

# Romans (12:11)

## *Paul's Boiling Point*

Part 67 - April 2, 2006

### LOSING STEAM

Q: Do you have any projects you began eagerly, enthusiastically, zealously, fervently ... but then somehow just lost your steam? I have a little garage I really want built ... but, ugh! And I have old family photos I want to archive ... but, ugh!

Q: Why do we lose our steam on things we *want* to accomplish?

Q: Could you imagine driving half-way to the airport (to take a trip to Hawaii) and just *losing steam*? "Let's go back home; all that packing and unpacking and sun-screening ... ugh!"

Q: Why is one so exhausting and the other so exciting?

Q: And, why do we lose the steam in our relationships?

At first you delight to do things for each other:

Her: Want to skip that ol' football game and go shopping?

Him: Sure honey-sweetie-sugar-baby-foo-foo-boo-boo-la-la!

But give it some time:

Her: Hey, could you help me bring in all these groceries?

Him: Yeah sure, just a minute, this is sort of important.

Her: It's an "Aflac" commercial.

Him: Just let me watch the *duck*!

And delight turns into demand, which in turn leads to divorce! The same can hold true for our relationship with the Lord, which is why Paul warns us so emphatically:

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. -  
*Romans 12:11 NIV*



The word "fervor" comes from the Latin word "fervens" which literally means "boiling"; spiritual boiling!

- God does not want our faith to lose steam.

## INTENSITY MATTERS

Q: Ever taken a drink of coffee, expecting it to be steaming hot, only to realize it's barely warm?



Q: What do you do?

Since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth! -  
*Revelation 3:16 NLT*

If I'm not piping hot, I'm not pleasing Him. My spiritual intensity matters to the Lord. That's why Paul says, "Never be lacking in zeal" (don't be lazy when it comes to God's Kingdom), "but keep your spiritual fervor".

- Don't just do stuff ... do stuff *passionately!*

It's the same way in marriage: You don't want some mechanical compliance. You want steam and passion and enthusiasm! But, how do you get the steam back once you have lost it? You do the hard work of learning how to communicate. Why? So you can feel loved again.

- Because of our self-sufficient nature we forget how much we need to be loved.

When we feel loved - really *loved* - we desire and aspire to reciprocate it. And the only way we know how to translate our feelings, and communicate our reciprocation, is through actions. We actually *desire* to serve and surrender when we feel loved.

Her: Want to skip that ol' football game and go shopping?

Him: Sure honey-sweetie-sugar-baby-foo-foo-boo-boo-la-la!

Then one of you inadvertently (or angrily, intentionally) wounds the other, and instead of admitting our need to be loved, we say, "I'm not going to serve or surrender to *you!*"

God wants us *pipin hot* and *boiling over* with passion to willfully serve and surrender as an act of *reciprocating* love! And whether we're talking about the Lord or a spouse, this is something that requires ongoing effort. Paul says that it's something we're responsible to "keep", which means "maintain".

It's like a car battery. No matter how much energy and oomph it begins with, if it's not properly maintained it *will* go dead. We must routinely recharge our relationship.

We do this by repeatedly embracing His affection personally. We must allow His Spirit the time and place to refresh and refire our sense of how much He cherishes us, passionately pursues us, and lavishes His love on us.

... God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. – *Romans 5:5 NIV*

One way to know we're filled with God's Holy Spirit is when we have a sense of His overwhelming, unconditional love for us.

## EYES ON THE PRIZE

The church in Ephesus had zeal, but they let their fervor die.

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. – *Revelation 2:2,4 NIV*

They lost their steam. They were doing the right stuff ... wrong focus.

- I have a little garage I really want built ... but, ugh! All I can focus on is the amount of work it's going to take, and the money it's going to cost.
- But with that trip to Hawaii, I'm so focused on the "prize" that the planning, booking, paying, packing, driving, waiting, flying ... paying ... it's all kind of *energizing!*

When we start a project, all we're focused on is the reward. Our eyes are on the prize! And that brings an incredible energy.



But then, as we get into the actual doing, we can lose sight of the value and significance of the goal ... and we lose our steam.

Keep your eyes on the prize, and the work will energize!

Because of our temporal nature, we easily lose sight of long-term rewards and returns.

## GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY

And Paul is quite clear on what, or Who, our focus should be on:

"Serving the Lord"

Q: You know the song, "Gotta Serve Somebody"?

You're gonna have to serve somebody,  
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord,  
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.

If our eyes are not on the prize of Christ, you can bet we're focused on, and serving one of three inappropriate things.

1. We must not serve our appetites.

The Lord calls us to self-control and purity. The flesh calls us to self-indulgence, and impurity.

For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. - *Romans 16:18 NIV*

When we follow carnal cravings or self-glorification instead of Christ we're not simply *servicing* them ... we're openly declaring that Jesus just doesn't measure up to the prize they offer. So, "serving the Lord" means **TRUSTING** His worth, beauty, love, and fellowship as more compelling and desirable than the flesh.

2. We must not serve the opinions of others

There'll be many times when we have to make a conscious choice between being people-pleasers and Jesus-pleasers.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ... - *Colossians 3:23 NIV*

If we're not careful we can become enslaved to the approval of others; living with one eye on what they might be thinking. So, "serving the Lord" means **DEPENDING** on His approval as more valuable than the approval of man, and acting on that conviction.

3. We must not serve our self-righteousness

Serving Jesus is radically different from serving religion. With religion, I check off the little good-deed boxes that make me good enough for God. But, with Jesus, I *receive* the holiness I could never produce for myself. And my good deeds are in gratitude to *His* serving me.

So, "serving the Lord" means **RECEIVING** Him as *my* servant.

[Jesus said] It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. - *Luke 12:37 NIV*

All of *our servicing* is really **TRUSTING**, **DEPENDING**, and **RECEIVING**.

If He needed what we had to offer, we'd get the glory. But He *chose* us as objects of His affection. And if we keep our eyes on the prize of Christ the *servant*; and we embrace the infinite, intimate affection of our Father; we *will* be piping hot, fully charged, and boiling glad!