***Serve the Lord
RO159-02***

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Today, we ask you to open your Bibles to Romans 12:9-12. Our subject is "Christian Conduct," and this is segment number six. We study now the exhortations and the practical guidelines for applying doctrine in the life of the individual believer.

It is the goal of every Christian life, every day, to become more like Jesus Christ. Transformation into the image of Christ is the product of positive volition to Bible doctrine which we have learned. Being like Jesus Christ is, of course, being the opposite of all that makes up Satan's world, which is the lusts of the sin nature; the lust of the eyes; and, the pride of life. A mind with God's divine viewpoint is fully capable of producing a life that walks in the steps of Jesus. For those who are born again, and who have a sensitivity to their eternal well-being, in terms of maximum happiness and reward in eternity from Christ, and maximum effectiveness in joy living on this earth now – such Christians are very sensitive to seeking to be transformed day-by-day into the image of Christ.

One of the great qualities of the Lord Jesus was that He was a servant of God, bringing blessings to those about Him. He was characterized by servanthood, and therefore, this becomes one of the qualities that constitutes the image of Christ into which we seek to be transformed. It is in Philippians 2:7-8 that, we read, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This is the servant who became the Lamb of God, who laid the foundation for our personal salvation.

We Christians, we have found, have been equipped with spiritual gifts to provide us with distinct abilities for a variety of Christian services. The Christian servant is God's channel for blessing mankind with the gospel message, and with the full knowledge of doctrine. Very little is known of God's thinking by the people of the world, because most Christians are very indifferent servants of God. This is due, in large part, because most Christians are very poorly taught, so they're not really alerted to the need of servanthood. It is the apostle Paul here who is trying to teach us that we can invest a vast amount of energy and time in what is pure waste of effort, and with no eternal value. But on the other hand, we can invest a life so that we are true servants of God, functioning on the Word of God, and truly changing the records in heaven.

It is in Romans 12 that the apostle Paul proceeds to outline the characteristics of Christian servanthood. And immediately up front, the primary governing motivation, he points out, is mental attitude love, produced in the yielded believer by the Spirit of God. The Christian servant, furthermore, is one who loathes evil – the evil of sins and human good. Furthermore, the Christian servant attaches himself firmly to what is morally good in thought, and in conduct, and in producing divine good works.

**The Family of God**

Now in Romans 12:10, Paul goes on to give us some guidelines for the way Christian servants are to treat each other. And if there ever was a verse in the Bible that Christians need to pay some attention to, it certainly is this one. We begin, first of all, with the objects of devotion. Paul says, "Be kindly affectioned one to another." The word "kindly affectioned" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's "philostorgos." This word simply means "devoted." It is used only here in the New Testament, and it connotes being tenderly affectionate. It refers specifically to the warmth of affection that exists between a parent and the child in the family. This is how Greek world used this word.

You'll notice that it is structured upon this Greek word "philos" in contrast to the word "agape." The word "philos" has to do with emotions. And this word, being kindly affectioned toward one another, is talking about having an emotional response toward other Christians. This goes a step now considerably beyond just your mental attitude goodwill toward the believer. It is specifically directed toward one another. The idea here is mutuality within the body of Christ. Christians, as God's family, should be devoted to each other. Christians together are indeed the family of God, and the heirs of God.

In Galatians 4:6-7, we have that put in this way: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father." This is the expression of a child toward his parent: "Abba, father:" "Wherefore, you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Christians do constitute the family of God. We are all spiritually related to one another. God is our father, and His family cannot be broken up, no matter how the members may act.

Christians, in fact, are the inner circle of humanity to each other. No one is more important, and closer to you, than other Christians. Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If there's anybody you ought to treat decently, it should be fellow Christians. If there's anybody that you should treat with considerable consideration and deference, it should be other Christians.

