

The Fervent Spirit

One of Israel's greatest, yet unsung examples of zeal for God is the son of Eleazar, the grandson of Aaron the priest, Phineas. In Numbers 25, Israel had turned away from the Living God to serve the Baal of the Moabites. God was so angry with the Israelites that he commanded Moses to kill anyone who had joined themselves with the Moabites in worshipping Baal. The command was barely out of Moses' mouth when a son of Israel audaciously walked past Moses in front of the entire assembly with a Moabite woman on his arm. Moved by his zeal for God, it was Phineas who grabbed a spear, chased after them into a tent, and carried out his God's command by killing them both with one thrust. Because of his desire to serve God and his immediate obedience, God said of Phineas, *"Phineas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel'"* (Num. 25:11-13).

Although God does not command the physical deaths of idol worshippers today, He does expect His followers to have the same zeal for His commands displayed in Phineas. In Romans 12:11, Paul tells the Romans to be *"fervent in spirit,"* which literally means to have an attitude that is on fire for God's Will. The Philippians were directed to look at the example of Christ and to follow His pattern. He wrote in Philippians 2:8, *"..He humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross."* The example that Christ set by dying on the cross is one of unquestionable loyalty to God because He submitted His entire will to match the will of the Father (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44). Obedience like that is not attained with a complacent attitude, and if Christians are going to imitate the pattern set by Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 4:32-5:2), then they must make following Christ their passionate desire. Paul warned Timothy that *"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* in 2 Tim. 3:12, and Christ warned His apostles on the very night that He was betrayed that they would be hated because Christ was hated (John 15:18-25). With so many warnings about persecution and hatred for those who want to do what is right, we must have convicted hearts and passionate attitudes that will remain firm under fire from the world, persecutors, or even the daily grind of complacency. The Hebrew writer says that Christ's house, or family, is our family *"IF we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm until the end"* (Heb. 3:6), and again, *"For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end"* (Heb. 3:14). How can we expect to

remain firm in the Faith, to stand for the Truth, or to bring others to Christ if we are not convicted by God's Word? Phineas did not stop with simply knowing what the Will of the Lord was. He acted upon it with sincerity, and so should we.

Zach Fisk