

Sunday Morning
13th December 2015

Look Around, Look In, Look Up

Romans Chapter 12 Verse 11

As you serve the Lord, work hard and don't be lazy. Be excited about serving him!

I have been preaching from Romans. It is a letter. Paul wrote it, and sent it to the church in Rome.

In **chapter 1-11**, Paul wrote about wonderful doctrines. Paul explained God's plans. In **chapter 12**, Paul wrote about many practical subjects:

1. I must remember God's mercies — what He has done for me.
2. I must have true worship: means I worship God with my words, and with my life, both.
3. I must not copy the world, or follow the world — means sin, and the devil's plans.
4. I must change myself, and copy God.
5. God has given me spiritual gifts and skills; I just use my skills to serve God in the local church.
6. I must have true love for my Christian brothers and sisters.
7. I must hate sin.
8. I must hold on to good things.

All these subjects are practical. In this chapter, God teaches Christian people how we should live every day.

Chapter 12 Verse 11: *As you serve the Lord, work hard and don't be lazy. Be excited about serving him!*

I want to focus on this verse today. The verse has three parts

— but the **Easy Read Bible** does not show me the three parts clearly. The **King James Bible** shows the three parts clearly. I will use the **King James Bible** this morning:

Chapter 12 Verse 11 (King James Bible): *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*

The three parts are very clear:

1. Not slothful in business
2. Fervent in spirit
3. Serving the Lord.

Each part encourages me to look: look around, look in, and look up. Now I will focus on each part, and explain what it means and how I should 'look'.

Part 1: 'Look Around'

Verse 11: *Not slothful in business ...*

I want to explain two words:

1. Slothful — means slow, lazy, not bothered.
2. Business — means activity, work, busy. Not like a job, working for money. This word means the work I do every day in my normal life.

Example 1: Jesus. When Jesus lived on earth, He was busy every day. Jesus always travelled around, helping people, preaching, healing people. Why? Was He paid? Did He get money? No — but Jesus had an aim, and He worked and focused on His aim. What was Jesus' aim? To save His people, and tell people about God's mercy and grace.

Jesus was not slow, or lazy. No — Jesus was active, busy, every day.

Example 2: Paul. Paul was also always busy. Paul was old and sick, but He continued to serve God well. Paul travelled around, preaching and teaching. Paul visited churches and wrote many letters. Paul was not slow.

Example 3: The first Christian people. Some of the first Christian people had nice jobs, and they worked hard. But later they had to leave their jobs. Why? Because every company had its own idol, and the Christian people refused to bow to the idol. Their bosses threw them out. The Christian people had to find low jobs, hard jobs. Many Christian people were slaves.

How did they work in their hard jobs? What attitude did they have? Bitter? Slow? Angry? No — they worked hard, and they witnessed. They did not stop or give up.

Now I can look around at Christian people, and I see many Christians who are not like these three examples. Many Christian people today are lazy! They are relaxed, and comfortable. They have nice homes, nice jobs, lots of money.

Many Christian people go to church, why? To enjoy the music and fellowship — that's all. They do not serve God. They are not active.

That is sad. This verse has a command: "*When you are busy, do not be lazy.*"

How can I become more busy and active?

1. Active to check my sin. I can check myself every day. I can think: "*What have I done today? What have I missed today? Have I been kind, or mean?*" I can plan: which sins will I avoid? How will I serve God more? I check myself, means I am a busy Christian.

2. Active in worship. Maybe I always arrive late to church, every week. Why? I am slow on a Sunday. I wake up late. I get dressed slowly. I relax. Means I feel not bothered about worship. I do not feel I have to come to church.

3. Active in prayer. Maybe I hear about a person who has a problem. I should remember, and pray for that person. I should not have a lazy attitude when I pray, or pray quickly and finish, then forget. No. I should work hard when I pray. I should remember people, and ask God to help.

4. Active in witness. I should always be ready to talk to people about the Gospel. I should look for an opportunity to speak, and be ready to answer questions.

5. Active in helping people. I should always be ready to help. I should look for people to help. I should meet new people, say hello, welcome people in the church. I should help at home also. Maybe I work hard in the church, but when I arrive home I do nothing. I do not help my family. That is wrong. I must be active everywhere.

6. Active to say sorry. I should be ready to say sorry. I should try to make peace, and forgive people.

7. Active to check doctrine. All church leaders and church members must be aware of new doctrines and false teaching. We should check every teaching, and make sure it is from the Bible. We should be active.

Be careful! All Christian people are different. I see some people, and I know they are busy. It is easy to see. Some people seem very quiet. Maybe I think, "*That person is not busy!*" But maybe I am wrong. Maybe the person is managing many different things, but he is a quiet person.

