

## Resist The Exist Part 2

Hold Fast To What Is Good

*Romans 12:9*

*Memory Verses: Galatians 6:9*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

When things get difficult or monotonous it becomes very easy to adopt a mentality of running out the clock. It's this idea that if things aren't going forward we might as well accept it and just go with the flow... even if the flow is going backwards. Instead of trying to thrive we simply survive. Instead of existing to live we live to exist. We embrace the mundane and become apathetic in our faith. There is nothing that brings glory to God when an individual or a church determines that they simply need to exist. This is why it is imperative that we resist the exist. That we never accept the mediocre, that we never become okay with running out the clock; that we never are fine with not moving forward.

A year ago we had all kinds of momentum as a church as we were preparing to relaunch. After the grand opening we saw a huge increase in attendance and had around 20 new families coming. There was excitement all around. And then in March the lockdown began and since things have not been the same. And here's where I as your pastor must address our mentality. Just because we are experiencing some new challenges with the lockdowns, pandemic, and precautions, doesn't mean that we can take our foot off the gas and take it easy in our walk with God. And so for the next month we will be looking at what it means to resist the exist. We will see what it means to embrace moving forward even when everything in us wants to quit or just take it easy.

Last week we began our series by looking at our main passage **Romans 12:9-13** where we see 5 exhortations to help us resist the exist. This week we want to focus in on the first of those which is found in verse 9. Let's read **Romans 12:9** together again. The key phrase which helps us resist the mentality to simply exist is "hold fast." **Don't slip into mediocrity, instead hold fast to the task at hand. Don't give up on what God has called you to do, instead hold fast to the mission. Don't quit, don't stop, don't get stuck, instead hold fast to the great calling of which you've been called.**

Hold fast is a sailing term where an officer would shout to the men to hold fast to the riggings so the sails don't swing around too hard and kill someone on deck or knock someone overboard. This was never more important than in a storm, where after holding onto the riggings for hours the sailors would be sore, tired, and frustrated. No doubt they would feel the temptation to give up... but they couldn't... the crew depended on it.

And so they would hear this phrase of encouragement rally the men to continue to fight. Hold fast... hold fast... hold fast! My prayer this morning is that this phrase would rally us as well to not give up the fight against sin, and for doing good as a Christian people and as a faith family at Stone Creek.

And the struggle is clear is it not? When times get hard, monotonous, and unexciting it's easy to lose focus on abhorring evil and doing good. When we lose some of the wind in our sails we could be tempted to love sin more and love doing good to people less. There is a common phrase that mom's have used for ages to get their kids off their butts and out of the house; "idle hands are the devil's playground." Meaning, when you aren't doing something useful the devil will tempt you to do something sinful to fill the time. And over the years I've noticed this to be true. If we live in the mentality of simply existing... if we become idle... it's easy for Satan to nudge open the door and begin to creep into your mind. When you are going forward and focused it's much harder for him to succeed at finding a foothold... but when we are standing still he can get our attention and before we know it we are sinning.

Or... perhaps he doesn't even need to be that aggressive. Turn with me over to **Ephesians 6:11-18** where we see the analogy of the armor of God. Perhaps all he's waiting for is for us drop our guard... we stop praying against the temptations that come against us, we stop reading the word which helps us stay focused, we take off the boots of peace and the belt of truth... and then before we know it we are pierced with everyone of his arrows. The point is simple... when we adopt the mentality of existing, we stop holding fast. Instead we stop abhorring evil, we stop doing good, we stop loving genuinely... we stop being effective Christians in almost every sense of the word. It's clear **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.** This morning we are going to see three aspects of holding fast to good that will hopefully inspire us to resist the exist and keep fighting the good fight.

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first aspect of Holding fast to good is... **Abhor What Is Evil.** In order to resist the exist we must hold fast, and in order to hold fast the first thing we must do is Hate evil. **Proverbs 8:13** reminds us that as followers of God we must hate evil. But what is evil? What is sin? In order to hate evil we must recognize what is evil. **James 1:21** tells us that we can put away wickedness if we embrace the word. The Word of God is where we find what is evil. We recognize what sin as it is outlined in the word of God our standard and foundation. Of course we can look to the 10 commandments; do not lie, steal, kill, covet, commit adultery, or dishonor our parents. But the big ones are easy. The ones we most regularly struggle with are found in passages like **Galatians 5:19-21** where we see a list of sins that tempt us everyday. Here we see what evil we must avoid as followers of Christ. We

must hate sin in our own lives first. Look at **Genesis 4:7** which tells us to rule over sin. Sin is hard to overcome so we must determine to fight it with all we have and to rule over it. **Proverbs 4:27** reminds us to not swerve from left to right concerning our sins but to drastically turn from them. **1 Thess 5:22** in like manner warns us to abstain from every form of evil. And again **Psalms 34:14** tells us to turn away from evil. The point being, we can't flirt with sin... we must turn from it and avoid it at all cost. Because **playing with sin is like playing with fire... eventually you will be burned**. But sometimes we don't avoid sin. We are fallible people and sometimes we are weak. The good news is that when we sin we can repent and ask for forgiveness. **1 John 1:9** tells us that Jesus will forgive us if we confess and repent. Therefore, we must rely on God to keep us from our sin and we must rely on God to forgive us of our sins.

