

Brick by Brick, Part 2

Romans 12:10–12

Code: 45-94

Well, tonight we're going to go back to Romans, chapter 12, for a look at verses 9-21. We're working our way through this wonderful passage on the duties of practical Christianity. We're having to take it a little at a time because there's so much inherent in all these things that the apostle Paul has to say.

Every once in a while I like to read biographies of Christians of the past, I guess, I pretty well understand how Christianity is in the present. I really don't know how it's going to be in the future. But I love to reach back in the past and see what parallels or comparisons or things I can learn from others. And so I get out some of my older volumes that have either vignettes or are biographical looks at people who lived in the years gone by to find out what it was that sort of made them tick and how they walked with the Lord and what they learned and how they lived and so forth. And I happened to be reading about a very lovely, a very gracious and precious Saint of God by the name of Robert C. Chapman, who lived a long time ago in England. And, I suppose, today almost no one would know about him. But he was a friend of a man named J. N. Darby, and J. N. Darby was a great early leader of the Plymouth Brethren. In fact, many of you who come out of that background have read many of Darby's writings. He greatly influenced C. I. Scofield, who was responsible for the Scofield Bible and many other things, central American mission, Dallas seminary and a lot of things came from that man. But this man, Chapman was an interesting man, a friend of Darby. He wrote on one occasion that this was his life goal, seeing that so many preached Christ and so few lived Christ, I will aim to live him. And Darby said of him, "He lives what I teach." What a commendation. "He lives what I teach." Another saint of God that I love to read about, and I love to read his writings, particularly his work on the parables is a man by the name of William Arnot A-R-N-O-T. And it was said about Arnot, this, "His preaching is good. His writing is better. His living is best of all." And so it should be with all of us, shouldn't it that is correct we live what we learn, and that the best of us should be our living. Why? Because more than anything else, Christianity is a way of life. Christianity is a way of living. It is a lifestyle. It is a life pattern. It is a life principle. And our relationship to God is not right if that life principle isn't present. It can't be.

So we come to Romans chapter 12, verses 9-21, in a very practical section about living right, about the Christian way of life. It is a practical section, more than any other section in Romans. It's very simple. It's very easy to understand. There's very little I can do to contribute to your understanding it because it's so absolutely obvious what he's saying. All I can do is try to enrich and embellish and exhort. But the kind of living that Paul calls us to is abnormal. It is unnatural. In a sense, it is nonhuman. It is not natural to the unregenerate. It is not normal to the unregenerate. It is not something which human beings can, of their own choice, do this kind of living. It is super natural living. It is living that can only occur when it's energized by the divine spirit of God. It is only the people who have lived through the first 11 chapters of Romans can live like chapter 12 calls them to live. Because, until you have been justified, until you have come to know Jesus Christ and his spirit is planted within you and the life principle of God dwells in your soul, it's impossible to live this way. And so all that we've learned in the first 11 chapters and in the first part of chapter 12 about dedication is to set us up to be able to live this way. And, as we have said through the years in the ministry, here at Grace, all theology has at its ultimate end that we might live to the glory of God, all doctrine is to result in the proper kind of duty, the proper kind of service.

Listen to the text of 2 Corinthians, chapter 7 and verse 1 and see if it doesn't somewhat familiar in the truth that it conveys. "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now, what he says there is just what Paul says in a capsule, "Having there, therefore, all these promises, dearly beloved." In other words, because of all that God has promised for us this is what we are to do in response. "Cleans ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting" — the flesh and spirit— "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Look at Ephesians, chapter 2 for a moment, and you will find there the same thing. This is a very familiar passage. It talks in verse 4 about God being rich in mercy, his great with which he loved us. In verse 5, that he made us alive, together with Christ by grace. He saved us. Verse 6, he raised us up together and made us to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. He has decided by his sovereign grace to show the exceeding riches of that grace in kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. By grace are we saved through faith. It is a gift of God. And so all of this has God done. And verse 10 says, "Now we are his workmanship. We have been created in Christ Jesus — here it comes — "unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." In other words, our salvation is to bring us into a certain life pattern of righteousness, a certain type of living.

A young man in the navy was visiting our service this morning, and he had heard of our ministry through tape and some books and things, and he was anxious to be here, and he said, "I want to ask you a very important question to me." How does one know when he's truly a Christian? And that it isn't just some momentary emotional activity that happened in some pastime? How does one really know?" And I said, "The way, you know, and the only way, you know, is to look at your life and see what is there. That's the only way to know. And if you have experienced

justification, that is being made right with God, then there will be an outflowing of sanctification. That is a living pattern of righteousness and holiness. And though you don't see all that you would like to see of that, you see it there, and it is the expression of the deepest desire of your heart." So, we, who were the recipients of all of God's grace have received that, so that we might live an obedient godly life so that we might point others to him and that we might show forth his praise, who can turn us from children of darkness to children of light, from those who serve the devil to those who serve God. You see, when you live a godly life, you bring honor to the one who transformed you, and you attract others to the one who transformed you. And he received the glory. And you also are blessed by your obedience, and then you glorify him for the blessing you receive." So the Lord has redeemed us then to live a certain kind of life, to live out practical Christianity.

