



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
February 21, 2016

ROMANS 12:11

Romans Series: How God Changes People

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I'm still kind of laughing in my heart about Frankie imitating your voice in his heart. I know we all have those kind of imaginations. I just appreciate his honesty. Lord, it is true that we want to hear you. We want you to speak to us, we want you to lead us and guide us. I thank you that we can hear your voice as a good, good Father that cares for us, loves us, thinks about us, and has a plan for us. So Father, today we ask that you would lead us and guide us. We ask that during this next half hour or so as I'm presenting this verse from your word that you would use it as an opportunity to touch our hearts in a significant way. We all come here, Lord, because we have needs. We come here because we're needy people and we want to experience your grace. We want you to touch us. Help us to deal with the challenges we face this week in our lives. Help us to think beyond our own lives to the lives of the others around us. Give us a message and a passion to serve you in everything we do. In Jesus' name, amen.

This week we're going to talk about spiritual health. We're taking our study from the book of Romans going verse by verse. There are some times in life (I don't know, you must experience this every once in a while) where you see something on the road and you just have to slow down in order to take it in. Whether it's something going on or some creation or sunsets happening, you just want to slow it all down. So you pull over for a little bit to watch it take place. That's what we're doing as we come to Romans 12. We zipped through or went through at our normal pace much of the book of Romans, but in Romans 12 we're slowing it down a little bit.

There are twenty different things in the book of Romans 12:9-21, twenty things, commands, that God gives us in that passage. Ten of them are proactive (here's things that Christians do) and then ten reactions that Christians have. So we're going to look at one verse today because I don't want to zip through it. We could have just gone through all ten of the things to do, but we would have missed some of the scenery that I think God wants us to experience and wants us to have. So I'm slowing it down a little bit so we can smell the roses here, we can allow it to seep into our lives.

As we talk about this one particular verse it's going to be a way that we can actually look at spiritual health. How are you doing spiritually? Well what I want to do is I want to look at the spiritual energy that you and I have.

I spent time this week talking to a number of people, about ten different people, asking them, what is it that you do in your life to keep your spiritual energy high? Because if your spiritual

energy isn't high, your passion for Jesus, then what tends to happen when the spiritual energy decreases is you become discouraged or you can get angry more often or you can fall into sin or you can drift away from God's church or other bad things start to happen.

So I think it's very important for us to keep our spiritual energy high and that's why when we come to this verse in Romans 12:11, this is the verse: *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.* What we're talking about here is a passion that we have for Jesus and a spiritual energy. But before I talk to you about the application and how we put it together in our own lives (each of us in some unique ways, I'm finding as I talk to different people), I want to take apart the verse and I want you to understand what the words are.

So I want to look at the word *zeal* first. The word passion. That's what the word is – passion. *Never be lacking in this passion* or this diligence or this something that comes from within. I want to show you some other places that this Greek word is used in the New Testament. As we look at those verses, we'll take the way it's used there and then import it back into our passage today to give us a little more understanding of what this verse means for us as Christians in Romans 12:11.

The first story I want to take you to is the story of Mary who received the message from the angel about how she would bear the Christ child. What an amazing event that must have been as she was hearing that story. Our word passion was used just in the verse right after that.

Here's her response after the angel left. *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered, "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. At that time Mary got ready...and here's our word. It's put in here and translated hurried. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth* (who of course would be her comrade who also is pregnant with John the Baptist, and God was doing something powerful in her, and so they share together). But the idea here is that when she got this message she hurried and it's with passion. She was excited about what was going on. So she took that and she ran with it to the hill country where Elizabeth was.

The next verse I want to show you is one that talks about repentance. In this verse it says, *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.* So you know what repentance is. It's that understanding, finally, that wow, I know who Jesus Christ is and what He's done for me. I need to change who I am because who I am is not what God wants me to be. I need to start changing the way I live, the way I think, the way I act. It really brings sorrow in my heart because of some of those. Sometimes it's the sorrow of having to leave some of the things we like that are not good for us, but sometimes it's a sorrow feeling bad that we've done so many things that are wrong.

