

Living Sacrifice 3

Resist The Exist

Romans 12:9-13

Memory Verses: Romans 12:9

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

(Carrying a lawn chair and the crowbar) Our theme for the year is "Leverage Your Life" and our motto is on our signs here for you to see and memorize. And our illustration is the crowbar. It's a lever used to dislodge nails and other things. But our hope is that you would take up every metaphorical crowbar that God has blessed you with and use them to dislodge sin and suffering in this world and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to whoever needs to hear it. That you would use the crow bars of financial fortune, of health and time, of spiritual maturity and missions, of family and friends, of homes and vehicles, and of body and spirit to do whatever you can for whoever needs to know Jesus has lived, died, risen and now lives again for their eternal salvation. We must leverage our lives for the glory of God and the Gospel message of salvation. So what's your crow bar? Are you using it?

And I've been wondering... what is the opposite of a crowbar? A crowbar is used for work, for lifting heavy or stuck objects, for getting the job done. What item might be the opposite of that? And I've come up with the lawn chair. (Unfolds lawn chair) The lawn chair represents idleness, laziness, relaxation, taking it easy. Whereas the crowbar is all about getting things done the lawn chair is about getting nothing done. It's about living care free, no worries, no problems, no hurry or urgency. The lawn chair is about me time. And while it's not wrong to spend some time in the lawn chair, the lawn chair is not where we are supposed to live our lives.

But let's get real... this is not only where many people live their lives, this is where many Christians spend their lives. Not with the crowbar in hand doing all they can to leverage their lives for Christ, but in the lawn chair simply letting all opportunities for engagement pass them by... just waiting, just chilling, just existing.

For the past two weeks, we've been asking the simple question: "What does a life transformed by the Gospel actually look like? What does it mean to be a living sacrifice leveraged for the sake of Christ? Two weeks ago, we saw Paul commanding us to lay all of our lives on the altar and surrender both our bodies and our minds to living sacrificially for God. **Galatians 2:20**; We've been crucified with Christ, and we no longer live, but the life we live we now live in Christ.

Then last week David made it clear that living sacrifices sacrifice

themselves not only to Christ, but to one another in the body of Christ, the Church. We are all members one to another. We live for one another, pray for one another, bear with one another, serve one another.

But here's the problem. A church can have people who have said a prayer of commitment to Christ... a church can have people with great gifts and talents... and still not look anything like Jesus. Why? How? Simple, giftedness doesn't automatically produce godliness, and spiritual desire doesn't always produce spiritual servitude.

One of the greatest tragedies one could ever suffer would be this; growing up in religion, having a belief in the one true God and his Son Jesus Christ, having all of the spiritual gifts one could ever hope to have, and being satisfied to simply sit in the lawn chair of faith, putting their salvation on cruise control and merely coast through the years just existing! Not leveraging, not sacrificing... just calling themselves born again and a part of the body of Christ... and yet doing nothing of significance or consequence for the Kingdom of God! That's a tragedy! **If Jesus truly means anything to us, we cannot let our lives pass by, ignoring our holy responsibility while waiting for a heavenly reward.** We must live radically for him now. We must resist the exist. The bottom line today is simple... **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.** Let's look at our passage today in **Romans 12:9-13**. Today we will see five simple ways to avoid an apathetic faith and be engaged in your salvation everyday.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **We Resist The Exist When We Hold Fast To What Is Good.** Look again with me at **vs9**. Hold Fast is a nautical term. It means don't let the rope slip through your hand. If you let that rope go, people may die and the ship may sink! Notice that holding fast is not a passive action... it is active, purposeful, intentional! You must be aware and engaged in order to hold fast. It doesn't just happen because you've been taught how to do it... I think many Christians just assume that they are holding onto good things simply because they have always been "good." The problem is that, life proves this differently! As soon as we stop actively holding onto good and put good on cruise control or in the lawn chair... we start to miss good things... we gradually lose goodness.