Now, look at Philippians, and I want to take you to a test for a moment that is often misunderstood and, perhaps, has confused some of you as you've read it. In Philippians, chapter 2, in verse 12, we read this. "Wherefore, my beloved, as you 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." Now, some have told us that that means that we have to work our own salvation out. In other words, we are a part of saving ourselves. And some have been distressed by what that verse says, "Work out your own salvation," when we have just read Ephesians, chapter 2, which says, "Salvation is not —" of what? "Works." Is this a contradiction? Is he saying in one place it's not of works and somewhere else work it out? What is this troublesome verse really saying? Well, let's back up in Philippians and kind of get a running start. Go back to chapter 1, verse 27. He says this, "Only —" and this is a single, most important exhortation — "Let your conduct be fitting to the gospel of Christ." you say what he's saying there? If you claim to have been redeemed by the gospel, then your conduct ought to show it. Let your conduct, he says to the Philippians, be as it is fitting to the gospel of Christ, that whether I am present, whether I come and see you or whether I'm absent, I may hear of your affairs or, if you will, your lifestyle, that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel and so forth. In other words, he says, "Look, if you're truly saved, then let your conduct show it whether I'm there or not." In other words, "Let it be so genuine and so true that it doesn't need to be policed by my presence. Let it be that if I'm there or if I'm not there. You still have a conduct fitting to the gospel."

Notice verse 5 of chapter 2. Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus Christ." Be like Christ, think like Christ. Have the attitude of humility that Christ had." And then he describes it, doesn't he? In verses 6-11. It was an attitude of humility. He didn't think it's something to hold onto in verse 6 to be like God. But he made himself of no reputation, took a part in the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of man, was found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He humiliated himself, humbled himself for us. And verse 9 says, "Wherefore God has highly exhausted him, given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, in earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father." So he says, "Let the mind be in you that was in Christ. It was a mind of

humiliation. It was a mind of submission. Let that mind be in you. Now, you come to verse 12, and he says, "Wherefore, or so then my beloved. As you have always obeyed, not in my presence only but now much more in my absence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now, in the context, I think it's very clear what he means by that. Listen now. "Since you belong to Christ through the gospel" — as chapter 1, verse 27 said — "Since you belong to Christ through the gospel" secondary — "Since Christ has, in his humble obedience to God, given you the example of how you ought to live, in humble obedience to God, since Christ has shown you the reward of that obedience," verses 9-11, Christ is obedient in verses 5-8, 6-8, and he's rewarded in verses 9-11, right? He humbled himself and God what? Exalted him. Since you belong to Christ, since he is your example, since you see what happens to one who obeys, "Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, keep on obeying," implied, "Whether I'm there or not." They had been obedience in Philippi. But, no doubt, their obedience was an obedience that was leaning heavily on Paul. When he was present, he set the pace. When he was present, he taught. He exhorted. He challenged. He helped. He confronted. He answered their questions. He solved their problems. He unscrambled their dilemmas. But what are you saying to them? And the same thing in chapter 1, verse 27 is "Now that I'm not there, don't be less obedient. You've always obeyed in my presence. Now keep obeying in my absence." Just the same place. So that it isn't a question of me policing you. Let it come from within. And let it be — here comes one of the most important things, at the end of verse 12 — "with fear and trembling." In other words, because it is such a serious thing to obey, do it with fear and trembling, not fear of me or trembling about me but of God, reverently, wholeheartedly, humbly, meekly, you obey. And he says, "Continue" — here it comes — "to work out your own salvation." Now, what does he mean? It simply means by great effort, by constant desire to be pleasing to God, by constant dedication to the spirit of God and obedience to the word of God, you work out what is already where? In. In other words, all he is seeing is the salvation that's in you ought to be visible outside.

This is the Christian life. To live on the outside what is already on the inside, and it is a word of great encouragement. In verse 13, when he says, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and do of his good pleasure." God is working on the inside to do his will and to fulfill his good pleasure and let it happen on the outside. And so we are then to live on the outside what we are on the inside. It's another way of saying what we saw in 2 Corinthians 7:1 and Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4-10, "Since God has done all of this, since you've seen the example of Jesus Christ, the one who obeys is exalted, as you have obeyed in my presence, keep on obeying in my absence and do it with fear and trembling because you regard the holiness of God and work onto the outside what is on the inside." And that's to be the standard of Christian living. We're to live on the outside what we have on the inside; so that the people who don't have it will desire it, right? And God will be glorified. Now, what does it mean? You say, "All right. I'm willing to cleanse myself and live the way I ought to live. I want to work on the outside the salvation that's on the inside. What do you think need to do?"

