



Sermon Transcription • Romans 12:9-11 (NIV)

## Marks of Kingdom Minded Love

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**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

One of the coolest places I've ever been in my life was the city of Hong Kong. If you've ever been there before you'll know what I mean. It's... it's remarkable. It's a remarkable place. It's...the trains run through all the malls, you can stop...Best Italian food I have ever had was in Hong Kong [audience laughs]. Trains run exactly on time, all the time. Everything...one of the things I noticed when I was in Hong Kong from a North American's perspective, everything smells like shrimp. Some of—that's good, sometimes it's not as good. I loved it. I got stuck in an elevator once in Hong Kong for half an hour—I remember that very well.

One of the experiences I had in Hong Kong that really threw me off, you know, like, I'm not...first time I've ever been to that part of the world, Southeast Asia, and Southeast Asian cultures and North American cultures are different in several ways. But one of the key ways is our proximity, right? Like, in North America, if you're standing, you know, three or four feet from me, I think we're close. And you talk to somebody like that, and they're three or four feet from you and they keep moving away, and you're like, "Where you going?" you know, you kind of follow them. And you have the close talkers here, and we're like "Whoa...slow down. Why...I can smell your breath. Go back." Well in Southeast Asia, culturally and probably because of the populous, you know, you're used to being right next to each other. And I, was not accustomed to that at all. So I remember standing in line to get a ticket to get on the train. And I was standing there, and I was about two feet behind the person in front of me. And this lady comes along and she steps right in front of me. And I'm like, "Wh-what... What are you..." I wouldn't be able to do something, I wouldn't be able to stop her if I wanted to, because I'm not—what am I gonna say? I don't know Cantonese or Mandarin, I don't know—I have no idea. But I was a little bit bothered, but now of course, I'm too close to her, so I backed up a step [steps backward], right? And as I backed up a step, this guy jumps right in front of me. And then I backed up a step again. And another guy jumps in front of me. And I'm like, "These people..." you know? "I can't believe this is...so...so rude." Finally, the guy who was with me, Tim, I said, "I don't know what's going on, man. I've been standing in line here for the last 15 minutes, and everyone keeps getting in front of me and I'm getting angry about it, right?" The last person who did, I tapped on the shoulder [staring], and I looked at them, and they were like "Why are you tapping me on the shoulder?" And he said, "Oh. They don't think you're in line." "How can they not think I'm in line? I'm right this distance." "Oh.. because that's not the distance, you have to stand super close to them." And I was like, "Oh... Oh okay." Okay, so..



The next time I was actually waiting for an elevator, there's a whole bunch of people waiting for an elevator, and of course doing this space thing. And then I learned at that point that I missed one elevator because everyone else went in front of me. And I realized "Oh.. that's right. They have to get close." So, one of the more awkward moments of my entire time was me standing, around a bunch of little Chinese women, right next to all of them, like I was a good foot and a half taller than all of them, and I was looking around [looking around below him], and they were all right next to me.... And we all went together into the thing. But I made it to the top of that building, right? Gotta acclimate. You gotta acclimate to succeed.

Every kingdom has its own rules. Every place you go has its own rules. Every church has its own rules. Sometimes you go to a new church, and you're like, "I don't understand, why are you standing up, wait a minute I'm sitting down and you want me to stand up and down and up and down—Ahhh..." Every place that you go has its own rules. Some it's usually why we don't go to new places is because we like the rules that we know. Don't wanna look like an idiot all the time. But every place, every country, every culture, every subculture got its own unstated rules. And if you want to succeed in switching from one culture to another, you have to learn to acclimate to the new rules.

Now that's an image that I want to keep in your mind. Because the way that the book of Romans work, this is really what Paul's working with, is this image of kingdoms—image of the world that used to be, the age that you used to be a part of, the kingdom of this world that you used to listen to; and now the kingdom of God's dear Son that you're now a part of, Christian. You have transferred kingdoms; from the old to the new. And in the new, there are new rules. And you need to acclimate to the new rules if you want to succeed in God's kingdom. So you find this, in the beginning of Romans 12. Romans 12:2,

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world [You see? Don't conform to the pattern of this present age], but be transformed [To what? Well you'll see,] by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is [What *his* rules are, what *his* desires are, in *his* kingdom]—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

So you need a mind renewal so that you can acclimate yourself properly to living in God's kingdom for your good and his glory, yeah? So in Romans 12, the rest of it, it's basically what it's about. In response to the grace of God, remember? Last week if you were here, in view of God's mercy, in response to the grace that he's shown us apart from anything that we've done, he freely offers us in Christ, in response to all of that wonderful stuff, don't be conformed but be transformed—specifically in how you love. There's an old way of viewing love and there's a new way—God's way of viewing love.