And he says *see what this godly sorry has produced in you.* So this is what happens when repentance takes place in our hearts. The first thing he says is *what earnestness.* This is our word passion, zeal. When you become a Christian you have this zeal.

He goes on to say, *what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.* All of those things are examples of

this passion that are being talked about, but the word itself is being used there. That's one of the results of understanding what salvation is deep within our hearts, experiencing that repentance and saying, "Yes. I have something and I know God wants to do something in my life."

The third verse I want to show you is one about giving, financial giving. When Paul is trying to collect a gift and he's going to the churches and asking them for that gift to pass on to the churches in need, he says, *But since you excel in everything* (and this is what they excel in Corinth) – *in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness or passion and in the love we have kindled in you – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.* What you are saying to them is I want you to understand and take advantage of this idea. *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.* That's what Paul is saying to us now.

So I want to look at this idea of passion for a moment. I'd like you to actually measure your spiritual passion. How are you doing in that area of spiritual passion or what is it that helps you stay high in that spiritual passion area so you don't get yourself into trouble by low spiritual passion.

The spiritual passion is going to be very important. Passion is what energizes our lives. Passion makes the impossible possible. Passion gives you the reason to get up in the morning and say, "This is going to be a good day. We're going to try something good here. I'm going to make life different." Without passion life becomes boring, it becomes monotonous, it becomes routine or dull. God created us with emotions so that we'd feed this passion for life. He wants us to live a passionate life.

Passion is what mobilizes armies into action. Passion is what explorers do boldly to go into areas that no one has been before. Passion is what causes scientists to find solutions to dreaded diseases. Passion takes good athletes and turns them into record-breaking athletes. This passion that exists inside. You've got to have passion in life.

One day a man walked up to Jesus and he asked the question, "*What is the greatest commandment?*" Or what is the most important thing in life, is what he's saying. And Jesus answers it with a statement that describes passion. He says, "*Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, with all of your mind.*" That's passion. He's saying the most important thing you can do in your life is to love me with passion. That is what Jesus is saying. The number one thing that we can do with all of our heart we're loving the Lord. That's passion.

Put your heart into it is the idea that he's saying here. Don't be namby-pamby about your relationship with the Lord. Don't be half-hearted. Give your all to Jesus. If you're going to follow me, do it with passion is what He's saying. You've got to add the oomph or the zest or the zip or the enthusiasm and live passionately is the cry that not only is Jesus making to that man, but also in our own lives through Paul to the Romans and then, of course, to us that we need to keep that zeal, that passion of service for the Lord.

Here's the amazing thing. In America it's okay to be passionate about anything except your faith. You can be passionate about movies, passionate about sports, passionate about politics,

passionate about fashion and clothes, passion about restaurants. But you cannot be passionate about God without being considered weird.

I typed in this phrase in Google's book department. I searched under books for "a passion for." There were 162,298 books. There's a book about passion for birds. Passion for books. A passion for cactus. A passion for chocolate. (Well that's reasonable). A passion for fashion. A passion for fishing, flying, gardening, golf, hunting. A passion for mushrooms. I don't know if that's the kind you put on your salad or the kind your smoke, but whatever. A passion. A passion for needlepoint. A passion for pasta, ponies, potatoes, roses, shoes. There's even a book called *A Passion for Steam*. So I was wondering what is that? That's locomotives. There's a passion for all kinds of things.

It's okay in our culture to be passionate. People are interested and passionate except when it comes to faith. You can go to a rock concert or you can go to a sports event or political rally and you can cheer as loud as you want. You can get hoarse by yelling so loud. When a team loses you can cry and that's acceptable. When your team wins you can jump up and throw your hands up in the air and yell and you'll be considered a fan. But if you do that in church you're considered a nut or a fanatic. You don't want to get too emotional about your faith.

Why is the command there Jesus is talking about love the Lord with all of your heart. Be passionate is what He's saying. And so in this verse he's talking about *never be lacking in this zeal, but keeping your spiritual fervor raised up*. Spiritual fervor up high.

