



Supernatural Practical Christian Living Part 2

July 13, 2025 Romans 12:9-21

(video 44:12)

Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12. Last week we had sort of two sermons in one with my prelude comments with regards to the issue of evil and suffering a bit in our world. And so I wanted to encourage you, people have asked about it, and Lia is going to do two transcripts, one on the first part and one on Romans 12:9&10 that we saw last time. So you'll be able to have those in print fairly soon if you couldn't take notes on. I hope it's a blessing to all of you.

But as we jump back again in Romans chapter 12, just to orient you, what did we have? Eleven chapters, as Brian reminded us in his remarks during our hymn time together, that we have 11 chapters of orthodoxy, all to get to these last few chapters of orthopraxy. What you think about God is designed to cause you to therefore live in accordance with the way God would have you live. And he starts out, of course, in Romans chapter 12, having all of these mercies that you have, and he's explained in 11 chapters, present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship. Commit your life to God. Know Him as Lord and Savior, and humbly lay your life before Him to obey His Holy Word. What's the first thing you do after that? Verses 3 through 8. Take your spiritual giftedness so that you can sense God's good pleasure in doing specifically, in the manner in which He's ordained and equipped you to do, you can fill out and live out Ephesians 4:10. Those good works that He has foreordained for you and me to walk in them, remembering 1 Corinthians 12:11. The Holy Spirit has distributed the gifts to each one in the body of Christ individually as He wills. And remember again, individually means *idios*, the Greek word. We get the word idiot from it. What's an idiot? He's a person whose actions and speech are aberrant, totally



distinct, totally individual, totally wrong. Now obviously a negative sense in the sense that his actions, his speech, and his conduct is totally out of his mind. But spiritually, that's what we're supposed to be. We're supposed to be out of our mind and have the mind of Christ. We're supposed to think and act as Christ, the Spirit of God, would direct us to do. And the word *idios* there, totally individually, means there's no other you. Remember, your spiritual gift is you. Quit trying to put a label on it. Quit trying to define it. Just do what the Lord lays upon your heart to do and as you more and more and more sense His good pleasure in giving that money or praying those prayers or meeting that need, or cleaning those windows, or preaching that sermon, or teaching that Bible study, or coming alongside those individuals and cooking those meals, or getting that card and having the church write it out and getting in that car and driving it all the way up to be a to exercise your gift of encouragement perhaps to those believers in New River. Just do it. And then what? And as you do, you're to be conforming yourself more and more to the image of Christ. Well what does that look like? He then gives us in verses 10, excuse me, 9 through the end of the chapter, 28 or 29 specific commands, specific principles that you and I are to strive to live out in our life. And like I said, when we first stuck our toe in this topic, initially as we go through these, you're gonna say, you know, I see that one in my life. I see that one in my life. Oh, I see that's sort of increasing in my life. You'll be encouraged. In some of them you'll say, wow, I need to be a lot better at this. And you might be a little convicted. Or you might say, I don't see that anywhere in my life. And you might really be convicted. And there's answers to all of that and how you deal with that. So we come here to Romans chapter 12 and I gave you an outline of sorts. These 28 or 29 separate injunctions, if you will, are actually, the first three of them are right there in verse 9. ***Let love be without hypocrisy.*** You're really not loving anybody if your love is not based on the truth. Don't be hypocritical about it. ***Abhor what is evil.*** Flee, run from



wickedness and so forth. And stand against it as well. And then what? ***Cling to what is good.*** And we talked about that. That's your personal attitude that you're to constantly have in general. Then he expands the circle a bit and he's now starting to talk in verses 10 through 14 of various relationships in the body of Christ and how we relate to one another in the body of Christ. But like I said, these principles still sort of loop back and apply to us personally as well in terms of our attitudes and stuff. Then he's gonna widen the circle a little bit more when we get to verse 15 through about 17 or 18. And he's gonna talk about people who may be in or outside the body of Christ but who are against you and so forth. And then lastly in the last couple of verses, he's really gonna widen the circle and he's gonna bring in people who are absolute enemies, directly contrary to everything you're trying to do spiritually and perhaps otherwise in your life and how you're supposed to relate to them. And I had told Brian after the service last week, well you know this is a long shopping list and I'll probably hit the highlights as I go through it and try to wind this up and get on to chapter 13. Wow, was that a misstatement? Because once I jumped into this, I started realizing, no, God's put these things here for a reason and we're gonna squeeze the life out of as many of these as we possibly, possibly can.