So what we have here in Romans 12:9-11 are marks, characteristics of kingdom minded love. Makes sense? I got four of them. Kingdom minded love is...

1. Sincere.
2. Familial [I know that sounds weird. Don't worry about it.]
3. Humble
4. Persistent.

Sincere, familial, humble, and persistent. I'll show you what I mean.

### **[Love is Sincere]**

Romans 12:9, he says that,

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good”

That word “sincere” is a word that means “genuine”. In other translations you’ll find that. “Love must be genuine” or “Love must be without hypocrisy.” I had a friend one time who had, he had a \$100 US bill, and we went to pay for something at a gas station, and when you pay for gas station with a \$100 bill, they had this little test. They had this little thing in the back that they ran a \$100 bill under [motioning under a machine], and it would test to see if that \$100 bill had all the marks of a true \$100 bill. Unbeknownst to him, this was a fake one. So somebody had passed along a fake one, or maybe not... maybe it was his fake. But it was a fake \$100 bill, and they pulled it out and said, “No, I’m sorry. We can’t take this. It’s fake currency.” And he goes, “What! How do you know that?” So the guy went and recounted all the marks. All the marks of what makes a real \$100 bill real. Got a line through it, and a thread, and you see the picture of...you know. I can’t remember, Franklin? I don’t even know who’s on that. I don’t use those bills, right? There’s different marks to it to show that it’s genuine. And if those marks aren’t there, then it’s disingenuous. It’s insincere, right?

What Paul is saying here is, there’s a kind of love that *looks* like the real thing. But it’s actually disingenuous. Sometimes we use the word “love”, says Paul, but the love that we’re talking about is not the kingdom love, it’s the love of the former age that’s passing away. Doesn’t have the right marks. So what are those marks? That’s a question. What are the marks of genuine love? Well he answers that here, do you see it? Romans 12:9,

“Love must be sincere [Then he follows it up]. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.”

Those words there, “evil” are...”hate” and “cling”—those verbs in the original language are stronger verbs than normal. So the Greeks had lots of different ways to say “hate”. Some of it was like “Yeah... just don’t like it.” And sometimes it was like, <loudly> “I *hate* it.” In the same way that I say “I *hate* broccoli. I hate the look of it, I hate the smell of it, I hate it when you eat it, in fact I hate you for eating it! I hate every part of broccoli. It’s visceral for me.” That’s what Paul means here. He has—lots of “Amen”s to that one, right? Hate...what is evil. Like I have a hatred for broccoli, hate what is evil.

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And *cling* to what is good. It's not just a "Yeah yeah...I like what's good." It's cling to it. It's a word that's used throughout the New Testament to talk about how dust clings to your shoes. How a disease clings to your body. When I hear that word "cling" I always think about friends when I was in college who started dating. You might have had this experience if you're too young, you will have this experience. You have a group, in my case, friends of guys, "We're the squad." And you get like, eight guys, and we go play basketball all the time, and we hang out and we eat pizza every Tuesday night. "We do the stuff!" And then one of the guys, goes and meets a girl. Right? And then she joins us, and makes it awkward, right? And then, but then the rest of the guys are like, "Oh.. it's fine to have her along." But whenever she's along, they're kind of next to each other all the time, and everywhere he goes, she goes...And everywhere she goes, he goes...He's not coming to the things that we do, he doesn't watch the games with us anymore. And finally one of the guys says when all the guys are back together, and the girls' not there, we say to our friend, "Dude, why are you so clingy?" Right? What do we mean by that? "You're always together! Stuck with each other!" Love is *stuck* together with what's good. It *clings* to what's good. It *abhors*—that's one of the ways that they translate this—it *abhors* evil, and it *clings* to the good.

