



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 112

Christian living principles – Part 01

Romans 12:12-21

Romans 12:12-21, *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Offering to the Lord our whole soul, body, mind and will,
Romans 12:1-2.

God wants our life as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Him, which is the basic act of spiritual worship. That is the entrance into usefulness.

There are no two Christians alike.

There are no two of us who can serve the Lord alike.

There is tremendous distinctiveness in all of us.

V 12, *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;*

Rejoicing in hope.

No one ever fully served the Lord.

No one ever served the Lord with his whole heart who wasn't constantly aware of hope for the future.

Because when you serve the Lord with your whole heart, things begin to happen to make you hope for the future.

It keeps us going.

We pour out all there is in this life, and we run into opposition, indifference, we see our own weakness and our own failure. Sometimes we do it wrong and have to pick up the pieces.

So, through all our service through the Lord, no matter how enthusiastic or how committed we are, there is always the hope in our hearts of the day when all our service will be done, and everything will be done the way it ought to be done.

The hope of better things is the inspiration of joy in the Christian who serves.

I serve because someday I want to go to the Lord and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

I serve because the day will come as **1 Corinthians 15** says, "The trumpet will sound, and we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

We will say,

1 Corinthians 15:55-58, *"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"* ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁵⁸ *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

We serve the way we serve because we know what's going to happen in the future.

We serve with a whole heart here because we know they will be an eternal reward and an eternal dividend which we long for that.

We hope for that.

We reach out for that.

Romans 8, we wait for the redemption of the body.

We wait for the manifestation of the children of God.

No matter how dark the world is, no matter how hard the task, and sometimes it is very hard, we await the future glory.

We await the time when the King comes to take His own to Himself and reward them for all their work is done, and they rest from their labours.

This is our anchor, that that day is coming, and work will be done.

To serve and seem to be defeated and never able to do all that you should do. Because of our own weaknesses and never see the results we want to receive and not be able to look ahead.

Someday the light will dawn on the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someday the labour will be over.

We will rest from our labours.

We will enjoy an eternal rest in the presence of Christ.

We must see ahead to that day will come. Because we see it, we rejoice in that hope.

We can't always rejoice in the service here because we are overwhelmed with the defeat.

For everything we see that's good, we can always see many things that aren't.

For everything that happens, it thrills us that there are things that haven't happened yet that burden us.

But I rejoice in the future hope.

Because of that, **verse 12**, *we are able to be patient in our tribulation.*

The word patient means to stay under, to remain under.

We can stay under the pressure.

We can stay under the test.

Because we know what is coming. We can endure the trouble, and the pressure.

We can stay under the pressure, serving the Lord, reaching out in hope.

Because we see what is coming in the future, we rejoice.

- We must go through things.
- We must endure the pain.
- We must endure the rejection.
- We must endure the animosity.
- We must endure the struggle with Satan and his demons.

All those things that defy what we want to do for the glory of God.

But that's not the end of the someday there will be an eternal victory. We hope in that. That gives us joy, and it allows us to stay under the pressure.

While we're under, **verse 12**, "*We are diligently in prayer.*"

One of the reasons the Lord keeps the pressure on is to keep us in communion with him.

- If you don't spend time communing with the Lord, it may be because you are not under the pressure.
- You may not be under the pressure because you are not in the service.
- If you are in the service, maybe you are not doing it with great zeal and a fervent spirit.

- If you are in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a bond slave to Him, and you are doing it with all your heart, with excitement and enthusiasm, you are going to be in the midst of trouble and in the midst of pressure.

In the midst of that you can stay under it and rejoice and hope because, you know, what is coming.

You are going to spend time bringing those things to the Lord and being sustained by Him.

The phrase "*Diligently in prayer*" is to continue steadily, to continue instantly, constantly in prayer.

Life becomes sort of an open communion with God.
It's just open all the time.

A prayer response is offered to God. It's just a way of living for me.

Prayer becomes an open communion, where you are totally dependent on God, spiritual breathing.

A Christian who loves purely who hates evil, who sticks to what is good will be tenderly affectionate to other believers. Who will humbly seek to honour others, rather than be honoured.

As a Christian who is service to Jesus Christ will be total enthusiastic, wholehearted, zealous, obedient, diligent service. As a result, trials, tribulation, and pressure will come, but they will be overcome by a strong hope of future glory and reward.

Based on God's promises that will allow that kind of Christian to endure everything that comes and constantly be committing him himself and all that he does to the care of the Lord.

V 13, *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

Pursue the love of strangers, not reluctantly.

Pursue it.

Don't do it reluctantly. Pursue hospitality, the love of strangers. Of course, in that day if you didn't stay in someone's home, you had to stay in one of those inns.