Okay, we pick it up in verse 10, be devoted, we said last time, to one another in *philadelphia*. ***Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;***... Have a brotherly, kind-hearted, familial love to everyone in a brotherly loving fashion. It's basically saying show love to others in the body of Christ but he's emphasizing it. It's like on steroids and that's always the start. They'll know you're Christians by your love. Well what's the definition of that? What does it look like? And he tells us in the rest of the verse, by giving ***preference to one another in honor;*** ... You'll recall, by the way, that attitude of brotherly love, that giving preference to one another, I prefaced it last time by saying in a word, humility. It's humbling yourselves. It's looking upon



the needs of others as more important than yourself, and so forth. Then I gave the example of the Christian guy who was standing with another Christian and a guy came up and just excoriated him, just literally verbally assaulted him from pillar to post and the guy walked away. And before the guy walked away, the Christian guy said "Thank you, thank you for reminding me of the shortcomings in my life." And the guy walked away and his friend standing next to him, you'll recall, said, "I could never do what you just did." And you remember what the Christian guy said? "Neither can I." Because he didn't do it. It was the Spirit of Christ dwelling within him and that's the essence of all of this, is to live in a supernatural fashion. So that's sort of where we left off last time.

So now we jump into it and we start seeing what we have. Alright, verse 10, ***...give preference to one another in honor***; Give preference to one another in honor. That answers the question of what it looks like to love one another with a brotherly love. The definition of this phrase is found in Philippians 2:1-4. ***If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship in the spirit, body, life, if any affection, love one another with an overwhelming brotherly kind of love, if there's any affection, if there is any [and] compassion,...*** somebody in the body of Christ has a need. What's he say? ***...make my joy complete by being of the same mind,...*** that's the mind of Christ. *Idios*, out of your own mind, in the mind of Christ. By being of the same mind, ***...maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*** What's the one purpose? He says in Philippians 2:3, ***Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, let each of you regard one another, are you ready, as more important than yourselves;...*** He didn't say you weren't important. He said you regard the other as more important than yourself. Well, how do you do that? The next verse, ***...do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*** It is humility to the max.



Now the thing that I wanted you to see about this, is that I remember getting the incredible privilege, one of the first elders of our church, Wedge Lutz, has gone to be with the Lord. He was an Army Ranger. One of his sons, Grant Lutz, got married to Barbara. They asked me if Teri and I would go to Fort Benning, Georgia and perform the wedding. And it's literally one of the greatest weddings I ever attended my whole life. I'd just been, like to have just been at the wedding and let somebody else do it. It was unbelievable, but in any event, we got to tour Fort Benning and all this and got to see where the Rangers trained. I didn't realize it, but the Rangers have a motto, and it exactly fits this verse: *Rangers lead the way*. And this verse in the Greek, the word 'itself', carries with it an incentivizing aspect, an urgency aspect, and it carries with it the idea of being out front. Don't wait for the other person to act. You see the need, you act, you meet it. And again, thank you, Lisa Blaine. I know you weren't doing this for any public strokes, but that issue happened at that New River Chapel. I still remember a few weeks ago, she came right down here talking to Bob Winkler and I. God has sort of laid it on Terry Ratley's heart and mine that we want to do something for them. And of course, and what did Bob and I say? Well, as a church, we won't make that decision, but I'll tell you what. You go and you talk about it, you think about it. God lays that on your heart. We'll do what we can to help. They led the way. That is exactly what this verse means. You two are a living, real-life example of preferring one another and in the sense of not only meeting the need, but not waiting. And by the way, it isn't always a need. Somebody in the body of Christ, something great happens to them. Be the first to encourage them. Be the first to write that note. Be the first to pick up a phone and say, I understand that this happened to you. I want you to know something. Something happens to you as my brother and sister in Christ, that happens to me. We're a part of the same body. I am so thrilled to think about that, how encouraged they would be. So it doesn't necessarily have to be a need, but it could be. And so you, in other