We must not tolerate sin in our lives and we must not tolerate sin in the church. When we tolerate sin in the church it will corrupt everything and everyone, therefore the Bible tells us that we must deal with it and remove it if necessary. **Romans 16:17** tells us to watch out for those who cause divisions within the church. **1 Cor 5:1-3** tells us to remove the unrepentant sinner from the church. And, **1 Timothy 5:20** tells us to rebuke the sinner in the presence of all. Yes, there is a process of church discipline that is done in private, but the seriousness of sin demands a public rebuke if sin persists. A sinless church is a serious matter. If we allow evil and sin to invade our lives or the church, simply existing will be the least of our problems... we will be destroyed in the end. **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.**

The second aspect of holding fast is to **Love Doing Good**. Listen, there's a big difference between resisting sin and loving good. Yes, of course we want you to resist sin, but there's more to being a Christian than just that. Many Christians feel that they are fine as long as they don't do the sinful things of the world; they don't cuss, they don't drink, they don't steal, etc... but that's only half of the battle. It's not enough to be a non-sinner, you must also love doing good things. It's not enough to go to church, not sin... and call it all good... that's existing. You must also live to do good things for God and others. You can't just be passive in not-sinners, you must be active in doing good. And, of course constantly doing good is hard... and few can give the full effort. That is why we have **Galatians 6:9** which tells us; don't grow weary in doing good. It's sad to see any Christian grow weary in doing good. They lose a love for serving, loving, and working hard. **it's a clear sign that you are simply existing when you have grown weary in doing good.**

But, doing Good is what it means to be a Christian. Look at **Ephesians 2:10** which says that we were created for good works. Or **James 1:27** which reminds us that real religion is helping those in need.

Also, **Galatians 6:10** says, if you have an opportunity, do good to everyone. Doing good is what we do.

But we also do good works because our Good works lead the lost to Christ. We've mentioned this verse a lot lately, but once again **Matthew 5:16** says that we should do good so the world will see our good works and worship God. If we don't love to do good works for God and for others then we will not be effective at reaching a lost world... we will merely exist. **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.**

Lastly... in order to hold fast **Let Your Love Be Genuine**. In hating sin we will be tempted to not only hate sin, but hate people as well. We must never hate people. **1 Peter 3:9** tells us; do not repay evil for evil. How do we hate sin, and love people, but also stand for the truth of God's word? With genuine love. Genuine love says; sin is evil. Genuine love says; I must tell you the truth. Genuine love; doesn't condemn. Genuine love; prays and depends on God. And here's where there's conflict... the world says that loving someone means letting them do whatever they want. But, the Bible says **real love doesn't allow people to do what they want if what they want leads to eternal destruction**. The greatest way to fight evil is to have a genuine love for God and for others which allows for honest conversations without division. Unfortunately it's scary how much this is becoming increasingly harder in our society. Still... though it's hard, it doesn't mean we give up... we hold fast. Genuine love is the ultimate good and that's what differentiates us from the world. **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.**

## Application

The application is clear. Hold Fast, Hate evil. Hate sin in our own lives, hate sin in the church, do not let the devil have a foothold in our lives. Hold Fast, Love Good. Don't be content to just not sin, but live to do good to others to show them Jesus and lead them to the Lord. Hold Fast, Let love be genuine. We don't hate anyone, we speak the truth in love and lead people to the truth.

We must hold fast to what is good in order to resist the exist. In order to move forward as a church, in order to avoid slipping into a state of mediocrity and apathy, we must grip the calling to resist sin and embrace doing good... we must hold fast as if our lives depend on it. **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.**

## Conclusion

I want to end by reminding of you what can happen when we stop

holding fast to what is good.

In 1987 Jim Bakker, the most popular televangelist of the 80's was caught in a sexual abuse scandal and was sentenced to 45 years in prison for financial fraud. In 2006 Ted Haggard, a pastor of over 4000 people in Colorado Springs, was caught in a homosexual prostitution scandal and fired from his church. In 2014 Mark Driscoll, a pastor of over 30,000 people in Seattle was caught in a plagiarism scandal and accused of emotional abusiveness which led to him being fired. Also in 2014 Bob Coy, the highly respected pastor of Calvary Chapel in Fort Lauderdale, a church with over 25,000 members, was caught in multiple affairs, a pornography addiction, and molesting a four-year old child. And in 2016 Perry Noble, a pastor of over 15,000 in South Carolina was fired from his church after it was discovered that he was an alcoholic. **When we stop holding fast to good and godly ways we will inevitably begin to embrace the ways of the world.**

This is what happens when you stop moving forward with God's calling and adopt a mentality of simply existing... you let down your guard and allow sin to creep in. We must hold fast to what is good... we must resist the exist.