

Name _____ Date _____

The Sonship Life Study Guide

Romans Education, Part Two Student Edition: Book 4

Welcome to The Sonship Life study guide. This book is designed to coincide with the power point presentation and video lessons.

The video lessons are found on Vimeo. Please call (888) 605-3202 for logon information for MBI's Vimeo channel.

Students which need help during the week can contact MBI for help at the following email: mbibiblestudies@gmail.com

Write to us at: MBI P.O. Box 305 Imperial, TX 79743



Table of Contents

Session Fifteen: The Application of Godly Wisdom

Interactive Notetaker	5
Session Notes.....	7
Self-Test.....	16
Edification Evaluation and Prayer	17
Self-Test Answers	18

Session Sixteen: Fervent in Spirit

Interactive Notetaker	19
Session Notes.....	20
Summary.....	28
Edification Evaluation	29

Session Seventeen: Serving the Lord

Interactive Notetaker (Figure 2).....	30
Session Notes.....	31
Self-Test.....	42
Summary.....	43
Reservoir of Knowledge #1 <i>The History of Work and Leisure</i>	44
Self-Test Answers	47
Edification Evaluation.....	48

Session Eighteen: Rejoicing in Hope

Interactive Notetaker	49
Session Notes.....	51
Self-Test.....	60
Summary.....	61
Self-Test Answers	62

Session Nineteen: The Effectual Working of Romans 12:12

Interactive Notetaker	63
Session Notes.....	65
Self-Test.....	75
Summary.....	76
Self-Test Answers	77

Session Twenty: Giving and Hospitality

Interactive Notetaker	78
Session Notes.....	79
Self-Test.....	84
Summary.....	85
Self-Test Answers	86
Edification Evaluation.....	87

Session Twenty-one: Bless them which persecute you:

Interactive Notetaker	88
Session Notes.....	89
Self-Test.....	97
Summary.....	98
Self-Test Answers	99

Session Twenty-two: Rejoice and Weep

Interactive Notetaker	100
Session Notes.....	101
Self-Test.....	110
Summary.....	111
Self-Test Answers	112

Session Twenty-three: Be of the Same Mind One Toward Another

Interactive Notetaker	113
Session Notes.....	114
Self-Test.....	120
Summary	121
Self-Test Answers	122
Edification Evaluation.....	123

ACRONYMS

A. V.	Authorized Version
FED	Fully-Educated Daughter
FED	Fully-Educated Daughter
RoK	Reservoir of Knowledge
SoC	Sufferings of Christ
SoPT	Sufferings of this Present Time
DoGG	Dispensation of Gentile Grace

NOTETAKER

Romans Education, Part Two Session 15

Fig. 1: The Breakdown of Godly Wisdom

Vv. 3-10: Our attitude toward _____

Vs. 11: Our attitude toward _____

Fig. 2

The Breakdown of Vs. 11

Phrase 1: Tells us _____

Phrase 2: Tells us _____

Phrase 3: Tells us _____

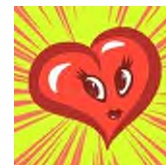


Fig. 3

Negative Exhortations



Romans 12:2 ..._____ to this world...

Romans 12:3 ... _____ *of himself* more highly...

Romans 12:9 Let love be _____...

Romans 12:11 _____ in business...

Fig. 4: How to Develop Slothfulness at Work

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Romans Education, Part 2 Notes

Session 15: The Application of Godly Wisdom

So far we have seen the establishment of godly love in us by the two core features of selflessness and lovingkindness. In vv. 11-16, we are taught how to take those key characteristics of godly wisdom and apply them to various relationship areas of our lives.

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
¹² Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
¹³ Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. ¹⁵ Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. ¹⁶ *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Each of these verses deal with a particular context:

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our work; our attitude toward business.

We have already covered the doctrine in vv. 3-10. Now we will take up our study in vs. 11. What we will notice is that the instruction has changed. Paul is stepping aside from giving us core features of godly love and charity to exhort us to the practical application of them in various aspects of our everyday lives.

One thing is sure, this is not just a motivational list of things to do in our flesh. These are all opportunities to put what we have learned so far into practice.

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

It is readily apparent by the first phrase in vs. 11 that the setting has changed from the local assembly to now being “business;” the job we work to make a living. In the context of what we have been learning and edified unto, we are now being exhorted to take the godly love generated in us and apply it to our thinking about the business world.

Our Father’s view of business is that it should be carried out by His saints with selflessness and lovingkindness. The phrase “It’s just business” is not a valid

excuse to God for being selfish or unkind just because we are at work, and not at the church building. Our Father means for godliness to permeate every area of our lives and that includes work.

But to be more specific, the three issues contained in vs. 11 are not so much about our relationship with our business associates and co-workers, but they are about our attitude toward work itself. Verse 11 is training us to think about work in a particular way; a godly way.

Why? Because we all grow up with a worldly view of work. Or to say it like Paul said it in Romans 12:2; our thinking about work is “conformed to this world.” Romans 12:11 is going to transform us so that we think about work like our Father does. And that process begins by “the renewing our mind” concerning business.

The idea of “business” does not always conjure up a pleasant picture in people’s minds. But remember, we are going to be laboring with God in His eternal business throughout the ages to come. It is His intention for us to be directly involved in His business.

We even have an inheritance in connection with His business; one that is separate and distinct from our inheritance which comes from simply being “in the family.” Business is important to God. In fact, He is the author and creator of it, for the angels were involved in various work activities (business) in the 3rd heaven before God created the earth.

How do you think they got those white, linen robes; magic?

The manna that God fed the children of Israel with was “angels’ food.” Where do you think the “corn of heaven” came from? The principles of farming and textiles and industry were taking place in the 3rd heaven long before men came along.

Vs. 11 is educating us that: No matter what we do for a living, there is a particular way our Father wants us to view the earthly “business” we are a part of.

I believe it is true that we are to make an impact on employees and employers alike by means of the attributes of godly love being manifested in our treatment of them. We should desire that, be praying about that, and working to that end.

But the main intention of vs. 11 is to get us thinking about “business” the way our heavenly Father does. Our attitude toward our work and the way we work is the practice field for our work in the heavenly places in the ages to come. Yes, our work is an opportunity to put godliness on display to men and angels. Our work is also an opportunity to change the way we think about business so that our thinking aligns with our Father’s thinking.

So why does vs. 11 more directly pertain to our attitude toward work than our impact on our fellow workers? The answer is found in the order of things; first things first. In the case of business, we will never have the impact on our fellow-workers which God wants us to have until we start thinking about business the way He does.

Otherwise, the message is incongruent to those we work with. Even without knowing the doctrine, they will sense the “tension” between what we say and how we act. The result is the rejection of our message. Until we adopt a godly attitude about business, our words and actions will not have the effect we want them to have.

We will talk more about this shortly.

As the old saying goes: “What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you are saying.” But here is how the Bible talks about it: “Not slothful in business.” And there are two more components in vs. 11 that pertain to the context of business: “fervent in spirit” and “serving the Lord.”

The first phrase in vs. 11 tells us not to be conformed to the world in the sense of being slothful.

The second phrase in vs. 11 tells us what to be “fervent” and instructs us how to do that.

The third phrase in vs. 11 provides our motivation for thinking about business properly as adopted sons and daughters; because it is a means of serving the Lord.

For now, let us examine the first phrase; “not slothful in business.”

Paul exposes the way the world in general thinks/works and exhorts us not to do that, and then he tells us what we should think/do and exhorts us to do that.

It is not uncommon in this chapter for Paul to make contrasts.

Romans 12:2 example: “...**be not conformed** to this world, but be ye transformed...” (Here you have what not to do and then what to do)

Romans 12:3 example: “...**not to think of himself more highly** than he ought to think, but to think soberly...”

Romans 12:9 example: “Let love be **without dissimulation**...be kindly affectioned one to another...”

And now, we have a similar type thing taking place in vs. 11.

“**Not slothful** in business” (*what not to do*); “fervent in spirit” (*what to do*).

Paul does not refer to any *particular* occupation, but is referring to *all* the labor which we may have to do. If you are not slothful, what are you?

OED: Slothful

- 1) Of persons: full of sloth; indisposed to exertion; inactive, indolent, lazy, sluggish

What are the antonyms of slothful?

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the antonyms of slothful are (among other words): ambitious, diligent, zealous, and fervent.

Are we then surprised to find the next phrase begin with “fervent?” No, as it is the polar opposite of “slothful.”

Let’s talk just for a moment about slothfulness. Slothfulness is mentioned 17 times in your Bible. Sixteen of those are in the Old Testament with 14 of the 16 being in Proverbs. Jesus mentions it once in Matthew, Paul mentions it once in Romans and the book of Hebrews mentions it once.

But these are just the direct references to the word slothful.

Lots of bad things happen to those who are slothful and the Bible has a lot to say about them.

Now, there are several reasons for Paul to exhort us not to be slothful:

- It is destructive for us
- It is destructive for our family (especially dependents)
- It is destructive to society
- It diminishes our reputation and hence, our message
- It is ungodly in its thinking, living and labor
- It hinders our sonship lives
- It steals our future, both here and in the ages to come
- And, it is destructive to our work

How to Develop Slothfulness at Work

Let me give you some tips on how to become slothful at work.

1. Only do the very minimum at work

Proverbs 18:9 He also that is **slothful in his work** is brother to him that is a **great waster**.

Proverbs 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for **his hands refuse to labour**.

That means come to work at the very last minute and leave at the earliest you can. In order to do the least amount of work possible, you must learn to waste as much time during the day as you can. Here are some tips on how to waste time: 1) Talking to others is a great way to waste time. This has the advantage of not only wasting your day at work, but you can waste your co-worker's day as well. And if you are really good at slothfulness, you can not only waste your days, you can ruin both of your careers in the process! I know that seems like a lofty goal, but the constant application of slothfulness can achieve it. 2) Another thing you can do is conduct personal business during your work day. Make personal phone calls, send personal emails, anything except what you were hired to do. In general, waste as much time as possible; do as little as possible.

2. Learn to hit the snooze button

Proverbs 19:15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

Proverbs 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

If you hit the snooze button for an extra 15 minutes per morning, 5 days a week, you will have slept an extra 3,900 minutes a year, or an extra 65 hours in bed!

(Just think what you could do with that 65 hours if you applied it to your Sonship Life, read your Bible, organized your day, wrote a to-do list, spent time in prayer, read your notes, looked over the self-test from the previous Sunday, wrote a note of encouragement to a fellow saint, wrote a love note to your spouse, wrote a note of encouragement to your kids, etc.)

Proverbs 26:14 As the door turneth upon his hinges, so **doth the slothful upon his bed.**

Just like a door that swings open and shut by staying in place, the slothful man turns from one side to the other by staying in place in bed. Spend time in bed, but only in the morning when there is work to do. You can stay up late at night if entertainment is involved like laying on the sofa and watching T.V.

The main point here is: Do not get up on time and certainly do not get up early; spend as much time in bed as possible.

3. Learn to make great excuses

This is one of the most indispensable skills of a slothful man. But let's not forget, we are talking about work, so to apply our slothfulness to our job, make sure you get up late. And when you do, and you are late to work, you can find excuses for why you are late. There is a great excuse used by the slothful in Proverbs, though we may not be able to use it ourselves today.