words, that passage of scripture, excuse me, I should say that portion of that verse, **give preference to one another in honor**, it has the idea of you give preference to the one another and you jumpstart it. You start it. You do it first. Rangers lead the way. Christians should lead the way. And this is one time when you can be competitive. You should be trying to outdo your brothers and sisters in Christ to lead out in humility towards them before they do it towards you. I got news for you. You get a church that's all doing that to one another and you'd be amazed at the testimony we would have for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So in any event, he says, and Paul backs up a bit now in verse 11, okay, **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love**. What's that look like? **Give preference to one another**. Humble yourself. Look out for their needs, as Philippians 2:1-4 says. Then he goes on and says this, **not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer**. And these two verses, these actually six characteristics, is where I want to camp on for the rest of our time here.

Three essential matters that relate to you and me as we relate to others in the body of Christ. **Not lagging behind in diligence**. The King James might say not lazy in zeal or actually the King James says **not slothful in business**. And it isn't talking about your commercial business. What he's really saying is don't be lazy in doing the King's business. Don't become spiritually lazy. Don't grow lazy in living your Christian life. There's so many Christians today, sad to say, who, especially in our culture, we are in a mad dash for personal peace and affluence. Well, as a matter of fact, it was the late, who's the Schaeffer with the knickers who had the Lebrue Fellowship? Famous theologian, somebody help me. Frank, yeah, what is it? Francis Schaeffer. I saw him on *How Should We Then Live* when he first started those seminars in 1975. I was a new believer in Christ. He said the bane on Western Christianity will be this: personal peace and affluence. We got to get enough money so that we can just build walls around our



communities and just live in peace and shut the world out. Personal peace and affluence. He says instead of being engaged with the culture and living the Christian life. Paul said it so well in Galatians 6:9. Don't become weary, believer, in well-doing. 2 Thessalonians 3:13. It's a command. Don't lose heart in doing good. There's no room for laziness in the work of the Lord. And guess what? All of us are ministers of Christ. All of us are ministers of a gospel reconciliation. All of us are to be showing the love of Christ to others in the body of Christ and reaching out to show the love of Christ to those outside the body of Christ. You're born to do one thing: Live out and walk in the good works that God has already foreordained for you to do 24-7 every day of your life. And when you're doing that, and especially using the "you" that's you, that unique gift package He's given to you, you will sense a pleasure and a purpose in life that you cannot duplicate anywhere else. And it will cause you to desire to want to do it more and more and more. How do you know? Because of Philippians 2:13-14. He's at work in you, ***both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*** That's why we say, talking to Irene Carroll the other night about someone we love, Teri and I, a person we love, and saying that they're going through a hard time right now. And one of the greatest blessings they can do for themselves is to serve other people. Use their giftedness to keep serving other people. Why? Because they will, first of all, they'll have less time for navel gazing and focusing on the Holy Trinity of me, myself, and I. And they'll start focusing on the Trinity, the real Trinity. They'll start focusing on the needs of others. They'll also see there's a whole lot of people out there that are hurting even greater than they are. But they'll sense God's good pleasure in the ministry to those individuals. And God has a special unique way of blessing the soul when you do that. It's one of the greatest antidotes for depression and getting your mind fixated on the right things, I can think of, to serve others. Don't get lazy. That's your admonition today, believer in Christ. Don't get lazy in your Christian walk. And remember the purpose that we



were called upon to do. Isaiah 56:10 and following, speaking of not just the leaders of Israel but the people, blind, ignorant, dumb dogs who can't bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. In other words, people come around to harm the body and they don't even point it out. They don't take a stand. They don't, they're supposed to be warning dogs and they don't even bark to point it out.

One of the biggest shortcomings I see of men in full-time, quote-unquote, pulpit pastoral ministry in my lifetime, two things. First of all, keeping confidences. Pastors in my experience don't know how to keep confidential information confidential. There's an attorney-client privilege. It's not the attorney's privilege. It's the client's privilege. There's a doctor-patient privilege. It's not the doctor's privilege. It's the patient's privilege. And there is a parishioner, congregant, if you will, pastor privilege. And it's not the pastor's privilege. It's the congregant's privilege. Oh, well, I just shared it with all the other elders so we could all pray about it. You don't have a right to do that. Somebody tells you something in confidence and doesn't want it shared. You are not to share that with anyone. And so I see that violated.