Well, that takes us back to Romans, chapter 12, and that's where we're going to find the practical

duties that make up Christian living. Now, remember, he's already given us a doctrinal base, already called for a total commitment in verses 1 and 2, already encouraged us to use our spiritual gifts in verses 3-8. So first we have to be saved, and then we have to be totally committed, and then we have to be in the ministry of our spiritual gifts. And in the flow of that, we begin to live the practical Christian life that he described, starting in chapter 12, verse 9 and going all the way into chapter 15, many things he has to say about practical living. Now, he starts with a grocery list of things, just rapid fire from verse 9 on. And it's like he drew a circle, as we said last time and just keeps widening the circle to embrace another category or another group of ideas. Circle number one starts with us, and we looked at this last week, verse 9. It starts with three basic attitudes, the matter of Christian living. Love is to be without hypocrisy. The dominant characteristic should be what? Love. What kind of love? Genuine love. That is the mark of a believer. John 13:34. By this, will all men know you are my disciples if you have love one for another. There's faith. There's hope. There's love, and the greatest of these, 1 Corinthians 13 says is love. And so love is the primary mark, a legitimate, godly love, without hypocrisy or deceit.

Secondly, he says hate what is evil. A strong hatred for sin. And, thirdly, cling or stick like glue to what is good. Now, that's the first phase of the circle, and that just kind of is around us. These are three things that out to be true in our lives. We love genuinely. We hate evil. And we stick to what is good. Now, as we come to verse 10, the circle widens a little bit to encompass another dimension, not just me personally, but the family of God. And in this second section, verses 10-13, some of what he says will direct itself to the family. Some will back up and direct itself to me, as an individual. So when the circle widens, it doesn't exclude the prior issue. It just embraces it a little wider. So, as we look at the circle, phase 2, we see it widen to embrace the Christian family, as well as including some direct issues to my own personal life. Notice verse 10 and see where it starts. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." That's the first of the statements regarding the wider circle, which embraces the Christian family. Brotherly love, one to another, kind affection speaks of us within the relationship of the body of Christ. Now, the word "kindly affection," it's one word. It's a very interesting word in the Greek, and it helps us to understand what he means if we understand the word. It's a combination of two words. In fact, both words mean love. You could translate it "Be lovingly loving." But in order to really get the richness of what it means, the two words are *philos* or *phile*, which means a warm affectionate love. And the second word is *storg*. The word is *philostorg*. The second word *storg*, basically, means natural family love. It is the word, for example, used in 2 Timothy, where Paul says to Timothy in the last days people will be without natural affection. And what he means is there will be a breakdown in normal love relationships within families, in normal, natural, love relationships. Now, *philostorg* combines two words then, *storg*, which means a natural love, not a love induced by desire, not a love induced by beauty or an attractive personality but the natural love that occurs within a family, normal, natural, kindred love, as opposed to love that is generated by attraction, personality, beauty, lust, desire, circumstance or anything like that. It is just normal family love. And it's marvelous that he use it here because he says in the Christian family, we ought to have a *phile* type family love. And *phile* talks about the

warm affection of love.

So we ought to be marked by a natural love that we share with all believers. And I think you've experienced that. I know I have many, many times. I can go into an environment where I do not know anyone. And if they love the Lord Jesus Christ, it doesn't take very long for us to have a very unique sense of love. There is a common bond that stretches beyond culture and time and place and events and circumstances. And even though we have no history and no knowledge of commonness in terms of lifestyle or likes or dislikes, there is an immediate sense of affection with one who belongs to the family of God. Have you felt that? Sure you have. And that is to be an affectionate demonstrative kind of love. We are to have love for those within the family. And, again, I say it is not a love built on attraction. It is a love that is given to anyone who belongs to the same Savior, the same Lord, the same Father. That's why in Matthew 18, our Lord says, "Under no circumstance are you ever to look down, *kataphrone*, think down or think someone to be less than you are who is in the family of God. Because we are all in the family. There should be a natural attraction, a natural affinity. And even though we might hassle a little bit in the family when it comes to wanting to protect each other and security each other and comes to each other's rescue, it's marvelous how we do that, isn't it. It's marvelous.

I don't like to use home illustrations, but I'm going to use this one 'cause it fits so well here. My kids say don't talk about us dad, so I try not to. But this one isn't here tonight. She's over there. So it'll be all right. Don't tell her. The other night, in the middle of the night, after Mark had played a football game, he was in pain, as you often are the night after a football game. And in the middle of the night, he came flying out of bed with a cramp and a whole lot of noise and, yow, you know. And I can identify with that. I had a few of those kind of nights in years past. And he was in pretty much pain. And the cramp was relieved. And the next day I happened to go into his room when he was gone to school, and I found a little card on his desk. And it was interesting. I opened it up. And inside it was taped a roll of Lifesavers, and there was a note from his little sister. And it started out something like this, "Dear Mark, I know sometimes I'm a brat, and I'm a hassle. But when I hear you cry out in pain, I feel bad, and you want you to forgive me for all the wrong I've done, and I want you to know that I love you, and I'm glad you're my brother. Signed, Melinda." Well, see, no matter what goes on in the backseat of the car on long trips, when you really come down to looking at what that relationship is, and you know somebody might be hurt, there's a sense of care, isn't there? That's how it ought to be in the family.