You may be familiar with former Hillsong Pastor Carl Lentz. Carl is an amazing speaker, preacher, and personality. He was the lead pastor of Hillsong NYC where he preached to over 8000 people weekly. He was attributed to leading Justin Bieber to Christ and at one point was called the Pastor to the stars. Of course all of that ended when in 2020 he was fired for sexual immorality. And you may assume that this was because Carl was a bad guy. He wasn't. In fact Carl was a really good guy who loved Jesus and desired to see people come to Christ. Early in his ministry he really Held Fast to good things! But as he became more and more famous he gradually

let his grip slip. In his own words he said that his fall "was indeed a gradual, progressive erosion of his boundaries and internal character. Rather than a sudden decision, it was a slow slip.

The bottom line is clear. **You can't just rest in the idea that you are good ... you have to hold fast to good every single day!** Meaning you have to seek good, you have to meditate on good, you have to actually do good regularly... or it will start to slip. **Joshua 23:8** tells us that we must cling to the Lord our God! **When we hold fast to God and to good, a couple of things will become natural. Because of our active intentionality to hold fast to good... two things will passively happen in our life. First, we will be authentically loving people, and two, we will abhor evil things! In other words... you don't have to try hard to be an authentically loving person. Hold Fast to good things and you will naturally be an authentically loving person. And, you don't have to white knuckle, full throttle fight to keep evil and sin out of your life. Hold Fast to good things and you will naturally resist sinful and evil things in your life!**

So... resist the exist. Resist the temptation to let the rope slip through your hands because you think you are good to go! You aren't. You must Hold Fast to what is good everyday! **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**

Second... **We Resist The Exist When We Outdo In Love.** Look again with me at **vs10**. Again, Outdoing is very active! You can't outdo from a lawn chair! You outdo with a crowbar! When we try to outdo one another in brotherly love and honor we flip the script on culture. Culture says we should try to outdo one another in getting noticed, getting rich, becoming successful, getting ours first! Paul says Christians do it different... we try to outdo one another in elevating others! Practically speaking.. this means we don't simply consider ourselves loving people and live passively loving lives. There should never be a doubt as to how loving and caring you are as a believer. It should be clearly seen and apparent. Why? Because resisting the exist means going out of your way to show love and honor to others!

Think about Chic-fil-A. For the past decade they have been the highest rated and most profitable fast food chain in the world. A Chick-Fil-A restaurant makes twice as much annually as their second closest competitor. Suffice to say, Chic-Fil-A is juggernaut. And what do they contribute their success to? Customer service! If you walk into a chic-fil-a you will notice that instead of ignoring you or pretending you aren't there, their employees are basically tripping over one another to help you out! They are always there for a refill, or to clear a tray, or to give you more of their delicious signature sauces. If you go through the drive through they never get your order wrong or treat you like an inconvenience. They are fast and they are friendly and they always let you know that its their

pleasure to serve you.

Now what would it be like if every church was like chic-fil-a? What if every Christian served each other and the world the way a fast food chain does? Makes you think! **Philippians 2:3-4** speaks to this. The point is this... **living sacrifices don't rest in the spotlight... they shine it on others!** So... resist the exist. Resist the temptation to simply think of yourself as a loving person. You must actively love and honor others everyday by trying to outdo them... out serve them... out care for them! **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**

Third... **We Resist The Exist When We Remain Passionate Towards God.** Look again with me at **vs11**. In other words, don't lose your fire! Spiritual passion naturally cools if left unattended. **Anyone knows that if you leave a fire and don't add more logs or fuel that eventually the fire goes out.** It's the same with your passion for God! You don't naturally keep that summer youth camp feeling... you have to constantly stoke it! Again, the one who determines to live a life of existing... might light a fire and then hope it keeps burning on its own. They are content to let it do its thing. Well that thing is that it will eventually die down or go out!