Proverbs 22:13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is a lion without*, **I shall be slain in the streets.**

Proverbs 26:13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way; **a lion is in the streets.**

The slothful man cannot get to work because there is a lion in the streets; it's not safe! The truth is, there was no lion; it was just an excuse. It is like "the dog ate my homework." The point here is to get your excuses together and be inventive.

But I hasten to add, for a man to truly be slothful, he needs to learn to use excuses all the time, the more the better. Excuses for tardiness, for why your work couldn't get done, for why lunch break went over, for leaving early, for not returning that phone call, for not seeing that client, for not writing that proposal...you get the idea.

And everyone knows that a true sloth makes excuses for everything in his life, not just work.

4. Do not have any goals

This is important because if you have no goals, then you have no direction. Let every day be uncertain, for that is the path of the slothful.

Proverbs 15:19 **The way of the slothful *man* is** as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

The way of the slothful man is not clear about his work; he does not know where he is going or how to get there. He does not know what to do or why he should. Looking at his path is like looking at hedges of thick briars; there is just no way to go. So, in order to be a good sloth, do not have a plain path; a path that is clearly marked out.

If you are going to become a good sloth, then lack of direction is essential. If you are going to wreck your future, then do not set goals which will give you direction in your work. And certainly do not work from a checklist. The biggest help to your slothful condition is lack of clarity about as much of your life as possible. Be as disorganized as possible.

If you are forced to do something, just keep in your head and never write it down. That way, when you don't do it, you can say, "I forgot."

5. Be very poor at your work and never improve

Here is the rule: a good sloth only does enough to keep from getting fired, a great sloth doesn't care. But, we have to crawl before we can walk, so at least learn to do only enough not to get fired. Later, as you advance in your slothfulness, you can quit caring.

There is something else connected to being poor at your work; by all means, do not do anything that would make others think you are good at what you do. And do not become good at what you do. Do not read about your job or study to be better. Do not strive for excellence. Take no pride in your job. Just think of your job as a paycheck and nothing more.

6. Complain about your boss, your company and your co-workers as much as you can

Proverbs 26:16 The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit **than seven men that can render a reason.**

Talk about how they are no good and how they are holding you back, and they are the reason you are not successful. Take time to criticize things about your job every day. Criticism is the fastest way to destroy relationships.

I know we are talking about work here, but this point of criticism works on everything; your kids, your spouse, your friends; everyone. You will know you are doing this right when no one likes you, when your kids are unhappy and your spouse is angry. But getting back to the subject at hand, you know you are on track when your boss is upset with you.

7. Do not manage your time well & do not plan your day

8. Do minor tasks, avoid doing things of value

The sloth can be busy, but in his own way. But what he will not do is stoop to accomplish things of value. How else will he always be a victim?

Proverbs 13:4 The soul of **the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing:** but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Proverbs 6:10 *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:* ¹¹ So **shall thy poverty** come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Proverbs 19:15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and **an idle soul shall suffer hunger.**

I want to end this session with the words of our apostle: “Not slothful in business.”

There is always the tendency of our flesh to shortcut the process, to lower our expectations of ourselves, to give less than our best, to sacrifice comfort and ease, and to do the least we can do. In other words, our flesh is always leaning toward slothfulness and if left unchecked, it will go there.

But Paul does not want us to become diligent in the energy of our flesh, but he wants us to be transformed into diligent people who are diligent because of the life of Christ in them. This is the difference between you and the diligent unsaved man.

With the life of Christ in us, we can work a job we don’t like, for a boss who is a jerk, with co-workers who are slothful, and instead of throwing in the towel (and becoming slothful ourselves), we can find that even that job can work together for our good!

Just as in other things, this is the patient endurance of a difficult situation for the purpose of producing the life of Christ in us.

It is possible to view work in a completely different way than the world does and that is exactly what a son is supposed to do.

Self-Test

1. What are vv. 11-16 designed to do?

2. Each of vv. 11-16 deal with a particular context; what is the context of vs. 11?

3. The lesson listed 8 ways in which a person can develop slothfulness at work, list as many as you can.

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Edification Evaluation & Prayer

At this point in the doctrine of vs. 11, we have not yet come to point where this can fully effectually work in us; not yet. In order for edification to take place, we will need the information about the next two phrases, especially the last one.

As it happens, we will not yet be able to pray about this properly until we have those last two pieces.

So for now, the thing to do is evaluate how, by employing the human mechanics of organizing, you can improve your work. This is a good time to become excellent at what you do for a living.

Ask yourself, how much you plan to improve. What new things you are learning? What are you reading as it pertains to becoming more excellent at your job?

Of course you can talk to God about your attitude in all of this, but by the end of vs. 11, the doctrine will have produced a certain mindset in you which your Father wants you to have.

Self-Test Answers

1. What are vv. 11-16 designed to do?

These verses exhort us to take the godly love and charity generated in us by vv. 3-10 and move us out of the local assembly to employ our godly wisdom to various relationships and contexts of our lives.

2. Each of vv. 11-16 deal with a particular context; what is the context of vs. 11?

Business, or work, what we do for a living

3. The lesson listed 8 ways in which a person can develop slothfulness at work, list as many as you can.

- Do only the minimum at work
- Hit the snooze button
- Make great excuses
- Do not have any goals
- Be very poor at your work and never improve
- Complain about everything
- Do not manage your time well or plan your day
- Do minor tasks, avoid doing things of value

Fig. 1: Two Ways to be Fervent

1. _____



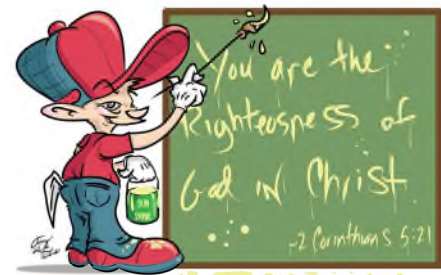
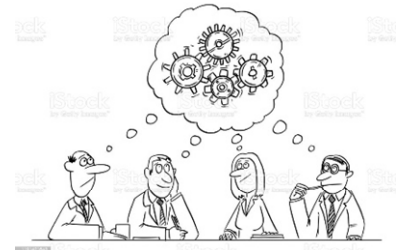
MOTIVATED



2. _____



MOTIVATED

Fig. 2: Applying Sonship Principles at Work

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Session 16: Fervent in Spirit

Now let's take a look at the second phrase in vs. 11, which is the exhortation of what to do in contrast to "Not slothful in business."

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; **fervent in spirit**; serving the Lord;

Notice this is a small case "s" in spirit. This means that Paul is referring to our human spirit and not the 3rd person of the Godhead.

What does it mean to be "fervent in spirit?" Our word "fervent" comes from the French word which means to burn, boil or glow." So, to be fervent in spirit is to be passionately and intensely disposed toward something; in this case, our work!

OED

Fervent: ardently, passionately, vigorously

Humanly speaking, it is much easier to be passionate about your work if you are doing something you love to do. If you do not know what it is you love to do, ask yourself this question, "If money was no issue, what would I like to spend my life doing?" The answer/answers to that question is what you might want to consider doing for a living.

Of course, some things do not have enough market value to do for a living. In that case, you must do something else. And since we are talking about it, let me add something to that; not only is it easier to work at something you enjoy, but the corollary to that is this: become excellent at whatever it is that you do. And by excellent, I mean in the top 10% of those who do it.

Some people really enjoy doing a certain thing (like art, for example) but they are not yet good enough at it to make a living doing only that.

But notice that Paul does not say to be fervent if your job happens to be one you enjoy and would do for free if you could. Neither did he specify only certain kind of jobs to be done fervently. Whatever "business" you are in, the exhortation is to be fervent in spirit.

But so far, we have only talked about the natural, human perspective of business. No matter what your job is, no matter how much you like it or despise it, the exhortation remains the same; do it fervently in spirit.

Now let's talk about the "in spirit" part. There are a couple of ways to look at this phrase.

The first way to understand "fervent in spirit" is to be excited, worked up, or on fire about something.

When there is **an external cause** (the "ex" = out) which stirs us to action that is what it means to be excited.

OED: Excite

To set in motion, to rouse, to awaken, to provoke to action.

It has to do with creating an emotional frame of mind which would animate us to action. An example of this would be "the spirit of '76." During the Revolutionary War, there was this intense desire for general and personal liberty that pervaded the country; this mindset of liberty ("spirit of '76") animated Americans during the conflict.

The second way to understand "fervent in spirit" is not in the sense of excitement, but enthusiasm. While these words are synonyms, there are very different words.

Enthusiasm

- 1) Inspiration as if by divine power; being directly subject to some divine impulse
- 2) Enkindled fervor of soul; ardent and imaginative zeal

Notice that enthusiasm starts with "en" which means "in" and not "ex" which means "out."

One of the main differences between excitement and enthusiasm is that excitement comes from outside of you and enthusiasm comes from within you. And since Paul is talking about fervency inside of us, in our human spirit, then

the better way to look at this is to have the proper enthusiasm about business; a motivation that comes from within us and not outside of us.

And since we have the “thous” (God) part of the word, then it means we are motivated by God in us, or by something God is doing in us. Think about that; God in us. That is pretty close to Christ in us, the hope of glory, isn’t it?

When I read this verse, I am looking at Paul saying this: don’t approach your daily work as though it has no part in your spiritual life; bring the fervency of Christ in you to your workplace. Put the principles of sonship to your business.

Therefore, since excitement is about outside occurrences that stir up emotion, it is often short-lived; however, enthusiasm is more long-lasting.

What I want us to see is the connection between “fervent in spirit” and enthusiasm. Paul is not exhorting us to have a good attitude about our work because our work is rewarding, our boss is wonderful, we are appreciated for the work we do and we are treated respectfully; those are outward motivations. Paul is exhorting us based on something that is happening in our inner man; Christ is being formed in us by our obedience to the doctrine.

The Bible is not just making a motivational speech here. Paul is not asking us to psych ourselves up for going to work each day. Repeating the mantra “I love my work, I love my work” when you actually hate your work, is only an exercise in conditioning your fleshly mind, which if you are a lost person, is as good as you can do.

But for those of us who know who we are in Christ, Paul is not asking us to stir up a level of excitement in our flesh so we can go do something we don’t enjoy.

Look, even the world knows about slothfulness and diligence. But for us, as sons and daughters who have been given the Spirit of adoption, it is that which is being formed in our human spirit that keeps us from being slothful.

So, what is being formed in our human spirit as adopted sons and daughters? Christ is being formed in us. That life of Christ is first formed in our spirit; that is where edification begins. As the doctrine transforms us, it changes our soul and godliness becomes a present reality.

“Fervent in spirit” is about the boiling, fiery, burning desire to put the life of Christ on display outside our assembly, in our business! We don’t *have* to do it, we *get* to do it! It is the intense, passionate display of godliness in our work.

The motivation to put godliness on display does not depend upon how much we like our job, how nice our boss is, how industrious our fellow employees are or any such external motivations. The motivation to put godliness on display comes from within, from our human spirit when Christ is being formed in us.

Learning this principle will allow you to love unconditionally, to give with simplicity, and to manifest godliness in an ungodly world. This is what causes us to value and esteem our fellow members and to manifest it by our Christ-like actions toward them. And this is what keeps us from being slothful in business.

Serving the Lord

And that leads us to the motivation for this fervency of spirit, the last phrase of vs. 11; “serving the Lord.”

