

Galatians 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

Analysis

But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. Paul clarifies he's not against zeal itself. "It is good to be zealously affected" (kalon de zēlousthai en kalō, καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ)—literally "it's good to be zealously courted in a good thing." Zeal directed toward good ends is praiseworthy. Paul isn't jealous of the Judaizers' influence; he wants the Galatians zealous for truth, not error.

"Always" (pantote, πάντοτε)—at all times, not just when convenient or when a particular teacher is present. "And not only when I am present with you" (kai mē monon en tō pareinai me pros hymas)—their zeal for the gospel shouldn't depend on Paul's physical presence. Mature believers maintain spiritual passion consistently, not just when motivated by a favorite teacher's presence. Paul subtly suggests their inconsistency: zealous when he was there, cooling and drifting when he left. True spiritual vitality is sustained by the Spirit, not fluctuating based on human presence.

Historical Context

Paul planted churches then moved on, trusting the Holy Spirit and appointed elders to maintain sound doctrine and spiritual fervor (Acts 14:23, 20:28-31). The Galatians' rapid defection after his departure revealed inadequate spiritual maturity and grounding. False teachers often succeed by exploiting the absence of faithful teachers. Paul's point: your commitment to truth should be constant, not

dependent on my physical presence. The indwelling Spirit, not any human teacher, sustains genuine faith.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Does your spiritual zeal and commitment to truth remain constant, or does it fluctuate based on who's influencing you at the moment?
2. How can you cultivate spiritual passion sustained by the Spirit rather than dependence on particular teachers or leaders?
3. What does consistent zeal for the gospel look like in daily life when no one's watching or encouraging you?

Interlinear Text

καλῶ	δὲ	τὸ	ζηλοῦσθαι	ἐν	καλῶ	πάντοτε	καὶ
a good	But	G3588	to be zealously affected	in	a good	always	thing and
G2570	G1161		G2206	G1722	G2570	G3842	G2532
μὴ	μόνον	ἐν	τῷ	παρεῖναι	με	πρὸς	ὑμᾶς
not	only	in	G3588	am present	I	with	you
G3361	G3440	G1722		G3918	G3165	G4314	G5209

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 2:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Revelation 3:19 (Parallel theme): As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Psalms 119:139 (Parallel theme): My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (Parallel theme): Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Galatians 4:13 (Parallel theme): Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

Titus 2:14 (Good): Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Philippians 1:27 (Parallel theme): Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;