

Series: Romans
Title: Not Slothful but Fervent
Text: Romans 12: 11
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Romans 21: 11: Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

“Slothful” means sluggish, lazy, idle. The words “in business” mean earnestness, diligence (Heb 6:11). “Fervent” means red hot, zealous.

Proposition: Christ calls his people to not be slothful in diligence, but red hot in spirit, serving him.

Now, before anyone can serve the Lord, we must be born-again of God. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8: 8). It is only through faith in Christ, by Christ, that our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God. As the apostle Peter said of believers, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2: 5) But for you and I who are born of God and brought to faith in Christ, remember, our Lord hates luke warmness. Christ is the Angel who spoke to the church of the Laodiceans.

Revelation 3: 14: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Every believer is motivated, constrained by the love of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15: And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

The phrase “*the love of Christ*” is used three times in scripture; each time it is Christ’s love for his people.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...37: Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Ephesians 3: 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph 3:16-19).

So it is in 2 Corinthians 5:14. The love of Christ for us constraineth us to not live unto ourselves but unto Christ that loved us and gave himself for us and rose again. You and I can never earn a righteousness or make ourselves holy by obeying the exhortation in our text nor any other. But Christ fulfilled it and every other precept in perfection and paid all our sins of not doing it. Christ alone is our righteousness and our sanctification. Therefore, if we would learn what the exhortation in our text means then we must look to Christ.

NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS

Our Lord Jesus Christ was not slothful in business. At an early age, he said, “I must be about my Father’s business?” (Lu 2:49) What was the Father’s business that Christ came to fulfill.

One, the Father’s business that Christ came to do was to preach the Gospel. Tis he did with diligence and earnestness. He said,

Isaiah 61: 1: The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; 2: To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3: To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Mark 1:38: And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

In the face of many dangers and severe persecution, Christ let nothing stop him from proclaiming the gospel.

Two, Christ came to declare God's righteousness. He is the Gospel he came to preach. As the Head and Representative of his people Christ came into this world to live and die as the substitute of his people that he might fulfill the law in precept and penalty for us. He came to bear the sin of his people that God might be just to pour out wrath on him in our place. By doing so, God is just to shower his people in mercy because our Substitute fulfilled every demand of the law for us, justifying us from all our sins. He obtained eternal redemption for us and reconciled his people to God. Christ began saying "I must be about my Father's business"; he ended saying, "It is finished!"

FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Our Lord Jesus was fervent in spirit. He had fervent charity for his Father and his people. Peter exhorted us, saying, "above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8). Our Redeemer walked this earth zealous in spirit with perfect fervent charity. Christ was fervent for his Father's house: he was filled with indignation at those who turned it into a house of merchandise.

John 2: 14: And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16: And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17: And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

It is Christ's fervent zeal that saves us.

Isaiah 9: 7: Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 37:32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

The fervent love of Christ for the glory of his Father and the salvation of his people moved Christ to fulfil all that was foretold concerning him. Remember, Christ's work on this earth was tiresome labor. He was touched with the same feeling of our infirmities, yet without sin. He became tired, hungry, thirsty just as we do. Our Savior is God but he really united our humanity with his deity. We read in John 4: 6, "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour" (Jn 4: 6). In the garden of Gethsemane, his disciple slept because they were tired. But Christ did not sleep but prayed. He knew he was about to endure separation from the Father he loved. Yet, his fervent love made him say, 'Not my will but thine be done.'

SERVING THE LORD

Our Lord Jesus did everything he did on the earth as the servant of God, serving in perfect faithfulness. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (Jn 4:13). He said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn 9:4). In the end he prayed to the Father saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jn 17:4).

Brethren, by his zeal, by his fervency, by Christ serving God his Father perfectly, Christ gives us everything we need for acceptance with God. He is our eternal salvation. Christ freely gives us that for which we did not labor: the gospel, life and a new holy heart, faith and repentance, perfect righteousness, free justification, constant protection and preservation from all our enemies and one day he will give us a new, glorified, immortal body. He has made us joint-heirs with him and we shall receive eternal inheritance with him. He says to us, "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour" (Jos 24: 13).

HEAR AND HEED

Knowing these things, let us, as his chosen, redeemed, regenerated people, hear the exhortation in our text and heed it. Constrained by Christ's love for us let us follow his example. As we consider how fervent Christ was in working out a righteousness for us, it is an easy and light yoke for Christ to say to us, be "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."

Brethren, serving the Lord is not merely external and outward, it is a matter of the heart, a matter of the conscience and of the affections. Serving the Lord is not starting and stopping; it is a constant submission to the Lord all our lives. Serving the Lord is actually spending and being spent, for the Lord, by his strength. **BY HIS STRENGTH!**

The preeminent business of Christ's church is to preach Christ and him crucified.

Mark 16:15: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

First, above all else, this is how we love and provide for one another. Whatever else we do is to share their burden so that they are not distracted from hearing the gospel preached. Therefore, each of us must not be slothful in diligence, but fervent in spirit to hear the gospel and study the word of God ourselves. Why? The apostle Peter said, "Sanctify the Lord God in

your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet 3:15). “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb 2: 1).

Secondly, whatever the Lord gives us to do in his church—no matter how big or how small—let us be not slothful, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Colossians 3:22: Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:23: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

As Christ’s preacher, I want to do it singleness of heart fearing God. If I am a musician I want to be the best musician. If I am a singer I want to be the best singer. If I am mowing the grass I want to be the best mower. Whatever we do let us do it heartily as to the Lord. Let it be said of us what Paul said of our brother Epaphras:

Colossians 4: 12: Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13: For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them *that are* in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. (Col 4:12-13)

Brethren, it is a great blessing Christ has given us, to have a heart to imitate Christ in providing for sinners in need. He said, “I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The Hebrew writer said, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb 13: 16).

When we grow weary, let us remember how Christ served the Father for us. By his grace, by his strength, let us push on a little farther in whatever we are doing in his name. And whatever we do, it will be God who gets the glory for his grace and strength working in us

2 Corinthians 9: 8: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

1 Corinthians 15: 58: 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.

Hebrews 6:10: For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11: And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Amen!