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; **serving the Lord**;

In a nutshell, when we are engaged diligently in our work, fervently putting godliness on display, we are serving the Lord. In fact, if you have a job, you should see that job as you working for the Lord in that job. Yes, you have a human boss, but ultimately our work should reflect our service to God in that job.

If we begin to see business the way our Father does, then it works to prepare us for our work in His business.

If you own the business-

- If I am the boss, I will view my position as one of helping and developing my employees
- I view this business as though it belongs to the Lord
- If you own the business, you ought to give it to God

If you do not own the business you work for:

- I will submit to my boss/bosses (as unto the Lord)

- I view my boss as the Lord's servant to help me sharpen my sonship skills (of diligence/patience/endurance/kindness/ selflessness/etc.) as well as my job skills
- I will conduct myself as an adopted son (or daughter)
- I view my work as though I am working for the Lord

I know motivational/business speakers say you are working for yourself, but they have a worldly view of business, not godly. Their motivations are carnal and temporal, not spiritual and eternal. Therefore it will all be burned up at the JSOC. You can live for yourself, but at the end, it is an empty sack, just like the parable Jesus spoke about to Israel.

Luke 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

If a man is not rich toward God, his earthly riches are of the counterfeit variety.

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; **serving the Lord;**

We are to regard ourselves as servants of the Lord in connection with even our worldly employment and work. There is a natural tendency to disconnect our love for God from our work. It is not that we do so on purpose, but most often because we do not see a connection. As we engage in our livelihood, we are prone to overlook ways to bring our education into every area of life. But our work place is a great opportunity to promote God's glory.

The phrase "serving the Lord" is to be seen as connected with the previous two phrases in that we are not slothful in business and we are fervent in spirit, to put

the life of our Savior on display in our work because in this way we actually “serve the Lord.”

The proper discharge of our duties in the various employments of life should be seen as service to God Himself. God, who set up this whole system of business and employment has made our industriousness an essential part of our happiness and success.

It is our Father’s will and it is to His glory that we conduct ourselves in this godly manner in connection to our work.

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or **whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.**

Ephesians 6:5 **Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters** according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, **as unto Christ;**

Colossians 3:17 And **whatsoever ye do** in word or deed, ***do all in the name of the Lord Jesus***, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Enduring hardships at work actually add to our joint-heir inheritance.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ **And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;** ²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

And now you know that putting the life of Christ on display in our work also has an impact on our joint-heir inheritance. Yes, we have a difficult job and work for a difficult boss, but the patient endurance of these, while we allow the life of Christ to be lived through us will result in an eternal inheritance. Of course, you can always change jobs, but instead of just talking to God about the worldly reasons for changing jobs, think about how changing jobs will impact your inheritance and the skill to exhibit godliness in the face of difficulties.

We must not separate the great truths of Romans 12:1-2 from the everyday details of our lives. What has been done for us and given to us as a free gift of grace, the elements of our new identity in Christ for example, are so grand that no thoughts we could conjure up on our own could ever attain unto what has been done to us and for us. Think of it; not only have we been forgiven every sin but we have been given the very righteousness of Jesus Christ as our standing before God. Our estrangement from God has been changed from enemies to sons!

We have been given a sanctified status whereby we have been made dead to sin and alive unto God so that we could truly serve God out of what He has done and not in the futile efforts of our flesh. And then, to cap that sanctified status off, we have been given the Spirit of adoption in connection with being offered the chance to go to work with our Father in His business!

Do you know anything better than that? You don't, even if you think you do. We recognize the greatness of what has been done for us, but the danger lies in these things being so grand and so great that a great distance lies between them and the comparatively trivial details of our everyday lives. And that distance is so great that we fail to bring the greatness of one into contact with the smallness of the other.

We must learn to import the great sonship truths into the small details of our everyday lives.

We get to Romans 12:2 with all the glorious truths of what is ours in Christ but there we stop. We know that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Son of God. Considering the price of our salvation, we also realize we should walk worthy of our calling to the adoption of sons. We know we are different from other men in most every way; in our hopes and the facets of life such as our thoughts, words and actions. But when it comes to applying this practice to what seem to be the small, insignificant details of life, we often fall short.

These verses we study now, from vs. 11 though to vs. 16 are one long witness against that failure. Take the greatness of what it means to a redeemed, adopted son or daughter of the true and living God and bring it into the very details of our

lives! This is what vs. 11 is doing by saying to us: “Let us bring it into our place of work!”

May we showcase the greatness of Christ in us to everyone we work with. May we bring the very doctrine that is transforming us into the business world where, yes, we are surrounded not only by fellow saints by the lost world.

The true “trial of our faith” is not found so much in the threat of renouncing the Lord upon pain of death (by that I mean those few and far between instances that require great acts of courage to stand in the face of them), but the trial of our faith is found in the constant, little occasions by which we become weary and we lose ourselves in the details and mundaneness of life.

Or to say it another way, it is one thing to make a big and bold stand for that which we believe in and will not compromise, but it is quite another to apply the greatness of all that is ours in Christ into all the little occasions which make up our everyday lives. The real test is not just in doing the right thing each time, but in doing it for the godly reason, hence, “fervent in spirit” and “serving the Lord.”

We may be very aware of how our business life may interfere with our sonship lives, but are we aware that the business world is the very field in which great GRACE is to be exercised?

Everything in life is an opportunity to serve the Lord; to put the life of Christ on display, to manifest godliness, to live out of the doctrine, to impact men and angels, to make manifest the power of God’s grace to transform us and conform us to the image of His Son.

Summary

Romans 12:11 is about business; our work by which we make a living.

There are two ways to be fervent:

1. Excitement – which is of the flesh – which comes from without
2. Enthusiasm – which of the Spirit – which comes from within

In a nutshell, to be fervent in spirit means to be passionate about manifesting the life of Christ to everyone we work with by 1) how well we perform our job, and 2) by living out of the sonship principles.

Putting godliness on display is one of the reasons we work in the business world.

Our motivation for doing well at our job is that by working at our job we are serving the Lord. Therefore, everything we do should be with that in mind.

We cannot allow outward motivations to influence the quality of our work, our attitude toward our co-workers, or our conduct at work.

We submit ourselves to those in authority over us as unto the Lord.

Enduring hardships at work add to our joint-heir inheritance.

We must learn to import the great sonship truths into the small details of our everyday lives.

Edification Evaluation

Review your day at work and ask yourself:

What did I allow to motivate me today?

Did I behave as though this was the job the Lord Himself gave me to do?

Part of the edification process is to teach us to do any job as though it is the most important job we can do, to do it as unto the Lord and to do it without complaint outwardly or inwardly.

When we get into the heavenly places, and you are given a job which you think is “beneath you” or you are not given the job you think you deserve, what will your reaction be?

Do you think you will magically “get it right?” It is best to let the education do its work for us here and now in this earthly realm.

Now, let’s talk about the application of principles we have already learned. What principles which we learned in the local assembly can translate into our work?

1. Apply the office principles of participate and cooperate
2. Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think
3. Assist others to be successful in their jobs
4. View co-workers as needed and essential
5. Value & Esteem co-workers for the work they do (Praise)
6. Desire what is best for the business and be willing to sacrifice for it
7. In honor prefer other workers
8. Don’t be slothful

Session 17: NOTETAKER

Fig. 1: Four Types of Slavery

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Fig. 2: Applying Sonship Principles at Work



1. Apply the office principles of _____
2. Don't think of yourself _____ than you ought to think
3. _____ to be successful in their jobs
4. View co-workers as _____
5. _____ co-workers for the work they do (_____)
6. Desire the best for the business and be willing to _____
7. In honor _____
8. Don't be _____

Session 17: Serving the Lord

Previously, we were looking at what it means to do our work “in the name of the Lord.” Even though we are looking at Romans 12:11, we ran a couple of references to Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

I want to say a word about this issue of servants and masters. When Paul talks about servants (slaves) and masters, he does not have in mind the way we generally think of slavery today.

There are four types of slavery issues and all of them are mentioned in the Bible in one place or another, but when Paul writes about servants and masters, he only has one of them in mind.

Today, when we think of slavery, we think of the slaves that were brought here from Africa for the purpose of providing an economic advantage by supplying workers.

But the servanthood that Paul is talking about is the kind of “slavery” that today we would refer to as indentured servitude.

In this ancient world, this was a common kind of slavery. This is where a man owed a debt that he could not pay, and he “sold himself” into service as a slave or servant until his debt was paid.

This kind of slavery is talked about in Edward Gibbon’s book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, where he estimated there were over 60 million slaves of this kind in the Roman Empire at the time of Christ.

This type of servitude is referred to in Deuteronomy 15.

Deuteronomy 15:12 *And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.* ¹³ *And when thou sendest him out free*

from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: ¹⁴ Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: *of that* wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. ¹⁵ And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

For Israel, indentured servitude was limited in time, it could not last more than seven years, no matter how large the debt.

Notice also, that whenever a slave was set free, he did not go out empty handed.

Exodus 21:2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. ³ If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.

There was a second type of slavery and that was that of a bond-slave.

This was a slave who wanted to stay with his master and serve him the rest of his life. This was done voluntarily. This is also referred to in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 15:16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; ¹⁷ Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust *it* through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.

As you can see from vs. 17, a bond servant was forever.

There was a third kind of slavery; captives.

This one comes from war, like when the children of Israel were carried away captive to Babylon, or like when they were made to be slaves in Egypt.

This was done against their will and it had to do with one nation conquering another nation. While in war this happened on a large scale, akin to this kind of slavery is what we would call today, kidnapping or human trafficking.

This kind of slavery is condemned in the Bible.

1 Timothy 1:9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, **for menstealers**, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; ¹¹ According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Menstealers are those who kidnap a person and then sell them off into bondage; human trafficking. God put a stiff penalty into place for those who commit this activity.

Exodus 21:16 And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

This is what the law said to do with those who committed that kind of slavery in Israel.

So when the Bible talks about slaves and servants, it is important to understand there is more than one kind of slavery, and to know which one the Bible is talking about.

But the slavery that Paul has in mind is the indentured servitude kind. Paul does not endorse slavery and in fact, he writes to Philemon concerning the runaway slave Onesimus, that he should free him and treat him as a brother.

Philemon 10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

Philemon 15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; ¹⁶ Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Today, we do not consider ourselves to be slaves in the sense of any of the three ways mentioned above, but we are really close to the “indentured servitude” type

of slavery. The difference being that we can quit our job and get another one if we choose to, but the similarity is that most of us need to work in order to live.

But consider this verse:

Proverbs 22:7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

In our day, when we use credit to make purchases, we have made ourselves “servant to the lender.” They either own your car or house or whatever until it is paid off. If it is money you borrowed and there is no collateral to make up for your default, then you could end up being put in jail. Servant is bad enough, but prisoner is worse.

The point I am making here is that just because we are not strictly indentured servants in its original sense, when the Bible talks about masters and servants, we can understand it to mean for us: employers and employees.

Please see the Reservoir of Knowledge #1: *History of Work and Leisure* on page 44 of this book for some background on how people have viewed work in the past and how that measures up against God’s view of work.

As a result of having to work in order to live, many people work jobs which they do not like and they work for people they do not like. We call them “employers” but as long as we are employed, they are our “masters in the flesh.”

Paul is constantly saying to obey those who are our masters “in the flesh.” If you work a job and you have a boss, then you have someone you are accountable to “in the flesh.”

