

Resist The Exist Part 4

Remain Passionate For The Lord

Romans 12:11

Memory Verses: **Romans 12:11**

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Everyone feels tired at some point. Some even get so tired that they kind of burn out. In order to be rejuvenated they need to take some time off. And all of that is okay until taking some time off means that we stop caring. Those who stop caring don't take a break... they end up quitting all together. And what does it look like when a Christian stops caring and quits on the mission and the ministry? It looks like existing. They've determined to run out the clock, go through the motions, and do as little as possible while still making a good show of it. There's a big difference between tired and retired. There's a huge difference between taking a break from ministry for a time and retiring from ministry and the mission all together. And way too many Christians seem to have already retired from the ministry and now we have a church in America that is stagnant and ineffective. We've determined to survive rather than thrive. We've adopted a mentality of simply existing. And we must change that mentality now. We must resist it with everything in our being. We must resist the exist.

All men die, not all men truly live. Don't you want to really live again? Then stop running out the clock. Stop going through the motions. And start living every moment for the glory of God and the good of others.

So how do we resist the exist? Look at **Romans 12:9-13**. According to **verse 9** we must hold fast to what is good. Hold fast; meaning never give up, never let go, never stop trying to live a righteous life, never stop fighting the fight against sin. There is no mere existing when we hate evil and hold fast to what is good.

According to **verse 10** we must outdo one another in love. Outdo; meaning to go the extra distance. Rather than giving up, we give more than ever before. We counter apathy and mediocrity with excellence and exceptional love. There is no simply existing when we are living to outdo one another in love.

And today, according to **Romans 12:11** we must remain passionate for the Lord. In fact I think this verse is the key verse for the entire series. A passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian... or at least it should be. Merely existing is the opposite of that.

Those who are merely existing have become apathetic, uncaring, mediocre in their faith, and simply lazy. They have given up on what matters the most to simply run out the clock. They have no passion for

ministry or for the mission of God. Their fire has all but gone completely out. I see Christians like this all the time. Their hobbies get them excited. Their sports teams get them excited. Their shows get them excited. They are passionate about a great many worldly things, but when it comes to their Lord and Savior... they have very little passion... if any at all. For example, this morning we sang some very powerful songs about our Lord... but many of us probably just sang words rather than feeling the impact of what those words meant. Would anyone look at us singing these songs and say that we are passionate about our God? I'm not judging... I'm just trying to help us realize that it is possible that we have forgotten what a passion for God even looks like anymore. Let's face it church... we, and the rest of the American Church have a serious problem. We claim to be Christians yet we have lost our passion for our God and with it our identity.

Let's go back to **Revelation 2**. When we were here last we saw that Jesus told the church at Sardis that they looked alive but were in fact dead. Now let's see what he says to the church at Ephesus. **Revelation 2:4** – "I have this against you, you have abandoned the love you had at first." Jesus is saying, you can hate evil, you can keep the ministry going... and at the same time be passionless for me. Once again. Is Jesus saying this to us this morning? Have we lost the love we had for him? If so, let's see if we can find it again this morning. **Passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian. Without it we are defective.**

How are we to remain passionate for the Lord? Our verse this morning gives us three ways.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first way we can remain passionate for the lord is to... **Stop Being Lazy In Ministry**. Some translations here say, "don't be slothful in diligence, or in the work of ministry." The point is that we cannot be passionate for God if we are lazy in the work he has called us to do. **Proverbs 13:4** tells us that laziness gets you nothing. In fact there are around 20 verses in Proverbs which say pretty much the same thing. Laziness is not good. **Colossians 3:23** reminds us to work heartily for the Lord. Ministry is work.

So what causes Christians to become lazy in ministry; to stop working? For one, a lack of understanding of what it means to be a Christian. We have not done a good job of preparing young believers to do ministry and to recognize that ministry is their responsibility. Secondly, a lot of people in our world have a poor work ethic. We have a video game, tv watching, screen junkie generation that knows nothing of hard work. Parents are raising a generation of lazy kids and lazy christians. And thirdly, and this may be the biggest reason Christians have become lazy in ministry, disappointment. They've done ministry, perhaps faithfully and for a long time... and they've not seen any return on their investment. They feel

cheated and now may even resent ministry.

Which is why we need to reevaluate our motives. If we have miscalculated our expectations we will inevitably burn out. Especially if we are doing ministry with the wrong motives. Wrong motives for doing ministry include... Money. Look at **Acts 20:24,33**. If we do ministry for money we will want to quit when the money isn't there, or worse, we will be led astray by greed and we should probably not be doing ministry at all. Another wrong motive would be; Our Glory or prestige. Look at **1 Cor 9:16**. If we do ministry for our glory we will quit when the crowds are small, or when we are criticized, or worse yet, we will be led astray for the praise of men. And another wrong motive would simply be easy living. Look at **2 Timothy 2:3**. If we do ministry for easy living we will quit when things get hard. None of these are the right motives for doing ministry, nor are they promised because of ministry. In fact we are warned to not do ministry for any of these because it leads to a passionless and pointless life apart from God; you will burn out and you will embrace simply existing. These motives, for the most part are selfish and self focused. They are not God focused.