But here's the second one, and really the one that this verse addresses. Laziness. Laziness. There are too many men, Vernon, I thought of you. You're not this way. You're not. You're working your head off. And your job right now is to hit those books and learn everything that that seminary can possibly give you. But it is a tremendous discipline you're going through. Because you know what? You got to work, and then you got to work at your studies, and you got to do this, and you got to do that, and there's no, and you know what? It makes you disciplined to put your rear end in a chair and spend the time in those books, and it'll carry you in good stead for the rest of your ministry. I see too many men in the ministry who are lazy. And one of the reasons why is because they're looking at ministry as a job, as a profession, and not as a calling on their life. And that's why I love what Spurgeon and Donald



Gray Barnhouse and so many other wise pastors who counseled young men who were thinking about going into the ministry always said, write down anything you could possibly think of that you could do for the rest of your life as your profession other than preaching and teaching God's Word. Think about anything it might be, other than being a full-time pastor of a church. Think of it. Write it down. And any man who came back to them and had something on that list, he said, please go try every one of those before you ever decide to become a pastor. It needs to be a calling on your life. And so many, sad to say, are absolutely lazy.

My late father-in-law spoke at a lot of missions conferences. He was called on to fly around and speak at, for Christian Missionary Alliance churches mostly, missions conferences. He said, and of course in those days at the train station or the, if they flew him somewhere on a plane, they'd be picked up by the pastor of the local little 200, 300, 400, 500 Christian Missionary Alliance Church. He said, in a 15-minute car ride to the, maybe the house where they were putting me up or the hotel or whatever, he said, in a 15-minute car ride, I could tell you immediately where that man was in his ministry simply by the way he talked about the congregation. The guy that would sit there and say, oh Russ, you're gonna love our people. They can't wait to see you. Your ministry of the Word of God, it's gonna be so tremendous. They have a heart for the Lord. They really want to do it right. They're such great people. They're loving people. They're giving. He would talk to, or the guy would sit there and say, well you know how hard ministry is. You know how difficult those gnarly, those sheep can be. I sure have a lot of problems and man, I'm really happy you're here to take over some of the duties for a few days so I can relax a little bit. As soon as that guy said that, he says, I knew I had a problem congregation on my hand because I had a guy in the pulpit who didn't love his people and most likely wasn't called in his soul to be there.



Mike Fink and I had a conversation about his, recently about his late mother and father, and mine as well for that matter, but we actually were talking about his mother at Georgia. Born in a log cabin on a dirt floor. A log cabin had a dirt floor. She wasn't born on the dirt floor, but you get it. That's crazy. In any event, and the things that she accomplished in her life, and we were commiserating about it and just talking about our parents in general, and you know what? Our parents knew what hard work was all about. They knew what discipline was all about, and I'll tell you, based on our culture today, you young people especially, you want to succeed? Work hard, because you know what? Ninety-five percent of your contemporaries aren't. I remember when I came out of law school, and it was the Vietnam War was raging, and there was a big push on, and it was time for all these women to go to law school, and the guys trying to get deferments who really wanted to go to law school, they were trying to go to law school, and we were churning out lawyers every year. More lawyers than there were jobs for. We're seeing the fallout of it today, in any event. I can remember lamenting saying, all my life I wanted to be a lawyer, and now I'm not even going to get a job, and I still remember what a guy, a mentor of a law firm said to me, Alex Clark, he said, "Always remember one thing, Politan, I don't care how many there are in any job, any profession, law or otherwise, there will always be room for another good one, and you know what will make you good?" "What, Mr. Clark?" He used a vulgarity, but basically, "Work your rear end off." Put yourself in a chair and be disciplined, and you know what, before the Lord, not me, I have seen this over and over and over again in my life. God has graced me with a certain amount of, actually quite a bit of success in front of juries and jury trials in my 50 years, not because I was the smartest lawyer in the room, not because I had the best case, simply because we outworked the other side. People are lazy. People do not want to work. It should never be said of a believer in Jesus Christ that we got weary in well-doing. I understand