**Emotional Rapport**

So, the apostle Paul, in Romans 12:10, says, "We should have a tender emotional attachment to each other as members of the family of God." And then he adds: "with brotherly love." And he uses the word "philadelphia." Philadelphia, of course, is the name from which the city of Philadelphia comes, which is named for the concept of the City of Brotherly Love. This word connotes an emotional rapport with other members in the family of God. It is what is in fact the spirit which is expressed in our hymnbook when we sing, "Blessed be the tie that binds." The third verse says, "We share our mutual woes; our mutual burdens bear, and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear." The point of all this, as that verse in the song says, is that Christians have an emotional, tender affection toward one another with brotherly love.

**Compassion**

This is an important word in this particular verse because it stands in the Greek Bible first in the sentence. This is how the sentence begins: "Philadelphia," and then he goes on and says the rest, which tells us that this is the thing that the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, wants us to zero in on. Christians are to be emotionally drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore, to believers who form the body of Christ. The feelings of brotherly love in Christians has, in fact, produced the great institutions of society, which care for the needs of human beings. And let it never be forgotten that it is Christians who have been in the forefront of providing for human welfare – not the state, and not the government. By default and by tyranny, the government has gotten into that. But when it comes to human needs, it has been Christians motivated by this spirit of brotherly love that have produced the orphanages; the hospitals; the skid row missions; the shelters for the homeless; the soup kitchens;, the schools; and, the recreation centers.

Paganism does not create compassion for the needy in their suffering. Within the pagan religions of the world, "philadelphia" is a totally false, and totally alien, concept. They don't know how to relate to that. It's like someone that I heard the other day say, "It is too bad that so many millions of Jews and other people were slaughtered in Nazi Germany by the Nazis. But don't forget that the reason that happened to those people is that they were getting their karma. They were getting what they deserved. This is how they had lived. And now their karma was coming home to roost with them."

Now, obviously, that is not an expression of "philadelphia." That is not an expression of brotherly love and emotional sensitivity. It is exactly the kind of thinking, though, that is to be found in Hinduism. When a person is dying on the streets in intense personal agony, they look upon him, and they pass him by. And they say, "Let's hope that in his next reincarnation, he will have learned his lesson, and his karma will be able to give him a better life.

**Honor**

"Be kindly, emotionally affectioned one to another, with brotherly love and emotional rapport toward one another; in honor, preferring one another." Paul builds upon an emotion of brotherly love created by the Word of God through the Spirit of God, so that he calls upon us to be capable of doing something that is not all that easy. The word "honor" is the word "time." This word means "respect" in the Greek Bible: showing respect and appreciation for other believers for what they are in Jesus Christ – not for their nice personality, but for what they are Jesus Christ. This is not because they are such valuable servants in our ministry, but because they are in Jesus Christ. Get the distinction. The apostle Paul is calling upon us to have respect for other Christians, not because there is something attractive about them, impressive or useful, but simply because they are in union with the Son of God.

Also, we show that respect for other Christians by preferring them. The Greek word looks like this: "proegeomai. This word, "proegeomai," means "to lead out." It means "to go before," "Pro" means "go before." "Egeomai" means "to lead out." It means "to lead out before," or "take the point." We say in military parlance, "Get out on the front, and be the person who shows the way." Everyone else is to follow you. It means here "aggressively leading the way in showing respect and appreciation for other Christians in your midst – not just yawning, and saying, "Yeah, she's a good worker," and "it's wonderful to have him on the team," but aggressively showing that appreciation and respect for what the people of God do to the Lord's glory.

This is present tense. We're to constantly have this attitude. It is active voice in its meaning. It is our personal choice. It is a participle in mood, which is stating a spiritual principle. And this is to be directed "toward one another," meaning one Christian toward other Christians.

So, we may translate this as: "Outdo one another in showing honor." This is a call to Christian humility and gratitude in relation to other Christians in the local church, even when some of those Christians irritate you, and when they're not attractive in some way. Recognize that other Christians, in some respects, have qualities that are better than yours. That's what Paul is saying.