Why work at it? Because I think it tends to wane in our lives. And I think life conspires to reduce our energy. When our spiritual energy reduces to a point then we become more susceptible to arguing, to whining, to complaining, to getting angry, to being negative, to getting discouraged. And so God is saying one of the key things you need to do is keep your spiritual energy high. That's what he's saying.

I was trying to think about what causes this to get messed up in our lives. What hinders us from being able to serve the Lord with passion? What are the passion stealers that get in the way?

I would say that one of them is the unbalanced life. There are people who maybe are overworked and then there are some who are underworked in their lives. Just think about being overworked for a moment. You see, I think we all establish for ourselves to-do lists or a certain level of busyness. I have a certain level of busyness in my life that I like. It's different from the next person's level of busyness or the other person's level of busyness.

I happen to like my level of busyness and I choose that. When my level of busyness gets a little too much because I'm overcommitted, I feel uncomfortable. It starts to affect me. An unbalanced life like that, being overly committed to something, can cause our spiritual fervor to die down because we get into survival mode. But in the same way when my to-do list drops a little bit and I finish that task and that task, instead of just moseying around in life, I add something else. Because I like a particular kind of busyness in my life. That's where I like to be.

Whether that's good or bad, that just happens in each one of our lives. Maybe we need to have enough busyness in our lives to keep us going, but enough, also, margin in our lives or white space that allows us to relax and rest. Being overworked puts us in survival mode where we find ourselves not caring as much. We don't care about people around us, we don't care about results in what we're doing; we just got to get this done and get it over with. We've got to dig in and we don't focus on other things. Our spiritual passion often decreases in those moments. Sometimes it can be called burnout.

But the exact opposite is true, I think, that some people are always taking in, but they're not giving out. Their to-do list isn't that great. They're often coming to church and they're listening to Bible studies or going to Bible studies, listening to sermons on the radio, going to concerts and seminars and workshops. Always learning but not giving out. Something happens, I think, to a person when they're always taking in and not giving out. I think we become fat Christians.

So we have to have a balanced life where we're giving out and we're taking in and we're not becoming overly committed. We have to be just as we want to be spiritually fit in our lives; physically fit and spiritually fit – both of those are related, I would say. So what we want to do in our lives is we want to be careful of this passion stealer, the unbalanced life.

Let me give you another one that I think gets in our way. That's unconfessed sin. I think that when a person has sin that they're harboring in their life it drains them spiritually.

You know you can't have enthusiasm and guilt at the same time? It's hard to be enthusiastic about something and guilty at the same time.

Look at this verse from the Psalms. The psalmist is reflecting on his guilt. He says this: *My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning* (Psalm 38:4 and 6). That guilt just weights us down. So I would suggest another one of those passion stealers is unconfessed sin in our lives.

Another one that I think is important for us to look at is unresolved conflict. You know how it is when you get up in the morning feeling good and then you have an argument with someone else in your family and you go, "Oh man." It just takes the air out of your tires. It makes it difficult for you to move forward. I just want to say I know some people live with conflict. They live in either a home or a workplace where there's a high level of conflict. So we do what we can to resolve some of that and minimize it.

I think we can have peace and passion in the midst of trying experiences. And in fact we have to allow God to do a deeper work in our hearts to do that so that we don't lose our spiritual passion every time something turns around as a challenge in our lives. God wants to do those things. He wants us to have our spiritual energy high so we can face the conflict and the challenges that exist there.

I would suggest that another area, a passion stealer, has to do with being disconnected. Being disconnected from God's people, disconnected from God's word, even disconnecting ourselves

from prayer or God in some ways. When we get disconnected, we start to lose the fire that God would have for us in our own souls.

The verse says, *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.* The word *fervor* is boiling. That's the word. Boiling. It's another picture that just helps us understand what that looks like.