So here's Paul's point okay? Put all this together. Here's his point, he's saying that genuine love is when we are strongly committed to avoiding evil and doing good in our actions towards others as defined by God and his Word. I'm gonna say that again. Genuine love, as opposed to disingenuous love, is when we are strongly committed to avoiding evil and doing good in our actions toward others as defined by God and his Word. Cause Paul is thinking here, "When I'm thinking of good and evil, I'm thinking God gets to define what those are." And we know those things by God and his Word. So, true love desperately wants the person being loved to follow God and his Word.

So let me give you some pictures to what I think this is getting at. So a mother walks into a room, and she sees her little boy. And her little boy has pulled all the scissors in the house out and many knives in the house. And he has made up a game, and the game involves throwing the knife into the air and letting it fall as he lays underneath it [arms open wide]. "Look, Mom! I made a game!" And she says, <yells> "STOP! Right now. Don't you touch those knives or scissors or anything! STOP RIGHT NOW! STOP!" And he starts to cry. You know, he's four years old, he created this lovely game, right? He's never seen it done before, he's thinking "Maybe ESPN will carry this someday, right?" And he says to her, at one point, in his tears, <crying> "Don't you love me?" Now, what is he saying? He's saying that "Mom, love is defined.." He's probably not thinking this clearly but, "Love is defined by my happiness in the immediate moment." Right? If you love me, you will empower me to feel happy...*now*. But Mom, is thinking to herself, "Of course I love you and that's why I'm making you stop." And she's thinking, "The reason I'm making you stop is because I have a different definition of love. The love I have for you seeks your good and wants to abstain from any kind of evil for you." One of those loves is sincere, genuine; and the other one is insincere and disingenuous. You're using the word "love", but it's not love.

Okay, so let's apply that to real things now. Now that I got you all nodding with the first one. So a couple starts dating, it's the couple maybe, the friend, you know that was part of your squad. He's



dating the girl now, and they start dating, you're all Christians together. She's...college, they're dating each other. The reason they're kinda clingy is because they're actually kinda clingy. You know, physically stuck together in many different public places. You can imagine that this couple at some point is sitting in the car, together, staring out at the beauty of Mill Lake. And stars in the sky...twinkle in her eyes. All of the darkness has removed her physical imperfections, she's gorgeous. They're all pretty in the dark...right? [audience laughs]. Sorry. Ah...I'm gonna get an email for that one. [laughs]. Ah... it's good. I'm kidding. Please. Please. I'm totally kidding, I just said it to get a rise out of you, alright? So they're sitting there in this car, and they're looking off into the distance and they're just... lovey dovey, looking in each other's eyes, and then the kissing starts, and then the patting on the head, and the hands start going places. And one of them says, "Wait. Wait. Stop. We shouldn't do this." And the other one says, "But don't you love me?" Now, how is that person using the word "love"? What they're saying is, "Don't you love me in the sense, don't you want for me to make me happy in this present moment? Isn't that what love essentially is? If you really loved me, you would give me what I want to make me happy *now*." But is that genuine love? No, according to this passage, it's disingenuous, sincere genuine love is seeking the good of the other person as defined by Scripture. Clinging to that good. And abhorring, *hating* the evil. Doing whatever you can to avoid it. So the person who's saying "Stop" says "Yes I love you. And that's why I want to stop. Because I want to lead you in the way of God and his Word."

Give you one more. Christian friend, you've been friends for years and years. They've gotten married maybe. You find out that they have had an extramarital relationship. And, it might be, your friend might be a man and that man has had an extramarital relationship with another woman or another man, or whatever...And they've embraced this. Right? They've embraced both their heterosexual sexual sin or their homosexual sexual sin. And they are given over to it. Or maybe they're not married, and they just want to cohabit together, and they're like "No, we're Christian people, we're gonna do this thing. It's great." You don't talk to him for a while, one of them's over at your house one time, and they finally come up to you in the kitchen while you're making stuff, and they say "So we haven't talked since I cohabited or left my husband/wife or whatever and done this thing that's made me happy. What do you think about it? Cause I think I know what you think about it. And I want to challenge you," says your friend, "I want to challenge you to love me. Don't you love me?" And in that moment, you should be thinking, "Right. What is kingdom love?" Cause you're appealing to love as being, "Hey can you affirm what I'm doing right now that makes me happy?" But kingdom love is not that. See, that's disingenuous love. Genuine love is the kind of love that says, "No. I do, I do love you. And that's why I want to oppose you, and call you to repent, and plead with you." You see the difference? Christian people love sincerely. Hating what is evil, clinging to what is good.

