

Do Not Be Slothful in Zeal

by Chad Thompson

Chad Thompson's sermon emphasizes the importance of zeal and diligence in serving God and fulfilling our responsibilities as Christians.

Duration: 49:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1, Romans 12:9-13

Topics: "Slothfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not being lazy or slothful in our zeal for serving the Lord. He encourages listeners to crack the whip and make a conscious decision to stop being slothful and instead serve the Lord fervently. The speaker highlights the need for prayer, seeking the Holy Spirit, and communing with God to receive His burdens and guidance. He also emphasizes the importance of taking action and making necessary changes in our lives to align with God's will. The sermon draws inspiration from Romans 12:11 and emphasizes the example of Jesus Christ, who spent 30 years learning and practicing the carpentry trade before beginning His ministry.

Transcript

We'll be in Romans 12 again. Romans 12. Let's pray before we begin.

Father in heaven, I ask you to come and teach us. Will you convict us, Lord? Encourage us. Provoke us.

We ask only to sit at your feet, to hear from you, to help us give heed to the teaching. Lord, as servants, we ask you to make known your will. Make it clear and make it plain.

Don't speak to us in vague generalities, but put your finger on the areas of our life that need to change, that need to be transformed. In the name of your Son, we pray, Amen. Well, I want to look at verse 11.

Today, Paul says, Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord.

It's a pretty basic command. In one sense, we could say go and do that. And that's exactly what we want to say.

But there needs to be a certain amount of explanation if we're going to do it rightly. And if we're going to feel the weight of what Paul presents to us, this kind of thing is all over in the Scriptures. And again, just to give us a sense of the context, I'd like to start in verse 9. And we'll go down to verse 13.

He just fires off a list of commands and exhortations. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil.

Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints. And seek to show hospitality. Again, remember, this is all in Romans 12.

It's the response. It's the proper response to all the doctrine and the teaching that's gone in Romans 1-11. This is the only fitting response to the Gospel.

And obedience to these commands and the life that looks like what we find in these commands is the goal for which God has redeemed us and changed us and put His Spirit within us. To get fruit unto God. To fulfill the righteous requirements of the law.

This is the aim and the charge. And so these texts are important. They're searching.

They're not easily done. They require a new heart even to accomplish them. They require walking with God in the Spirit.

They require a renewed mind. Giving diligence to the Scriptures. To even know how to take the first step in this direction.

We will stumble and we will fail inevitably if we're not doing those things. And if we're not doing it in this way. That is, in a way that's informed by the Gospel.

In a way that's shaped by the Gospel. And in a way that is dependent upon the Holy Spirit. And that's the way we relate to all these commands.

Well, just to introduce then the topic for today. At this point in the chapter, in chapter 12, early verses 9 and following, it sort of looks like the Apostle Paul, he moves away from speaking just about how Christians relate to other Christians, which he had been doing immediately. The very first thing he said in Romans 12, after he commanded us to present our bodies in this way and to renew our minds, was that we shouldn't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think as it relates to other Christians.

And then he speaks about our spiritual gifting and how we're all fit in a body together and how we're to relate and to serve to one another in that relationship. And then he goes on from there. And he begins to speak not so much just about how Christians relate to other Christians, but rather about... He moves into a more generalized section.

He mentions things like this. Our attitude in all that we do. The way we meet tribulation.

And the way we meet persecution. Our prayer life. Generosity to the saints.

Empathy and compassion to those who are suffering. Being peacemakers. Being a servant.

Overcoming evil with good. And so on. It's just more general.

It's not just Christians. It's so much more than that. Persecution, tribulation.

These kinds of things. And so, it's not that he abandons all notions of how Christians relate to Christians, but he just widens the lens and the scope, so to speak, and just to say, now I'm not just talking about just this one thing, but about all your life and everything that's included in that. And so, his exhortations become much broader.

And he commands us here, do not be slothful in zeal. Do not be slothful in zeal. Now, the King James translated that, be diligent in business.

Be diligent in business. And so, you have all these interpretations that say, well, this is how we are to be with regards to the affairs of this life. You have business.

You have work. You have responsibilities. Be diligent in them.

And that's a right understanding. It certainly is a truth with regards to Christian doctrine and the way we're supposed to live. It's something God would have us do.

But the word in the ESV says, do not be slothful in zeal. Is zeal. That's what it means.