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but **in singleness of heart...**

What does it mean to obey with “singleness of heart?”

OED: Singleness

5) The quality or fact of having one single aim or purpose; concentration of the faculties upon one object (purpose, aim, etc.)

The first application of “singleness of heart” is to say it this way: when you are at work, then work, work at your work (as opposed to personal things), and work mostly on those things which add the most value to your company. When you identify those major goals which pertain to your job, spend the bulk of your time accomplishing those. Don’t get bogged down in the minutia which every job has. Do the big things first and do not allow yourself to be sidetracked.

Having the proper attitude toward work will train us for our positions in the heavenly places as we work in our Father’s business.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but **in singleness of heart, fearing God:**

It is easy to read this passage without noticing this little phrase; “fearing God.” What is that phrase in the verse for? What does “fearing God” have to do with the way servants obey their “masters according to the flesh?”

There is something here that I think we either misunderstand or we just pass over it altogether. The misunderstanding is the common idea today that any time the Bible talks about fearing God in Paul’s epistles, we chalk it up to nothing more than “reverential fear.” Because we understand some things about our unique position in Christ, we mistakenly think there is no room in our relationship with our Father for any kind of real “fear” which would make us “tremble.”

So, the natural response today is to look to redefine the “fear” aspect so that it is not actually “fear” even though that is what the verse says. But is the fear of God actually a reverential trust in Him?

Not according to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

I know this is Hebrews, but bear with me a moment. This is talking about the kingdom and the grace which the members of the believing remnant are supposed to have as they serve God with two things: 1) reverence, and 2) godly fear. Remember, they have been made recipients of the New Covenant and as such, they are meant to operate under grace. And that grace not only produces a service which is with reverence, but is also with godly fear. So, fear is not the same thing as reverence, and that is the point I am after.

Fear and trembling means that something is terrifying. And I know that as members of the body of Christ, we don't think about God as terrifying. So, what are we supposed to learn from the Colossians passage?

The first thing is that this phrase is written in several places. Take a look at the following verses.

2 Corinthians 7:15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how **with fear and trembling** ye received him.

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, **with fear and trembling**, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

The companion verse is the one we were reading in Colossians.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but **in singleness of heart, fearing God**:

Now, look at the next reference to "fear and trembling."

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation **with fear and trembling**.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in **the fear of God**.

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in **the fear of God**.

1 Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness, and **in fear, and in much trembling**.

Fear and trembling mean just that; being greatly frightened; scared out of your wits. Let me show you this in the book of Acts. As background, look at what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

The point here is that there was satanic opposition to Paul, and he knew it. As a result, in Acts 18 (which is the time when Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians) Paul talks about his fear of this opposition.

Acts 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: ¹⁰ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. ¹¹ And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

According to what you just read, what do you think Paul was afraid of? He was afraid of Satan's opposition to him and his ministry. It is in response to that fear that God tells Paul not to be afraid, that He will not allow anyone to hurt him there. So what is the "fear and trembling" about, reverential fear, or is it more? It is more. Paul was afraid that his enemies would harm him, maybe even kill him. The difference here is that Paul is not fearing God.

But it is different in Colossians.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but **in singleness of heart, fearing God**:

One of the marks of being filled with the Spirit (there are three of them listed in the passage) is found in vs. 21.

Ephesians 5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another **in the fear of God.**

The fear of God, in Paul's mind, factor's in to the motivation for a believer. What is the godly fear that grace produces in the life of the believer? Without getting too far afield let me just say that my understanding is that this has to do with the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. ¹¹ **Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,** we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

In connection with that, let us turn back to Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ And whatsoever ye do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord,** and not unto men; ²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

And now, from Colossians 3:24, we know that putting the life of Christ on display in our work also has an impact on our joint-heir inheritance. Yes, we have a difficult job and work for a difficult boss, but the patient endurance of these, while we allow the life of Christ to be lived through us will result in an eternal inheritance. Of course, you can always change jobs, but instead of just talking to God about the worldly reasons for changing jobs, think about how changing jobs will impact your inheritance and the skill to exhibit godliness in the face of difficulties.

Sometimes we think that our work is very separate from our spiritual life with the Lord. We must not separate the great truths of Romans 12:1-2 from the everyday details of our lives. What has been done for us and given to us as a free gift of

grace, the elements of our new identity in Christ for example, are so grand that no thoughts we could conjure up on our own could ever attain unto what has been done to us and for us. Think of it; not only have we been forgiven every sin but we have been given the very righteousness of Jesus Christ as our standing before God. Our estrangement from God has been changed from enemies to sons!

We have been given a sanctified status whereby we have been made dead to sin and alive unto God so that we could truly serve God out of what He has done and not in the futile efforts of our flesh. And then, to cap that sanctified status off, we have been given the Spirit of adoption in connection with being offered the chance to go to work with our Father in His business!

Do you know anything better than that? You don't, even if you think you do. We recognize the greatness of what has been done for us, but the danger lies in these things being so grand and so great that a great distance lies between them and the comparatively trivial details of our everyday lives. And that distance is so great that we fail to bring the greatness of one into contact with the smallness of the other.

We must learn to import the great sonship truths into the small details of our everyday lives.

We get to Romans 12:2 with all the glorious truths of what is ours in Christ but there we stop. We know that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of the Son of God. Considering the price of our salvation, we also realize we should walk worthy of our calling to the adoption of sons. We know we are different from other men in most every way; in our hopes and the facets of life such as our thoughts, words and actions. But when it comes to applying this practice to what seem to be the small, insignificant details of life, we often fall short.

These verses we study now, from vs. 11 through vs. 16 are one long witness against that failure. Take the greatness of what it means to a redeemed, adopted son or daughter of the true and living God and bring it into the very details of our lives! This is what vs. 11 is doing by saying to us: "Let us bring it into our place of work!"

May we showcase the greatness of Christ in us to everyone we work with. May we bring the very doctrine that is transforming us into the business world where, yes, we are surrounded not only by fellow saints but by the lost world.

The true “trial of our faith” is not found so much in the threat of renouncing the Lord upon pain of death (by that I mean those few and far between instances that require great acts of courage to stand in the face of them), but the trial of our faith is found in the constant, little occasions by which we become weary and we lose ourselves in the details and mundaneness of life.

Or to say it another way, it is one thing to make a big and bold stand for that which we believe in and will not compromise, but it is quite another to apply the greatness of all that is ours in Christ into all the little occasions which make up our everyday lives. The real test is not just in doing the right thing each time, but in doing it for the godly reason, hence, “fervent in spirit” and “serving the Lord.”

We may be very aware of how our business life may interfere with our sonship lives, but are we aware that the business world is the very field in which great GRACE is to be exercised?

Everything in life is an opportunity to serve the Lord; to put the life of Christ on display, to manifest godliness, to live out of the doctrine, to impact men and angels, to make manifest the power of God’s grace to transform us and conform us to the image of His Son.

The Application of Vs. 11 into our Workplace

What is it that we have learned concerning the local assembly that we can import into our workplace?

Instead of writing it out here in your notes, I have actually put these somewhere else for the purpose of having you brainstorm with me about how we can take sonship principles and apply them at work.

Please fill in your brainstorming answers in Fig. 2 of your Notetaker.

Once we are through brainstorming, I will tell you where they are.

Self-Test

1. Which one of the three types of slavery referenced in the Bible, best identify today's work?

2. How should we obey our "masters in the flesh?"

3. What happens when you apply "singleness of heart" to your work?

4. Of the two ways in which we fear God, which "fear" should motivate us in our work attitude.

5. If we have a difficult boss, what should we consider before changing jobs?

Summary

Having the right attitude toward your work now will prepare you for your eternal vocation in the heavenly places.

Sometimes we think that our work is very separate from our spiritual life with the Lord. We must not separate the great truths of Romans 12:1-2 from the everyday details of our lives. The importance of having the right attitude about our work will train us for our positions in the heavenly places as we work in our Father's business.

There are three types of slavery referenced in the Bible: indentured servitude, bond-slave, and captive.

Today, although we do not consider ourselves to be slaves in the sense of any of the three ways mentioned, we are really close to the "indentured servitude" type of slavery. When the Bible talks about masters and servants, we can understand it to mean for us: employers and employees. The only difference is that we can quit our job and get another one if we choose to.

Paul is constantly saying to obey those who are our masters "in the flesh." If you work a job and you have a boss, then you have someone you are accountable to "in the flesh."

In addition, we are to obey in "singleness of heart, fearing God."

We can also be servants in another way. When we make purchases on credit, we make ourselves "servants to the lender." (Proverbs 22:7)

We must learn to import the great sonship truths into the small details of our everyday lives.

RESERVOIR OF KNOWLEDGE #1: History of Work and Leisure

When we think about taking grace into the workplace, it is important to understand that historically, work has been viewed in different ways than we view it today. Back in the Greek and Roman Empire days, work was viewed as a curse. Work was seen as an obstacle to enjoying life, to leisure.

Now you can see why slavery was so prominent those times. It was mentioned in your notes that there were around 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire at the time of Christ. If the general feeling was that in order to enjoy life one had to be free of work, then certainly if any goods and services were going to be produced, you had to have people who were working.

If you ever watch a movie or television show about life in England in centuries past, you can see that people with wealth looked down on people who worked. Even trades such as doctors or lawyers were considered undignified. If you were talking about jobs like farming or building, those were even lower. Servants were even worse. At that time, life was all about money and position because those things gave a person a life of leisure.

So how did this come about? It started back in what we call the “Middle Ages” or the “Dark Ages” (roughly 500-1500 A.D.) This is the time period between the fall of the Romans Empire and the Renaissance. There is a lot of debate about the time and even the label of the Dark Ages, but for our purposes, it was during this time that work began to take on a bad reputation. The reason for this was because of the condition of Christianity during that time.

It was in the 5th century that the division became very prominent between the laity and the clergy. The idea was that the only work that was “good” was the religious work done by the clergy. All other work was meaningless to God and in some ways evil, or at least, menial. So, if you were a priest, a monk or a nun in the church, then that was work that had real value to it because that was the only kind of work God cared about. The thinking was that God had no interest whatsoever in secular work. In fact, if you were a secular worker, you were considered to be a second class citizen in many regards. And that is where the split of clergy and laity came from.

That kind of attitude gave rise to a problem. You could run a business without morals, ethics and grace because God had no interest or dealings with the business world at all.

The next period of time is what is referred to as the Renaissance.

The Renaissance is generally described as taking place from the 14th century to the 17th century. The Renaissance promoted the rediscovery of classical philosophy, literature and art. Some of the greatest thinkers, authors, statesmen, scientists and artists in human history thrived during this era, while global exploration opened up new lands and cultures to European commerce.

During the time of the Renaissance, the religious world went through the time of the Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was a political, cultural, and religious turning point that changed the course of history and Christian theology! Reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others sparked movements across Europe. Among other theological issues, they challenged the Catholic Church's claim to be the sole interpreter of the Bible.

Luther initially taught that everyone had the right to interpret the Bible for themselves. In one sermon, he scolded theologians who did not read or teach the Bible. He didn't want them to mislead their readers and students. Martin Luther completed his most significant work in 1522, his translation of the New Testament from Greek to German. The Bible that was previously read and taught primarily in Latin was now in the hands of ordinary people, in ordinary speech and the world was forever changed.