And in Matthew, chapter 18, Jesus also said, "However you receive one of the little ones that belong to me is how you receive whom?" Me. Me. We have a very wonderful family, a marvelous family that we are to love with a warm affection. That's why, as we saw a few weeks ago, the New Testament, it joins us on five different occasions to greet one another with a holy kiss or a kiss of love because we are to identify ourselves in demonstrative ways with the affection that belongs to those who have a family, a kindred, affinity in the fellowship of the Lord. I was so thrilled this morning—I think Dennis Mc Bride was telling me some of the disabled folks, the handicap came into the Galileans class — some of you were there — and a blind fella came in and

was telling the story of how they needed a Braille duplicator. It's like a Xerox machine, only it duplicates in Braille, so that they could get the word out to more people and just shared the need. And they said, "If you want to give a little after Sunday school class is over, just stop at the door," and they counted it up, and it was \$2,100. Well, I don't know that anybody in Galileans ever really personally knew that individual who shared that need, that blind individual, or maybe they don't know the other blind people, but they have an amazing sense of affinity and concern and care for the needs of someone else. And that's the way it ought to be. That's the kind of love our Lord calls for. Then, also, would you notice, it not only uses the word *philostorg* or the word kindly affection, but it says be, that way, one to another, with brotherly love, and this is amazing. This is Phila-delphia. So what he says is be lovingly loving with one another with loving love. I mean, it's just redundant. It's, again, *phila*, again the affection and *adelphos*, brother, again, the same idea. Love them as if they were intimately associated with you as kindred. So he uses two words that express kindred love in the same phrase, which makes a very strong statement. Love each other as kindred and love each other as kindred, twice in a row. That is not just a theological love. It is an affection, a tender, kind, caring, concerned affection. The pure love of those who belong to Jesus Christ.

It's what John talks about in 1 John 5, in that very lovely statement that he makes, "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone that loves him that begot, loves him also that is begotten of him," a marvelous statement. If you love God, you love those who belong to him, and there is a warm affection for brothers and sisters in Christ. And that's why in Ephesians, Paul says, "Be ye tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." We are to be tender identified as those who love. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12: 15, "I'll love you more though you love me less," he says. That was the love that ought character all of us. When he wrote 1 Corinthians in the fourth chapter, he said, "Look," he said, "Look, I love you. You're my beloved children, and, as my beloved children, I want to take care of you. Now, if you keep disobeying, I'm going to come with a rod. But if you get your act together, I'll come in gentleness." You make the choice. "But my love will reach out to you, either in the warmth of affection and gratitude for your obedience or in discipline because I want you to be all God want you to be." That's the kind of God we're talking about. It is a confrontive love. It is a caring love, a concerned loved, a compassionate love. You say, "Well, do we really have that love to give?" Yes. Romans 5, we remember the love of Christ is what? "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." Paul in writing to the Thessalonians in chapter 4, I believe it is verse 9, says, "But as touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you. For you, yourselves are taught by God to love one another. You're taught by God to do that." And of course he praise that that love would abound, yet more and more. They know how to love. That love should abound more and more. That's Philippians 1:19. So we are to love with a tender gracious affection that belongs uniquely to those in the family of God.

Then notice the second, in verse 10, in honor, preferring one another. Now, we even go a step beyond. Love is the general environment, and it sort of works its way into the second thought,

and that is to prefer one another over ourselves. And this introduces us to another ingredient essential in family life in the church, and that is humility. If we are to love everyone the same, if we are to do that, if we are to have the right kind of compassion, Philippians 2: 1-4 says, "If we are to show mercy to people, we must look on the things of others and not on our own things. We must prefer others. And the preferring idea is a very beautiful idea. It has the sense of leading the way. Did you get that? It has the sense of leading the way. That is, being the example. To put it another way, starting the parade, if you will, being out front, on behalf of others. In other words, we're not to sit back and wait until someone else honors the other one, till someone else shows preference to the other one, till someone else meets another's need, till someone else gives to another's request. We're not to wait till someone else shows honor to whom honor is due, love to whom love is due. We're not to wait until someone else takes care of something that needs to be done to the sacrifice of their own time and talent and resource. But we are to lead the parade. In other words, we're to be the first to do that. That is the essence of the term. We're not waiting but leading the way in honoring others. And that is what it means to prefer others, to lead in bringing to them the honor that we would give to one we esteem more highly than ourselves. What a great thought, great thought. Quick to give honor, quick to give reward, quick to give respect, quick to give love, quick to meet a need. That is the truest test of humility that I know about. Some people,, on the other hand, when someone else is honored get very angry and jealous, right? And envious. Just the opposite should mark a believer. We prefer others, and we lead the parade in bringing honor to others in meeting the needs of others. So that takes us into a little wider circle, doesn't it? And embraces attitudes towards the family of God. And we could say a lot more about that one but let's go on.

