

Fervent in Spirit Romans 12:11

The KJV says, “*Be not slothful in business*” whereas the NIV says, “*be not lacking in zeal*” and the NASB says, “*Be not lagging in diligence.*” Most all translations are unified in the next phrase --- “*In fervent spirit serve the Lord.*” What does this mean?

I. The context of this verse demands application to relationships

Paul has just encouraged us to “*love without hypocrisy.*” Paul goes further and tells us “**be not slothful in *this* (emphasis mine) business.**” Be fervent about it!

(A). Our love sometimes requires this fervency.

It is not always easy to be patient and kind and keep no record of wrongs. The pain of relationships cries loudly to give up and quit. Paul says, “*Don’t quit!*”

(B). God’s love reminds us of this fervency.

Think of how God pursued you when “you were His enemy.” Think of how He never gave up and eventually conquered your heart. When you consider His love for you, as you love others, the fervency in your heart increases!

II. The construction of this verse demands application to work

“*Be not slothful in business. Be fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord*” has long been compared to a parallel passage from Ephesians 6:7 where Paul says that you are to work “*as for the Lord and not for men.*” These texts form what is commonly known as “the Protestant work ethic.” I like to call it the Christian’s view of work.

(A). **We work for the betterment of others, not just ourselves** --- “*look not only to one’s own interests, but also to the interests of others*” (Philippians 2: 4).

(B). **We work hard even when the boss is not looking** --- “*because we work for the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:7). As Eric Lindell said, “*I feel God’s pleasure.*”

(C). **We work as a steward entrusted by God** --- “*a good steward*” (Matt. 25:23). “*All men were created to busy themselves with labour ... for the common good*” **John Calvin**. Or as **Helen Keller** said: “*The world is moved along not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.*” However, society’s view of work has changed.

(1). Whereas people previously “*lived to work,*” the prevailing ethic today is that many people “*work to live.*”

(2). As a result, there is either an indifference to work whereby it becomes simply a means of earning money, or there is driving, self-centered ambition that leads to an extreme number of hours of work.

III. The conclusion of this verse demands application to our lives

How has the Lord gifted you? Where has the Lord led you? It may not be an ideal situation or you may not be the most gifted individual, but realize you are where God has placed you and you are who God has made you for a purpose. Now serve!

“*When we realize who we are, and stop trying to be what we aren’t, God works in our lives to become what we desire*” **Tom Koehler**.