Philippians 2:3 puts it this way: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory. But in lowliness of mind, and the humility of attitude, let each believer esteem other believers better than themselves." Now you are going to be inclined to look around here and say, "Boy, do I wish so-and-so was in church this morning." You can think of quite a few people who need to learn this, can't you? Well, let's hope they get it later. But for those of us here, let's work on it ourselves: thinking of other people better than yourselves? Spiritually mature Christians do not resent, and do not envy, the superior qualities that they see in fellow believers in Christ. Spiritually mature Christians, who have an attitude of brotherly love, attribute the best of motives to the words and the actions of other Christians. Otherwise, they run the hazard of judging motives. And the Bible says, "You cannot judge a person's motives, and you must not do that." You can judge his actions, and you can judge his words, but you cannot judge his internal motives. Therefore, we attribute the best.

How many times can I think of something that I said, sometimes in a joke, sometimes trying to be funny, and it didn't come off that way? And it gets misunderstood, and somebody gets hurt because they responded by thinking that someone was trying to be mean to them. The Christian who prefers other believers in honor is a Christian who attributes the best to them.

So, Paul is saying: "Don't wait to follow others in respecting and esteeming other believers. You lead out and show the way. Don't wait to be appreciated yourself before you decide that you'll be respectful in esteeming other people. That's seeking self-praise in conceit, with your eyes on yourself, and not on the Lord. We're not saying that you should look around to see if somebody can pat you on the back. We are saying that whether they do or not, you should be ready to do that to others when they deserve it. Each believer, we recognize, has a special divine ministry in the body of Christ, which no one else can perform in just the same way. For that, we respect and esteem you – alone.

**Not False Humility**

Honoring does not mean, of course, practicing of false humility. I've seen Christians do this. They practice a false humility, and say, "Well, I really can't do very much;" "I just can't do anything;" or, "I've been serving so long." Then they use a little phrase: "letting others have a chance." How many times have I heard somebody who is copping out on Christian service, say, "I'm going to let others have a chance now," as if they were just standing around with nothing to do.

So, when we say "honoring other people," don't come up with a false humility and say, "I'm just not good enough at this, so I'll let other people sign up for Bible school. I'll let other people sign up and sweat two weeks in camp because I'm just not that gifted." That's a false humility. And that's not what this Scripture is talking about when it says, "preferring one another."

God himself is honored when we treat His trophies of grace with great respect. The Christian who functions on mental attitude love for all people, and with emotional affection for God's people is going to have a healthy soul. That kind of a Christian is not going to have a lot of inner emotional turmoil and rages, which remove God's peace and blessings. And you'd be surprised how many Christians go through a lot of internal rages and turmoil, which wrecks their peace with God, and makes them emotionally unstable, because they're unhappy; they're dissatisfied; and they're displeased, because they have some imagined offense, or some imagined rebuff. The Word of God says, "Prefer each other, exalting each other." Get your eyes on the Lord, and on what He's doing with people, and off of yourself.

**The Stable Christian**

The stable Christian does not have inner turmoil. The stable Christian has a personal sense of security in Christ. So, he's not threatened by others when they come along and do their service. This kind of self-effacement is not the way of the world, but it does characterize the way of Jesus Christ. Christians who lack a loving, gracious, forgiving spirit toward each other are really playing a very dangerous game. And when I see Christians striking out at each other, and I hear the snide remarks that they make, I wonder if they've ever read Galatians 5:13-15, which says, "For brethren, you have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another." And that's what ultimately happens.

Christians can be unforgiving; they can be intolerable of the frailties of others; and, they can be unwilling to put the best interpretation and the best light upon what other trophies of grace are trying to do. When you snarl; you snap; and, you beg, just be prepared eventually to find yourself destroyed. You will destroy each other in the process. It is a dangerous game to play. It is always smart to remember that nobody is perfect, so I would suggest that everybody cool it. That's what the apostle Paul is saying. Have the good sense, really, to hand your grievances over to the Lord. This kind of ugliness is most unbecoming among Christians, and 100 years from now, it's not going to make a fig newton difference, and it will be quite pointless. And we should think in terms of 100 years from now, not in the emotional crises, that we make, traumatically, of the moment.