Now, in this second circle, which includes the family, we have that personal identification there as well. So we're still there. So he backs up to his us a few times. And here it comes very personal. Three essential matters that relate to me and to you come in verse 11, and they're very, very important. The first one, in the King James it says, "Not slothful in business." That's not a very good translation by modern terms. It may have worked with King James authorized the translation of this Bible in Old England. But right now, it doesn't get the idea across. It sounds like having something to do with businessmen and has been erroneously used in that reference. The actual Greek term would be best translated this way. "Not lazy in zeal." The word isn't business. The word is *spoud*, and it literally means hurry, haste. I remember one of the classic sermons I heard from a black preacher one time was a sermon on hurry. That was his whole sermon. We got to hurry, and he went on and on and on and on like that for about 35 minutes, and then he said, "Now, that we is hurrying where is we hurrying to? That's my second point." And by the time we were done, we about trampled each other to get out of the place. We were in such a hurry. I don't know we all knew what they were hurrying to do, but we were definitely in a hurry. And that is the idea here. Don't be lazy in your haste. You're in a hurry. And his point in the message was well-taken. In general, what he was saying was, "We have the King's business to do, and the King's business has to be done while we can do it." "While it is day, we have to work," as Jesus said, "For the night comes when no man can work." And what is to be done has to be done, and it has to be done now. And so what he's saying is don't lose your zeal in

hurrying. Don't grow lazy in the work. The issue here is a spiritual issue. In regard to spiritual zeal, don't be lazy. In regard to the haste and the need for a fast and total commitment and staying with it, don't back up. To put it another way, two times in the New Testament, Galatians 6:9, and I think the other one is 2 Thessalonians 3, about verse 13. Both of those say, "Be not weary in what?" Well doing. There has to be haste. There has to be intensity in the Christian life. There's no room for laziness. We could spend a lot of time going back to the book of Proverbs and doing an entire study on laziness and how appalling laziness is to God. Suffice it to say at this point, there is no room for laziness in the work of the Lord. There is no room for indolence. It demands hastiness, a hurry, a spirit that is moving fast.

In Ecclesiastes 9:10, Solomon gave some very sage advice. He said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. For there is no work in the grave." Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. And in Matthew 25 and verse 26, when we studied that not long ago, we met an indolent servant who was given one talent and was too lazy to make anything of it, buried it in the ground, and it cost him his eternity.

In Isaiah 56, I was reading this week, and came to verse 10, and in that verse, Isaiah in died the leaders of Israel with these words, "Blind, ignorant, dumb dogs who can't bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. In other words, the people who were supposed to be on spiritual watch in Israel went to sleep and became dumb dogs who didn't bark when they should have barked, useless as watch dogs, blind and ignorant, sleeping, lying down and loving to slumber. And what Paul is saying here is that we who are in the ministry of Christ are to be busy at all times at a maximum output effort to do the work of the Lord while the work can be done. In fact, in Proverbs 18:9, it says, "He who is lazy in his work is brother to him who is a great waster." The greatest waster I know is the one who wastes not money but what? Time. Who wastes time. We are not to be wasters of time.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, Paul says, "We are to redeem the time, to buy it up." In Hebrews 6:12, it says, "Be not slothful." Be not slothful. That's, again, the idea of laziness, and I'm afraid many Christians rust out when they should wear out. I haven't met very many Christians who wear out. And that's the mood of our day. I had an interesting occasion to come across a survey. And the intent of the survey was to demonstrate how few people work hard. And they picked out the middle management, upper management sort of people who work in the business world. And the survey was to determine how many hours, a working day, how many hours are actually productive hours in the average day of a person in the business world with some responsibility in management, some oversight? That is they have some freedom to do with their time what they want. If you're on the assembly line, it's a little tough to dictate how long you're going to work and how much of an eight-hour day you really do work. But if you're in management or in business and you control your own time, they wanted to find out how much people really work and how much is really productive time. And the average across the United States of an eight-hour day was two hours of productive time. Two hours of actually producing. If you don't think we live in a leisure-oriented society, you're wrong. Now, you say, "Yeah, but man for those two hours, I produce." Well, good. And maybe you do, and maybe that's enough to keep the rest of