### **[Love is Familial]**

So one, love is sincere. Second, love is familial. I'll show you what I mean, you get this line. This is the next line at the beginning of verse 10. It says, Romans 12:10,

"Be devoted to one another in love."



That's in the New International Version. That's the version we're using here. They don't do really well in giving you the guts of what Paul's writing here. Because that word "be devoted" is the Greek word *philstorgos*, okay? What I want you to hear though is the *philos* at the beginning, it means "brotherly. Love here is the greek word *philadelphia* Notice the similarity? *Philos*, *phila*. *Philadelphia* means "to love like a brother". *Philstorgos* means "devoted like a brother." So what Paul's really doing here, according to one of the translations, the Holman Christian Standard Bible does it this way, and this is a better translation, Romans 12:10 (HCSB)

"Show family affection to one another with brotherly love."

Because both of those words have a family word in them. "Brother, be devoted like a brother, love in that way with brotherly love." Brotherly, brotherly. So Paul wants Christians to love one another like they love their families. That's what he's trying to say. He's trying to evoke in your mind, so I want you to picture your family. That's the way you should be loving other people in the church. You know why he says that? Because we are family.

So just to prove that to you. Matthew 12:46,

"While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." [And we expect Jesus here as being a good son, to be like "Oh okay. Can everybody hold on a minute? Let's push pause on the talk. I'm just gonna go out and talk to my mom. See if she brought cupcakes—" You know?]

He replied to him [the messenger, **Jesus replied to him**], "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'"

Jesus has done there, is basically redefined his family. "My family is not necessarily my biological family," says Jesus, "my family is my spiritual family—those who follow." We're brothers and sisters. And the love that characterizes a biological brother, or sister, or mother and son, should be the love that characterizes the spiritual family.

You get it similar language in Luke 18:28, this is when the rich ruler had come and he was really sad because Jesus said "You need to sell all your possessions, give to the poor, and then come follow me." And he walks away and he's really sad, and Jesus says "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." And Peter's like, him and his buddies, like, "Who can be saved then?" And Jesus said, "With God it's possible. Human beings, that's impossible, with God it's possible." Luke 18:28,

"Peter said to him, 'We have left all we had to follow you!'



‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus said to them, ‘no one who has left home [listen now] or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much [What? Well brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and...**many times as much**] in *this* age, and in the age to come eternal life.’”

So in other words, “Yeah you guys gave up your familial ties, that’s okay cause you’re joining a bigger family.” What is he talking about? The church. The spiritual family of God.

So the point here is, we are family. And family loves each other differently. We love each other with greater devotion. Just think about your own family. When my mother was alive, one of my favourite things that I ever did, was when I would drive to her house when I was in college, or even when I got married, we drive to the front of our house. And I didn’t knock, I just burst into the house, you know...Walk down, <loudly> “Mom!!!” right? I’m 26 years old, 28 years old at this time. First place you go, right gentlemen? Refrigerator. See what she’s got. And she always had something, right? <high pitch voice> “I knew you were coming...” right? So you open it up, there’s the cheese ball, I just grab the whole cheese ball, and I sit down with that baby on the couch, put my leg up [puts leg up]. My dad’s watching a show, I grab the clicker and I just start changing that channel, right? I do that cause we’re family. Can you imagine if I did that in your house? Right? Just came to your house, “What’s a...John!” And just open the door, and start taking all your Coke and sitting down <drinking sound>, “This show stinks.” Or you know, you would probably not be pleased. And the reason for that is because you be like, “Hey stop acting like... you’re my family.” Yeah because we understand that. Family has a special kind of devotion for each other. We have a special kind of hospitality that we show one another.