But what we are after here is that out of this Protestant Reformation came something called "the Protestant Work Ethic." This work ethic carried the idea that secular work was just as valuable as religious work; that secular work had a dignity to it too.

The Protestant Work Ethic did away with the idea that the church was the only legitimate kind of work, and advanced the idea that God is sovereign over all areas of your life, even your secular job. The reformers taught that a man's work life was to be just as much under the authority of God as his religious life and that by working even in a secular job, a man is working as God's servant. With that understanding, men learned that all work has value.

The next time is what we call the Enlightenment which took place in the 17th and 18th centuries. During this time, men began to see themselves as more important than God. This gave rise to a corrupted view of the Protestant Work Ethic. And that work ethic began to be despised. Enlightenment says that it is man's effort which is important, so work is just for you and what you can get out of it. The real purpose of work, under the philosophy of Enlightenment is that work is only for making money so you can get what you want; your work is all tied up in self-interests. This all has the flesh and its desires in view. And when this is the focus of work, then there is a lot anger and bitterness when a man doesn't get the promotion or the raise.

Then, in the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a conflict which arose between capitalism and Marxism (socialism, which developed into communism). The problem with capitalism is that there is no limit to man's greed. The problem with socialism or communism is that there is no limit to man's desire to control others. Neither of these, left to themselves to be used to satisfy the ends of men, are godly.

What we should be asking is "What is God's view of work?" And that is something we will be discussing in our Sunday sessions.

The purpose of these notes is to show us how we got to where we are with regard to work.

Answers to Self-Test

1. Which one of the three types of slavery referenced in the Bible, best identify today's work?

Indentured Servitude

2. How should we obey our “masters in the flesh?”

In singleness of heart, fearing God.

3. What happens when you apply “singleness of heart” to your work?

You work on what adds the most value to the company. Identify the major goals that pertain to your job and spend the majority of your time accomplishing them.

4. Of the two ways in which we fear God, which “fear” should motivate us in our work attitude.

It is godly fear that should motivate us.

5. If we have a difficult boss, what should we consider before changing jobs?

We should consider how changing jobs will impact our inheritance and the skill to exhibit godliness in the face of difficulties.

Edification Evaluation

Here are the answers from the brainstorming exercise on page 43.

Fig. 2: **Applying Sonship Principles at Work**



1. **Apply the office principles of participate and cooperate**
2. **Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think**
3. **Assist others to be successful in their jobs**
4. **View co-workers as needed and essential**
5. **Value & Esteem co-workers for the work they do (Praise)**
6. **Desire the best for the business and be willing to sacrifice**
7. **In honor prefer other workers**
8. **Don't be slothful**

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Wisdom

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the **local assembly**.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward **business**

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward _____

Fig. 2: Biblical Hope

HOPE: _____

Fig. 3: Put a check beside each statement which is an expression of biblical "hope."

- ☐ I hope I can get a new car.
- ☐ I hope God saves my friend.
- ☐ I hope it rains.
- ☐ I hope I can be edified.

Fig. 4: Three Issues in our Complete Redemption

- 1) _____ as our permanent standing before God.
- 2) _____ in our inner man.
- 3) The sure and future _____.

Fig. 5: Reasons We can Rejoice in Hope

- _____
- _____
- _____

Session 18: Rejoicing in Hope

The Context of Vs. 12

Back in session 15, there is an overview of the verses that comprise “wisdom” in Romans 12.

Each of these verses deal with a particular context:

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the **local assembly**.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward **business**

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward **the saints**

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward **enemies**

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward **others’ circumstances**

In vs. 16, Paul deals with our attitude toward **those of “low estate”**

As you see from the list, verse 12 moves us out of the business realm (vs. 11) and into the area of handling physical tribulations. And because of the particular wording of the verse, I think these tribulations are of a very particular nature.

In this session we are going to get an understanding of the verse so that, in the next session, we can establish a process for the effectual working of the verse in our inner man. The doctrine must first be understood before it can work to produce the life of Christ in us.

This ought to be something which all of us are looking forward to. What we will learn in the next two sessions is not “Why do good people suffer?” but what godly people should do when they suffer. We are going to get familiar with a process which we will use throughout our life when it comes to suffering, whether it is the SoPT or the SoC.

In accordance with our first goal of understanding the verse, let’s get started.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Let’s look at the first phrase, “rejoicing in hope” and define hope according to the bible.

This “hope” is not wishful thinking about something, but rather it is a confident expectation regarding something God has promised; something which we do not yet possess.

The groundwork for discharging Romans 12:12, with godly selflessness and lovingkindness, started back in Romans 5. For it was in Romans 5 that we first encountered all four key words found in the first two phrases of Romans 12:12.

Look back in Romans 5. As we get ready to read, think about the context of Romans 5; our justified status in Christ.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.

Look at Romans 5:2 and compare it to Colossians 1:27.

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in **hope of the glory** of God.

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, **the hope of glory**:

By the way, there are two of the four words we cited from Romans 12; “rejoice” and “hope.”

Romans 12:12 **Rejoicing in hope**; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of God.

Back to Romans 5: In the context of our justification and because the “glory” is used as a noun, the “glory of God” refers to the full honor and magnificence of our completed redemption. That definition makes sense seeing the context is the redemption which is in Christ Jesus which results in our justified status in Christ.

Romans 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

I want to take us back to something we just covered, that the “glory of God” in Romans 5 is referring to the full honor and magnificence of our completed redemption.

When most people think of redemption they think of being forgiven and going to heaven when they die. But salvation is more than just what happened the moment you trusted Christ; it is the life of Christ being formed in us by the effectual working of the doctrine.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life.**

There are three issues in our completed redemption:

- 1) Putting us in Christ as our permanent standing before God. This is a finished accomplished fact which cannot be altered, diminished or improved upon.
- 2) The forming of Christ in our inner man. This is our ongoing edification which pertains to bringing our function up to the measure of our standing. And this is a “hope.”

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory:**

- 3) The sure and future redemption of our body; the completion of our adoption.

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**

The phrase “to wit” indicates that you are about to state or describe something more precisely. For example, I could say, someone ran into my car the other day; to wit, the back bumper. The “to wit” is me indicating the dent more precisely. They did not dent the whole car, but only a part of the car.

So when Paul says we are waiting for the adoption, he adds more precisely what part of our adoption we are waiting for; the redemption of our body.

The yet future redemption of our body is also a “hope.”

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. ²⁴**For we are saved by hope:** but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

And not only that, but when the time comes for our bodies to be redeemed, for corruption to put on incorruption, and for mortal to put on immortality, that event is called what? The Blessed Hope!

Titus 2:13 Looking for that **blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

With those two “hopes” in mind, now you have a complete picture of what we are to rejoice in.

Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and **rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

...and because he says, “in hope” of that glory, then he is referring to that which we do not yet possess. (Else, why is it a “hope?”)

So what is it that we do not yet possess? The fullness of Christ in us, and our glorified body. And guess what! When it comes to handling tribulations, these are the two things which provide hope to get us through the suffering. For an educated son or daughter, these are the two greatest resources for allowing us to patiently endure our tribulations.

We have doctrine working in our souls right now, which is able to produce something in us, in our inner man, which is so great that our sufferings will pale in comparison to it. We realize that while our sufferings cause pain, at the same time they are working for us.

Romans 5:3 And not only *so*, but we **glory in tribulations** also: knowing that **tribulation worketh patience**;

This time the “glory” is a verb, which means “to exult with triumph, rejoice proudly.” It is talking about our attitude toward tribulations.

Now compare this with Romans 12:12.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; **patient in tribulation**; continuing instant in prayer;

Did you notice the attitude we are to have when faced with tribulations of any sort? We glory in them; we “rejoice and exult with triumph,” which reminds us of being “more than conquerors.”

But why? Why should we glory in them and how do we actually do that? I mean really do it and not fake it. Paul is giving us a motivational speech which he means for us to accomplish in the energy of our flesh.

Firstly, we can glory in tribulations because we realize what is being produced in us as we go through them properly. And what does it mean to “glory” in them? It means to rejoice with triumph.

Instead of being discouraged by tribulations, we see them as opportunities. This is exactly what Romans 12:12 is exhorting us to do with regard to tribulations of any kind.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Before we leave Romans 8, I want to nail down that last issue of the hope that comes from the promise of our body’s redemption.

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. ²⁴**For we are saved by hope...**

Once again we see our hope connected to the future redemption of our body. Our body is the only part of us that is not yet redeemed. But, according to this passage, one day it will be. And the confident expectation that one day our body will be redeemed provides a “hope” of deliverance from the normal effects of all the

physical infirmities and the assurance of an eternal, fully-functioning vessel for our spirit.

Back to Romans 8:23: The fact that we are “saved by hope” is about our hope keeping us from being overwhelmed by things which happen to our physical bodies.

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

The point here is that our hope is not something we conjure up in our own thinking, but it is in direct relation to something that God has promised! That is why it is a hope that produces something in us. The world sees hope as something they dream up and then psyche themselves up to believe is true, thinking they can bring it into existence. Sons and daughters see hope as the confident expectation of that which God has promised.

Look back at vs. 23.

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.**

The redemption of our body is culmination of the adoption process. Our adoption process began when we trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior. The process is completed at the Blessed Hope. Do not think of your adoption as a single event that happens all at once.

An example of this would be the Day of the Lord. That “day” begins when Israel goes into captivity under Babylon. That is why you have verses describing the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities as taking place in the day of the LORD.

The day of the LORD continues through the 5th installment of the 5th CoP; Daniel’s 70th Week, culminating in the Armageddon campaign.

The point here is that the Lord's Day is not confined to a single event or moment in time, but runs from the first installment of the 5th CoP to the final installment of the 5th CoP.

Think of your adoption the same way. It began when you trusted Christ as Savior and God gave you His Spirit, functioning as the Spirit of adoption (Rm. 8:15). (It would be a bit of a waste for the Spirit of God to function in accordance with something that was not yet true for you in this life.)

Your adoption continues as you learn what is entailed in biblical adoption; the offer to be educated to one day work in the Father's business, your acceptance of that offer by the cry of "Abba, Father," and the subsequent sonship education whereby your Father's wisdom is installed in you and manifested by the various sonship skills throughout your life.

The culmination of the adoption process is when your body is redeemed at the Blessed Hope. That is what Romans 8:23 has in mind when it says we are waiting for the adoption; the redemption of our body.

So, when Romans 12:12 says, "Rejoicing in hope," it is taking us back to what we learned in Romans 8; that we have a hope that produces a patience in our inner man, as we endure the various sufferings of our mortal bodies.

And how is it that we can rejoice in the midst of the things happening to this body?

We do not rejoice because we think God will minimize the pain, or because God promises our pain will be less tomorrow. Quite the contrary, our situation may be worse tomorrow, but we are still called to rejoice.

We can rejoice because there are some things we know:

- We rejoice because we know God is not punishing us
- We rejoice because we know that one day, we will get a new body; a redeemed, glorified body
- We rejoice because we know what is happening in our inner man as we respond properly to those outward man sufferings; Christ is being formed in us

There is one more passage I want us to look at before we leave this session, but before we do, let me talk to us about tribulations and our hope.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us **a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;**

Our physical afflictions are meant to produce a “more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” But ask yourself, more exceeding than what? A more exceeding glory than that which you previously possessed. The fact that this “weight of glory” is eternal means that we will possess it forever.

