

GET BUSY SERVING THE LORD

TEXT: ROMANS 12:9-13

INTRODUCTION:

1. The apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans is considered the most thoroughly doctrinal book of the entire New Testament.
2. It has been called the quintessence and perfection of Bible doctrine.
3. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the great English poet, said Paul's epistle to the Romans was the most profound writing that exists.
4. There is a pattern, which we see in all of Paul's epistles, and we see it here in his epistle to the Romans -- first comes doctrine, then comes duty.
5. First comes Biblical principles, then comes Biblical practice.
6. In the first eleven chapters of Romans, Paul was dealing with Christian character; now he deals with Christian conduct.
7. In the first part of the epistle, Paul deals with the inner man; here it is the outward man.
8. Doctrine is not simply something we know; it is also something we do. Our Lord said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).
9. In the first eleven chapters of Romans, it was who the Christian is; now it is what he does. The first eleven chapters concern the condition of the Christian; here it is the consecration of the Christian.
10. Romans chapter 12 calls for surrender (12:1, 2) and service. We have been saved to serve.

I. DILIGENT SERVICE -- "Not slothful in business" (12:11)

1. Each and every Christian ought to be zealous for the Lord, but sadly many are not.
2. Stephen Olford said many Christians are "characterized by bovine stolidity."
3. "Not slothful in business" (12:11). This refers to everything we do, both at work, in the home, and especially in the church, but many Christians do not do anything in the church.
4. There are many warnings about slothfulness (laziness) in the book of Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 26:14 says, "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed."
5. In Matthew 25:26, our Lord condemned the wicked and slothful servant.

6. John Wesley was not slothful in business. He preached an average of three sermons a day for 54 years. It was estimated that he preached more than 44,000 times. He traveled by horseback and carriage more than 200,000 miles. His published works include a four-volume commentary on the whole Bible, a five-volume work on natural history, histories of England and Rome, grammars on the Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French, and English languages. Wesley knew ten languages. He wrote three books on medicine, six books on church music, and seven volumes of sermons. He arose every day at 4 AM, and usually worked till 10 PM. At the age of 86 he preached in almost every town in England and Wales.
7. The apostle Paul was not slothful in business. The moment he was converted he got busy serving the Lord. As Paul stood trembling and astonished on the road to Damascus, he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:5).
8. Paul preached all over the Roman Empire, winning souls and planting churches. Paul wrote thirteen epistles, fourteen if you count the epistle to the Hebrews.
9. And along the way Paul suffered many hardships.
10. He wrote this, "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:23-28).
11. Paul said Jesus Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).
12. Are you "zealous of good works"?
13. Or are you "slothful in business"?
14. John Wesley was a great man. And the apostle Paul was a great man. But our greatest example is the Lord Jesus Himself.
15. Our Lord said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

16. Our Lord said in John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."
17. God the Father is working. God the Son is working. And God the Holy Spirit is working.
18. Therefore we ought to get busy working.
19. Someone has said there are four main bones in every organization, and unfortunately this includes the local church.
- (1) The wishbones -- wishing someone else would step up and do the work.
 - (2) The jawbones -- they do a lot of talking but not much else.
 - (3) The knucklebones -- they just knock everything.
 - (4) The backbones -- they are the ones that carry the brunt of the load and do most of the work.

II. FERVENT SERVICE -- "fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11)

1. This word "fervent" means "boiling over" or "seething." We can never truly be fervent for God without showing it in active service.
2. Many Christians are like the members of the church in Laodicea.
3. Our Lord rebuked them in Revelation 3:15 and 16. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."
4. In Acts 18:25 we read that Apollos was "fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord."
5. Notice that fervency is evident in the believer's speech.
6. In Acts 6:9 we read that Stephen disputed in the synagogue with the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia.
7. "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10).
8. Acts 6:15 says, "And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."
9. What a remarkable statement! Stephen was so fervent in spirit that -- "all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."
10. What characterizes the face of an angel?
 - light -- intelligence, sincerity, moral excellence, glory, wisdom.
 - warmth -- lovingkindness, sympathy, comfort.
 - strength -- Psalm 103:20 says, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his

commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."

11. I believe the key is found in Acts 6:5. Stephen was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." And in Acts 7:55, which says Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost."
12. If we sincerely want to be "fervent in spirit" (Romans 12:11), then we need what Stephen had, and that is the fullness of the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 11:13).

III. DEVOTED SERVICE -- "serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11)

1. We need diligent service, fervent service, and devoted service (12:11).
2. Some one said: "Not slothful in business" -- that's the outward look; "fervent in spirit" -- that's the inward look," and "serving the Lord" -- that's the upward look (John Phillips).
3. The word "servant" literally means "bondslave."
4. When Paul begins his epistle to the Romans by saying in Romans 1:1, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ," he is literally saying, " Paul, a bondslave of Jesus Christ..."
5. The definition is, "man of servile condition, devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests."
6. This describes the apostle Paul. He was completely devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why he could say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).
7. A Christian has to be humble to have this devotedness to Christ (cf. Rom. 12:3).
8. The Bible has much to say about bondservants. For example in Exodus 21 we see that the best bondservants were loyal.
9. Washing feet was a bondservant's job, but our Lord knelt down and washed His disciples' feet (Judas included).

CONCLUSION:

1. Stephen Olford's parents were missionaries in Zambia in southern Africa. He wrote about a testimony he heard at a communion service

- there. An old liberated slave said, "When I was a lad I was accompanying my small sister to the watering hole one morning when a neighboring tribe, on the lookout, suddenly surrounded us, gagged and bound us, and carried us far away from home."
2. "Later we were sold to slave dealers. My body fetched the price of a chicken!" Olford said the old man paused for a moment in his story, and then said with deep emotion, "Today we have remembered One who paid the price of royal blood in order to liberate us from sin. Man's estimate of my worth was the price of a chicken; God's estimate of my worth was His Son.
 3. "Such love demands all that I can give. Brethren, pray for me, for I have promised my Lord during this communion service to leave the shelter and protection of the mission station, and go back to the tribe that sold me. I will tell them of a love that gave royal blood for the worth of my body. It will mean death, no doubt, but it meant that for Jesus!"