This is a very significant exhortation and guideline in Romans 12:10: "Be kindly affectioned to one another" – an emotional, tender feeling toward other Christians: "with brotherly love" – a personal attachment as members of the family of God: "in honor" – putting others ahead of ourselves, because we esteem and respect what they do. But you should not use that honor to dope off yourself: putting others ahead, and respecting them for what they can do, but remembering that you too have a capacity with your gifts from the Spirit of God that nobody else can do, and that you are necessary in that team as well.

**Serving the Lord**

Then in Romans 12:11, the apostle Paul moves on to the subject of serving the Lord. Now he builds on what he has just said. Esteeming other Christians involves serving the Lord. He begins with saying, "Not slothful in business." The word "slothful" looks like this. It's the word "okneros." "Okneros" means "not lagging behind," or "not hesitating."

This word is used in Matthew 25:26. And there, it connotes the idea of laziness: "His lord answered and said unto him, 'You wicked and slothful servant (lazy servant). You know that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I have not spread.'" Here's the servant who was given something to work with. He did not invest it in God's work. The Lord comes back and says, "You're a lazy servant." It's this word "okneros" that is used there.

There's another place that it's used, and that's in Philippians 3:1. There it connotes the idea of being irked because somebody is putting a demand on you: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome (is not 'okneros' – he uses this same word) but for you it is safe." Paul says, "It's not irksome for me to have to say the same thing to you again and again, to remind you of the same things I've already taught you, and guided you in, and you're forgetting, and I have to realign and remind you." He says, "It's not irksome for me, and for you: it's safe; it's important; and, it's valuable."

So, this word means not being slow in responding to something, and willing to be bothered to take the trouble to act. That is very interesting. Christians don't sit around being a bunch of lazy bones. This is an exhortation against laziness in some respect. And as we shall see here, it is laziness when it comes to doing God's business; laziness when it comes to using your spiritual gift; and, laziness when it comes to serving the Lord. The word "business" here, in our King James translation does not refer to your vocation or earning money. This verse has been quoted like that improperly. The word "business" is "spoude." The word "spoude" means "diligence" or "zeal," and it is referring to your driving energy. You're applying yourself. Do not be lazy in putting yourself out. That is what he is saying: putting yourself out, in terms of God's business.

Here again, we may illustrate this word from its use elsewhere in Scripture. In 2 Corinthians 8:16, this same word "spoude" is used in describing the attitude of Titus toward the Corinthian Christians. Paul says, "But thanks be to God, he put the same earnest care (there's the word) into the heart of Titus for you."

It is also used in Jude 3, where it is translated as "diligence:" "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation." Jude says, "When I gave all effort and maximum energy to write to you about salvation," and then he goes on and says in the rest of the verse, where God the Holy Spirit said, "No, I don't want you to talk about salvation. I want you to talk about fighting to defend the truth of doctrine." So, he said, "So, I'm going to talk about apostasy instead." But here was his diligence to deal with this subject of salvation.

The word "business" in our King James translation is really being used in the way the word used to be used in its basic meaning, which was "busy-ness." That is why the word "business" is used here in the old King James translation.

So, we translate: "Do not lag behind in all diligence. It refers here to the believer's energetic response to Christian service opportunities."

So, here we are. Paul says, "You Christians are faced with Christian service opportunities. What is your right response?" He does not say, "What is your optional response?" He says, "What is your right response? There is a job that needs to be done, and your spiritual gift is capable of executing it. God has given you circumstances in life that give you the freedom to do so." He says, "Don't lag behind in jumping on the opportunity. Do not lag behind anyone in doing God's work." That is the idea. He is exhorting us not to be lazy in exercising our spiritual gifts as God's servants.

For this reason, the Bible cautions us not, for example, to get weary of doing the Lord's work. Galatians 6:9 puts it this way: "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, we shall reap if we don't faint." You have a great potential return in serving God – a return which will go with you through all eternity. The idea is to work hard for the Lord, and don't ever get lazy about it. Thus, as far as eagerness in serving God is concerned, let no one surpasses.