But that is an interesting phrase, “weight of glory.” What does that mean? Well, weight is a way of measuring things against each other. The OED #1 definition for “weight” is: measurement of quantity.

Paul is talking about our glory exceeding the glory we already possess. That is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image **from glory to glory,** *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

So, again, what is that weight or measure of glory? Yes, there is a sense in which the glory can refer to our exaltation in ages to come, but in the immediate sense, it refers to the measure of “Christ in you; the hope of glory.” This is the change that takes place in us, Christ is being formed in us in a greater and greater measure.

A good way to understand the glory is to see it as the measure of Christ in you, or the measure of your edification.

In 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul tells us the formula for getting the increase of glory in our inner man.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸**While we look not at the things which are**

seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

When we are suffering, the way to respond to our physical afflictions is to focus on the things which are not seen with our physical eyes, the spiritual things which concern the building of our inner man, which is eternal. And that turns out to be the key to the process whereby we deal with tribulations and sufferings.

Self-Test

1. The key to the process whereby we deal with tribulations and sufferings is found in 2 Corinthians 4: 18. Explain it in your own words.

2. What are the three issues in our completed redemption?

1.

2.

3.

3. When it comes to handling tribulations, what are the two greatest resources that will help an educated son or daughter endure tribulations?

- ---
- ---

4. Instead of being discouraged by tribulations, we should see them as what?

- ---

5. We can rejoice in tribulation because there are some things we know. What are they?

- ---
- ---
- ---

Summary

When we have a clear understanding of Romans 12:12, it will serve as an anchor when facing any kind of suffering. The doctrine must first be understood before it can work to produce the life of Christ in us.

Developing a process to address suffering will result in the effectual working of the word in our inner man in times of tribulation.

Hope is not wishful thinking about something, but rather it is a confident expectation regarding something God has promised; something which we do not yet possess.

Our hope is in the future redemption of our body and the event of the Blessed Hope! This gives us a reason to “rejoice in hope!” For an educated son or daughter, these are the two greatest resources for allowing us to patiently endure our tribulations.

To be patient in tribulations is an attitude we are to have when faced with sufferings. Understanding Romans 12:12 helps us to see our tribulations as opportunities to be conformed to Christ

We can rejoice because we have a hope that produces a patience in our inner man, as we endure the various sufferings of our mortal bodies. We can rejoice because we understand that we are not being punished: we know we will one day get a new glorified body; we know that our inner man is being conformed to the image of Christ. Whatever our situation, we are called to rejoice!

As we face our sufferings, whether they are the sufferings of Christ or the sufferings of this present time; may we view it with a heavenly perspective – with an understanding that as our Father’s wisdom is installed in us it will be manifested by the various sonship skills throughout our life. Suffering will refine the skills that will be required for our vocation in the heavenly places.

Answers to Self-Test

1. The key to the process whereby we deal with tribulations and sufferings is found in 2 Corinthians 4: 18. Explain it in your own words.

We understand that the tribulations and sufferings we endure are temporal; what is eternal is the spiritual, which is not seen.

2. What are the three issues in our completed redemption?
 - 1) *Putting us in Christ as our permanent standing before God.*
 - 2) *The forming of Christ in our inner man.*
 - 3) *The sure and future redemption of our body.*
3. When it comes to handling tribulations, what are the two greatest resources that will help an educated son or daughter endure tribulations?
 - *The life of Christ in our inner man*
 - *Our body is redeemed at the Blessed Hope.*
4. Instead of being discouraged by tribulations, we should see them as what?
 - *Opportunities*
5. We can rejoice in tribulation because there are some things we know. What are they?
 - *We know God is not punishing us*
 - *We know that one day, we will get a new, redeemed, glorified body*
 - *We rejoice because we know that Christ is being formed in our inner man as we respond properly to our outward man sufferings*

Fig. 1: The Mechanics of Enduring Tribulations

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Step 4: _____

Step 5: _____

Step 6: _____

Step 7: _____

Step 8: _____

Step 9: _____

Step 10: _____

Fig. 2: Scriptures by Which We Endure

Romans 8:17: We can be _____ with Christ if so be that we
“ _____ ”

Romans 8:18: Our sufferings will pale in comparison to _____

Romans 8:23-25: _____; one day this body
will be redeemed and all the bad things which happen to it now will be
over.

Romans 8:26: Part of the recipe for dealing with bodily infirmities is
_____.

Romans 8:28: _____.

Romans 8:32: Everything we encounter in this life will be dealt with
by the things which _____.

Romans 8:35-37: In all our tribulations, because of what takes place in
our inner man, _____.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18: Our afflictions provide for _____
_____.

2 Corinthians 12:9: _____ to produce His
strength in our inner man when we have no strength of our own.

Philippians 4:6-7: _____ in
the midst of those things which cause us mental anguish.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5: _____
_____, and by such, we are counted
worthy of the kingdom of God

Session 19: The Effectual Working of Romans 12:12

In our previous session, we were looking at Paul's admonition for us to "rejoice in hope" and be "patient in tribulation."

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; **patient in tribulation**; continuing instant in prayer;

What does it mean to be patient in tribulation? It means to bear up under the trouble without complaint or protest. And the secret to dealing with tribulations is hope.

As we saw from our previous lesson, we have two hopes that help us in our suffering, the promise of a redeemed body, and the life of Christ in our inner man.

These are not the wishful thinking kind, but the expectation that God is doing something in our inner man to keep us from being overwhelmed by our suffering.

Today, there are many ways to suffer; physically, emotionally, mentally, etc. Suffering can be the result of living in a fallen world or the satanic policy of evil.

Today, I want to introduce you to a man who knows something about suffering. In fact, he may know more about suffering than any man alive. This man suffered as much as anyone I know of and he did it without complaint or grumbling. He saw something in the sufferings that others could not see. I love this man for not only how he handled his tribulations, but for what motivated him to respond to them the way he did. So please meet God's servant, the apostle Paul, and listen to him tell you about what he went through.

As promised, in this lesson, we will create a process by the doctrine in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 which will effectually work in our inner man. And when it does, we will not faint at our tribulations which affect our body (outward man), but we will be renewed in our inward man each day.

Some of you have been waiting for a lesson like this. You want to know what you can do to deal with something that is affecting you. And the best time to learn it is before you need it.

Stop and think for a moment. What will you do when tragedy strikes? What will you do when your doctor says to you that there is no cure for what is wrong with you? Or when he says your cancer is worse? Or when your marriage is falling apart? Or when your kids turn away from God? Or when you lose a love one? Or when your life feels like it is falling apart? Or when you are financially ruined?

I know in that list we have different kinds of tribulations. In this study, we are going to pick one that most pertains to Romans 12:12; physical tribulations that pertain to our body. We are going to create our process with that in mind, but you can do this with any type of tribulation, you just may have to look at different verses and tweak the process just a bit.

We left off in our previous session by looking at 2 Corinthians 4:16.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ **While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:** for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

So, how do we focus on those unseen things? I mean, what are the actual mechanics to do that? In today's lesson we are going to discover just that. This is the process I used after my stroke in January 2017. It is also the process that I employed when my sweetheart passed away. And now I am giving it to you.

I told you I would give you the mechanical process which helped me, so that you can utilize it for yourself if the need arises. There are some of you who are already using this process because we have talked about it individually.

Step 1: Identify the Relevant Scriptures

The first thing to do is the gather up all the scriptures that you know about responding to the issue that is concerning you. Here is the list I assembled at that time. It is not all-inclusive but it was enough for what I needed. I used 11 passages (or verses).

What I did was write down each verse and then I encapsulated my understanding along with it. Here they are:

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

The promise is: We can be joint-heirs with Christ if so be that we “suffer with Him” (respond properly to our sufferings.)

Suffering with Him is about our godly response to our sufferings. Our response is His response in us. Learning to suffer with Him is an important part of becoming a FES/FED. (Fully-Educated Son / Fully-Educated Daughter)

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The promise is: Our sufferings will pale in comparison to Christ being formed in us.

Whatever we suffer, it will be counted as insignificant when compared to the glory that will be produced in us through those sufferings; Christ will be formed in us! That is the glory.

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

The promise is: My suffering is not permanent; one day this body will be redeemed and all the bad things which happen to it now will be over.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The promise is: Part of the recipe for dealing with bodily infirmities is Spirit-led, intelligent, sonship prayer.

The Spirit, which we received when we trusted, helps our infirmities through prayer with our Father. The process of combining prayer with the doctrine helps us, not by taking away the cause of our pain, but by producing a “hope” and a “strengthening of our inner man” so that we endure our suffering without complaint or objection.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. ²⁹For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

The promise is: Everything that happens is working for my good.

“Work together for good” is not about God changing our situation so that it turns out alright, but the promise is that the “good” is that through “all things” we are conformed to the image of God’s Son.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The promise is that there is nothing we can encounter in this life that cannot be dealt with by those things which God will freely give us.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁷Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The promise is: In all our tribulations, because of what takes place in our inner man, we can be more than conquerors through Christ.

The promise of being more than a conqueror is that we are stronger and more capable at the end than we were when before the trouble. It is the very opposite of being victimized by our tribulations, we not only conquer them, we are made stronger, more godly, more edified, and more conformed by them.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

The promise is: Our afflictions provide for the measure of Christ in us to increase.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

The promise is: God's grace is sufficient to produce His strength in our inner man when we have no strength of our own.

It is not that we will not have infirmities or distresses or persecutions, but that we will have His grace.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The promise is: the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds in the midst of those things which cause us mental anguish.

It is not that in response to our prayer God will remove those things which are making us "full of care," but the promise is that we can have peace in the midst of those things.

2 Thessalonians 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: ⁵*Which* is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

The promise is that we can endure all our persecutions and tribulations with patience and faith, and by such, we are counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

I want to step aside here for a moment and encourage you to go above and beyond to get these verses in your heart and mind. The more you are familiar with them, and know them by heart, the more accessible they will be to you on a daily basis. To assist you with this, I am attaching some loose pages in your book so that you can have these verses in a flashcard style. You need only remove the pages and cut them out along the dotted lines.

These cards will have the verse and reference on one side and the encapsulated promise on the other. Practice with them on your own, or get a family member to read the verse and let you identify the promise. You know you are really familiar when they can give you the promise and you can quote the reference! Tape them up on your bathroom mirror or keep them in your Bible, but go over them and get familiar with them.

These flashcard pages can be found in your *Sonship Life Study Guide* in the Reservoir of Knowledge section.

Now, look over your list and make sure you understand what Paul is saying in each one of your verses. If you are planning on using this list for yourself, that is fine, but it is imperative that you understand the verses for yourself.

It is a good idea to write or print these verses out so you can have the entire list in front of you every day. The reason is because you will be looking at these every day for a period of days.

Step 2: Identify the Problem

Next, take a piece of paper and a pen and write down a title at the top. In my case, I can't recall the specific title, but it was something like: spiritual, inner man benefits to my physical disabilities.

You can fill in the title with whatever the issue is for you. It does not have to be a physical issue. If it is another kind of issue, mental or emotional, for example, you might want to look at your original list of verses and swap a few out for other verses, as a few of those are specific to physical maladies.