But if we have the right motives, focused on God, we will have proper expectations and avoid burnout. Right motives for ministry include a love for the Lord (**Matt 22:36-38**). A love for people (**Matt 22:36-39-40**). A love for the Bible (**Psalm 119:97**). And a love for the lost (**Romans 9:2-3**). The bottom line is clear... we don't do ministry for worldly things...we do it for godly things because... **if you have worldly motives you will burn out on ministry.**

Then... once your motives are biblical... go minister. Serve the needy. Help the elderly get to the doctor, help the homeless find shelter, help the jobless find jobs, help the hungry get food, tutor struggling students, help struggling moms take care of their families. Through partnership with Claire Parker Foundation you can serve families who have kids with cancer. Through Transition Pregnancy Solutions you can help moms fall in love with their unborn children and give them the resources to birth them and raise them. You can share the love of Christ in big ways. Go on short term mission trips, build a house for a homeless family, pay off the medical bills for a sick family, or buy a car for a family without transportation. And of course you can evangelize the lost, at your job, in your school, on your team, in your neighborhood, or with Good News Jail & Prison Ministry you can evangelize in the jails. And then you can disciple the saved. Mentor a new believer, lead a small group, or teach a kid's class or bible study. No matter how you minister, the point is simple. Stop ministering according to worldly motives, start ministering according to biblical motives... and you will maintain a zeal for biblical ministry. **When you stop living for yourself and start living for others** your passion will grow and your desire to simply exist will dissipate.

Passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian. Without it we are defective.

The second way we can remain passionate for the Lord is...

Determine to Be Spiritually Disciplined. The verse says to be fervent in spirit. Fervent means a heat hot enough to boil water. It means to be on fire in your soul. Listen, Christians cannot be **fired up** in their soul when they **have neglected to feed** the fire with spiritual disciplines. **1 Timothy 4:7-8** reminds us that we must train ourselves for godliness. We must practice spiritual disciplines. So, what spiritual disciplines should be our primary focus? What feeds the fire in our soul the most? I'm sure you can think of a few.

How about a consistent prayer life? A fire needs oxygen and prayer is our oxygen. **Psalm 145:18** tells us that the lord is nearest to us when we pray. **Oswald Chambers** - "prayer is the vital breath of the Christian; not the thing that makes him alive, but the evidence that he is alive."

Or what about a dedication to bible reading? Of course. **Matthew 4:4** reminds us that we can't really be alive without the bread of life, the word of God. It makes sense that the more time we spend with Christ the more passionate we will be for him. Just like the 2 men on the road to Emmaus. Their hearts burned as Jesus opened the scriptures to them **Luke 24:32**.

And of course we need confession and repentance of sins. **1 Cor 9:27** says we must discipline ourselves to be self-controlled when faced with temptation and to be pure as to not disqualify ourselves or lose our voice. Therefore we must not allow any pet sins, or any harmful addictions to continue lest they become ingrained too deep. You see sin separates us from God and therefore destroys our passion for God (**Isaiah 59:2**). **Proverbs 28:13** tells us that if we conceal sin then there is no way forward in our walk with God, but if we confess our sins we will get mercy and maintain our relationship and passion with God.

And most importantly we need commitment to fend off idolatry. **Colossians 3:5** says that we must put to death what is earthly in us which is idolatry. Earthly things can so easily become idols – good things can become evil. Years ago I was playing my Xbox all the time. I would go home early from work to play it. I would stay up all night playing it. I neglected my wife and newborn son to play it. One day God spoke clearly to me... it's an idol get rid of it – so I did. Not to long after I was confronted with my idolatry of a sports team I followed religiously... so I stopped supporting them. Cold turkey. Why? Cause no game or team deserves the affection that belongs to God alone. So what are your idols that have stolen the passion in your heart that belongs solely to God? **Nothing** should ever fill the place in your heart that is **reserved for God**. **Passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian. Without it we are defective.**

Lastly... in order to remain passionate for the Lord you must...

Reexamine Your Relationship With God. We are made to serve and worship our God. But when you lose your passion... that becomes difficult. So what should we do? I would suggest going back and standing under the cross again. **1 Cor 1:18** says the preaching of the cross is the power of God in us. A focus on what Christ has done for us on the cross is a source of our passion, and **we tend to lose a passion for God when we take our eyes off the cross** and what Christ has done for us . We must never become calloused to the cross.

Application

So with all of this in mind... let us evaluate our passion for God. I want you to ask yourself some questions. Ask, "what am I most passionate about?" If it's not God we have a problem. Ask, "how passionate am I for God?" On a scale from 1-10, 1 being cold and 10 being on fire... how passionate are you for God? Ask... what will people remember me for... my hobbies, my job? If it's not God we have a problem. Ask... "what can I do to show people that God is my greatest passion?" **Passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian. Without it we are defective.**

To regain a passion for God and to remain passionate for God we must stop being lazy in ministry, determine to be spiritually disciplined, and reexamine our relationship with God. Where is your passion for God? This morning we pray you do whatever it takes to reclaim it. If you aren't passionate for God why not? And what about your life shows that you are a follower of God? You can't continue to be this kind of Christian zombie... merely existing. Please remember...**Passion for God is the defining characteristic of a Christian. Without it we are defective.**

Conclusion

French Military Strategist Ferdinand Foch said, "The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire." Helen Keller once said, "Life is either a daring adventure or it's nothing." German Philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel said, "Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion."

Amy Carmichael, the famous missionary to India once penned this short poem... "Give me the Love that leads the way - The Faith that nothing can dismay - The Hope no disappointments tire - The Passion that'll burn like fire - Let me not sink to be a clod - Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God"

In our spiritual journey, passion can help provide the incentive to continue all the way to heaven; to keep going no matter what. Without it... we will merely exist. Burn for God... resist the exist.