I must be careful. I must not criticise. I must check myself, and ask myself: "*Am I busy? Am I active? Or am I slow? Which?*"

Part 1 teaches me to 'look around'. I look at my life, and how I behave, and I check that I am serving God well.

Part 2: 'Look In'

Verse 11: ... *fervent in spirit* ...

'Fervent' means — very hot, boiling. It is an example. I should be 'hot' in my spirit, and I should have the Holy Spirit in me — means I love the Holy Spirit, and I have a lot of energy for God.

Some people say, "*If you are 'hot' with the Holy Spirit, you will become a very busy Christian.*" This is not true! Many Christian people are 'hot' — they love God, they study the Bible, they are very holy — but they do not serve God. They are not busy.

Some people say. "*If you are a busy Christian, you will become 'hot' with the Holy Spirit.*" This is not true! Many Christian people are very busy, but their love has become cold.

I must remember: I am responsible to check both parts of my life: outside and inside. I must make sure I am busy, and I have a 'hot' spirit inside, full of energy and love for God.

Example: In **Acts chapter 6** I read about Stephen, the first Christian person who was killed. The Bible says Stephen was full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit. Stephen was 'hot' with the Holy Spirit.

Question: How did the people around know that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit?

Answer: We do not have the details in the Bible, but we can guess:

1. Stephen talked about spiritual subjects.
2. Stephen encouraged people.
3. Stephen was humble.
4. Stephen knew about people's problems, and he prayed.
5. Stephen always thought about telling people the Gospel.
6. Stephen was honest, and he worked hard.
7. Stephen loved Jesus Christ.

All these things proved that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit.

Today, many Christian people want to be full of the Holy Spirit, but not in the same way as Stephen. They say, *"I want to be able to speak in different languages. That will show that I am full of the Holy Spirit."*

Those people are wrong! I do not need a miracle to show that I am 'hot' with the Spirit. I need the things that Stephen had.

How can I get the things that Stephen had? How can I become 'hot' with the Spirit?

1. Pray — always, every day. When I pray, I am near to God.
2. Check my heart — always, every day. I check for sin, and I ask God to help me throw it out.
3. Serve God — always, every day. I always think of some way to serve God and spread the Gospel.

I must 'look in', and check my heart. Do I have energy for the Holy Spirit?

Part 3: 'Look Up'

Verse 11: ... *servicing the Lord.*

'Serving' means what? The Greek word means 'a slave'. Christian people are God's slaves! That seems a strange word to use, right? But it is true.

A slave belongs to his master, because the master bought him. Christian people belong to God, because God bought us. We are His.

I must remember: I belong to God. Everything I do is for God.

Example: Some pastors do not behave like people who belong to God. Some pastors behave like they want all the attention. Everything they do, they want people to see. They want people to come to their church — why? To spread the Gospel? No — they want a big church, full of people, that's all.

I can use **verse 11** to check these people — and maybe I will be surprised:

1. Are these people active? Yes, they are active. They work hard, preaching and teaching. They pass the test! That is a surprise!

2. Are these people 'hot' with the Spirit? Yes, maybe. Maybe they love God very much, and they are full of energy for God. They pass the test! That is a surprise!

3. Are these people God's slaves? No! They want all the praise and attention for themselves, not for God. They want to become famous. They are not humble enough. They fail the test.

Whatever I do, I remember: I am only a servant, or a slave. I work hard, but I do not have praise or glory for myself. All the praise and glory is for God.

That is why we never clap in this church. Think: have you ever

seen us clap for the pastor? No! We clap for the children in the Sunday School, when we give prizes every year; and we clap for the kitchen staff in the School of Theology. But we do not clap for the pastor, or whoever preaches.

Why not? Because the pastor serves God, not himself. All the praise and thanks must be given to God.

This verse teaches me to 'look up', and think about God. I remember: everything I do is for God.

Example: Sunday is the Lord's Day. We have one day every week that we use to serve God and focus on God. How much of Sunday do I give to God? The morning only? A few hours in church? No! I give the whole day to God. I forget my work and my business; I forget the world's things. I focus on God only for one day. I remember: I belong to God.

Verse 11 teaches me to look:

1. Look around — I look at how I behave, and how I work. Am I busy? Do I serve God? Or am I slow and lazy?

2. Look in — What is my spiritual attitude? Am I 'hot' with the Spirit? Do I love God? Do I have energy for God? Or am I 'cold', and not bothered?

3. Look up — I remember: I belong to God. Everything I have and everything I do, I must give to God.

May the Lord help us all to look around, look in, and look up to Him.

Amen.