discouragement and frustration and criticism and so forth. I understand all of that, but don't get weary in the well-doing. Don't get, they took a survey. They took it 50 years ago, and then they took it again about four years ago. The survey 50 years ago, these are a middle management and upper management people. Not, you know, it's kind of hard to manage your own time if you're on the assembly line at, you know, Ford or something, putting parts on, well you're pretty controlled. But we're talking about middle management, upper management people in the workforce in corporate America who have the ability to somewhat manage their own time, and nobody specifically telling them exactly where they had to be at a certain what they were doing. They said anonymously, on average, on an eight-hour workday, how many hours do you actually work each day? Fifty years ago, it was 2.2 hours out of every eight. They took the survey again four or five years ago, and you know what the survey showed? 2.2 hours out of every eight on average. That means almost 75% of the time, people, for the most part, are not working. And so, when it comes to the Christian life, you and I are to be productive.

You know, the work... people make fun of President Trump. They always talk about Trump time and the way he's constantly working. He's the energizer bunny. Does the guy ever sleep? I love it. We got a President of the United States, regardless of what you think of his policies, and for the most part, I love his policies, but in any event, regardless of that, I love his work ethic. He's literally, I mean, come on, the guy's tweeting you from the shower what he's thinking. I love his work ethic. We have the focal point, if you will, the Commander-in-Chief of the United States of America is setting the tone, and he's 80 years old or whatever he is, and every person in America should have, I'm not saying you got to have that constitution, I'm not saying we all have that kind of energy, and I'm not saying he might be a little bit on steroids with it, but you know what, to a certain level, we all need to have that. And certainly,



when it comes to the Christian life, and by the way, it applies to your work, there's no secular and sacred, if you will, for Christians. Your work is a part, is just as spiritual as anything else. You've heard me say this and talking about 2 Timothy before. Let me tell you something, most people are never going to stand behind a pulpit and preach a sermon. Most people are never going to teach a Bible study. Most people are not going to advance the kingdom in that fashion. What are most believers in Jesus Christ going to do? They're going to graduate from school, whether it's high school and a technical training school or college or whatever, they're going to get their degree or their training, and they're going to go out into the workforce, most Christians, and they're going to work usually Monday through Friday, eight hours a day, and on average they're going to sleep five, six, seven, eight hours. So a third of their life, at least, they're going to spend working at a job, a profession, or whatever, and I will tell you, the greatest statement, for good or bad, for the Lord Jesus Christ, you as a Christian, most of you, will ever make, the greatest statement you'll ever make, either good or bad, for the cause of Christ, is how you do your work. How you do your work. Are you on time? Are you punctual? Do you write the memo with excellence? Do you return the phone call? Man, am I convicting myself right now as I say these words. I could do a lot better than I'm doing, and I think of some just unbelievable examples of men who finish life's race strong. They, as Ephesians says, we need to redeem the time. Jesus says, let me tell you something, the days are short. We can work while it's daylight, but night is coming. You don't know that you're going to get your 85 years or whatever it is. There's a lot of people who were camping on the Guadalupe River who thought their whole life was ahead of them. Their life was ending that night, and they're still looking for 160 of them that we pray for their families as well, but I was thinking of a man named Don Coway, a dentist named Ralph Walz, another dentist named Jarl Malin from Venice, Florida. I was thinking of Bob Merwin. I was thinking of Bob Winkler. I was thinking



of Joan Wright. I was thinking of Manny Stettini, and I can go on and on and on down the list, and I've already offended somebody by leaving your name out, but you know what I'm talking about. People who got a lot of gray hair, who've been walking with the Lord a long time, and aren't about to rust out. They're going to burn out for Christ, but they're not going to rust out. Manny Stettini is 90-some years old with a sick wife. He's showing up here with bulletins and doing trivia, because that's his ministry to the body of Christ, among others. Joan is showing up in a walker, encouraging us to get some more blankets for the Navajos and the others on the Indian reservation. Never stop taking ground for Christ. Don't get weary in well-doing. You never retire from the Christian life. What's he saying? Don't lag behind in diligence. Stay at it, and one of the biggest things to keep you staying at it, well, is responsibility.