My son was really little, we were playing cricket in New Zealand and the ball came off one of the bats and it hit him dead in the head. You ever wonder what’s wrong with my son Micah? There it is. Hit in the head with a cricket ball. Cricket balls are really hard and wooden and hit him, just flat in the head. Everybody there was like, “Ohh... my goodness” And throws. But as his father, my wife was carrying him [as if carrying a baby on the side], while it happened, she’s smiling and talking to someone, <ball smacks sound> right off his head. All of a sudden he’s crying, “What’s wrong?” I’m like, “Ahhh!! He got hit in the head.” So I run in, and taking care of Micah, and we put him in the car, “Is he still awake? Is he still awake?” Drive to the hospital, “Are you still awake?” <kid voice> “Uh huh...” He’s looking all over the place, he’s fine, kinda like <kid voice> “Ah.. my head hurts.” We get to the hospital, we show all of this care for him. We’re staying there, my wife “I’m not leaving until he’s fine.” And she’s in the room with him. None of the other people were there with us. Cause they’re not family. Family shows a special kind of devotion to each other. If your child is in that situation, I expect that you would show more care and devotion to them than I would. Family is devoted to one another in that kind of love.

I always tell my kids, my two boys. Sometimes they get in a bit of a fit with each other and they get mad. I pull them aside frequently and say, “Listen, you guys better work this out. Because you’re stuck together the rest of your life.” Right? You’re family. Say, “You’re always gonna be Bucknam.” Might be



a long way away, but you're stuck together. So just work it out. It's gonna be a lot harder later to work it later, so might as well work it out now.

My point here is that if Christians are truly family, we should have family level devotion for each other. We work things out because we're linked forever. Not just 'til the end of this life. Forever! You're like, "Well.." You see that one person you don't like in Costco, you're like, "I'm gonna go out to the other wall." Wait 'til you're in heaven. There's no Costco's— Well, maybe heaven is all Costco, right? It's gonna be hard to avoid them. Our pain, each other's pain is our business. When you hurt, I hurt. Or at least that's the way it should be. We're hospitable to everyone, but especially to each other. Paul says, Galatians 6:10,

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the [To the?] family of believers."

Yeah, there should be a devotion. A familial kind of love.

### **[Love is humble]**

Third. Love is sincere, love is familial. Third, love is humble. Second part of verse 10. He says, Romans 12:10,

"Honor one another above yourselves."

So this is a command that's like a shorthand of what Paul says in the longer version elsewhere. If you go to Philippians 2:3, here's what you read,

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God [He's equal to God, and on the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. **being in very nature God**],

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage [Or in other versions, "to be held on to"];

rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. [So that's a big distance to go from eternal joy and peace in the Trinity, to becoming a human being. It's a big gap. He didn't stick with the first, but instead humbled himself.]

And being found [Verse 8] in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself [further]





by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!”

So in other words, the incarnation of Jesus, meaning he’s born into this world going from you know, equality with God in that perfect union experientially, to coming to the earth, and then not just living here in a palace, but instead, going to the cross and dying at the hand of sinful men—all reeks of humility! And putting others in front of yourself. What Paul’s saying is, “See that’s our Lord! That’s what should mark us! That honouring others above ourselves.”

You know why this is hard? I have a theory. It’s a theory actually that I came across a number of years ago in a book by a guy named Donald Miller. It’s called “The Lifeboat Theory”. I shared it a number of years ago. Here’s how it goes. His theory was that basically the reason that you and I don’t like to honour each other above ourselves, I don’t want to honour you above me, is because all of us think that there is this big lifeboat. The ship is sinking, the world. And there’s a lifeboat. And we have to give reasons for why we belong in the lifeboat. And some of us, our reasons for belonging in the lifeboat are, “Well I got big muscles.” Or “I’m really educated.” Or “I’m really good at baseball.” Or “Have you seen how pretty I am?” “Have you seen how well I can throw a ball through this hoop?” “I’m fast.” Everybody’s got a thing that they point to, to say “I belong in the lifeboat.” Whenever you get into a debate with somebody else and you get really mad cause they’re better at something than you. The thing that you usually point to to say “Well...you might be good at that, but I’m good at...” That’s usually your reason.