There was a great need for that and as Christians moved around, they opened their homes. The people in various places opened their homes for those traveling Christians, preachers, because that was the best place for them to stay.

The New Testament is literally loaded with those kinds of things.

Titus 1:8, *but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,*

An elder is to be a lover of hospitality, not a reluctant lover of strangers.

1 Peter 4:9, *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

The assumption is that it isn't going to be always easy for us. Do it without grudging, be eager to do it, pursue it here, and the elder is to be a lover of it.

We can do it because we don't have any choice, but we ought to love to do it!

We ought to be generous to guests, give them the best of what we have, share our love with them.

2 Timothy 1:16-18, *The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; ¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. ¹⁸The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.*

His house served the needs of Paul. Generous, gracious hospitality. Part of Christian duty.

Luke 14 where Jesus says if you are going to have a feast, don't call your friends. Call the handicapped, the outcasts and have

them over because the rest of them, they get invited all the time.

You invite the people that don't usually get invited.

Learn to cultivate in your life the fact that everybody that you belong to in the family of Christ is a partner. If they have a need, you have a partnership to share with them.

Yours is not yours. It is ours in that sense.

Learn to cultivate a spirit of love toward those that aren't a part of your inner circle, family, and friends and reach out to them eagerly without grudging and loving to do that.

It is to do your Christian duty.

But in order to be committed to these things, you have got to be disciplined to do the things you know God wants you to do. God help us to live that kind of disciplined life where we eagerly come under the standards the Scripture says and live by them with joy and gratitude.

V 14, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

To pursue someone with the intent of doing harm.

We are to respond to those who pursue us with the intent of doing harm with blessing, that is wishing them the best.

Blessing them, desiring that God would pour out upon them His goodness, grace, and mercy.

This what Jesus did on the cross when He said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Jesus wanted grace to be bestowed on those who were taking his life.

It is the spirit of Stephen.

Acts 7:60, *Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

It says “bless.”

It’s in a present tense.

It’s the idea of constantly blessing.

“To bless” means “to celebrate with praise, to wish good will upon.”

1 Peter 2:21-23, *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

When they came against Jesus, He never retaliated.

There is no mixture of blessing and cursing to be tolerated.

It isn't bless them in addition to cursing them.

It is bless them and do not curse them at all.

This is distinctively Christian living.

Christians are distinctly unearthly.

When we are pursued with intent to do harm, we do not retaliate.

V 15, *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

We enjoy someone else's joy. That is the absence of any jealousy.

To rejoice at someone else's prosperity.

Proverbs 17:5, *He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.*

The ungodly are described as those who are glad at the calamity of others.

Contrast.

2 Corinthians 2:3, *And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.*

It is distinctively Christian to be blessed at someone else's joy, to be able to rejoice with someone else.

What a beautiful characteristic of a Christian.

1 Corinthians 12:26, *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

Christian is to rejoice at someone else's honour, and joy.

V 15, *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

A Christian to be sympathetic, not indifferent.

The world is becoming more and more callous, and indifferent.

The word "weep" means "to shed tears."

A strong word evidence of the Christian sympathy.

So, we are to be marked as those who are very sensitive to those around us. As they have cause for rejoicing, we fully and

totally enter into their joy. Because we love them, care for them. We are so happy that they are so blessed that we can't restrain our joy.

True Christians respect so much the blessing that comes to others and are so thankful that they should be blessed too, enjoy the same thrill.

Christians are in sympathy to understand what it is to share the tears of a friend. The tears of a fellow member of the body of Christ who is in sorrow. This too distinctively Christian in an ever increasingly, indifferent, dull, and insensitive kind of world.

Jeremiah in the Old Testament had a whole life of weeping, which had very little to do with anything happening to him.

Jeremiah was blessed, and Jeremiah was a man full of joy.

Jeremiah 15:16, *Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.*

Jeremiah had joy, but he couldn't really live that joy on the outside absolute because he was so sensitive to the problems of his people.

Jeremiah 9:1, *Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!*

He had such a burden for the salvation of Israel that he wished himself to be literally a fountain of water so he could weep night and day to pour out the anguish in his heart for those people who were perishing without a right relationship to God.

A beautiful expression of pure and sensitive love.

When Christians are pursued by someone who wants to do harm whether in a minimal way or maximum for the cause of Jesus Christ we be persecuted.

Some of us in a more public ministry sense more of that persecution, but others may be getting it at your level, too.

Return that with blessing.

V 16, *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

Be of the same mind one toward another. Very simple thought. It just means think about everybody the same.

