when picking a delicate course through folklore, legend, pseudohistorical documents and exaggerations the author highlights many an arresting thought that will provide valuable background for preaching material and for devotional thinking.

H. W. LOWE

***Basic Evangelism*, Dr. C. E. Autrey, Director of Evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959, 183 pages, \$2.95.**

This fine book should awaken a deep interest in the ranks of all administrators, evangelists, pastors, and teachers of applied theology.