So we all think that we belong in the lifeboat because of that particular thing. And so, a pretty girl, is in the school in the high school. Beginning of the year starts, and there’s another girl. She’s always been known as the prettiest girl in her class, and all of a sudden, some girl who moved from Calgary, shows up and she’s pretty pretty. And everyone starts focusing attention on that. And the girl’s, out in front of everyone, “Oh yeah, she’s sweet and kind.” But behind the scenes, she’s saying, “I don’t like her at all. Have you seen her nose? It’s way too big.” Well what’s she doing? Her place in the lifeboat’s threatened. “You can’t take her! Take me!” She ends up going of course, and trying got get skinnier and skinnier by eating less and less food. Because she gotta stay in the lifeboat.

Or your kid is on a sports team and there’s another kid on the team who’s really good. But your kid’s kinda good... And that other kid seems to be getting attention. And you kinda cheer like this [half heartedly clapping] “Yay...good job, Jimmy.” But behind the scenes, you’re like, “Oooh...that Jimmy. I don’t like him. Right? Did you see he struck out four times? Do you see he missed those shots? Do you see...he can’t skate. He can’t skate like *my* kid.” What’s going on there? Well you wanna be in the lifeboat. You have to be better, your kid has to be better, so you start talking trash about the other person and you put them down. You dishonour them. Because you gotta stay in the lifeboat.

I’ve been around pastors enough to know that they’re all real polite in public. “Oh, nice to see you. What church do you—Oh I love that church. It’s fantastic.” But then you get in their little groups behind, “That church over there stinks. I don’t like them at all. Their building is ugly and they replaced



the stone on the sides with white panel, you know..." Whatever. "They're sellouts." Whatever it is. What are they doing? Well we need—I need to be in the lifeboat. Our church is better, I'm a better pastor, so that when they need a pastor in the lifeboat, they're taking me and not him!

So the theory is, that all of us are trying to fight for our place in the lifeboat. And the secret is, <whispering> there's no lifeboat. That your standing as a person, as a Christian, is established by the living God, who chose you, made you who you are and is carrying you to your eternal home. That nothing is going to change that. Everybody else around you can succeed more than you, and you'll still arrive at that heavenly home. So that knowledge free you up. It should free you up to say, "You know what, that kid's pretty good. She's pretty. That church is great. That guy's good at his job. My friend's kind."

You know there's this great scene in John 13 where Jesus starts washing his disciples' feet, which is weird for the King of Heaven to be doing, yes? But here's why he does it. John 13:3-5,

"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God ["All things are under my power, I've come from God, I'm returning to God. I know who I am," says Jesus. None of that's gonna be changed. So what does he do? Verse 4]; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

He started doing slave's work. How does the King of Heaven do slave's work? Because he knows who he is. Do you know who you are? Maybe the reason that you're so irritated by all those other people and what they're getting ahead is because you don't know who you are. Love is humble.

### **[Love is Persistent]**

Sincere, familial, humble. Finally, persistent. Last verse, Romans 12:11,

"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord."

That word "zeal" means to be moving toward something swiftly, right? Like, like, <fast> quickly. I was just at a baseball tournament this week in Toronto. It was a great week. I flew there to watch my son, and come back. They had these two little boys catching the balls in the stands. And they were racing each other. So the ball, be fouled off, and it would go into the stands of the Rogers Centre. And these two little boys would be like jumping on each other. And they'd run as fast as they could. Some parents were messing around with them, they'll go and get the ball and run away. It was great. Better than the games. Right? These little two kids. That image though, of moving quickly, with zeal. I would say that those two little boys had zeal. Now contrast that with the way my children respond when I say, "Can one of you take out the trash?" <grunts, lazily> "Dad, that's easily as hard as cold fusion. I don't think I can—" You know? Like they don't...



So what Paul is saying here is “never be lacking in zeal” Never be the “Hey... we have to take out the trash” guy. But instead, be the kids running after the baseballs when it comes to serving the Lord. Have a zealous attitude in approach to serving the Lord. Not “Ugh.. do I have to?” but “Really? Do I get to?” <woos>. So how do you do that?

Gotta tell you man, serving the Lord gets tiring. Be easy if people were not involved. Right? But it's tiring. How do you keep your spiritual fervor? Let me just finish this sermon with three pieces of advice regarding keeping your spiritual fervor. If you feel tired at all, just gonna commend these to you. Alright?