**Doing Christian Service Means not Doing Something Else**

Doing Christian service diligently means not doing something else in life. You've heard me say that many times. Doing Christian service, and doing it diligently, means not doing something else in life. So, we've got these Christians all around us who talk Christian service, but they're pursuing their own interests. Every now and then, they surface (some of them), and they do a Christian service, and then they disappear. They talk Christian service, but they don't do it. We have Christians among us who only serve erratically. They do it when they've got nothing better to do in life. Then they can step in and say, "Now God's priority becomes number one with me."

That's what the apostle Paul is saying. And you may not like it when he says, "Don't be slothful in your energy in God's work." That's what he means. Spiritual Christians will give first priority to God's work in living out his lifespan. That's all that Paul is saying. If you are truly a godly man or woman, you will always give first priority to what Jesus was referring to when He said, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Few Christians can read that verse, and live it, because they know they've got to get the money to do this. Therefore, it is obvious that that's what's got to come first: getting the money – not Christian service.

However, when you come to a certain point in life where you know that that God is really there, and you know that He is listening, and He is responding, and that He is really going to operate on His principles, such that when you put His business first, your business is going to be taken care of. And there's nobody that can teach you that except you yourself. There's no way you will learn that except if you yourself should learn it. And you never get over being awed by it.

It was not so many weeks ago that we were very pressed financially in the academy as we were coming down to the last two weeks of the school year. The resources were simply not there, and there was an intensity of prayer for God to come through, and then indeed we received a large contribution. And I just said, there it is again. I sat there staring at this thing, and I almost began to believe that prayer really works. How does this happen? It happens because we've gone about doing God's business, and we're saying, "Now look. We think we're on track, and therefore, we're counting on the principles that you must come through. And suddenly the sunshine broke over everything, and the burdens were rolled away, because they had been placed upon the Lord, and He came through with carrying them, as I never could have done.

Don't be slothful in your energetic application to doing the Lord's work. Put His business as a first priority in the span of life. Did you get that? In the span of your life. You only have so many days, and you only have so much life, and you're going to live every bit of it for God; for yourself. Indeed, earning your money is part of living for God. But be sure that is the slot to which He's calling you at that particular point in time.

Then he adds a second point to this in verse 11. He says, "Fervent in spirit." The word "fervent" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "zeo." This word means "to boil with heat." So, this connotes here "being burning with zeal," or "having a burning zeal." The idea is for Christians to be aglow in some respect. How? It says to be aglow in your spirit. And that is the Greek word "pneuma." This word in the Greek Bible could refer to God the Holy Spirit, or it could refer to the human spirit. Here it refers to the living human spirit in the believer.

This is the way this word is used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 2:11, where it says, "For what man knows the things of man except the spirit of man which is in him. It is our human spirit within us that makes us capable of understanding of the things that are pertaining to our human condition. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 refers to our spirits and our souls and our bodies. And Paul prays that they might become blameless before God.

So, we're talking about the believer's human spirit, which is the storage bin of his divine viewpoint. Here's where he puts all that Bible doctrine that he has learned, and it is his point of contact with the living God. In Romans 1:9, Paul says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son." It is in Paul's human spirit, ennobled, and made aglow with zeal and enthusiasm by God the Holy Spirit, that Paul is doing his work of serving.

For your human spirit to be aglow requires something that God the Holy Spirit does for you, and briefly, I want to review that so that we're sure that we understand that. The Bible tells us that there are three things involved here: two negatives; and, one positive. And it is very essential that you be sensitive to this in order that God the Holy Spirit can give you a fervency of Spirit. It is a very dangerous thing for you to have a lot of zeal and emotional enthusiasm that is the product of your sin nature. We're seeing all kinds of results of that in the public realm now. But he is talking about a personal, emotional enthusiasm and zeal and drive that is not a wildfire, but is a controlled fire because it comes from God the Holy Spirit. There's only one way for that to happen, and that is that you, as a believer, are filled with the Spirit so that God the Holy Spirit is controlling that emotional zeal that you're putting out, which He indeed is putting out from you.