- Don't be a respecter of persons.
- Don't play up to certain kinds of people.
- Don't sort of plan your strategy to reach the elite level.

Think of everybody the same. Treat everyone equally.

Romans 15:5, *Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,*

Same idea. We are not to prefer each other over each other.

Philippians 2:1-4, *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Better than ourselves.

James 2:1-9, James says you don't want to respect persons. You want to love everyone the same. If a man comes into your congregation, and he has a gold ring, and he is very wealthy don't give him the best seat. Don't say to the man who is poor,

get under my footstool and out of the way where you belong.
That's not the way the Christian responds.

The Christian distinctive in lifestyle is to treat everyone the same, and that is a very important pattern of life.

It's easy for us to become social climbers.

It's easy for us to want to find ourselves always around the rich, and the famous, and the mighty, and whatever.

That is not distinctively Christian.

Distinct Christianity desires to treat all the same.

Philippians 1:27, *Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,*

1 Corinthians 1:10, *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

All this flows out of love.

All this flows out of humility.

It is essential.

V 16, Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Don't think or concentrate on high things.

Don't pursue the high place, high people, high position, and that which is highly esteemed.

Praise God for those in our church fellowship and those who are friends of mine who are people of high position, or high office, or high estate, significant in the world of men, significant in the kingdom of God.

Praise the Lord for friends of mine who are right down on the ground level, who are equally rich, enriching my life, and who mean as much to me as any others, and that is distinctively Christian, and that's what Paul is saying.

Our feelings are to be so much in line with lowly things that we are perfectly at home with people who are not rising above the ground.

There is no place for aristocracy in the church.

There is no place for an upper crust.

We are to be at home with the lowly as well as the rest.

Luke 14:12-14, *Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbours, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

Do you want to know something?

You bring over the rich, the rich will pay you back.

You bring over the poor, guess who will pay you back.

The Lord will pay you back, for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

So, who do you want it from, the rich or God?

The rich are the richest.

It's nice when you have people over and they respond and have you over or give you a gift.

But their gift can't match what the Lord will give. So next time you have a dinner, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind who could never have you over, who could never pay you back. Learn to be at home, to be carried away with those people who are of low estate by the world's standards.

The truth of the matter is the idea of low estate has nothing to do with spirituality.

It is not to say they are low level spiritual.

It is to say that on the social scale they are at the bottom rung. Very often that some of those people who are low on the social scale are very high on the spiritual one.

If you are to life of humility that has everybody the same, treats everybody the same, you not only must not concentrate on high things, but come down and be carried away with those on the lowest level.

But secondly, you cannot be wise in your own conceits. Don't become wise with yourself, thinking you know everything.

Don't be satisfied that everything begins and ends with you.

“Lean not on your own understanding.”

If you are to treat everyone equal, there are two things you are going to have to realize.

In the church there is no social aristocracy and there is no intellectual aristocracy.

- There is no social aristocracy.
- There is no intellectual aristocracy.
- There are no castes in the body of Christ.
- That's the way it ought to be.

People come to our church are the ones who love the word of God. Because we preach the truth without any compromise.

We are to reach down to the people who are lowly and up to the people who are high and not pursue either one but be available to both.

Final circle:

V 17, Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

What about the Old Testament where it says in **Exodus 21, Leviticus 24, Deuteronomy 19** ‘**an eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth**?’”

That is talking about public law.

That Mosaic prescription has to do with the nation.

A nation is to have a system of justice that retaliates against evil.

So that where there is murder, there should be the execution of a murderer.

Where there is a theft, there should be retribution brought upon the thief. There is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth in a society as ruled by men in a government that is ordered by law. But that is not to be for private revenge!

What is God's design for the society is not vigilante law.

Romans 13:4, *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

There is built into society the avenging. When a society doesn't do that, I believe it puts itself in the judgment of God.

When you read the Old Testament, you will find out God demands blood for blood.

We in our society allow crime to go unpunished.

Our society bears the responsibility for that because we have not reciprocated against evil by the judicial process, the law of God, which is ordered for a society. So, our society bears the guilt of failing to punish evildoers.

But as far as private revenge, there's no place for that.

"Pay back no man evil for evil."

That is not our place.
We do not retaliate.
We do not have that kind of spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:15, *See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*

1 Peter 3:9, *not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

It's almost an exact quote. Instead of giving back evil give back good. Give back good.

V 17, *Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.*

To take thought in advance, to plan to do that, to premeditate your goodness so that you are not caught unaware.

When somebody does something evil to you, if you are just set up for momentary reaction then you are going to act with evil against evil.

That is your natural reaction. So, you must premeditate and predispose yourself to do good when evil comes.

