

Faithful in Prayer

A message from our Lord!

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by

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Right at the start this morning I have to tell you how excited I am. The Lord has revealed Himself and His will for me in my study of His Word this last week, in truly humbling, yet exciting ways.

You may say – *“Hey, you’re a pastor; you should always find God’s will revealed in scripture. All the time!”* Well, you probably know more about this pastoring thing than I do. For myself, I sometimes find that there are times in my reading when I am not as excited as I am at other times. It may be that rehashing things that I have already found to be true in His Word don’t hold the same level of excitement as when He shows me something new. I’m not 100% certain that I understand it, but that is the best way I can explain it.

Well, He’s done it! Our Father has shown me things that my eyes were not opened up to yet in His Word – and I AM EXCITED! I will get to share some of that with you, but frankly, it won’t be today.

Certainly a few of you know my life verses: **Romans 12:1-2**. They are the very first scriptures that God etched into my thinking – my core, when I first came back to Him after years of prodigal living. Today, and at least tomorrow, we will be looking at **Romans 12**, but not at verses **1 & 2**. While those are the verses, I call my “*life verses*”, I find the whole of **Chapter 12** to have been instrumental in, not only my first months

“in Christ”, but for my personal walk as a believer since that day Abba took me back.

Romans 12:9-13

⁹*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.* ¹⁰*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

¹¹*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.* ¹²*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.* ¹³*Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

PRAYER

Father, we agree with the psalmist that, “^{119:105}Your word is a lamp for our feet, and a light onto our path. We ask that as we open your word today, light for the journey would illuminate our minds. We have confidence that your Holy Spirit will use Your word, to help us to apply it in our own lives in redemptive ways. As you teach and heal us, it is our desire that we can become conduits of love to the least, the last, and the lost, around us. All this we ask through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

These verses start off with the recognition that “*Love must be sincere.*” I’m not going to get into that today, but I will likely use it tomorrow or the next day to show us its’ relation to some verses in **Chapter 12** which we have not yet read. That’s okay – we still need to know the context for everything else in this chapter, is LOVE – sincere love.

While we pray that the time will not come, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that we may end up needing to (**verse 13**) “*Share with the Lord’s people who are in need,*” before this is over. Taking care to not transmit anything beyond what we desire, Judy and I have tried to practice hospitality during this time of COVID-19; taking meals to some of our senior shut-ins.

But let me get to the crux of what I want to share with you today. In **verse 12** we read: “¹²*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*” Let’s take a few minutes to itemize these separate, but associated thoughts.

BE JOYFUL IN HOPE

My guess is that most of us – likely, the vast majority of us – have hope (the expectation) that this COVID-19 pandemic will come to an end. We don’t know when; we don’t know what the final results of it will look like, but we expect that within either a couple of weeks, or a couple of months, we will all return to our normal lives. What I think the Apostle Paul was telling the Roman believers however, is that we should be full of joy while we wait for that time to come.

I know full well that a number of you claim to “love” the epistle of James. I’ve heard you say it again and again. Okay, let’s turn to James.

James 1:2 to be exact. “²*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.*”

My dear friends, it is **ONLY** in challenging times that the Lord is able to “test” the quality of our faith. And the “test” – the measure of how resolutely we believe in the promises of God for ourselves as His children, is when He looks at the level of JOY that we possess in the middle of the storms of life.

Are people able to see that your ‘joy’ has not taken the same dip that the stock market has taken as a result of COVID-19? Does your enthusiasm for the Lord still ring out like it did before this pandemic?

BE PATIENT IN AFFLICTION

The three main synonyms for ‘affliction’ are “illness, sickness, & disease.” Now, unless you’ve got a cold, or the flu, or even the coronavirus; these three don’t seem to apply to us right now. But the last two synonyms for ‘affliction’ just might – “condition & disorder.”

How patient are we with the condition we find ourselves in right now? Are we willing to wait upon the Lord while He sets the time for this period to end? I am not trying to set a parallel between the “end times” and what we are currently facing – some would. But I do know that even after the time when the beast of Revelation puts his mark onto people for buying and selling on earth, the apostle John says, “¹²*This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.*” (**Revelation 14:12**)

We know that persecutions are imminent for believers at that time, but hear John’s encouragement – even in that dark hour. *Patient endurance on the part of the people of God.* What chance do we have of ever living that out, if we cannot patiently endure this lesser trial now?

BE FAITHFUL IN PRAYER

Here we are at perhaps Paul's loftiest instruction for us as believers – **be faithful in prayer**. Paul goes further in his explanation to the young pastor Timothy, when he speaks to him of prayer with these words.

2 Timothy 2:1-8

¹*I urge, then, first of all, that **petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving** be made for all people — ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. ⁷And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I am telling the truth; I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.*

⁸*Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing.*

Did you pick up on it? Did you see the reason that Paul exhorts young Timothy to teach the believers to be about the business of “*petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving, made for all people?*”

It is because God wants (**vs 4**) *all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth*. **THIS** is why we must be:

FAITHFUL IN PRAYER

PATIENT IN AFFLICTION &

JOYFUL IN HOPE.

It is the Father's will to use us as His messengers of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:20 tells us, “²⁰*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.*”

Church of Jesus Christ. In these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, let us be:

Responsibly concerned, but not illegitimately worried.

Do you remember our devotion from the other day as we looked at Jesus and the disciples in the boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee? Do we desire to learn the lesson they learned in the same way – the hard way. Are we content to fuss and worry; not at all concerned about hearing from Jesus, “*Oh, ye of little faith.*”

Or will we believe the Word that our Father is sovereign – that He is in control. Can we rest in Him?

PRAYER