**Quench not the Spirit**

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, we have the statement, "Quench not the Spirit." That is the first negative for you to be filled with the Spirit. Any Christian can be filled with the Spirit at any time, providing he meets these particular specifications. The word "quench" is the Greek word "sbennumi." This word means "to neutralize something." It specifically means "to extinguish a flame." It refers here to denying God the Holy Spirit control over your life. This is in the present tense, which is a constant prohibition. It is active. It is something that you as a Christian determine – that you don't extinguish the control of the Spirit of God. And I have to point out to you that it is in imperative mood, It is a divine command.

Quenching the Holy Spirit is the result of producing human good works from your sin nature instead of God's divine good works through the Holy Spirit. When this happens, you are out of temporal fellowship, and you're living life apart from the will of God, and you're a carnal believer. In short, you may quench the Holy Spirit by simply saying "no" to His guidance.

So, you come up all cocky and sure, and sure of yourself, and you've been around, and you know your way, and you're going to do something in life. And God says, "That isn't what I want you to do." And you say, "But I'd like to do this. I'm excited about doing this." And God says, "That's not what I want you to do. I want you to go sweat in summer camp. I don't want you to do that." And so you say "no" to the Holy Spirit of God. When you do that, a terrible thing has taken place internally within your soul. A steel door has fallen between you and God. At first, you may not be aware of it. If it continues, you will go spiritually insane, and lose all track of divine viewpoint and all divine guidance.

So, this is a terrible thing to say "no" to the guidance of the Spirit of God. This problem is corrected by rejecting yourself will, and confessing this evil to God the Father.

**Grieve not the Holy Spirit**

The second negative guideline for being filled with the Spirit is an Ephesians 4:30, which says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." The word "grieve" looks like this in the Greek Bible. It's the word "lupeo." The word "lupeo" means "to cause distress." Here it refers to causing the Holy Spirit distress by willful moral sins in your life – by willful sinning that you choose to do. It is present tense. It is a constant thing that you are to prohibit. It is active. You do it yourself. And again, God gives a command: "Don't do this." It is imperative mood.

This is choosing wickedness instead of righteousness in one's conduct. The Christian who is out of temporal fellowship, and living in sin, is a carnal Christian. Therefore, he grieves the Holy Spirit, because he has moral violations in his life. This problem is solved by correcting the moral violation, and confessing to sin to God the Father.

**Walk in the Holy Spirit**

Then there is a positive statement required for being filled with the Spirit. You must not quench Him by rejecting His will. You must not grieve Him by participating in sin. And you must, Galatians 5:16 says, "Walk by means of Him:" "This I say then. Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." The Greek word for "walk" is "peripateo." "Peripateo" means "to live your life in dependence on God the Holy Spirit – not the old sin nature.

All of you know that if you are walking down the sidewalk, and your toe hit's a little high spot, your body has already been put in motion to fall upon that leg that you're throwing out. And if you stumble, and that leg isn't there, you fall. You are walking in dependence upon that foot that's out there that you're going to expect to support you. This is how you walk in the Christian life – in dependence on God the Holy Spirit to support you and to carry you through.

The Christian lives under the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. This is present tense. It's one's constant status. It is active voice. It is your choice is a Christian. It is imperative. God says, "Walk in dependence on the Spirit of God."

So, the Christian who is walking by means of the guidance of the Holy Spirit is in temporal fellowship with God the Father. He is therefore a spiritual Christian. This question is not depending on his reason, or on the consensus of society, or on the bad advice of his carnal friends. The Christian is not to make the mistake, however, of trying to correct his carnality by working up a feeling of sorrow; by shedding tears; by promising to do better; by doing penance; or certainly, by public confession. That is not the way you correct failure to walk by means of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is filled with the Spirit, and when he is, he has zeal in his spirit for God and His work.

This kind of walking by means of the Spirit, and the zeal for doing God's work that comes from that kind of filled-with-the-Spirit Christian, is exemplified by the young evangelist Apollos in Acts 18:25, where we read, "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord." He knew his doctrine: "And being fervent in Spirit (the very thing that Paul is talking about). He spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord." He had some shortcomings of things that he didn't know, but he had a zeal and a diligence in applying his spiritual gift. His zeal was produced by the Spirit of God in Apollos – not by the sin nature. He was a preacher, therefore, of the truth.

