



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 363

Romans 12:11 *“Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”*

The book of Romans has two main sections. The first section, covering the majority of the book is heavy with theory, arguments and proofs about salvation in Jesus Christ. The first section leans heavily upon Old Testament concepts.

The second section, the end of the book, is practical application. Having proven the Christian life in the first part, the apostle now shows the readers how to live the Christian life at the end of the book. It is from this section our verse today is found. It is in a series of rapid fire bullet points.

Notice the words from our verse today: *diligence, fervent, serving, not lagging behind*. These words illustrate the manner and attitude we are to have. These words define the passion that a Christian ought to have. The word “fervent” is from the same root where the word fire or fever comes from. We use the expression when someone is sick, ‘they are burning up with fever.’ The ‘fever’ Paul is talking about is a choice the Christian makes. He chooses to be passionate in spirit. This is an emotion, but it runs deeper than that. Emotions come and go. People get excited at a ball game and then they get home and the excitement is gone. This feeling is not based upon externals but rather internals. It is because of what Jesus has done and the relationship the child of God now has with the Lord. This isn’t something that happens when we walk into a church building and then leaves by the time we get home. This is something that remains and stays. This person is glad to be a Christian. This fervency stays with him. He is passionate about Christ at home. He is passionate about the Lord at work. He loves the Lord and loves being in the Lord.

This spirit and passionate keeps a person from appearing two faced. Some are that way. In the church building they talk a good story. But you’d never find them doing that at home. This is not the person Paul is describing. They serve, they are diligent, they are fervent.

The expression, "not lagging behind" gives the impression of someone who can't keep up with the others. I think of cross country runners and some who are new to the sport often lag behind in their first races. They can't keep up with the pack of runners. Soon hope leaves. Some just stop running. I admire those who stay with it, even though they are light years behind.

The apostles words are to: "Not lag behind." Keep up. Keep going. In the parable of the sower, the seed that was sown among the weeds grew but was soon choked out by the worries, the riches, and the pleasure of this world. The plant couldn't keep up.

How do we keep from lagging behind? Great question. How does anyone remain passionate about anything? Some are passionate about music. Some are passionate about rescuing pets. Some are passionate about politics. Others, sports. To keep passionate, you first must love it. Then you spend time thinking, learning and hanging around others who are passionate. Have you ever been in a setting where there are a group of people who are passionate about baseball. They know the standings, they know the players, they know who won last night. But one in that group is not a die hard baseball fan. He doesn't read score boxes every day. He doesn't have a baseball app on his phone. In that setting he feels lost, bored and unable to contribute. He has lagged behind the others.

The same works with the Lord. This is where Paul wants us to be. He wants us to be interested in the Lord, to know the Lord and to understand the Lord. He wants our talk to be saturated with discussions about the Bible and teaching others and growing the kingdom. He wants us excited about the things of God. Now in such a setting there may be that one who hasn't kept up. He's out of touch and doesn't know much. He feels like he's missed out. He's lagged behind. Don't be that way! Keep up! Become passionate about the Lord. It is the most important thing. Jesus put it this way: "what does it profit if a man gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" Passionate about Heaven...passionate about learning more...passionate about the Bible...passionate about the church...passionate about what God has done.

The Bible covers life, all of life. I have found those who are passionate about science and the Bible. They are really into archaeology, discoveries and scientific evidences for a young earth. There are those who are passionate about home and family. They like learning about parenting and marriage. Others are into history and the Bible. Some like the study of how the English Bible came about. Some are passionate about the geography of the Bible. They are into maps and photographs of the Bible lands. Others have spent a lifetimes studying the books of the Bible. They understand the original languages and the thoughts behind many expressions. For me, my passion has been church history, especially early American church history. My passionate has taken me to old cemeteries, boarded up church buildings and dusty library achieve rooms. It's hard to describe why some have a passion about things. Why is it some like to collect this or that. Why is it some are into one thing or another.

The greatest passion to have is to be into Jesus Christ. The passion to serve, love and follow Him all the days of your life.

Don't lag behind...get up and get at it.

Roger Shouse