your people working eight. I'm not saying it's necessarily wrong. I'm just saying that that's how it is. And sometimes I think our attitude toward that gets transmitted over into Christianity. I've noticed even with young men in seminary that the movement that's happening in seminaries today is an elongation of the educational process. Now, there are a lot of reasons for it, and I don't want to fault everyone who takes a long time to go through seminary. Sometimes a wife and a lot of kids or the need for a job cause that to happen. But there was a time when you went in the door of the seminary, and three years or four years later, you came out the other door, and you were done, and you did it all in one shot. And the benefit of that was the training of diligence and discipline. I know that was the way it was for me. I went into college, graduated from high school at 17, graduated from college at 21, graduated from seminary at 24, just bang, bang, bang, got it all done. I really believe it was one of the best teachers of self-discipline. It was the best practical teacher of self-discipline I ever had in my life, learning how to do it and stay with it and crank it out. And what happens now days is it gets stretches out. So, very often, young men who are going into the ministry work a little bit, go to school a little bit, date their fiancée a little bit, play racquetball a little bit, have free time a little bit. And then they get out of seminary, and they go to a church, and they have to do one thing all the time. And they can't do it. It's almost impossible. So it's not unusual to see them cancel the Sunday night service because they can't discipline themselves to the preparation process. And, as I mentioned some time ago to you, when people asked me what's the key to the ministry, and I tell them, "It's sitting in your chair till your work is done," they think that's unspiritual. But, in a real sense, it's true. There is a need for real enthusiastic zeal in the work of the Lord.

I heard the other day about a lady in our church who has taught one Sunday school class of little girls for 18 years, not the same little girls, by the way. They keep getting along, you know. But, in the same group, I don't know whether it was third grade or fourth grade or whatever, 18 years. That's marvelous. Staying with it and not becoming weary in well-doing. And so that's what he means when he says, "Don't be lazy in your zeal." Keep moving, keep doing it. And one of the secrets is to have responsibility. Someone says to me so often, "Well, how do you force yourself to study?" And I say, "I don't force myself to study. The people who show up on Sunday do that." I mean, what good would it be if I walked in here and said, "Look, folks, I'm not done, but I think I'll have the sermon by Tuesday. Could you come back?" No, no, no, no. In fact, when I taught a course in seminary, one time I told them, just somewhat casually, your paper will be due on Friday. I gave them about three weeks to write a paper. I said, "It'll be due on Friday. I'd like to have it on Friday." So Friday came, and about half the class turned their papers in, and the other half said, "Well, we'll have it on Monday." I said, "No. You'll get an 'F.'" Oh, they said, "We didn't think you would be hard like that." I said, "I'm not hard. I just said Friday. That's all." "But I had this and that, oh, but this —" "That's just what I said. It's Friday." They said, "Well, why?" I said, "Because you can't show up in your church on Sunday and say, 'I'll have it if you give me a couple days. You might as well learn now.'" And, as one of my professors told me I could never be a pastor because I can't make up my mind about every passage by Sunday of every week. There's a certain tyranny in this that's very helpful. And when you have a class or you have a ministry of the accountability, that's why it's good to have that.

You can have sort of a floating ministry, you know, do it when you want. But the more you tie yourself into a ministry where there's a certain demand on your time, the more you are forced to zealousness and to diligence in the preparation for that. So that's a very important principle.

Now, tied in with it, in verse 11, is the principle of being fervent in spirit. Now, this is very good because you cannot be lazy, but you can have a rotten attitude about it. You can say, "Well, I'm going to do it because it has to be done, but I certainly don't like it. I'd like to get out of this whole thing." No. This is — I like this. The word "Fervent" means to boil with heat, boiling. And the spirit is the human spirit, your own inner man. And what it says is "Be a boiling point believer." I mean, just be boiling all the time, raring to go, anything but lukewarm or cold. The Christian life ought to be filled with enthusiasm, with zeal, with excitement, with joy, with total effort.

I remember reading an article — in fact, I picked it up just to share a couple of excerpts. The title of it was "Get Enthusiastic." And it said — it begins, "I've just been talking with Lorraine, and she left me feeling like last year's bird nest, all hallow and raveled." You've met people like that, haven't you? Sure you have. Millions, millions of them. They're so common, in fact, they threaten to become a national epidemic. What's the matter with them? Are they in great trouble? Not anymore than the average citizen. Sick? Nope. Crushed by grief, remorse or sorrow? Hardly ever. Then what in the world ails them? The oldest blight on earth, they lack enthusiasm. And it went from there. And I think that can be true. We can become weary in well-doing. We can lose our zeal and our excitement and our enthusiasm, and it's too bad. The Christian life needs to be filled with that energy, that thrill, that verve, that dynamic that moves out, not only committed to do the task and not grow lazy but boil in the spirit to get it done, excited.

There were many such in the scriptures, but there's one that comes to mind and uses the same phrase to describe him. It's in the 18th chapter of acts. Don't look it up. I'll just read it. It tells about Apollos, certain Jew who was an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, the Old Testament. He was instructed in the way of Lord, and he was boiling in the spirit, same thing. He was fervent in spirit. He was a man whose spirit was a never-stop, never slow down, aggressive, enthusiastic, excited spirit, spiritual fervor. Henry Martyn, the great missionary went to India said, "Now let me burn out for God." The apostle Paul said never stopped. He said, "I run to win the race. I fight to hit my opponent." He said, "I do everything I can bringing my body into subjection," 1 Corinthians 9. He says, "I preach and I teach and I warn every man that I may present every man perfect in Christ," Colossians, chapter 1. I mean, he just was an indefatigable and zealous worker. Not only on the outside was he forced to that effort, but on the inside he had a fervent spirit. That's the thing I love to see, enthusiastic, excited Christians.