A disciplined life is an ordered mind where all reactions are premeditated so that when something comes, I am not left to react with my bare and raw emotions humanly.

But I have already thought it through, perceived it beforehand. Prepared for it in advance, and should it happen I am ready to respond with goodness.

That's the premeditated, ordered, disciplined life.

He is saying premeditate your goodness.
Don't be caught unaware.

When someone does evil to you then do good to them in a way, they can see it and it's visible.

It isn't just thought.
It isn't just a private emotion.
It is a visible act of goodness.

So that we return something good, kind, and gracious to them.

Our behaviour should commend us to those who do evil against us.

Very basic principle.

The Christian is to think through his responses so that when he is confronted with an evil situation, he has premeditated a right response. So that he rightly represents the God he belongs to!

Titus 2:10, *not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.*

Paul adds another thought here including our personal enemies.

V 18, *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

There are some people you try to make peace with, it's not possible.

You can't do it. Sometimes you just don't know what is left to do. You have tried everything there is to do, and you can't seem to do it.

You are comforted that it says here, "If it's possible," and even the Holy Spirit knew it wasn't always possible.

"As much as lies in you."

Why?

Because it takes two to make peace!

So, if it's possible, as much as comes on your end, never let the conflict come from you. Never. Always make peace.

Don't care whether they are right or wrong about their condemnation, make peace. From your side make peace. Don't choose conflict.

"As much as depends on you"

Sometimes it's very difficult to know how far to go.

To make peace here am I going to have to compromise the truth?

This person is going to be furious with me unless I change my doctrine, or unless I say I am wrong, you are right.

So, you must come back to that little phrase, *"as much as depends on you."*

There are some points in me where you come to the bottom line and it's non-negotiable.

We will have peace.

I will do everything can I compromise the truth to have peace?

No!

I won't do that.

One thing I can't do is that I will not violate the Word of God.

Listen to the words of” Prince of Peace “Jesus.

Matthew 10:34-36, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to ‘set^[i] a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

Jesus said, “I know that there are going to come times when even though I come in peace I can’t bring peace, and I will not compromise truth.”

Live peaceably with all men. Seek to be a peacemaker.

The world is full of troublemakers.

James 3:17, *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

Don’t be a troublemaker. Seek peace,

V 19, *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

Don't you execute justice.

The word literally means to punish.

Don't you go around punishing people for their evil. You are not called to do that.

Give over to the wrath of God.

Deuteronomy 32:35, *Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them.'*

Let the Lord do it. Don't you do it.

Don't you return evil for evil.

Don't you avenge.

Don't you punish someone.

Let the Lord do it.

This is God's promise.

He will deal with sin.

No sinner will ever escape his just reward.

- I don't feel any need to do vengeance.
- I don't feel any need to punish anybody.
- I don't have to retaliate.

God does that.

God is a just God.

Nahum chapter 1, Habakkuk chapter 1, Psalm 37, Psalm 94.

God will repay evil.

V 20, Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Don't give him vengeance. Give him help.

Why?

Do you want to know where it comes from?

An old Egyptian ritual that was known in the old world.

When a man in the Egyptian culture wanted to demonstrate his public shame, his public guilt, when he wanted to show his spirit of repentance, he would carry on his head a pan of burning coals, which were supposed to represent the burning pain of shame, the burning pain of guilt.

Paul is saying when you treat an enemy with love, and you feed him, and quench his thirst, you put on his head a burning shame for the evil done.

You make him feel a burning shame.

V 21, *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Distinctively Christian.

The word overcome is ***nika***.

We get Nike, the Nike Missile, the Nike shoe, which means “victory.”

Be the victor, be the conqueror, overcome evil by doing good.

Don't be a victim. Be a victor.

Conclusion:

What is a Christian and how distinctively are we to live?

We begin with pure love, hating evil, holding fast to what is good.

Humbly, affectionately being concerned with others.

Enthusiastically, fervently, with maximum effort serving the Lord.

When the inevitable resistance to that service comes, we face it with hope, and joy, and believing prayer.

When we see others who are in the same kinds of trials, we reach out to them and share our possession and our homes with all who have need.

When we are opposed in our service to Christ, we bless those who oppose us and who persecute us.

We reach out to enjoy the joy of others and to endure the pain of others.

We have no desire for personal prestige.

We seek neither position nor office.

We do not regard only those who are high people, but we love to fellowship equally with those on the lowest level, and we are marked by a humility that knows no intellectual or social aristocracy.

Even those who personally harm us, we do not return evil against them, but we desire to overpower them with good no matter what they have done.

We assign any vengeance, any judgment, and any punishment to God.

In the end, we are the overcomers.
We are the winners.

That is how Paul says justification touches life.