This is in great contrast to the Christians who sat in the church in Laodicea, that we read of in Revelation 3:15-16, where the Lord says to them, "I know your works; that you are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. I'm going to spit you out. I'm going to vomit you out of My mouth." That is what it's saying. Because of what? Because they have no zeal for God.

So, this is a very serious thing, lacking a zeal for God in your spirit. Unless your human spirit is controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that you are filled with the Spirit, you will not have this zeal. Worse yet, you will be tempted to produce a counterfeit zeal for God by your sin nature. And that kind of counterfeit zeal will look very good, even to outsiders. This is what characterizes the charismatic Pentecostal circles today. And it is producing evils among them. The charismatic Pentecostal circles do not understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They're completely fouled up about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And they're even more fouled up about the principle of being filled with the Spirit, and how to be filled with the Spirit. Yet they do want an enthusiastic, fervent, warm zeal outwardly. So, what do they do? They produce it on their own. They think that God is doing it, but it's the sin nature regurgitating its evil. And these people get together, and they create an emotional high through human techniques, and through self-hypnosis. And some thoughtful person among them may say, "This can't be for real. I'm not really seeing miracles. I'm not really speaking in tongues. I'm not really performing healings or seeing healing. I'm not really hearing messages from God." But they don't dare say that. They keep it to themselves because they have permitted the sin nature to take over and create a counterfeit fervency.

That's not what Paul was talking about. He's talking about a fervency of spirit which is the product of God the Holy Spirit. The spiritual Christian does not have to get with a group of other carnal people to psych himself into enthusiasm for God's work. The spiritual Christian who is under the control of the Holy Spirit does not go into a wild orgy of emotional outbursts, seeking tongues, and miracles, and healings, and prophetic revelations. Emotional hyperventilation is not the filling of the Spirit. It is the filling of Satan. The spiritual Christian is, on the other hand, filled with a deep sense of joy. And in quiet humility, he consistently serves the Lord. He gives God preeminence in his life. He gives the work of the Lord first priority. That's hard to do. But eventually, the Christian who rises to the capacity of spiritual maturity, and finally becomes aware that God is out there; He is very real; He is listening, and He is acting – finally, that Christian comes to the point where he can put priority on his spiritual gifts before anything else, and he uses that gift in God's service.

You cannot fool God the Holy Spirit with this old sin nature-generated zeal that a lot of Christians put on. Leviticus 10:1-2 tell us about two men who tried to come up with their own false fire at the altar of God, and they were struck down for it.

The last part of verse 11 ties all this up in a very important way. Paul says, "Serving the Lord." The word "serving" is a very illuminating word. It's the word "douleuo." "Douleuo" means "to be a slave to." It connotes slaving for a master to do his wishes. Again, this is present tense. That is the constant action of the Christian. It is active. We are to choose to do this. It is a participle in mood. A spiritual principle is being stated here, and it is implying a command. And we are to be slaves of "kurios." "Kurios" means "lord," and it refers here to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a word that indicates that Jesus is the master, and the believers are the slaves. In the very start of this brook, in order to put everything in perspective, in the book of Romans, the apostle Paul, in Romans 1:1, identifies himself as a slave of Jesus Christ: "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." He bore the mighty spiritual gift of apostle, but before he mentions that, he says, "I'm a slave of Jesus Christ, and I want you to know that, because I am now going to speak for my Master. I am going to deliver to you that which He has for you.

In ancient Greek and Roman society, some slaves were given great authority in their master's household and in the master's business. But these slaves never pursued their own plans. They pursued the plans of their master. These slave stewards did not act as if they owned the business. They were masters who were making decisions for the lord. They were not acting independently.

So, serving the Lord is, in effect, defining the area in which slothfulness is to be shunned, and a fervency of spirit is to be practiced. Jesus Christ is our master. We are His slaves. In all our diligence and zeal to serve Him, we have to seek His plans and His methods. Christians must ultimately account, I remind you, for their lives and their service to Jesus Christ alone – not to your husband; not your wife; and, not to your Christian friends or anybody else. You will account for the span of your life (how you have performed your slavehood) to Jesus Christ alone.