Step 3: List the Spiritual Benefits

The next thing to do is to list as many benefits of your particular issue as you can think of. As you do this, as you have been learning in your Sonship Life Study Guide, you need to be talking to your Father about this. Prayer is an important part of this process.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; **continuing instant in prayer;**

Talk to God, ask Him questions, think of the answers in scripture, read the verses you assembled and think about them. This is a process that you will learn to employ at a moment's notice; one which you will learn to do instantly! By the way, this is what the last phrase in Romans 12:12 is about.

As you do this, the prayer part will begin to activate the doctrine in your own mind by getting your thinking to line up with God's thinking. This turns our focus away from the outer man and cause us to focus on the eternal, inner man issues.

Once you have written everything you can think of, take a look at each of the verses that you identified and think some more and pray some more. Compare the things in your list with the doctrine contained in the verses you identified and make sure what you write does not contradict the scripture.

After you have made your list, now you have created the mechanical process which will allow the scriptures you assembled to work in your inner man. This process will get you to thinking about the eternal, inner man issues instead of looking at the physical and allow for God's word to work in you and change the way you think about your situation and get some comfort in your soul.

Step 4: Engage with your List

In order for you to have that kind of benefit you must engage in the process you created. How do we do that? We do that by looking at this list of verses and list of benefits every single morning as one of the first things you do. This is important because it gets your conscious mind engaging with the doctrine. This does much more than merely set the stage for your day, but it gets your mind involved on a conscious level and puts the focus on your inner man.

Then, before you go to sleep at night, go over your list. Think and pray about it as the last thing you do. This is important too. The reason this is important is because you are putting things into your subconscious mind, which will go to work with the scriptures in your spirit.

You may even wake up at night with some epiphany or insight. If you do, write it down before you go back to sleep. When you think and pray about this list as the first and last thing you do each day, you will deepen your understanding of the things written in the verses. You will begin to see connections between the doctrine and your circumstance. What Paul wrote will become a living reality for you!

You may find yourself coming up with an idea which seemed to be out of the blue, but in actuality, it is the result of your subconscious mind discovering some truth or application of the truth. This is a very exciting way to engage with God's word and with your Father in prayer.

In fact, one of the great benefits of this is that it acquaints us with the way prayer works today; the melding of our circumstance with prayer and God's word which results in godliness (think, live, labor).

Step 5: Determine how long to Engage

Now let's talk about how long to engage in this process. For many issues, doing this every day for 14 days may be enough to turn your focus to your inner man and relieve you of the anxiety or worry of your problem.

But some things are worse than others. At the end of 14 days, if you are still not where you would like to be concerning the suffering or the circumstance or whatever it is that is affecting you, then you will need to continue for 30 days. That is a sonship decision for you to make.

Step 6: Expect the Right Results

What should we expect from engaging in this exercise?

- That we will not be overwhelmed by our problem
- That we will find comfort in the scripture
- That we are being transformed by the doctrine working in us

But there is something else we need to understand. Some folks think that if the doctrine is working in them, then whatever the problem is, has gone away. And that is not the case.

In other words, the doctrine does not guarantee a better diagnosis, a removal of the source of your suffering, a turnaround in circumstances, that your pain has stopped, or that God is somehow going to turn everything around so that it works out like you want.

Let us suppose you have lost a loved one and you are hurting inside. What should you expect from the doctrine? Should you expect that you are no longer hurting? No, you should not. Well, if we are still hurting, what is the point?

Does the admonition to “rejoice” mean that you no longer feel any sadness? It does not. What you should expect when these types of things are happening is revealed in 2 Corinthians 6.

2 Corinthians 6:4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ⁵In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; ⁶By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, ⁷By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and *yet* true; ⁹As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;...

And now here comes the verse I wanted us to get to.

2 Corinthians 6:9 As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; ¹⁰**As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing;** as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

Do you see that? Paul is not saying that he does not sorrow when he suffers, but along with the sorrow, he has something to rejoice over. He does both at the same time!

Is that possible? Of course it is. There are ladies listening right now who have done this. They have given birth to children, which is a painful endeavor, all the while rejoicing in the birth of their child.

We go through the pain of a surgery knowing that the benefit will outweigh the pain of recovery. So, even though we hurt, we rejoice at the same time in what the surgery accomplished.

In a similar manner, we rejoice in the midst of our suffering. We can do this by focusing on the inner man and not the outward problem. We find joy in what the suffering allows us to accomplish, a greater measure of Christ in us; an increased edification.

Whenever you encounter some tribulation, some infirmity, some problem, some situation, some kind of suffering, or some kind of attack, you now have a process you can engage in to obtain God's grace, to obtain comfort, to rejoice in hope, and to be patient in tribulation.

One last thing; being instant in prayer was something we talked about back in SR10 on Prayer. This has to do with being so familiar with how prayer works in this process that we are able to employ it at the very first sign of a problem or issue of suffering. Instant means immediate. The more we engage in this type of prayer, the more comfortable you will be with it.

Self-Test

1. What is the process that will keep you spiritually focused in times of tribulations and/or sufferings?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

2. When identifying the relevant scriptures why is it imperative that you understand the verses for yourself?

3. What benefit comes from engaging with your list daily?

4. What benefit comes from engaging with your list each night.

5. What results should you expect from engaging in this process?

- *That we will not be _____ by our problem*
- *That we will find _____ in the scriptures*
- *That we are being _____ by the doctrine working in us*

Summary

When we are suffering, the way to respond to our physical afflictions is to focus on the things which are not seen with our physical eyes. These are the spiritual things which concern the building of our inner man, which is eternal. And that turns out to be the key to the process whereby we deal with tribulations and sufferings.

In order to rejoice in hope; be patient in tribulation; and continue instant in prayer we must arm ourselves with tools to help us endure. Our tools are found in the word of God; and the process for using these tools can help us to focus and not faint and give up our sonship life when faced with tribulations and sufferings.

This session explains a process which has proven useful in helping you to focus on the unseen (spiritual aspect of your life) instead of the seen (physical aspects of your life) when facing tribulations and sufferings.

As you use this process, you will begin to see connections between the doctrine and your circumstance. The process will not take away the hurt, sorrow, etc., but it will give you a heavenly perspective on what is being done in your inner man.

As you grow in grace, you will be able to rejoice in the midst of your suffering once you begin to understand that the suffering allows you to accomplish a greater measure of Christ in you; an increased edification.

Answers to Self-Test

1. What is the process that will keep you spiritually focused in times of tribulations and/or sufferings?

- 1) Identify the Relevant Scriptures that pertain to your situation.
- 2) Identify the Problem
- 3) List the Spiritual Benefits / Talk to your Father
- 4) Engage with your List / Make this a daily habit
- 5) Determine how long to Engage
- 6) Expect the Right Results

2. When identifying the relevant scriptures why is it imperative that you understand the verses for yourself?

You need to know and understand how the scripture applies to your situation in order for it to effectually work in you.

3. What benefit comes from engaging with your list daily?

It gets your mind involved on a conscious level and puts the focus on your inner man.

4. What benefit comes from engaging with your list each night.

It puts things into your subconscious mind, which will go to work with the scriptures in your spirit.

5. What results should we expect from engaging in this process?

- That we will not be **overwhelmed** by your problem
- That we will find **comfort** in the scriptures
- That we are being **transformed** by the doctrine working in you

Fig. 1: The Breakdown of Godly Wisdom

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward _____

Session 20: Giving and Hospitality

Romans 12:13 **Distributing to the necessity of saints**; given to hospitality.

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

Even though the two phrases in this verse are technically talking about different things, they are connected in the sense of our willingness to give when we see a need. Even the world knows about giving to necessity and being hospitable.

This verse does not require a lot of commentary, but it does require some consideration. If godly selfless love is operating in us, if we are preferring each other in honor, if we are kindly affectioned one to another, then we will be on the lookout for necessities and we will meet those needs and we will do so willingly, lovingly, and not out of necessity.

Because of the “distributing” aspect of vs. 13, it seems that the emphasis here is on saints within our local assembly and the distributing becomes not only the job of individuals and families, but of the assembly as a whole, to the extent it is able.

But should that mean that we do not care about nor meet the necessity of saints outside of our assembly? It does not. We should care about all saints in the body of Christ. It may not be within our power to help everyone, everywhere, but we should have a heart for our fellow saints and do what we can.

To a great degree, this has to do with saints who either are poor, or who have temporarily become unable to provide for the necessities of life; food, clothing, shelter, etc. In these days, even though they may not be listed as absolute necessities, it is certainly godly to care about the comfort of our fellow saints. What I mean by this is to say that our selfless lovingkindness is not reserved for only the poorest among us as though we are relieved of any obligation unless someone is starving or homeless.

But remember what should be driving our distributing to the necessity of the saints; godly charity.

1 Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

May our love for our fellow saints move us to meet their need. May their value to our assembly be evident in our words and charitable actions toward them. May our love be without dissimulation. May our selfless lovingkindness be evident in our care for each other.

There are always people who look at the world and begrudge giving. But we ought to have selfless lovingkindness working in us to such a degree that we do not shy away from giving to the necessity of the saints.

The second part of the verse is about hospitality.

Romans 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; **given to hospitality.**

The word “hospitality” is only used in the A.V. four times, and Paul uses it three of the four times; once to the saints (here in Rm. 12:13) and twice to pastors. The other use of the word is used by Peter to the members of the little flock. And what he writes to them sounds very much like what our apostle has written to us.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. ⁹**Use hospitality one to another without grudging.**

Now, let’s look again at our Romans verse.

Romans 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; **given to hospitality.**

But there is no restriction in the verse that applies this to saints only. Hospitality, I think, goes beyond merely inviting guests into our home, although it certainly includes that mostly. But how about inviting them into our assembly? I have seen churches ban people simply because they were not of the right income or social standing.

When it comes to exhibiting hospitality at our homes, God is not asking us to turn our homes into B&Bs just so we can help the hotel business; there is godly purpose behind our hospitality.

For Billie and me, hospitality was easy because we wanted to get the message of Sonship out, we wanted to talk about the doctrine and answer questions. We wanted to make friendships with other sons and daughters. And we have had the privilege, over the past years, to meet many wonderful people who have stayed with us in our home. We have gotten to know them and have established relationships with them and we love them dearly.

When it comes to the word “hospitality” you should know that the Greek NT word for hospitality means “love of strangers.” And this includes those people we just do not know. And since the verse does not qualify our hospitality as to the saints alone, it means there should be something working in us that is willing to demonstrate hospitality to anyone, at any time.

Do not overlook the power of hospitality. It, like every Christian virtue has the power to change lives.

A case in point is Rosario Butterfield. Rosario earned her Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1992. She became a tenured English Literature professor at University of Syracuse in 1999. A member of the LGBT community, Rosario described Christians as “stupid, pointless and menacing.”

In 1997 Promise Keepers came to town and, as Rosario said, “...they parked their little circus at the University. In my war against stupid, I wrote an article against Promise Keepers which was published in the local newspaper.”

Promise Keepers is a Christian Organization founded in 1990 by Bill McCartney, who was the head football coach at Colorado. One of its main tenants, one which its name implies, was to challenge men to marital fidelity; to keep their marriage vows and remain faithful to their wives.

So, in 1997, Rosario wrote an article in a newspaper criticizing the Promise Keepers movement. She got a lot of response, some for and some against. One was from a local pastor named Ken Smith who asked her to defend her

interpretation of Christianity. At the end of the letter there was an invitation for Rosario to join him and his wife at their home for dinner.