Number one: remember the grace. 2 Corinthians 4:1, Paul says,

“Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.”

I mean, this guy is getting beating up all over the place. He nearly dies on several occasions. But he says, “No, no, no. We don’t lose heart.” Well, why not? “Because we got the ministry through God’s mercy. Like, it was given to us. You know where we should’ve been?” Is basically what Paul’s saying, “The day doesn’t go by that I don’t realize where I should’ve been. So no matter how bad this gets, no matter how difficult it is, it’s still better than that.” Remember that movie *Cast Away*, some of you would remember? It’s kinda a modern classic. This guy gets, Tom Hanks, gets stuck on an island. There’s a scene after he gets rescued, rescues himself, basically gets back to the mainland, I think after it was four years of being on the island. And he’s laying in a room, an air conditioned room at a hotel, laying on the floor, cause he can’t handle the bed cause it’s too hard. And he’s just flipping the lights on and off. Just on and off. You know I imagine if you’d been stuck on a desert island for four years, there would not be a moment that goes by, not a day that goes by, that you don’t think “However bad this is... it’s better than the island.” So no matter how bad it gets, it’s better than being lost in your sins, guys. It’s better than being left alone to fend for yourself in the world. It’s better. It’s better. Since we have this ministry through God’s mercy, we don’t lose heart. We don’t lose heart. So remember the grace.

Number two: Remember the hope. Romans 8:18,

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”

There’s a glorious future on the way. So yes, right now, difficult. But then...majestic. The work you’re doing now, hard but then...rest and phenomenal future, yes? There’s a, Tim Keller tells this great, gives this great illustration. Imagine the worst possible job you can. Um...I always think it’s the guy who has to empty out the porta-poo-bucket-thing? I just think that’s the grossest thing. Worst possible. If you can imagine the worst possible job, you know, Ezra’s personal assistant. That would be...So, worst possible job. I want you to imagine that, okay? I come along to you though, and I say,



“Listen. There’s this horrible job. But at the end of the year, I’m gonna give you a billion dollars for doing this job.” Now the day before I told you that, you would’ve gone to the job, “[big sigh] I gotta go to see Ezra again...” you know. “[groans] I gotta go empty human feces out of that hole... you know...” But then the day after I told you about the billion dollars, you’d be like, <excitedly> “Get that suction thing over here! We’re gonna have a good time!!!” “I love you, Ezra!!” You’d be a joy to do all of this wonderful work—why? Because of the future hope. You think you’re in the dregs? You might be. Serving the Lord, you might be in the dregs, man. You gotta remember the hope. You gotta remember the hope. Remember the grace and the hope.

And then finally remember the help. Joshua 1:9, about to go into the Promised Land, take it. They already made their mistake by failing to do it. But new start. Joshua 1:9,

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous [Joshua, says the Lord.] Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Psalms 23:4,

“Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.”

Matthew 18:18-20, Jesus before he ascends,

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

You ever come across a group of guys, you know, who are walking down the street, and there’s like six of them, walkin’...yeah.. tough [walking puffing chest]. And then five hours later, you see one of those guys, and he’s sitting in the corner of the subway, you know huddled over his cup of drink, worried that someone might attack him. What happened? Why was this guy...Why did he go from that to his cowering person? And the answer is, he had friends. Friends bring out boldness.

Now, can you imagine what kind of boldness having the Holy Spirit in you ought to bring? You’re never alone. He is always there to help. And he will achieve his purposes in his good time. So never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Don’t you love Romans? Let’s pray.



Father I'm thankful for your grace and for this book. Each one of these phrases is worth pondering. So there's a lot to ponder here. So I pray by the power of your Spirit you would help us to recall whatever little bits and pieces needed to be said here. That you would bring those things back to mind this week. As we continue to serve you. Father I want to specifically pray this moment for those who are in our community, Father, who seemed to be taking their own lives. And I want to pray especially for some friends of our church and involved with MEI and Abby Senior, who have done that this week. Father I pray that you would comfort our community. And I pray that you would care for us. Help us to be agents of reconciliation and blessing in our community these days. For your glory and our good we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.