Notice it says *serving the Lord.* We're not just talking about church work here. Serving the Lord when you come to church, that's one way we serve. But also talking about our lives as service. That when you get up in the morning and you're preparing yourself for the day, that's serving the Lord. When you drive in your car to where you're going, that's serving the Lord. When you interact with anybody, that's serving the Lord. Every time that we find ourselves doing whatever we're doing, whether that's caring for kids or working on our homework or going to class or talking to other students, whatever we're doing, that serving the Lord is very important. He's saying keep that in mind. The service that you're doing is going to be strategic. What we want to do is we want to understand what God wants to do in the midst of our hearts as we are serving Him.

I think one of the things that gets in the way of our lives is that the mundane things in life tend to appear mundane and not God ordained. We start thinking well then there's a difference between the spiritual things that I do (like going to church) and the common things I do (like getting dressed). I would suggest that all the things we do involve serving the Lord.

I think that's what Paul is saying to the Colossians when he says to them, *Whatever you do, whatever it is, work at it with all your heart.* This is the passion we're talking about. *Work at it with all your heart.* Working for the Lord, not for human masters. So when you go to that class and that teacher is telling you something or you're working on that report for the professor in your class, you're not doing this for that professor, you're doing this for the Lord. You're doing this for the Lord. You're doing that work for Him. *Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.* I'm sure just looking at Paul's life and all the things that he did he had quite a fervor for the Lord and what God was doing in his life.

As I look at the things that God has designed for us that will fuel this boiling point for us, what are the flames that God puts under our lives that create a spiritual passion, I come to these words in God's word that I think we can rely on. So if you want to energize your passion I think you're going to look to these five words in particular to do that.

One is worship, and that's worship publicly like this or worship on your own. Another is getting into God's word, whether that's in a group setting or on your own. Service is this idea of contributing to others. There's something that happens when we serve the Lord.

I just really enjoy the team of people that meet here in the morning. We start here in the morning at eight o'clock. Around eight o'clock in the morning we start arriving here. This morning when I arrived before eight o'clock the DeLisis were already here in the parking lot ready to go. They're the ones who take care of our refreshments. If you go back there, you will see

everything looks neat and it is laid out beautifully. They bring healthy snacks for us. They've chosen to do that, and they paid for those things. So they bring that here for our enjoyment. I just appreciate the passion they have to do that.

Tim Brown's here working with Peter and they're organizing the room and getting the wires all hooked up here. They're making the slide fit exactly on the screen this morning. That's what they were doing. I'm watching that and I'm thinking, "I didn't tell them to do that." There's attention to detail that they're concerned about because they want everything to look good when you come in here.

I kind of set and organize the chairs this way. Frank (who's teaching in our discipleship group) comes in and he reorganizes the chairs and lines every chair up perfectly. I'm telling you, this is what he does. He goes and he lines every chair up. This guy really likes things in order. He wants to make sure every chair is set up so that when you come in you're not distracted.

You would not know these things normally. Paulette's out there making that information table look spiffy. You would only know them if they didn't work. If the projector was turned sideways, you'd say, "Wow, this is weird." But what they've done is there's this passion when they come in, this energy that they bring into the room that is their service.

God does something in their lives. We're just talking about that around the table, just enjoying what God does inside of us when that takes place. Prayer is another way that we can get energy from and in our spiritual service because we're seeing God work, we're connecting with Him in a very special way.

I would encourage you to come to the prayer meeting on Saturday evening this week. It's a place to learn how to pray. It's a place to get healed. It's a place to experience God's grace in a new way. As we pray for our church we pray for individual needs, we pray for our country, we pray for this political situation we're in, we're praying for our world. Very important things that happen during prayer. I guarantee if you come on Saturday you will feel spiritually energized when you leave. And the fellowship that we enjoy with connecting with each other is fun.

It used to be maybe eighteen months, two years ago we only had about fifty people here in church and when we said "amen" at the end of the worship service I would stand and I would talk to most everybody before they leave. Now you watch what happens after the worship service today. When we say "amen," people stand up and everybody turns around and meeting with everybody and I'm standing here. I'll go somewhere and try to greet somebody, but people aren't eager to necessarily talk to me. You know why? Because they're connected with each other. Which is a very important part of a church's growth and maturity. As people form into this group here and that group here and people are talking all over the place, it's a great thing that happens in the midst of fellowship.

