Simon, the Zealot”

Introduction: As we continue our study of the “Master’s Men – the twelve chosen men, who changed the world” would you once again focus your attention on Luke 6:12-19, “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. (13) And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; (14) Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, (15) Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, (16) And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. (17) And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; (18) And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. (19) And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”

During the Second World War, a church in Strasbourg Germany was destroyed. After the bombing, the members of this particular church went to see what was left and found that the entire roof had fallen, leaving a heap of rubble and broken glass. Much to their surprise, however, the statue of Christ with outstretched hands, that had been carved centuries before by a great artist, was still standing erect. It was virtually unharmed except that both hands had been sheared off by a falling beam. The people hurried to a sculptor in town and asked if he could replace the hands of the statue. He was willing and he even offered to do it for nothing. The church officials met to consider the sculptor’s proposition, and decided not to accept his offer. Why? Because they felt that the statue without the hands would be the greatest illustration possible that God’s work is done through His people.

In a very real sense that’s true. Jesus Christ chooses human hands. Sometimes they seem to be the most infirm hands, the least potentially successful hands, or the least qualified hands, but those are the hands He uses. God wants you to be a little Jesus.

God has no hands but our hands to do His work today.
He has no feet but our feet to lead men to His way.
We are the only Bible this careless world will read;
We are the sinner’s gospel; we are the scoffer’s creed.
We are the Lord’s last message written in word and deed.
What if the line is crooked and what if the print is blurred?
What if our hands are busy with other works than His?
What if our feet are leading where sin’s allurement is?
What if our tongues are speaking of things that Christ would spurn?
How could we hope to aid Him and hasten His return?

The TWELVE men whom the Lord chose to be His disciples were the most significant men ever assembled together. Significant, in that after the resurrection of Christ they changed the world with the gospel.

Jesus called these men one by one, Peter, Andrew, James and John
Next came Philip, Thomas too, Matthew and Bartholomew.
James, the one they called the less, Simon, also Thaddæus.
The twelfth Disciple, Judas betrayed our Lord.

The Bible doesn’t really say anything about “James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbæus (surnamed Thaddæus), or Simon the Zealot,” the first three men in this last group of four. But one thing we do know, they were chosen by Christ to be His Apostles, and as such, taught the truths of the kingdom, healed the sick, and cast out demons. Yet they became the first order of Kingdom preachers after Christ Himself, and they will reign on thrones ruling the twelve
tribes of Israel in the Millennium.

In the list of the Apostles there are two Simons:

Simon called Peter, who is first on the list of the apostles, and
Simon called Zelotes, who is eleventh on the list.

There is only one other apostle mentioned after Simon Zelotes, and that is Judas Iscariot. Practically nothing is said at all about Simon Zelotes. He is mentioned only four times in the four lists of the twelve apostles.

**Let’s take a look at what is known about Simon the Zealot:**

I. **Notice his proper title:**

In Matthew 10:4 Simon is identified as, “Simon, the Canaanite.”
In Mark 3:18 he is also called “Simon, the Canaanite.”
In Luke 6:15 Simon is identified as “Simon, called Zelotes.”
In Acts 1:13 he is also called “Simon Zelotes.”

The word used in Matthew and Mark, “Canaanite” is an unfortunate transliteration of the Greek word, “Kananaios” on the assumption that it referred to the geographical location of Canaan. Actually, the word comes from the Hebrew root word which means “to be zealous.” and was used for those who were jealous for the Law. In Luke and Acts, Simon is identified as “Simon, called Zelotes.” The Greek word used here for Zelotes has the same meaning as the Hebrew root word meaning “to be zealous.”

II. **Notice His political background:**

Basically there were four dominant groups within Judaism: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots. The Zealots were the last of the great Jewish parties to emerge, and its members were the most fervent, passionate patriots of Judaism. Their existence seems to have come from the Maccabean period when the Jews were led by Judas Maccabaeus in a revolt against Greek influences on their nation and religion. A statement revealing the intensity of this revolutionary philosophy is seen in 1 Maccabees 2:50: "Be ye zealous for the law and give your lives for the covenant." This politically oriented group later became known as the Zealots.

In New Testament times, these red-hot patriots banded together under the leadership of Judas the Galilean to deliver Judea from Roman domination. They murdered, plundered, burned, looted, and were involved in any type of terrorist guerrilla activity that they could inflict. The Romans finally murdered Judas, but they could not stamp out the fire of the Zealots. Finally in 70 A.D. the Romans had to put a stop to all the havoc caused by the Zealots, so they destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered people in 985 towns in Galilee where the attacks by the Zealots were the fiercest.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Zealots came under the leadership of a man by the name of Eleazar. There were only a few Zealots left, but they continued their guerrilla-type activities against the Romans. These activities were enhanced because of a safe retreat that they had discovered, a place called Masada. However, the Romans finally captured Masada. At that time the Zealots, not wanting their lives to be taken by the despised and hated Roman enemy, committed suicide. Josephus, the Jewish historian in The Wars of the Jews (Book VII, Chapters VIII and IX), gives the following account of this mass suicide. Eleazar summoned the people together and made a flaming speech in which he urged all the men to slaughter their own wives and children, and then commit suicide. They took him at his word, tenderly embraced their wives, kissed their children, and began their bloody work. Nine hundred and sixty people perished; two women and five children escaped by hiding in a cave. The Zealots’ hatred of the Romans was so deep that they killed themselves before they would let the Romans take their lives.

