

October 27, 2019

Title: Who's Driving?**[Slide 1]****Text: Romans 12:11****Ready to Roll****The Paddock:****[Slide 2]**

There is a very special place in the auto racing world called simply The Paddock. The Paddock is where crews work on the race cars, getting them ready for the next race or making major repairs to get them back on the track.

A couple of weeks ago I had the chance to go to a major sports car race with my son and grandson. The first thing we did when we got to the track was take a walk down The Paddock. We watched as crews unloaded race cars from trailers and rolled them into a temporary garage. We watched them take the wheels off, service the brakes, work on engines and transmissions, top off fluids, attach spoilers and entire body sections. And then, when a car was ready to go out on the track, the crew would shoo us all out of the way as they rolled the car down the paddock to pit lane. A few minutes later, a car that we had seen partially disassembled now roared around the track at 150 mph!

Never lacking in zeal:

Paul gives the Romans a terse command that fits well with all the activity in The Paddock:

[Slide 3]*Romans 12:11a NIV**Never be lacking in zeal...*

The word Paul uses for "zeal" means *speed, eagerness, earnestness, diligence*. It means being "ready to go" on a moment's notice. It is the

opposite of the other word he uses in this little command: *slow, lazy, hesitant*.

A literal translation of his words would say something like:

"Fast, not slow!" or "Eager, not lazy!"

All that work in The Paddock was designed to make sure that the race car would be ready to go *fast!* Every moving part had to be free to do its thing. No hesitation. No lazy engine!

Ready to roll:

And that is what a renewed mind looks like – a mind transformed to “test and approve what God’s will is (Romans 12:2 NIV). It is a mind that is ready to roll. Eager, earnest, diligent, responsive to God’s leading and direction.

This mindset is the opposite of the mindset of a person in one of Jesus’ parables. In the little story, Jesus tells about a wealthy landowner who entrusts a fortune to three of his servants. Two of them take the wealth and invest it, reaping a large profit. The third, however, buries the wealth in the ground, not even earning any interest. When the landowner discovers what the servant did – and didn’t do – he says:

[Slide 4]

Matthew 25:26a NIV

"You wicked, lazy servant!"

Jesus uses the same word that Paul uses in his warning that we not be lazy or hesitant. We’re to be like that race car engine: itching to go fast for God!

Energized

The Buckeye:

Just before the big race we had a chance to walk the grid and see all the race cars lined up at the starting line. I stopped to talk to one of the pit crew about some of the features of the car he had readied for the race. He pointed out a big round fixture on the side of the car called The Buckeye. This is where they fuel the car during pit stops.

Needless to say, it doesn't matter how good the engine is if it doesn't have any fuel!

Fueled up!

Paul goes on to say:

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Romans 12:11b NIV

...but keep your spiritual fervor.

Another way of translating this verse is by taking the word "spirit" and understanding it as referring to the Holy Spirit:

Be aglow in the Spirit.

Ultimately, both translations say the same thing. We can only keep our spiritual fervor if we are "aglow in the Spirit." He is the fuel, the energy – God's own limitless creative power poured into our lives.

Energized:

A year ago, the lead car in this race ran out of gas just before the checkered flag and had to sit and watch everyone else zoom past him. Bummer.

The same thing can and will happen to you and me if we fail to stay topped off with the fuel of the Holy Spirit. We need to make frequent pit stops. We can't do our life journey on our own strength. It doesn't matter how motivated or eager we are; no gas, no go.

So, as The Message translates this verse:

Keep yourselves fueled and aflame.

Who's Driving?

"Drivers, start your engines!"

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An hour and a half or so before the race the crews push their cars down through the paddock for (hopefully) the last time. The cars take their places on the starting grid, lined up in the order they qualified.

When the crowds have cleared the track, the drivers climb into the cars, buckle up, and wait for the words everyone most wants to hear: "Drivers, start your engines!"

Only then can the race begin. To run the race you need more than a perfectly set up and mechanically sound car. You need more than a full fuel cell. You need a driver who knows what he or she is doing!

Serving the Lord:

Having told us to ready to go, and challenging us to be energized by God's Spirit, Paul then says:

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Romans 12:11c NIV

...serving the Lord.

Paul's audience would have immediately gotten the message here! The word "serving" is the verbal form of the word "slave." The word "Lord" was used for the slave's master. Slaves and servants *serve their master*. He calls the shots.

In much the same way, the well-tuned race car full of fuel needs a master. That's the driver's job. He or she harnesses all of that eagerness and speed, all the power of the racing fuel. The driver is the one who negotiates the turns, puts on the brakes, hits the accelerator. The driver drives the car.

The same is true for you and me. Jesus is the Driver. Not me. Not you.

Who's Driving?

We went to the race all because of my grandson. He had a favorite car: #66. And for much of the race #66 was running either #1 or #2. But then something happened. The driver missed a turn and put the car in the gravel. The time it took to pull the car out and get it back on the track cost the #66 2 full laps, a handicap from which it never recovered. Ugh.

When we try to drive ourselves, the same thing happens. With Jesus driving, we will be at the front of the pack. But when we try to run our lives things go wrong. We end up in the wall or plowing into someone else.

So, who's driving? Who is calling the shots in your life right now? Are you wrestling the wheel away from Jesus? Are you hesitating when He hits the gas? Are you fueled up?

God has purposed nothing less than Victory Lane for you. But only if you let Him do the driving!