We must resist this by intentionally determining to keep the fire going! How? How do we keep the fire going for Christ? This verse gives one way. Serve! When you determine to serve sacrificially for the Lord, whether its a disaster relief trip, a mission trip, as a children's leader, as part of the worship team, or as a bible study leader.... When you serve you are refueled and reengaged to live passionately for Jesus. I've said it before and I'll say it again... nothing keeps my fire going for Jesus like going on a short term mission trip! You should try it!

Other ways to keep the fire burning? You know them... Stay in the word, stay in prayer, stay in worship, come to church, get in a bible study, watch Christ glorifying media, read Christ glorifying books! Spend time around others who are on fire for Jesus! This isn't rocket science. **Passion isn't just found... its fueled.** So... resist the exist. Resist the temptation to let the fire for God burn out! **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**

Fourth... **We Resist The Exist When We Persevere Through Trials.** Look again with me at **vs12**. The hard truth is this... the world quits when life gets hard. But so do Christians! And then they settle into an apathetic life of simply existing! But this should never be the case! Living sacrifices are already dead to the trials of this world... they keep on going no matter what! Like zombies in the movies... nothing stops them! I've preached on this topic probably 20-30 times over the past 10 years. There's very little more for me to add than what's been said!

Yes bad things happen, yes they suck and they are hard to endure!

But true believers are very hard to overcome because greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world! We have Prayer power. The power to speak to our God and Him speak to us! Prayer makes all the difference! We have Holy Spirit power. That power doesn't quit.. it doesn't give up... it doesn't simply exist! It fights til the very end! Look at **Galatians 6:9**, and **James 1:12**. **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**

Lastly... **We Resist The Exist When We Contribute To The Saints**. Look again with me at **vs13**. Contributing is also an active action. It can't be passive. How would you passively contribute? You can't do anything for anyone from the lawn chair! You have to pick up a crowbar to contribute! We must sacrifice our time, efforts, money, talents, to give them to the work of ministry in collaboration with others in the church! This goes back to what we talked about last week! Living sacrifices sacrifice for the body of Christ and the community of believers!

In 2017 massive flooding happened in Texas. People were stranded, without food, having lost everything... and if they weren't rescued soon they would lose their lives too. So what happened? Ordinary people launched their own fishing boats into neighborhoods. They weren't first responders, they were neighbors. Eventually they were dubbed the "Cajun Navy." They became famous because ordinary people refused to sit comfortably while others suffered. They simply asked, "God what do I have that can be used for you and others today?" They didn't stay seated... they got up and contributed! They resisted the exist! **A living sacrifice looks at what God has given them and uses it to contribute to others.** We must not sit idle. We must leverage our lives! **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**

Application

So instead of asking how does all of this apply to me today, ask yourselves... how in the world does this not apply to me? You can't escape it can you! Every single one of these applies to all of our lives every single day! Paul doesn't call us to platforms of popularity and influence and success. Paul definitely doesn't call us to a lawn chair! He is calling you to a life that refuses to sit in the lawn chair and let life pass you by! He is calling you to a life that holds fast, outdoes, remains passionate, perseveres, and contributes! And none of these requires extraordinary talent. They merely require extraordinary surrender and sacrifice!

Conclusion

Please church, we must refuse to ever adopt a mentality of calling ourselves born again Christians and members of the body of Christ barely doing anything for Christ with our lives! We must leverage our lives everyday. We must resist the exist everyday! We must offer ourselves as living sacrifices everyday! My challenge to you today is to put the lawn chair away! Not actually, but figuratively! Of course you may need a lawn chair around the fire, or at the soccer game, or for the camping trip with the family. There's nothing wrong with the lawn chair... but there is with the lawn chair mentality. The lawn chair is for watching life pass you by! The lawn chair is for religious people who have no desire to be active in their faith! The lawn chair is for those who have forgotten how to hold fast, outdo, be on fire, persevere, or contribute! We can't be a lawn chair church! We can't be lawn chair Christians! We are living sacrifices and... **Being a living sacrifice means we must resist the exist everyday.**