Vernon, I've had you on my heart and mind a lot in looking at some of these things. I can remember I was in law school. Professor Sam, those papers got to be in by Friday, and a couple of students had said to him, when Friday came, we'll have ours on Monday, and he said, well, you can turn it in Monday, but you're going to get an F. What do you mean? Why are you so hard? I'm not being hard. I said that Friday was the deadline, and it's the same way in everything. I can't go to the Court of Appeals for an oral argument and say, well, Your Honor, and have them say, well, where's your brief? I know the brief was due 30 days ago, Your Honor, but I'll have mine to you in a couple of weeks. You can't do that, and there's a certain urgency and a certain discipline that people learn by having a responsibility. People say, "Oh, John, we just really admire how you love God's Word." And "Why do you love God's Word?" Well, let me tell you something. Do you know what drives me to stand up here on Sundays and give you something from the Word of God? You. You do. Because about Monday night, Tuesday morning, Tuesday night, I'm thinking to myself, Sundays are coming. There's 200 people, give or take, that are going to expect something from the Word of God. I better



start working on it. And I love it, and I'm fulfilled, and I'm privileged, and I'm thankful, and all of that, but there's something about having the discipline of a responsibility. And one of the greatest things for you, Vernon, you'll ever do is learn that discipline of meeting those deadlines now. I had a guy tell me one time, I could never pastor a church. I said, why? He says, I could never make up my mind on what that passage of scripture meant by Sunday. And there's also something to be said for, as our brother, Dr. John MacArthur, staying at one church for over 50 years, longevity with the same group of people is absolutely critical to staying at the task. I can use the same illustrations with you, because you're so gracious about it, over a 44-year period, maybe three or four times. But you want to be fed something, and rightfully so, from the Word of God, new and fresh, when you come on Sunday mornings. And it is indeed inexhaustible. You put in the time to do that. He isn't here this morning, but I was thinking of Irv Bush. He usually sits over here where Irene's sitting this morning behind her. Irv Bush. Irv Bush walked in as a high school kid to the Sunday school class we were teaching at the Church on Mill when we first moved to the Valley in 1981. And here he is 44 years later, still sitting under the same pulpit ministry. I can't use a lot of the same illustrations with Irv. And the point of all that is, there's a discipline to that. A discipline to that. And by the way, you're also forced to formulate your theology. We've preached for six, over six years, the Gospel of Matthew. Now, when I was with my brother-in-law Kimber, and he's a post-tribulation rapturist at the time, I could be a post-tribulation rapturist. It was okay. I didn't care. I listened to what they said. Sounded good. I could be with Pastor Darryl Delhousaye, believes in a pre-tribulation rapture. Darryl would share some things with me. Made pretty good sense. Sounds good. That's great. But when the people in Reformed Living was studying along in the book of Matthew, and we got to Matthew 24 and 25, guess what? He starts talking about the end times. And all of a sudden, John had to make a decision before God. What does



the Word of God say? What are you going to tell these people? Is there a millennial reign of Christ or not? Is there a rapture or not? When's it coming? Pre-trib, post-trib, mid-trib, pre-wrath, no rapture? What is it? So we talked about all the options, but I literally convicted in my own soul, and I preached and taught to you at that time, at least, and still do think that the scriptures say. And it led to Irene coming to me and saying, maybe we should do an end times chart. And now we've got a published end times chart because every one I looked at from the other day, I disagreed with. So in any event, what are you talking about? All of that to say, don't grow weary in doing good. Don't lag behind in your diligence. There's only one you. And you're going to meet people that nobody else in the body of Christ are ever going to rub elbows with. And you talk about finishing life's race strong. And the reason why I picked on Bob Merwin, he still has a heart to evangelize and he's still discipling five men. And here he is in his 70s and doing this. And Bob Winkler in his 70s and still wanting to teach a Bible study. But my best example of all time is my late father-in-law. And I'm sure I've shared this with you. This is Steve Sherbon's favorite illustration, but it's true. My father-in-law is blind in one eye, sitting at his table in Fort Myers, Florida, 92, 93 years old. The bug man comes by. You know this story? The bug man. The guy who comes to fumigate once a month, this condo. And of course, my father-in-law, wanting to share the gospel of Christ, turns to the bug man as he's working around his condo and says, you know, Bob, I can't see quite so well. Could you read this portion of scripture to me? He gets the bug man to sit down. And of course, what portion of scripture? John 3. He has him read the third chapter of John. And he, of course, stops him. And he says, now, who do you think he's talking about there? God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Who do you think he's referring to there? And walks into it. He leads the bug man to Christ. The bug man, his wife, and his children are now all believers in Christ. And I think it's McGregor Baptist Church. I'm not sure, but they worship at a church to