Not business. It means zeal. And it's the same word that's used in verse 8 when it says, the one who leads with zeal.

It should be the same word in your translation. Zeal. Fervency.

Zeal. A certain desire. And intensity.

It says, do not be slothful in zeal. Now, this command has historically been taken two ways. One, primarily because of the influence of the King James.

But it's not a wrong understanding. It's this. Paul's not referring to any particular occupation or a task with regards to our Christian life.

But rather, he's speaking in a general sense to refer to every responsibility that you have. Any and all labor which you have to do. Everything that comes into your life as a duty to be performed, this falls under this command.

Do not be slothful in zeal. He's giving us a command to be faithful and to be industrious and hardworking and carrying out all our responsibilities. That's the first interpretation.

The idea here is from those in church history who have believed that the Sabbath was binding on the Christian. Some of those people who thought, well, the Sabbath is binding, they put it this way. God commanded rest on the seventh day, but only the seventh day.

And He commanded work on the other six. So, if you're going to be obedient, you better be working on the other six. A sense of not being slothful in zeal.

You're working hard. If you take your rest on the other six, you're disobedient. Was their understanding.

It's an amazing thing. And it's so foreign to us and our culture. We think, you know, I've at least got to have my weekend.

You know, at least. Surely I can get a three or four day weekend every now and again. Take a week off here and there.

You know, that kind of thing. Rather than this idea that they have, those who kept the Sabbath and believed the Sabbath was binding on the Christian, was that you only rest on the seventh day. And all the other days you do work.

So, we are equally disobedient if we're not busy at work. And if we become slothful. You didn't keep the Sabbath as separate as the day of rest.

You made it like all the other days in a day of rest. And so different in that way. Now, for those of us who don't believe in the Sabbath commandment, that it would have ongoing validity today, this interpretation takes this idea that Christians are to be hard workers.

Period. They're not to be slothful or slow to perform their duties. They are to be diligent and earnest and zealous in their work.

Now, the second interpretation of this passage is that Paul is commanding believers to be zealous, particularly in the service of God, in the affairs of piety and of religion, whether publicly, things that we do as a church, or corporately, or privately, just in your own study, in your own prayers. That you should not be without passion and without zeal and without fervency in the way that you give yourself to daily reading, to the preaching and the hearing of the Word, to private prayers, to exhorting one another in the truth, to ministering to the poor, to the needy, in brotherly love, and in every other good work that we've been given as Christians to do. There is to be a certain fiery passion within us for these things.

Particularly, do not be slothful and zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Our service is to be this way. No slothfulness in our zeal.

And so, this interpretation understands Paul to be saying that in all of our efforts to serve the Lord in a reasonable and in a fitting way, Romans 12, 1 and 2, we must not lose steam, so to speak, but we should have an unflagging zeal in our endeavors to serve the Lord. Now, personally, I believe both interpretations are correct. Now, you say, well, wait a minute.

Does that mean it means one or it means the other? It can't mean both. Well, clearly the second interpretation is correct when we take the exhortation as a whole. Don't be slothful and zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Clearly, it's talking about at least those things which we typically think of as directly being a service to the Lord. So, that's clear. There's no question that that's included.

It has to do with all the things that we would say are part of Christianity and part of our religion in relationship to God. It means those things certainly. We are to be fervent in the spirit to be serving the Lord.

You cannot divorce this command from the things we do as Christians in terms of living and spiritual disciplines. And yet, I don't believe that it's right either to say it just means that. We're not meant to take this command only to refer to what we might call, more specifically, the spiritual things in life and somehow separate that.

That's not what we're to do. It's clearly meant to encompass all of our lives. And so, rather than excluding either of these interpretations, I just want to suggest that they're both correct, that we should include them both in our understanding.

And that's what I want to do today. I just want to consider them one at a time. Just two parts of this one command.

Two aspects of it. It's helpful to break it down that way, I think. And so, that's what I want to do.

Consider these ideas separately. So, first of all, considering it as a general exhortation to all of life, there are many reasons to take it that way. First of all, I should like to say that laziness and slothfulness are not compatible with Christianity.

They're not compatible with Christianity. Not at all compatible. In fact, a lazy person is in clear disobedience to God.

Consider some of these commands with me. I'm just going to read them off. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

Ecclesiastes 9.10 Jesus said, My Father is working until now, and I am working. That's an amazing statement. You want to be like Christ? You must be working.

