

## Diligence and Devotion

Rom 12:11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

In the reading from the Old Testament this morning from 2 Kings we saw that God had instructed His church, the Children of Israel not to fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them, yet this is exactly what they had done. They were engaged in idolatry, they were engaged in the ways of the pagans about them. But what made it worse was that they had integrated the worship of pagan gods with the worship of the God of Israel.

Thus we read this conclusion concerning the Children of Israel. **They feared the Lord, yet served their own gods** — according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; **they do not fear the Lord.** (2 Kings 17:33-35) Did you notice the great contradiction in their service? They feared the Lord, yet served other gods, and the conclusion of Scripture? - - - They do NOT fear the Lord. God does not receive half way service. Jesus said it thus, "You cannot serve God and mammon." I think a question that needs to be asked is this, "Has the church today become such a mixture?" That is, a mixture of the worship of God with a mixture of the pagan world within her midst? The question before us then is how would God have us serve Him as His people?

The text before us this morning is presented first with a negative and then with a positive command. First, do not lack in eagerness, or earnestness, or in diligence in serving God. And secondly, be fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

A. Do not lack in eagerness, or earnestness, or in diligence in serving God.

1. God is not pleased with "lukewarm" service.

*Rev 3:16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

- a. Intensely strong language from our Lord to His church!
- b. He is deeply disgusted with the attitude of the Laodicean church.
- c. They are a people satisfied with their abilities and their self-contentment.
- d. But God sees them as destitute and wretched and in a miserable state. (Rev. 3:17)
- e. They are under the threat of being utterly rejected and cast off as a church.
- f. It is not that they do not believe, it is that they are half-hearted in their service.
- g. It has been said that they "had enough religion to lull the conscience in security, but not enough to save the soul." JFB
- h. I fear that we do not hear the seriousness of the Lord's condemnation of them. - I will vomit you out of My mouth. Rev 3:16
- i. There is more hope for the cold dead rejecters of Christ than for the lukewarm.

2. Like Israel of old, the church is not to be wavering between two opinions.

*1 Kings 18:21 Elijah . . . said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."*

- a. What was their serious error?
- b. They followed rituals but not God

*2 Kings 17:40-41 However they **did not obey**, but they **followed their former rituals**. So these **nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images**.*

- c. They had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof.

B. God then wants us to be diligent or fervent in spirit serving Him.

1. We are to be zealous in defending the faith once delivered.

*Jude 3 I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

- a. Some having left the faith had suffered "ship wreck"
- b. When God's people falter, God's name is blasphemed.

*Rom 2:24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,*

c. We have the example of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron the priest.

- (1) When a Hebrew man publicly took a Midianite woman into his tent - Phinehas went in took a spear and thrust them both with his spear.
- (2) And we read that God commended him for his action and removed the plague from Israel.

Num 25:11 "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, **because he was zealous with My zeal** among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

d. What was that zeal of Phinehas?

- (1) He could not stand God being mocked
- (2) He could not abide God's law being broken
- (3) He could not accept God's name being shamed.

e. We cannot take spear in hand today, but in the church we need to take a firm stand against permitting error to be taught in the church.

f. When the Corinthian church permitted sin in her midst remember Paul's instruction, Remove that one from your midst.

2. God literally hates false teachers in His church.

a. We are to do the same.

*Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

b. Pergamos the compromising church - married to the world.

Rev 2:15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Nicolaitans are those who teach God's people to err, either in life or doctrine.

3. Then there is the positive aspect for it also denotes eagerness, earnestness, zeal in serving the Lord.

- a. As the Psalmist who delighted in the law of the Lord. - *Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,*
- b. We are to find our greatest pleasure in serving God. - *Ps 37:4 Delight yourself also in the Lord,*

Ps 40:6 I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

CONCLUSION: What does God ask of us as His servants

He desires that we be diligent in our service to Him

Diligent in our contending for His name sake

Fervent in our love and devotion to Him

Delight in His law above all else

Zealous, yes jealous for His church.

May we, like the beloved Paul, be jealous for the Bride of Christ, the Church that she may be faithful to her husband.

*2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*