this day, at least up until five or six years ago. I heard they were still at this church in Fort Myers, Florida. What's the point? *...not lagging behind in diligence* and with an enthusiasm. You see, it says right there, *fervent in spirit*. That word means to be boiling over with excitement. Boiling over with excitement. And that is exactly the way. And again, I keep underscoring this, when you're using that giftedness or that gift package that God has specifically given you, you will find it is just like an itch that you've got to scratch. You just got to do it. You've heard me say this a hundred times. If there was nobody in this building, I'd still be studying God's word and working on these things. I just got to. And I'd find somebody to tell it to. It's just, I sense God's good pleasure in doing that. And it excites me. And there should be that excitement. It's amazing, the things that people get excited about. And it's okay. New cars, new houses, new wardrobe, new clothes. That's great. Football game. I mean, there's people that, you know, they'll paint the left cheek red and the right cheek black and go to the Kansas City Chiefs game and go crazy. You know, they're all excited about it. That is exactly the way we should be when it comes to eternal things and doing things that have an eternal importance. It's just unbelievable. I mean, again, I'm telling stories on my father-in-law, but it's so apropos. He encouraged an individual who wasn't a believer, but he encouraged him to come to their church one way and down in Fort Myers, this little retirement community. He says, well, when do you have church? He says, well, we have it for an hour on Sunday morning and we have it for another hour on Sunday evening. He goes, you go to church twice on Sunday? You must be a fanatic. You're one of those Bible fanatics. I'll never forget what my father-in-law said to this guy. He said, Jim, do you follow football? He says, yeah. I said, I know you like pro football. He says, oh yeah, I like pro football. He says, do you watch the football game on Sunday afternoon? He says, yeah. He says, you know, there's two of them on Sunday afternoon. Do you watch both of them? He says, yeah, every Sunday I



watch them both, usually if I can. He says, now they have Sunday night football too. Do you watch the game on Sunday night? He says, oh yeah, I try to watch Sunday night football. He said, well, you know, they have Monday night football. You know where he was going with this. Did you watch the game on Monday night? Oh, I try to never miss Monday night football. Well, you know, they have Thursday night football now. Do you watch the pro games on Thursday night? Well, yeah. I said, as a matter of fact, I'll bet you like college football too, don't you? He goes, well, yeah, I do. He says, I bet you watch both college games on Saturday, don't you? He says, every chance I get. He says, now let me get this straight. Two college games on Saturday, two pro games Sunday afternoon, two full pro games Sunday night, a pro game Monday night, a pro football game Thursday night, and you call yourself a fan. I want you to come to church for just one hour, one of two services on Sunday, and you think I'm a fanatic. By the way, fan is short for fanatic. That's where it comes from. And that is, you know what? Be a fanatic, friends. We need to be fanatics of serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

In 1979, I fell in love with a girl named Teri Kaufman. I'm more in love with Teri today than I was. I don't even think I knew what love was when I first fell in love with her. And that is exactly the way it should and can be in your love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason why you're not sensing it is that you're not using perhaps that gift package He's given you. And so if you're lagging behind and diligent, if you're not excited about the things of the Lord, what should you do? Well, we're going to expound on it next time, but the key to the whole thing is at the end of verse 12, ***devoted to prayer***. You need to ask Him for that excitement. But look at verse 12, and this is how you get that excitement, because you're going to get attacks. You're going to have struggles. There's going to be a discouragement, gnarly sheep, if you will. ***rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation***, rejoicing in hope. You know why? We know the end. We know Romans 8:28. All things ultimately work together for good.