Be working. He is working. His Father is working.

They are about work. John 5.17 Another thing Jesus said, We must work. The works of Him who sent Me while it is day.

Night is coming when no man can work. John 9.4 We're to be about the business of working. Another one from Paul.

Here's a command. Aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs and to work with your own hands as we instructed you. Isn't that amazing? I instructed you to work with your hands.

Now do it. That's 1 Thessalonians 4.11 2 Thessalonians 3.10 If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. Think of what that means if we're all gathered together and there's somebody here that's not willing to work and we've got all this food and they say, No! You can't have it.

What do you mean I can't have it? I'm hungry. It doesn't matter. Under obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, I am not allowing you to eat until you will work.

That's incredible. Work. We're to be diligent about work.

And Paul says, Don't let this guy eat if he's not going to work. Don't let it happen. It's amazing.

So, God cares that we work. Then he says in 2 Thessalonians, just two verses later, 3.12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. That's the command.

He says I command you in the Lord Jesus Christ and I encourage you in the Lord Jesus Christ do your own work quietly and earn your own living. That's profound. And these are just a sampling of the verses in the Scripture that speak of hard and diligent work.

We can go to the Proverbs and find a multitude. We can go to so many places in the Old Testament, other places in the New. Think of all the parables of the Lord where He talked about a slothful lazy servant who didn't do the will of his master.

And he went to hell. It's incredible. We're to be diligent about work.

Whatever it is that we've been given to do. So we should not be surprised then to find an exhortation like this in Scriptures in Romans 12, 11 that says do not be slothful and zeal. Be fervent in spirit and serve the Lord.

And we shouldn't be surprised to think of that as all of life. Everything we're given to do. But somehow I would say I fear that in our age with all the young men growing up on video games and television instead of hard work, chores, helping dad, we've lost much of the nobility of hard work.

Much of the idea of hard work being somehow virtuous. But we cannot forget that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself spent 30 years, His first 30 years learning and practicing the carpentry trade. Isn't that amazing? He cut His teeth on hard carpentry work.

It's incredible. And we can be sure that He was a hard worker. We tend to want to think that this is something that is just a matter of how you're made.

Some people are harder workers than other people. Well, that's true. Some people are.

That doesn't mean it's not a matter of obedience or disobedience. It's not that the way they're made. Nothing can be more false than that.

We're commanded to be diligent. Now, don't misunderstand me though. I'm not... You can have two people working equally hard or being equally diligent and yet one is doing more work than the other person is doing work.

One guy could just be twice the size of the other guy. And if he works as hard as the little guy's working, then he's going to accomplish much more. You see what I'm saying? But we're all to be diligent at work.

It doesn't mean that you have to perform the same amount of work as someone else, but to be diligent in your efforts. So we don't want to compare ourselves by one another. Again, this is something we serve the Lord with.

You're not accountable to do what I do and I'm not accountable to do what you do. But you're accountable to God to give all to God and to work diligently in all that you have and all that you've been given to do. So we're not setting some quota of work which must be met, but we are saying along with the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles and with the whole of God's revelation that it is a sin to not be a hard worker.

That's what we're saying. That's sin. And that needs to be repented of.

Think of it this way. Suppose you know a man who is not a Christian. He spends all his day lounging around and eating and playing and taking advantage of the labors of others.

This is what he does. And then he gets converted. He converts to Christianity.

He becomes a follower of Christ. What changes do you suppose God would cause in him when he becomes a Christian? Well, you would expect this man to repent of his misdeeds and to set an example to the rest of hard work and diligence. That's what you'd expect.

And there's a reason you'd expect it. Because whether you acknowledge it or not or whether you would say it or not, it's because you realize and you know that hard work is a virtue and something God would have for us. I mean, Adam was created in the garden not to toil by the sweat of his brow, but to work and to tend the garden.

And there's something about that that's essential. You can mark it down. If you are known as a lazy person or a person unwilling to work hard, if you are not known by your co-workers as an excellent worker, if you're not known that way, you are undermining the witness of the gospel where you work.

You are. If you're not known as a hard worker, you're undermining the gospel where you work. But there's a word of caution that's needed here.

And it's this. Paul says, Serve the Lord. In other words, the temptation is to do our work and to be diligent at it but for our sake or for the sake of reputation or sake of gain, anything like that, and not to be serving the Lord in it.