And that takes us to a third, personal principle here in verse 11. Not only are we not to be lazy in our zeal but to be boiling in our spirit, ready to go, excited, bubbling over. But all of this in serving the Lord. It's almost as if those phrases modify serving the Lord. We are to not be lazy in zeal. We are to be fervent in spirit, as we serve the Lord. I see people who can get excited about a

lot of things. I see people get excited about things they sell in the marketplace. They get excited about new houses, new cars, new wardrobes. I see people get all turned on at football games, baseball games, basketball games and act like absolute idiots, enthusiastic about many, many things. I see people who fall in love, you know, and you see all the bells ring. You just watch those people, you know, and, boy, they've got all the marks, and they're just abandoned to that. It just totally controls every waking moment of their life, and they go to sleep and dream about the one they love. And they get enthusiastic about that. And we've all have fallen in love and experienced that. We know what that's like. I still am in love, and I understand that. It's settled down a little bit. I'm not quite as, you know, gaga, as I once was, to put it in the vernacular. I guess, it's because it's settled into a deep and rich and wonderful love. But we all know what that's like when, you know, just sparks and bells and those things happen, and we get so enthusiastic about that kind of relationship that everything in the world sort of fades away. And I wonder if we've ever experienced that in terms of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. What a thrill, what an exciting thing. It's hard to sit on that. It should be. It ought to be just boiling over. And serving the Lord is what we're for.

When Paul began this whole epistle, didn't he say that? Chapter 1, verse 8, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole word, for God as my witness, whom I serve with my spirit," in the gospel of his son. He loved the thought of serving the Lord. I love that thought, too. I can't believe it, that God has given me the privilege that he's given me. I have to pinch myself from time to time to be sure that it's really happened. I don't know why it is that God allows me this marvelous, thrilling, glorious privilege. The sense of satisfaction in the service of Christ outweighs any other satisfaction the world has to offer. We are called to serve the Lord and to serve him with haste, to serve him with zeal, to serve him with a fervent spirit, enthusiastic, full of joy and excitement. And if you can't serve him that way, the problem is not where you're serving. The problem is in your own heart. The problem is not that the accommodations aren't right or whatever. The problem is in you. It's in you. Serving the Lord is so wonderful. Let me just enrich your understanding of that. In this chapter, there are three distinct words used for servant. The first one is in verse 1, your act of spiritual service, the end of verse 1, the word is service. That's the word *latreu*, that's the verb form of it. *Latreu*, it means reverential service of worship. It's the worship kind of service. The service of reverential awe. The offering of ourselves to God like a priest bringing an animal. Then you'll notice verse 7. It talks about service and waiting on service, and that's the word *diakone*, and that has to do with practical service, waiting on tables. We serve the Lord as priests who bring an offering in reverential service. We serve the Lord as servants who wait on tables, doing menial test being, simple tasks, whatever needs to be done. But here in verse 11, the word is *douleu*, which is a third word in this chapter that can be translated service. And it is the intense service of slavery. It is bond service. And the emphasis here is that we see ourselves as slaves to Christ, to give total service to him, having no other master and rendering that service with enthusiasm and excitement and eagerness and zeal. And Paul knows this level of living will not be easy. It's not easy because we have opposition. When you go to serve the Lord with enthusiasm and you to serve the Lord with zeal, and you go to serve the Lord with a whole heart abandoned to that, and you really

want to give everything you have, you're going to have some problems, aren't you? Because you're going to run right into an ungodly system, and it's going to be difficult.