God's going to work it out. I was lamenting with a pastor not too long ago and was saying, you know, I'm on the back end of ministry now. If I had to do it over again, I made a lot of mistakes. I have a lot of regrets. I wish I could do it over again. I said, you know what? But you were in the battle. You were trying. You were doing the best you could. And Romans 8:28, God's still going to work it all out for good. Everything that got said should have been said. And we have the promise of eternal rewards. God loves you so much, He not only foreordains the good works for you to walk in and do them, but He says, someday there's a thing called the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, and I'm going to reward you. In addition to saying, well done, good, and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your reward. The book ends with Christ saying, behold, I come quickly and I'm bringing with Me your reward. He loves you so much. He saves your soul and dwells you Himself with His Spirit, gives you the desire to want to live for Him, gives you the grace and the ability to live for Him, gives you the gift package to do it all, ordains the good works for you to walk in, and then at the end of the day rewards you for eternity for doing it. It's all about the love of God, it's all about the glory of Christ, and we should be the most excited people on the planet in doing this.

Well, I have more, I hope, Lord willing, about this next week. But I really love two things that I saw this week. Jim Elliott, modern-day martyr, he got this from an Amy Carmichael poem. Jim Elliott is reading one day, Hebrews 1:7, where it says, God makes His ministers a flame of fire. And Elliott, that day, when he read that, he wrote these words in his diary, quote, *Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of other things.* Isn't that good? Then he goes on and says, *Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame.* And this was almost prophetic because he died at the age of 31, killed by the Alka Indians in Ecuador. *But a flame is transient and often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul? Short life? In me there dwells*



the spirit of the great short-lived whose zeal for God's house consumed him. O God, make me thy fuel, flame of God. He took that from a poem by Amy Carmichael. The poem says this:

From prayer that asks that I may be

Sheltered from the winds that beat on thee,

From fearing when I should aspire,

From faltering when I should climb higher,

From silken self, O Captain, free the soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,

From easy choices, weakenings,

Not thus our spirits fortified,

Not this way went the Crucified;

From all that dims Thy calvary,

O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that (here you go) leads the way,

The faith that nothing can dismay,

The hope no disappointments tire,

The passion that will burn like fire;

Let me not sink to be a clod;



Make me Thy fuel, O flame of God.

That prayer should be on the lips of every believer in Jesus Christ every day. Give me the passion to burn out for you, Lord, and never to rust out. And if you want to listen to it in a more updated version, I'll give you the words from Tim McGraw and *Live Like You Were Dying*. Well, I finally read the good book, and I took a good long hard look at what I'd do if I could do it all again. And then he goes into the refrain. I went skydiving, I went Rocky Mountain Climb, I went 2.4 seconds on a bull named Fu Manchu and all these earthly things. But then he said something else. Like tomorrow was a gift, and you got eternity to think about what to do with it. What did you do with it? What did I do with it? What would I do with it? If anybody on the planet should live like they were dying, it should be us believers in Christ. The Puritan, Richard Baxter, said it best, I preach like a dying man to dying men. And he was talking about the urgency of giving your life to Christ. I'm talking about the urgency of walking closer in holiness for Christ and doing what only you can do. It's what you were born for. It's your calling. It's your passion.

Brian, come forward and lead us into closing hymn, if you will. I'm two or three minutes over time. But let me close us in a word of prayer before we sing. Father, I pray that all of us on the authority of Your word would be more encouraged to do just that, to live like we're dying because we are. You said it best in the person of the Son, we must work while there is yet day, for very soon the night will come. We don't know. I'm looking forward, Father, to expounding more of Your word next Lord's Day, but maybe not. Maybe my time will come this week. We have no guarantees. Father, we just pray that by Your grace and Your mercy, You would ignite us and you would give us hearts to be that fuel for the glory of You, oh flame of God. We ask it in the matchless name of Jesus the Christ. And again, all God's redeemed people said, Amen, and amen.