You are to be diligent at your work, but not for your own gain. You're to be diligent in serving the Lord. And that means that task that He's given you to do today or tomorrow.

And so, it's a service we render to the Lord. And that's the danger is that we all know the affairs of this life have a tendency, if we're not on a constant vigil, to pull us away from the affairs of God. They just do.

And so, if we are diligent about the things in this world that we've been given to do, and we're not conscientious of serving God in them, we'll find that our own supposed obedience to being diligent to work actually pulls us away from the Lord. We've got to be conscious of serving God in everything. And so, that's got to be there.

Jesus warns us, of course, in the parable of the soils that the cares of this world can have a choking effect on spiritual life. And they do for many. He says, I mean, many people fall away simply because of the cares of this world.

And so, Paul reminds us to be careful that we are serving the Lord. Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit.

Serve the Lord. I also want to caution us this way to say that there are some professions like accounting. I've got a friend who's very sought after in regards to accounting.

And the thing in that profession particularly working harder than others at your job in accounting probably means you're being disobedient to God. Because all those people are bowing down to their profession. And they're working, spending all their energies in that.

I mean, those people literally, and most of them sleep at the office and that kind of thing where He's working. I mean, this is what... I mean, you're just... It's typical. And we know that's disobedience.

We're not talking about bowing down to something in this world. But we're talking about in the work that we do, in everything that we set our hands to doing, we're doing it fervently. We're doing it zealously.

We're doing it unto the Lord to honor Him. And so, this is what we're after. We must diligently serve the Lord in whatever we do.

Two texts in Colossians. Colossians 3, 7. In whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through Him. A few verses later when speaking directly to slaves, He says this, Whatever you do, work heartily.

Ask for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. He said that to slaves.

I mean, it's amazing. But I mean, if there were... You know, there are some people who if they hired you for a certain job as opposed to others, you'd work more diligently. You just would.

He's telling us, Look, work heartily as unto the Lord, not as unto men. I mean, I don't care who the man is. Work harder than you would for him because you're working for the Lord.

You are serving the Lord Christ. The slave doing the menial task. I mean, here he is.

I mean, in a day before plumbing, here he is cleaning out the... wherever there... I mean, think of some of the things that slaves would be doing. The menial debasing task. And he says, You're serving the Lord Jesus Christ in that.

That's what God would have you do. And that's profound. And that adds a certain... Doesn't it? Adds a certain sense of nobility even to those things.

Here this person is serving God in that task. And, you know, the lowest... I mean, it's kind of like that... I'd owe to be even just a doorkeeper in the temple of God. If I know it's what God would have me do, it's bliss.

Prisons would palace His proof. Right? And that's true. And this is what we're saying.

This is what God requires of us. Whatever we do, work heartily, ask for the Lord, and not for men. He doesn't just say, think of it as working for the Lord.

He says, It's a fact that God has given you this task. And if you're not diligent in it, then you're failing Him, because you're not this person who's given it to you, that you think maybe you can get away with not working hard or this thing or that thing. God's given it to you to do it.

And your service is unto Him. It's not unto men. So work diligently.

Work heartily. Albert Barnes has said it this way, and this sums it all up. The tendency of the Christian religion is to promote industry.

You think, how could that be? It teaches the value of time. It presents numerous and important things to be done. It inclines people to be conscientious in the improvement of each moment.

And it takes away the mind from those pleasures and pursuits which generate and promote indolence. The Lord Jesus was constantly employed in filling up the great duties of His life. And the effect of His religion has been to promote industry wherever it has spread, both among nations and individuals.

An idle man and a Christian are names which do not harmonize. Every Christian has enough to do to occupy all his time. And he whose life is spent in ease and in doing nothing should doubt altogether his

religion.

God has assigned us much to accomplish, and He will hold us answerable for the faithful performance of it. That's pretty good. And that's about all I want to say on that.

But we need to understand that there is a certain Christian zeal, specifically Christian zeal, that ought to go into every task we're given to perform. And we ought to perform it heartily in that zeal. I think most of us would be surprised to realize just how much a hard work ethic is especially Christian.

Because it is. Remember the words of Paul about the Cretans? Quote, One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. That's what one of these men said.

And Paul says, This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. These guys are lazy gluttons, so you're going to have to rebuke them sharply or they're not going to be sound in the faith.