Now Simon, to attach himself to this group, must have been a man with a tremendous passion and capacity for zeal. And he must have been a fireball when it came to doing the work of the Lord, because he had found a better leader and a greater cause.
III. Notice His partners in ministry:

There was Judas Iscariot: It is interesting to notice that Simon is listed right before Judas Iscariot in Matthew 10. I believe that when Jesus sent the Apostles out to minister two-by-two according to Mark 6:7, Simon and Judas Iscariot went together. They both may have originally followed Christ for the same political reasons, seeing Him as an aid to their political cause. But Simon believed and was transformed. Judas was not.

There was also Matthew: Think how miraculous it must have been for Simon to get along with Matthew. Matthew collected taxes for the Roman government. The Zealots were so anti-Roman that they wouldn’t even think twice about murdering a Jew who was in any way connected with Rome. It’s tremendous to see how a Publican and a Zealot were able to join hands in the love of Christ. Yes, there was diversity and variety among the twelve Disciples; just as there is diversity and variety in the body of Christ. This is the fulfillment of what Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”

Let’s look at some lessons learned from the Zealous:

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we ought to be zealous for the cause of God. There is a verse in the Bible that gets a lot of misuse. Paul in Romans 10:1-2 says, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a ZEAL for God, but not according to knowledge.” This verse is not talking about Christians, but about unsaved people. The Lord doesn’t say anything about Christians without knowledge having zeal. We ought to have a zeal for God even if we don’t have complete knowledge. We certainly have enough dead Christianity. What we need are some Christians with enthusiasm and zeal for the Lord!

There are three specific things found in the New Testament of the Bible about which we are to be zealous:

First: There should be ZEAL in the matter of GIVING. Concerning the giving of the saints in Macedonia Paul wrote in II Corinthians 9:2, “...and your ZEAL provoked very many.”

Second: There should be ZEAL in the matter of SERVICE. I Corinthians 14:12, “Even so ye, for as much as ye are ZEALOUS of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”

Third: There should be ZEAL for GOOD WORKS. Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, ZEALOUS of good works.”

Now let’s bring this to the present, and in so doing, let me challenge you to action:

In I Samuel 17:20-29 we have the little shepherd boy David being instructed by his father Jesse to take some food to his brothers who were out fighting the Philistines. When David got to the battlefront, he heard the giant Goliath breathing out threatening against God’s people and challenging them to provide a champion from their ranks to come and do battle against him. In verses 28-29 we read, “And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. (29) And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?”

In effect, David’s brother Eliab came up and said, ”Son, what are you doing down here? You ought to be back home in the wilderness taking care of your sheep. Now go on back home where you belong, for this is no place for a boy.” It is here that David asks in verse 29, ”Is there not a cause?”
O my soul! We are constantly languishing in mediocrity and failure. Why? Because most of us have never known what it is to be caught up and lost in **ZEAL** for a **CAUSE**!

David answered his brother by saying, **"What do you mean, go back and take care of a few sheep? A lot of folks can take care of sheep. Only one guy with a slingshot can lick the big giant. Let me at him. There is a cause I have burning in my soul."** As a result, this little shepherd boy did what all the mighty men of Israel couldn't do. He got caught up in a cause. He said let me at him, **"I'll slay that giant!"**

I wish every believer would say, **"In God's name, give me ZEAL for a CAUSE!"** When a **CHURCH** has a cause it's a force to be reckoned with. What would make a church lose its **ZEAL** for a cause?

A church begins to lose its **ZEAL** for a cause when people look more to **Pastoral personality**, then to keep on praying for the power of God to fall upon the pulpit and the pew. Listen. There is more pressure on a man who preaches the truth of God's Word than there is on any other professional in the world. The pressure is on the preacher to change and conform rather than declare and proclaim.

A church begins to lose its **ZEAL** for a cause **when the church loses its motivation**. The newness is gone. The honeymoon wears off. Soon discouragement and disillusionment set in.

A church begins to lose its **ZEAL** for a cause **when the Pastor and then the people lose their vision**. I have to guard against this all the time. For if I lose my vision for the membership, the members will perish.

A church begins to lose its **ZEAL** for a cause **when the older people settle down**. The worst ways for a church to change is for the older people to quit the choir, quit their soul winning, quit their Sunday school class, quit bringing folks to church, and quit getting excited about big days. Over the years, older members settle down and finally retire to the pews.

Listen. If you want your grandchildren to have a great church, you have got to keep it great until they get to where you were during your “excitement days”. In God's dear name, get back up and get a cause. Become zealous! Live and die by the cause either until the “uppertaker” or the “undertaker”.

May I remind you what it will take? It is going to take you going home and developing **“a ZEAL for a cause”** for the glory of God.

I bring this lesson to a close with this story. There was a great concert violinist who wanted to demonstrate a very important point, so he rented a music hall and announced that he would play a concert on a $20,000 violin. On the night of the concert the place was packed with violin lovers, curious to hear such an expensive instrument played. The violinist came out on stage and gave an exquisite performance. When he was done, he bowed and took their applause. But suddenly, he threw the violin to the ground, stomped it to pieces, and walked off the stage. The people were horrified.

The stage manger then came out and said, **“Ladies and gentlemen, to put you at ease, the violin that was just destroyed was only a $200 violin. He will now return to play on the $20,000 instrument.”** The point that he wanted to make was well illustrated; the point is this:

**It isn’t the violin that makes the music, it’s the violinist. Most of us are $200 violins at best, but in the Master’s hands, we can make beautiful music. The Lord uses all kinds of unqualified people, doesn’t He? And He can use you and me.**

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If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon, **“Simon, the Zealot”** then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in
Acts 16:31, “...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”
Romans 10:13, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: “I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.”

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, would you please let me know? Please send me an e-mail to pdnikBBM@aol.com, and in return I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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