Romans 14:10 puts it this way: "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you set at nought your brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ." We will account to Him alone.

2 Corinthians 5:10 puts it this way: "We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad" – whether it be divine good or human good.

Colossians 3:24 puts it this way: "Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ." Sometimes we Christians forget who it is that we're really serving. In the Lord, all the speed of our diligence, and all the drive of our zeal, will be directed in productive channels. When you and I grow weary in serving the Lord, and we lose our zeal, it's because the Lord's glory has ceased to be the primary objective in our life. Serving the Lord with diligence and zeal, of course, requires nurturing one's soul on the Word of God.

**Self-Centered Living is a Sin**

I was struck by the thought that most Christians spend more time in grooming their bodies and improving their personalities than they do feeding their souls and spirits on Bible doctrines. Just add up how long it takes you to get ready in the morning, and all the building you go through, and all those personality improvement courses that some of you take, which indeed you should. But consider the time that it takes to do all that, over again the big thing of feeding your soul on the doctrines of Scripture. Spiritually lazy, self-centered living is a sin. That's what verse 11 is telling us – "Not lacking in diligence, but being fervent under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and serving the Lord."

So, again, I ask you: how many Christians really seek first the Kingdom of God, and leave the delivery of material things to Him? Only those who have gone to the top. The rest are still grubbing around, making it on their own. We are all in full-time Christian service, but many Christians are doing their own thing, and pursuing their desires, and they think that when they get their desires, they have something. That's the dumbest thing about it altogether. They are pursuing their own objectives, when this quiet voice in the midst of their soul is saying, "This is not what you should be doing. There is a Christian service that you should be engaged in at this point in life. That's what you should be doing." And they ignore it. And when they get the objective that they pursued, very smugly; very arrogantly; and, very cockily, they think they actually have something. They don't know how little, in terms of eternity, they have, and how much injury they have done to themselves.

So, indeed, when will we finally surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord, and stop wasting our lives in these short-term benefits? All we do in life is to be one grand act of service to our master, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:5-8 says, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill doing service as the Lord and not to men; knowing that whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Yes, all of your employment is one great sacrifice of service to God. Your whole life (every moment); your vacation; your entertainment; your homemaking; and, all of the things that you do in life is one great service to God, if it is that which He is directing you to do at that point in time. You may add to that Colossians 3:22-23. It says the same thing.

For the spiritually mature and carnal Christian, we find that there is resentment when he is told that he is not his own master. I'd like to tell you today some of the things I've had recently said to me – the snide remarks I've had directed at me when I have suggested that something less than the most godly and desirable choices are to be made. People who are doing their own thing, and lacking in energetic devotion and fervency of spirit, don't like to have that pointed out to them.

However, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and 1 Corinthians 7:23 remind us that we are not our own. We have been bought by Him. He is our master. So, resentment will be experienced even when you express esteem for others who serve in Christian service instead of for their own enrichment. And people are going to resent it when you say that. I've had people resent things, and I'm going to do it again in a couple of weeks. So, I'll tell you now, if you resent it, don't show up. But the Sunday we go to summer camp, I'm going to get up here, and I'm going to read the order of battle. The order of battle means the units (the troops) that are engaged in the combat. That's the order of battle, in military parlance. And as I did last year, I'll read the names of everybody who constitutes that summer camp crew. You would be surprised at the flak I've received for having the audacity to stand up here and read those names, because some of the people who should have been in that order of battle chose to be elsewhere, which is just great with me. But I found it very peculiar that when we do exactly what's the Word of God says – that we express our esteem for our comrades in arms who make all this possible for eternal changes in the lives of these young people, that we get flak shot at us to cover themselves.

We Christians are all under Satan's gun. Let's face it. Some of us get shot down like Demas. But there's always happy recovery, as there was for John Mark. The glow of the Holy Spirit in the believer's human spirit releases the warmth and the zeal of the love of God. It is the invisible Lord Jesus Christ who, for such a Christian, becomes a daily personal reality to the eye of faith.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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