So, hard work, diligence is specifically Christian. That's one of the reasons Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians, if this guy is not willing to work, mark him down and have nothing to do with him. He's going to blemish the testimony of Christ because that's not the way Christ would have us be and live in this world.

So we're not to be slothful in zeal, but we are given to do with all our might. Now, so that's the first aspect of this. Just the general truth.

Now specifically, the second part of this exhortation, we are to be full of zeal in our Christian devotion and our Christian experience. Full of zeal. We are to press on to know the Lord.

We are to fight the good fight of faith right to the end. There's a certain amount of vigor and activity that's involved in that. You can't even fight the good fight of faith lazily.

It's not even possible. We're talking about expending energy. And you've got to be zealous.

If you're not stirred up to fight, you're going to lose. I mean, that's just the reality of it. So there's a zeal that's there.

This finds expression so many times in the Scriptures. I just wanted to read a few of these. And I don't have the references written down, but this should be familiar to all of you.

Now, the Lord Jesus said to anyone who does not take up His cross daily, that he cannot be His disciple. I mean, every day to take up a cross ready to die. There's the zeal there.

You wake up this morning and say, I'm going to die to self in order to live for God. That's zealous. That's discipleship 101.

You're not a Christian. You're not even a disciple if that's not your attitude. Every day, He says.

It's amazing. It's impossible for you to be a disciple of Christ if you don't do that every day. It's an impossibility, He says.

Paul reminds us that we are soldiers of the cross. And he says, like all soldiers, we must not entangle ourselves in civilian affairs, but to give ourselves wholly to our Captain. Soldiers don't entangle themselves

in civilian affairs.

We don't do that. Peter says, I think it right so long as I am in this body to stir you up by way of reminder. Zeal.

He wants to stir you up. The author to the Hebrews tells us to provoke one another to love and good works. Provoke each other.

The Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation threatens to spew out of His mouth any who are not zealous for Him. That's amazing. To spew them out of His mouth.

He urges us, some of us who have grown cold, to return to their first love and their first zeal and their first passion. And Paul here gives the command, do not be slothful in zeal. And there are many others.

Do not be slothful in zeal. Now listen to that. He doesn't say, this is what's amazing to me.

He says, do not be slothful in zeal. He doesn't say, have a zeal for God. He says, you should not be slothful in zeal.

In other words, it's not enough simply to be zealous for God. You hear what I'm saying? I tend to think you either have zeal or you don't have zeal. Paul tends to think of, you can not have zeal and then you can have just a little zeal and be slothful in it.

Or you can not be slothful in zeal and really burn for God. You see? And that's what he commands us. In fact, well, I don't want to get ahead of myself.

So it's not enough simply to be zealous for God. Do we have a zeal for God? Well, as a Christian, we have to have a zeal for God. It's not even an option.

But he says, don't be slothful in zeal. Which means what? Well, I think maybe the best picture of this is just to remember the Lord Jesus Christ there clearing out the temple courts. Do not be slothful in zeal.

Here it is. There He was coming to pray and commune with His Father. Here He comes.

And these rascals were changing money for profit, stealing from the people and from God. And the Lord is furious. And in holy and righteous anger, the Lord Jesus Christ fervently, quickly made a whip of cords that were readily available.

He made a whip of cords. He didn't go buy a whip. He didn't go grab a whip.

He made a whip. He made a whip. And He didn't grab a couple of cords and say, come on guys, you know, get out of here.

You know, this isn't right. He made a whip. It says, He made a whip.

It's incredible. He turned around and He let loose. In a display of absolute zeal, He drove out all the animals.

All the animals. He drove them all out. I mean, animals don't just move right on out of there.

He drove out all the animals. If an animal is going to spook, something has got to spook it. And it was the Lord Jesus Christ.

He drove out the animals. He drove out the money changers with these whips. And He poured out all their money on the ground.

He overturned their tables. And His disciples rightly remembered after such a display, that it was written of Him in the Scriptures, zeal for your house will consume me. It was written of Him.

Zeal for your house will consume me. There's no other way to describe it. Some man consumed with zeal for the house of God.

It's the only explanation. I mean, this is not the normal thing. I mean, you're talking about it.

And I was telling Scott a while back, you're talking about an area slightly larger than the size of a football field. That He cleared everybody out of there. Overturned the tables.

No more animals. No more people. And the disciples are sitting there wide-eyed.

And they remembered, you know, what is this? Remember that passage that talked about somebody being consumed with zeal for the house of God? This has to be it. If it ever meant... If that passage means anything, this is what it means. This display.

