**On Fire for Good Works**

(by Ron Drumm)

 How do we keep ourselves on fire to do good works for the Lord Jesus? Paul wrote to Titus about God’s grace and the coming glorious appearing of Jesus Christ: ***“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”*** (**Titus 2:14**). The word zealous means to be on fire for something or totally dedicated to something. Christians are to be totally dedicated to good works. Christians know they should be fervently doing good works, but how do they keep doing them day after day?

We should remember that we have been saved by the grace of God. It should be noted that in three New Testament references to good works we find that the grace of God is the foundation or the catalyst of the good works of a Christian (**Ephesians 2:1-10**; **Titus 2:11-14**; **Titus 3:4-8**).

 Brethren, we do what we do because God our Father gave us the greatest gift that could have ever been given – His only begotten Son! The Corinthian brethren said that they would do a work for the needy saints in Judea. Note Paul’s words as he encouraged them to do the work they had promised to do: ***“I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich”*** (**2 Corinthians 8:9-10**). We are on fire for good works because of God’s marvelous grace!

We’re zealous for good works because ***“we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”*** (**Ephesians 2:10**). Jesus went about doing good works. His followers go about doing good works. Jesus redeemed us from lawless deeds & purified us to do good deeds as His special people (**Titus 2:14**). Each child of God is set apart for God’s use. Realizing who we are should set us on fire for good works.

Paul told Christians to live by this faithful saying: ***“Those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men”*** (**Titus 3:8**). He also wrote: ***“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful”*** (**Titus 3:14**). Believers are zealous for good works because they are ever learning and being encouraged by God’s faithful word to be people who do well for others and share this world’s blessings.

**Works of the Flesh: Our Fellow Man**

(by Kent Heaton)

 ***“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are … enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying … those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”*** (**Galatians 5:19-21**). Our relationship with God is in part dependent upon our relationship with our fellow man. Forgiveness is not given from God unless we forgive one another (**Matthew 6:14-15**). The first recorded sin following man’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden was the murder of Abel by his brother Cain (**Genesis 4**). The murder of Abel was from the heart of Cain who was angered that God respected his brother’s sacrifice and not his own; ***“and his countenance fell”*** (**Genesis 4:5**).

 The deeds of the flesh include the emotions of man that are allowed to drive selfish desires and motives to bring harm to his neighbor. Hatred for another person is wickedness before God. All men are created in the image of God (**Genesis 1:26-27**) and bear the imprint of His glory. ***“Hatred stirs up strife … He who conceals hatred has lying lips”*** (**Proverbs 10:12, 18**). When men have such hatred for others because of the color of their skin, nationality, religion or just plain meanness, the kingdom of God is far removed. St. Basil (330-379) said, *“He who has hatred nourishes the devil.”*

 Jealousy comes in many forms but forms many kinds of feelings of strife against others. It is singularly self-centered and selfish. The emotions of the heart filled with jealousy can destroy families and good names. Children of God are to guard against jealousy. The consequences of these emotions can bring about outbursts of anger. Some people are proud of their ‘temper’ as if God really approves of such behavior. Those who have tempers fall prey to the deception of the devil. Anger is not the sin but the uncontrolled anger brings about sin and gives glory to the devil (**Ephesians 4:26-27**).

There are some who are not content unless they are involved in contention. Paul warned of those who ***“cause divisions & offenses”*** who ***“do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly”*** (**Romans 16:17-18**). The spirit of selfish ambition brings about dissension among God’s people. ***“A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers; who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, who spreads strife”*** (**Proverbs 6:12-14**).

 The church is plagued by those who bring about false doctrines and practices through their own vain deceit, jealousy, anger, hatred and prejudice in the name of the Lord. Heresies divide brethren and bring the deeds of the flesh into the hearts of God’s people. The spirit of envy drives their heart to exalt themselves above the law of God and the love of the brethren. Adam Clarke said of envy that it is *“A passion the most base and the least curable of all that disgrace or degrade the fallen soul.”*

 The wise man said, ***“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls”*** (**Proverbs 25:28**). The deeds of the flesh must be conquered and brought under the will of God (**2 Corinthians 10:1-6**).