I would suggest these are four, five different sources of spiritual passion that God wants to provide for us. But here's what I found as I talked to people this week: people are so individualized about this. Ask yourself this question. When you want to boost your spiritual

energy, what do you do? Or how does that happen in your life? I was surprised at the answers. They contain some of these, but they contain other things as well.

One of those people I asked was my wife. I value my wife a lot. I was attracted to my wife because of her spiritual passion originally and have enjoyed my life with her over the last thirty-seven years plus. So I asked her her ideas. So she gave me a list of them. So I said, "Honey, would you just read these? Would you just share these with people?" I want you to hear my wife. I appreciate her ability to have this passion. And when it wanes in her life, she does some things to bring that back. So I highly respect and value her. So, honey, why don't you come and share the things that you wrote on your page.

[Carrie] I wrote this list for Scott. He was away this week and he asked me to give him some ideas. I thought, "Oh good. I'll just encourage him and tell him these things." And then this morning he said, "Why don't you read that?" So I said, "Okay!"

So a lot of the things he already shared are what I have on my list. The first thing I wrote was just spending time reading the Bible. In the morning I like to do that. I have some really special devotional books and those are really helpful for me.

I also like to keep a journal where I write out my prayers. That just helps me not get distracted and I can really focus in. I like to copy scripture. Usually when I'm reading through the Bible if a verse stands out for me or I'll look for a verse that I can just copy down and then I kind of pray through that. As I'm writing it out it makes me slow down and really think about it. And that gives the Spirit time to kind of speak to me. When I'm having that time with the Lord I can release my problems to Him and it gives me time to hear from the Spirit as far as other scriptures that come to mind just to comfort me and give me hope and perspective on the things that I'm facing and get me ready for the day. So that renews me and keeps me going.

Then I also love being part of a small group. We have a couple different women's Bible studies and I just get so much out of my time with the women. That keeps me focused and growing. The Bible is always our focus. So when we're together in the small group we have time for sharing and time for prayer. That's just an encouragement for me. When I'm struggling with anything in my life I know when I go to Bible study I can have some friends that I can talk to about that and they'll pray for me. I gain a lot of wisdom from that group and also some real special friendships are growing there. So I'm grateful for women's Bible study.

I also wrote down here serving in church. Using my gifts to serve others in the body is really rewarding and encouraging. Seeing the results is great. That really motivates me.

Also listening to praise music. I have an iPad set up in my kitchen and my special Christian radio station that I like to listen to on Pandora. I have some fun stations too. So I have a quiet one for if I'm doing something like read my Bible or whatever. And then I have really loud, rowdy ones for when I'm going to clean up or do anything like that. So that's really motivating for me. It helps me keep my spiritual passion and it helps me put my mind on good things.

I also have audio books there and biographies of Christians and just stories that are beautifully written. Those kinds of things just give me a better mindset, so I'm grateful for that.

And then I'd say spending time with my friends who love the Lord and share their lives with me. Seeing how others face their joys and their trials in life, that's really inspiring and encouraging, and I'm thankful for those friendships.

Going away on retreats and hearing special speakers at conferences is a great way to kind of stir up that spiritual motivation and that extra good input.

I put this first on the list, but I thought I'd leave it for last, is attend a great church and be taught the word each week by an amazing pastor who lives it out at home. I'm blessed in that way to see Scott's commitment to the Lord. He's always had enthusiasm. That's one of the things I always admired about him from the beginning. He's just a really enthusiastic person and he has that in a lot of areas of life, but especially for the Lord. And he's a great encouragement to me.

[Applause]

[Scott] As I talked to more people, one man said to me, "I know my life is disciplined in my eating, my exercise, my personal finance, and my quiet time." I thought wow that's really interesting how those things affect a person. It's amazing how many people told me physical health helps me to feel better spiritually. I found that to be really interesting too. Someone else said, "When I hear of God at work, God doing things in the world in people's lives, that energizes me spiritually." So I felt all of those things were helpful.