Well, so there's that. Then He says, but it means more than just this. Do not be thoughtful in zeal.

He goes on in verse 11 to say, Be fervent in spirit. The word for fervent is boil. It's boil.

And we shouldn't understand it to be, you know, in your own spirit you should be really zealous and fervent for the Lord. Rather, it should be a capital S. It's instrumental. By the Holy Spirit of God, be set aflame.

John Murray translated it this way. Be set on fire by the Spirit. Boil with the Spirit.

It's the word that they use when you put metal into a fire and you heat it to such a degree that the metal itself began to bubble. Be that way by the Spirit of God. So don't be slothful in zeal, but boil and be set on fire with intense heat by the Spirit of God and serve the Lord.

You see, we're not talking about... I mean, a little zeal isn't enough. This is the command. Be set on fire by the Spirit.

You know, God has not intended that you would be yawning in the meeting. You know, that's amazing to think of it this way. Or that you would hardly be able to stay awake when you sat down to read the Bible.

This thing, this book brings life. These are the words of God. Christianity is abundant life.

This is living water welling up unto eternal life. This is God in the heart. This is transformation.

This is love and power. And beloved, don't you feel it? Oh, how miserably we do when we're not utterly enthralled with so great a salvation as we have been given. How miserably we fail.

We're commanded, be set on fire by the Spirit. We're commanded, do not be slothful in zeal. Don't say, well, you know, I'm a little more zealous than this guy.

Don't be slothful in your zeal. Be set on fire. And serve the Lord.

What does the song say? Give me one pure and holy passion, one magnificent obsession, and it is magnificent, and it has to be an obsession, to know and follow hard after you. That's right. That's exactly what we're talking about.

Following hard after God. Something done by the Spirit. It says, be set on fire by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does this to us, but we can resist Him. And we often do. Quenching the Spirit with sin in our life.

Not turning to the Word when we're prompted. This kind of thing. We resist Him in this.

And we grieve Him. Something else that this means, and this is amazing. This may be of real help.

Do not be slothful in zeal, but be set on fire by the Spirit. Which means that it is the desire of the Holy Spirit. And it is the aim of the Holy Spirit.

And it is His purpose. It's the reason for which He's been given to you. One of the primary reasons that He works in your life is to set you aflame for God.

That's His desire. To set you aflame. To produce in you a fire, as Jeremiah said, deep within your bones, such that you would let loose and let shine a light so bright that none can deny the power of the risen Christ.

That's His desire. That's the work and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life. It's this kind of zeal for God.

Which looks like joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control. This is what it looks like. But with a zeal and an intensity and a Godward direction that is unmistakable, serving the Lord with zeal.

It's not a natural zeal. You can't make this up. You can't fabricate it.

There's never been a man devoted to an idol who's had zeal like this. Supernatural zeal. Supernatural zeal.

Now we all as Christians have the Spirit of God within us. And we are commanded not to quench His influence in His voice. This is what He's after to produce this in us.

And I want to say by word of caution that the Holy Spirit Himself is not a power or a force. He's not just heat that cranks up on the inside. But He is a Spirit of power.

And He is a Spirit of energy. And He is a Spirit of unction. He is that.

When He comes, the Person comes, He produces these things. Just some phrases from Scripture. And when He comes, you will receive power from on high.

You will receive power. Paul says, I toil with all His energy that He works powerfully within me. Zeal and fervency.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for God is at work within you. Both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Or my Gospel came to you in a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

There's power. There's a sense in which when we submit to the Holy Spirit and when He has more of us and we experience more of Him, we are set aflame. We do boil in the inner man for God.

And that's right. He's not weak. And when we live in obedience to Him, when we give ourselves to Him, when we obey this text, we will find that it's true that there is a greater zeal, a greater desire, a greater hunger than we've ever had.

Paul commands Timothy, fan into flame the gift of God which is in you. Fan it into flame. You say, well, there's not this zeal right now.

Fan it into flame. Take those little embers and fan them into flame. Fan them into flame.

Well, how do you do that? Just a couple things. First of all, you crack the whip. You just listen to this text and say, don't be slothful in zeal.

And so you stop being slothful in zeal. You just stop. You just turn right around and say, I'm not going to do this.

I'm going to serve the Lord. You rouse yourself. Prayer.

