

KNOWLEDGE & ZEAL: A WINNING COMBINATION by Andrew Roberts

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17, NASV). This scripture has the potential to factor into many of our decisions. If I know the right thing to do, then obviously this scripture convicts me to pursue that course of action. Likewise, when I am aware of the right thing to do, but I chose another course of action, then I have condemned myself.

People know they should work and not steal, yet...

People know they ought to give liberally, yet...

People know they should spend more time with their children, yet...

People know they need to be baptized, yet...

...Yet they really drag their feet about making the right decision and following through with the proper course of action!

Knowledge Without Zeal

Sometimes this scripture gets twisted around in our minds to sound something like, “To one who knows the right thing to do, and does it grudgingly, thus fulfilling his obligation, to him it is a blessing.” Many of us possess the knowledge, but where is the zeal? We love the Bible but are offended by the application? We enjoy sitting and studying but cringe at rising and serving?

When you know the right thing to do, can you do it zealously for the Lord? Knowledge without zealous application speaks to a sickness in attitude and weakness of faith. Paul wrote to Rome, *“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord”* (Rom. 12:9-11, NIV). If we are to keep our spiritual fervor in serving the Lord, then when we learn how to serve Him, we ought to zealously serve Him.

Zeal Without Knowledge

Yet the wise man cautions us, *“It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way”* Prov. 19:2, NIV.

It is so frustrating to hear the cry for action and never be directed how to act. And how foolish people look when they make snap decisions before examining all of the evidence. It is uncomfortable and discouraging to be committed to a plan and realize halfway through the process that you are poorly equipped and lack resources.

Jesus certainly pointed this out. *“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’”* (Luke 14:28-30, NASV). Building a tower was a great thing, and the builder could work at it zealously but first he needed the knowledge. To plunge headlong into the project

without all the necessary knowledge would lead to embarrassment and a failed construction project.

The Winning Combination

We learn that the proper combination in serving the Lord is knowledge and zeal. When we discern from God's word His will for us we should zealously work to realize it. To serve God accurately but half-heartedly is not pleasing to the Lord. To serve God whole-heartedly but ignorantly is not pleasing to the Lord. To serve God accurately and whole-heartedly is extremely pleasing to the Lord and He will bless our efforts.