So he adds three more exhortations in verse 12, and we'll look at those and stop at that point. First of all, he says rejoicing in hope. Listen, no one ever fully served the Lord. No one ever served the Lord with his whole heart who wasn't constantly aware of hope for the future. Because when you serve the Lord with your whole heart, things begin to happen to make you hope for the future, right? That's just part of it. It keeps us going. We pour out all there is in this life, and we run into opposition, and we run into indifference, and we run into apathy, and we see our own weakness and our own failure. And sometimes we do it wrong and have to pick up the pieces. And so through all of our service through the Lord, no matter how enthusiastic or how committed we are, there is always the hope in our hearts of the day when all our service will be done, and everything will be done the way it ought to be done. The hope of better things is the inspiration of joy in the Christian who serves. I serve because someday I want to go to the Lord and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I serve because the day will come — you remember 1 Corinthians 15? It says, "The trumpet will sound, and we'll be changed in the twinkling of an eye," and we'll say, "Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy sting?" And it talks about the victory and resurrection. And it says in verse 58, after all that, about the future resurrection. "Therefore, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in —" What? "the work of the Lord, for, you know, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." In other words, we serve the way we serve because we know what's going to happen in the future. We serve with a whole heart here because we know they'll be an eternal reward and an eternal dividend, and we long for that. We hope for that. We reach out for that. Like Romans 8, we wait for the redemption of the body. We wait for the manifestation of the children of God. No matter how dark the world is, no matter how hard the task, and sometimes it is very hard, we await the future glory. We await the time when the King comes to take his own to himself and reward them, and all their work is done, and they rest from their labors. And that's our anchor, that that day is coming, that the work will be done. You know, if we had no hope for that, it would sure be a bleak world for us, to serve and serve and serve and serve and always seem to be defeated and never able to do all that you should do because of your own weaknesses and never see the results you want to receive and not be able to look ahead and say, "But someday it'll all be the way it's supposed to be. Someday the light will dawn on the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Someday the labor will be over and we'll rest from our labors, and we'll enjoy an eternal rest in the presence of Christ." Listen, we have to see ahead to that, we have to know that day will come. And because we see it, we rejoice in that hope. We rejoice in that hope. We can't always rejoice in the service here because we're overwhelmed with the defeat, you know. For everything I see that's good, I can always see many things that aren't. For everything that happens, it thrills me that there are things that haven't happened yet that burden me. But I rejoice in the future hope. And, because of that, verse 12 says we're able to be patient in our tribulation. The word patient means to stay under, to remain under. We can stay under the pressure. We can stay under the test because we know what's coming. We can endure the trouble, *thlipsis*, the pressure, that's the word pressure. We can stay under the pressure, serving the Lord, reaching out

in hope. And because we see what's coming in the future, we rejoice. We rejoice. And we have to go through things. We have to endure the pain. We have to endure the rejection. We have to endure the animosity. We have to endure the struggle with satan and his demons, and all those things that defy what we want to do for the glory of God. But that's not the end of the someday they'll be an eternal victory. We hope in that. That gives us joy, and it allows us to stay under the pressure, to stay under the pressure. And while we're under, verse 12 says, "We are diligently —" doing what? "in prayer." We're diligently in prayer. I believe one of the reasons the Lord keeps the pressure on is to keep us in communion with him. Do you believe that? If you don't spend time communing with the Lord, it may be because you're not under the pressure, and you may not be under the pressure because you're not in the service. And if you're in the service, maybe you're not doing it with great zeal and a fervent spirit. I'll promise you this. If you're in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a bond slave to him, and you're doing it with all your heart, and you're doing it with excitement and enthusiasm, you're going to be in the midst of trouble and in the midst of pressure. And in the midst of that you can stay under it and rejoice and hope because, you know, what's coming. And I'll tell you, in the midst of that you're going to spend time bringing those things to the Lord and being sustained by him. The idea there in the phrase "Diligently in prayer" is to continue steadily or, literally, to continue instantly, constantly in prayer. Life becomes sort of an open communion with God. It's just open all the time. Something is said to me and, immediately, a prayer response is offered to God. It's just a way of living for me. As I sat here during the song service, things came into my mind. People came into my mind. Several times, my own children came into my mind. And, as a result of what I thought, I offered to God a prayer on their behalf. Ministry comes into mind; the thought of getting up to teach you. And I ask God to strengthen me, give me wisdom and the words to say. Life becomes an open communion, where you are totally dependent on God, spiritual breathing. And that's what it is in the service of the Lord. So a Christian who loves purely, verse 9, who hates evil, who sticks to what is good is a Christian who will be tenderly affectionate to other believers, who will humbly seek to honor others, rather than be honored. And, as a Christian who's service to Jesus Christ will be total enthusiastic, wholehearted, zealous, obedient, diligent service. And, as a result, trials and tribulation and pressure will come, but they will be overcome by a strong hope of future glory and reward, based on God's promises that will allow that kind of Christian to endure everything that comes and constantly be committing him himself and all that he does to the care of the Lord. Now, that's the way to live the Christian life. It's all summed up right there, in just those opening four verses. But there's more, and that's for next time. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Rather than hearing me pray in your behalf, will you spend a moment in prayer with the Lord? I don't want these things to just go out, hit your ears and be done. I want them to penetrate all of our hearts. So would you just, in your own heart, ask the spirit of God to seal these things to your heart? To put them in the front of your memory, to help you to live them out in your life, to be the kind of Christian that he would want you to be. Just spend a moment in prayer.

Our father, we thank you for these moments, and we pray that there might be a genuine

dedication of our hearts, to live out the life that's within, to work out our salvation with reverence for the one who saved us, to be obedient to these patterns of living, that Christ might be exalted in us, that others might see him and give him glory. And we pray, Lord, for each individual life here, not only corporately for our church but every individual, that each of them might know the fullness of blessing that comes to the one who lives the Christ life. May we know that blessing as we walk in obedience. And if there are some among us tonight who don't know the savior, oh, God, may they be drawn to him this day. Find in him their all in all, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, blessing, more than they ever dreamed, open hearts by your spirit. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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