We commit ourselves to prayer. Crying out to God. Asking.

Whoever asks for the Holy Spirit will receive. Just ask for more of it. You cry out to God for more.

You commit yourself to communing with God. You ask God to give you His burdens to show you things that need to change. Time in prayer.

Time in the Word. We commit ourselves to action. It's so easy to say, well, I have a real desire to do this or that.

Well, what are you doing? Act on it. Action. Action.

And then change. You know, that's not just... We have to examine ourselves and ask God, where does there need to be change? And I'm speaking here particularly with regard to change in our habits and things. We've got to give more time to the Lord.

We've got to spend more time building the fire. In prayer, we've got to spend more time searching and asking God to put His hand on things that He would desire to burn. There's got to be wood for this fire.

There's got to be something to burn up and be consumed. Well, put more to self on the altar. There's got to be air here.

Well, breathe prayer. I mean, there's got to be this reality that's there in this fire if we're going to boil for God. There's got to be a change in our habits, in the things we spend our time on.

And then lastly, there ought to be what Ravenhill called a holy dissatisfaction. A holy dissatisfaction. If we don't read this text, and if you don't feel as I've shared, a yearning, a desire in your own heart for more of this, then I'd say you don't have this.

This holy dissatisfaction. Are we dissatisfied where we are now? Do we want to press in to know God more? We ought to be dissatisfied. Not with what God's given us, but with how much we've failed and fallen short of where we ought to be.

We ought to be dissatisfied with sin in our life. We ought to be dissatisfied with not being more fervent and more zealous and more sacrificial with regards to serving the Lord. We ought to be that way.

And it is, as Ravenhill said, a holy dissatisfaction. It's godly to be that way. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

That's got to be there. So these things is how we do it. First of all, as I said, we just crack the whip.

We just discipline ourselves and say no to the things of this world and yes to God. Time and prayer. A ready obedience.

Just moving ourselves to action. God gives us something to do and we just act on it. He gives us a desire and we respond.

We don't quench this flame. We act upon it. We change with regards to our habits.

There are things in your life, you can have more of God, but it's going to require a greater sacrifice. That's just the reality. You can have more of Him and you can have a greater zeal, but it's going to require more time.

It's going to require more effort. And then a holy dissatisfaction. We've got to have that.

One of the best and most helpful ways to get that is to be around people that are more zealous than you. There's nobody around that's more zealous than you or as zealous as you. Then get into good Christian biography.

I guarantee you there's people that are more zealous than you. You'll find them. Read the New Testament for goodness sake.

There are always examples about us. Well, are there questions or comments on this that was shared today? Again, so much here we find in Romans is so basic, and yet, that's right where... God has not called us to do some great astounding things just to live for Him in these ways. And that's where the rubber meets the road and that's where the test of discipleship is.

None of us are deeper than our walk. And we've got to live it. Questions or comments? Anything at all? Yeah.

I mean, the guy thought he was a madman. And that's what he looked like. Paul says we're counted as fools for Christ.

That's right. There needs to be more of that. Amen.

Well, let's close this time of our meeting and prayer. Heavenly Father, You counted our gracious privilege that we're allowed to come. Lord, You said we're a city set on a hill, and it's our desire, just as we've read, Lord, to serve You, to be pleasing to You, to hear on that day well done by a good and faithful servant.

And we know that in and of ourselves, even considering our service thus far, Lord, it would be too much to believe that You'd say that of us. We know we'll not stand before You on that day on our merits, this side of the cross. We'll still be cast upon it.

And yet, our desire is to be that bride, Lord, clothed in white linen, spotless, pure, no blemish at all, precious to You. We know You're not done with us yet, and so we know there's more room for change. We ask, Lord, would You work on our hearts, each one.

Show us where it is and in what ways You'd have us change and surrender more to You. God, there's one thing You've asked of us, and it's to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. We ask for the seal to carry it out.

We ask You to take each one of us, Lord, and grant us a greater fire for You, a greater hunger. You raise our temperature spiritually, Lord. We can't produce any of these things.

We're dependent on You or cast on You, and yet we know that it's Your desire to work these things in us. Help us, O God. Be with us the rest of this time that we're gathered, Lord, that we would be about the business of stirring one another up to love and to good works, provoking each other to godliness.

May we not be content with the status quo, Lord, in any other group or in this one either. May we press on. We're asking for Your work.

We seek these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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