In fact tomorrow night at the Take Jesus Home small group, they're going to ask this question and share some of these things. Ed will lead that tomorrow night. I encourage you to go there and talk with others about spiritual passion and how that takes place in one's life.

I want to share one more idea, and this is kind of advanced. If I were teaching a class, this is like the advanced work. So I think as I look at scripture there are three ways to look at spiritual health. This may be of benefit to you. So let me share these with you so that you understand them.

One is to view ourselves in regard to spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is linear. That means you're on a line somewhere. That means you can be better or worse in this area than someone else. That means that you might put Billy Graham way up here on the list, and you're here, and the person you're discipling is down here, and someone who's discipling you is up here. So it's somewhere on this list. We're talking about growth. Spiritual maturity is the ability to handle temptation, handle our emotions, be able to hear the voice of the Lord, understand scripture, those kinds of things. And it grows over a period of time, described in 1 Corinthians 3.

A second kind of way to look at spiritual health has to do with this idea of spirituality. Now spirituality is different than spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity you can measure on a line. Spirituality is all or nothing.

It's like two circles. You either are spiritual at this moment, right now in your day or not. You're either spiritual or carnal. Carnal is being run by the flesh, according to the scriptures. And spiritual is being led by the Spirit. And so if you're not being led by the Spirit at this moment, you can easily do that by saying, "Holy Spirit, lead me. Run my life," and He will do that. So I think we want to do that every day of our lives, several times during the day. We're moving ourselves from the carnal circle to the spiritual circle and that spirituality then becomes very important.

In fact I think these two are connected because once we are spiritual and we're allowing the Holy Spirit to run our life in this moment, we are starting to grow spiritually on this path of spiritual maturity.

But the third way that we look at these things has to do with spiritual passion or fervor that we're talking about today. How is your spiritual energy level? I don't want you to go away today thinking that spiritual energy level is dependent on emotion or experience. Those who base their energy on emotion experience find themselves flitting around and going up and down a lot. Those who are more stable in their spiritual passion do so because their spiritual passion is based on conviction, beliefs, commitment, and determination. So if you have your spiritual passion based on your conviction, that will drive you forward. Even when things aren't going well, you have this conviction that keeps your energy high. So if you're just relying on emotion and experience you'll be going all over the place.

I would suggest that what God wants us to do is have a spiritual passion that's going to be based on the beliefs that we have in God's word, the convictions of what He's doing in our lives.

That is why we do the study on Sunday morning where we go into God's word, rather than have some kind of entertainment experience on Sunday morning. We're interested in going deep, understanding. Because when you leave here I don't want you to go away and say, "My pastor thinks this" or "we had a great show on Sunday morning." I want you to say, "This is what the Bible says." Because that's what's going to fuel your spiritual passion this week.

[Applause]

Thank you, guys. I love you guys.

God is working here at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. If you're here today and you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that's where you start. The spiritual passion will come from that. I'd love to help you make that commitment to Jesus. So if you haven't made that commitment today, would you talk to me? Or maybe during this next song while we sing there are prayer counselors on the side and they are ready to pray for you.

When I saw this song, *Great I Am*, ("Lord, you're the great I Am") I was just thinking about Moses and the spiritual passion that God was building in his life. He didn't have it at first. But over time as he started leading the Israelites, he started telling them things about spiritual passion. They would complain and he would be convicted and he would stay true to God because he would go up on the mountain and he'd see God face to face. The glory would shine on his face, just like I think God does in our lives. There's a spiritual passion we can all have. And so as

we think about this great I Am that God was for Moses, He's that for you and me today. That's why I enjoyed this song so much and I want to sing it again as our worship song as we close. Alright? Stand and we'll pray and then we'll sing. Okay?

[PRAYER] So Heavenly Father, as we come to you now we ask that you would increase that passion in our hearts. We've opened your word. We ask you take it, apply it to our lives. We want to take Jesus home now and take this into our various aspects of who we are. So use it in our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.