She took him up on the dinner and Ken and his wife became friends with Rosario. She started reading the Bible in order to denigrate Christianity, but as she read, she began to change. Her friends even noticed and warned her that she was changing.

Two years later, in 1999, Rosario became a tenured professor of English at Syracuse, but she also trusted Jesus Christ as her Savior that year.

Today she is a Christian author, speaker, wife and mother. And almost all of her speaking and writing is about one subject; can you guess what it is? Hospitality. Why hospitality? Because that is the tool that Ken Smith and his wife used to show Rosario the truth of the gospel.

This is the power of hospitality to get the gospel to someone. But what about using hospitality to get the message of Right Division or Sonship to another believer? What about using hospitality to deepen the relationship with someone else in our assembly? People do not have to spend the night with you in order to exhibit hospitality toward them. Hospitality can take place in a single meal or a brief visit. You can even exhibit hospitality away from your home.

When we choose to be hospitable for godly reasons, we are employing a very powerful tool for both aspects of the work of the ministry; evangelism and edification.

Is it any wonder that hospitality is among the qualifications for a bishop?

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, **given to hospitality**, apt to teach;

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; ⁸ But **a lover of hospitality**, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

As we get ready to move on to the next verse, let me ask you a question, is it enough for us to hear this, to understand it, to believe it is true, and then go about our lives with no plans to find ways to be hospitable?

Yes, it is one thing to be hospitable when a sudden occasion arises, but it is quite another to plan to be hospitable for the achieving of some godly purpose.

Self-Test

1. What should be driving our distributing to the necessity of the saints?

- _____

2. When we choose to be hospitable for godly reasons, we are employing a very powerful tool for both aspects of the work of the ministry. What are they?

- _____

- _____

Summary

Our love for our fellow saints should move us to meet their need. Our words and charitable actions should reflect how we see their value to our assembly. As the word effectually works in us our love for our fellow saints will be without dissimulation and our godly selfless lovingkindness will not only be reserved for only the poorest among us, but we will care about all saints in the body of Christ. Although we may not be able to help everyone, we should have a heart for them.

If godly selfless love is operating in us, and if we are preferring each other in honor, and if we are kindly affectioned one to another, then we will be on the lookout for necessities and we will meet those needs willingly, lovingly, and not out of necessity.

Hospitality has a godly purpose. It, like every Christian virtue, has the power to change lives. Hospitality can be used to not only get the gospel to someone, but it can be used to get the message of Right Division of Sonship.

When we choose to be hospitable for godly reasons, we are employing a very powerful tool for both aspects of the work of the ministry; evangelism and edification.

Answers to Self-Test

1. What should be driving our distributing to the necessity of the saints?
 - godly charity
2. When we choose to be hospitable for godly reasons, we are employing a very powerful tool for both aspects of the work of the ministry. What are they?
 - Evangelism
 - Edification

Edification Evaluation

Hospitality for the purpose of achieving some godly purpose is not always inviting someone to your home. What other ways can you think of that would show hospitality?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Wisdom

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward our _____

Session 21: Romans 12:14

Today's verse is Romans 12:14.

Romans 12:14 **Bless them which persecute you:** bless, and curse not.

Today we are going to talk about persecution. Persecution for being a believer in Jesus still takes place in this world. It can run from mild to severe. I want us to start with the mild.

The mildest form might be what we experience here in America. An occasional slight or someone making fun of something about our faith.

Persecution takes many forms. The persecution may be mental in nature; attacks against our faith by argument or criticism. This is mostly carried out by individuals who are opposed to Christianity.

Let me step aside here to say that just because someone disagrees with something we believe does not automatically make it persecution. Persecution involves an attitude of hostility with an intent to produce some kind of harm or pain.

Persecution can be against Christianity in general; churches not allowed to assemble, no public expression of teaching or preaching, and the controlling of every message and writing. This kind of persecution is most often carried out by governments.

Persecution can be a physical persecution carried out against Christians by individuals, rival religions or governments.

In November of 2021, International Christian Concern posted a video on YouTube. The scene takes place in India which is fast becoming a hotbed of persecution for Christians. The video, while not especially graphic, shows a few Christian men being slapped and beaten with a belt by a mob of young men who are opposed to Christianity. The video is called "Poking the bear. India strikes back."

I want to show you just a few seconds of the incident in India.

Now let's move to the severe side. Every day, somewhere in the world, people are being killed simply because they are Christians.

December 17, 2021

According to the Zimbabwe Daily, a Christian pastor was intercepted in a field by Islamic extremists. They decapitated the pastor, handed his head to his wife and ordered her to carry his head to the police station and report the incident.

We have already been told about this kind of activity; persecution.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or **persecution**, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Persecution takes a lot of different forms:

There is political persecution which involves things like:

- Arrest/Imprisonment
- Assassination/Martyrdom

Marxism: In communist countries like Cuba, China, Vietnam, Laos, and North Korea, Christians are targeted because they vest their faith in the Lord and not the Marxist regimes.

There is religious persecution which involves things like:

- Restrictions on churches
- Forced conversions
- Arrest/Imprisonment

Islam: Islam is very intolerant toward other faiths, and in radical Muslim countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Indonesia, Christians suffer greatly. This ranges from job discrimination to the abduction, rape, and forced conversion of Christian women. Persecution is most violent in these countries and often includes the imprisonment and murder of Christians.

There is gender and age persecution which involves things like:

- Man stealing for workforce
- Crimes against women: forced prostitution/education restrictions
- Kidnapping of children for sale

There is a cultural persecution which involves things like:

- Racial discrimination

- Job discrimination
- Denial of rights
- Attacks on life and property

Cultural: Christian persecution also occurs as a result of social and cultural discrimination. Human beings in general are afraid and intolerant of that which is different. In places like India, Christians are discriminated against, denied employment, physically attacked, and sometimes even murdered.

I have saved the most dangerous place in the world for last: Nigeria.

We know something about Nigeria seeing that we have a branch of the bible institute over there; MBI Africa. Princeton Waters heads up our studies over there and in the last couple of years, through his instruction in our School of Theology, which focuses on the right division of God's word, over 200 people have graduated and received diplomas from MBI. Many of these people are pastors who are now teaching right division to their own churches.

As this is being written in December 2021, I have been looking at a fresh news report where 10 Christians were killed in Nigeria when over 500 Islamic militants rolled into the village. I actually watched the video of them burying the dead. Nigeria can be a deadly place to be a Christian and Princeton is doing a great job over there.

Here is just part of his email to me back in August 2021.

Please, we need prayers for peace, justice, and security in Jos our city, plateau state and the whole of Nigeria. We are in difficult situation with attacks from Fulani pastoralists called herdmen and counter attacks from community youths which results in the death of 23 people.

Tension between Muslims youths and Christians is very high.

We cannot get out now.

We were able to attend fellowship yesterday but we have to hurried closed because of the tension in the city. And most of our Fellowship members were unable to attend.

Now the government have imposed a curfew on us. we are under a 24 and 6pm to 6am curfew respectively.

...the inability of government to handle it decisively is what is leading to the death of innocent people all this time.

So what are we doing by going over all of this? We are establishing the reality of persecution in the world for believers in Christ. And why do we need to do this? Because persecution of this kind almost never gets reported by the news media and here in America, most people are completely unaware of this kind of persecution.

There is all kind of preaching about this and has been for some time.

Now, let's look at Romans 12:14 and the instruction that it gives us when we suffer some kind of persecution.

Romans 12:14 **Bless them which persecute you:** bless, and curse not.

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward our enemies

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward others' circumstances

In vs. 16, Paul deals with our attitude toward those of "low estate"

When I talk about our attitude toward our enemies, you might naturally assume that we are talking about lost people, but Christians have many times persecuted fellow Christians, even to the point of putting them to death.

John Calvin (1509–1564) was a French theologian who was instrumental in the Protestant Reformation. Calvin eventually fled Catholic France and moved to Geneva, Switzerland. Under Calvin's leadership, the city of Geneva became a haven for other Reformers who fled persecution in their own countries. By 1540 the city began moving toward a theocracy—moral law and civil law were one and the same (much like the Catholic Church enjoyed for 1000 years.)

In 1553 came a confrontation with a man named Michael Servetus. Michael Servetus was a Spanish physician and theologian who rejected orthodox Trinitarian doctrine. In his denial of the Trinity, Servetus was seen as a heretic by Catholics and Protestants alike.

John Calvin briefly corresponded with Servetus, but broke off all communication after the first few letters, as it was apparent that Servetus was unyielding in his denial of the Trinity.

In 1552 the Spanish Inquisition took action against Servetus, but he escaped. In August 1553, Servetus traveled to Geneva where he was recognized and at Calvin's request was imprisoned by the city magistrates. Servetus, found guilty of being a heretic was burned at the stake on October 27, 1553. Calvin played a prominent part in the trial and pressed for execution, although by beheading rather than by fire. Despite his intense Biblicism and his wholly Christocentric view of the universe, Servetus was found guilty of heresy, mainly on his views of the Trinity and Baptism.

Looking back at our text, what does it mean to “bless” someone? Generally, people think of a blessing as a good thing and therefore they think that any good thing they do is a blessing. And there is a sense in which this is true. But in the case of Romans 12:14, we are talking about what we *say* when we are persecuted.

So there is something we are supposed to say (bless) when we are persecuted and there is something we are not supposed to say (curse not).

OED

Bless: To speak well of and wish well to

Do not misunderstand this. If we are being persecuted, Paul is not asking us to compliment them in some way. We are not “wishing them luck” in their persecution attempts. The “bless” aspect has to do with our ministry toward them. We will look at this in more detail in just a moment, but first let's look at the thing we are not supposed to do; “curse.”

OED

Curse: An utterance intended to consign a person or thing to spiritual and temporal evil, the vengeance of God, [or to a] malignant fate.

Romans 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, **and curse not.**

In Romans 12:14, the persecution pertains to any type of persecution. Why is God asking us to “bless” those who persecute us? Because we are His ambassadors and our actions ought to be in line with what He is doing in this world. We are no longer looking at persecution the way we would have before; we are now looking at persecution in light of the work of the ministry.

For a lost person who persecutes us, our aim is to get them the gospel so they can be saved. The “good things” which come out of our mouth would be the word of reconciliation; the good news of the gospel of Christ. The way we “bless” lost people who persecute us is by viewing them as someone our Father wants to save and speaking to them in connection with that. It means we will not be saying those things of vengeance and return insult. We want them to be saved.

Was there anyone before who was a great persecutor of believers that got saved and turned out to be a great servant of God? How about the apostle Paul?

Concerning the stoning of Stephen:

Acts 8:1 And **Saul was consenting unto his death.** And at that time there was **a great persecution against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Every time Paul gives his testimony of conversion to Christ, he mentions the persecutions he inflicted on the members of the Lord’s little flock.

Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.⁵ As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Acts 26:9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁰ Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my

voice against *them*. ¹¹And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

No doubt, the believing remnant had thoughts about Saul of Tarsus, but what they did not know is that one day, he would be a great servant of God to Jews and Gentiles alike.

How do we know that our persecutor may not one day, trust Christ as their Savior because we did not respond to them out of our flesh, but responded to them as a faithful ambassador.

But what about when we are persecuted by a fellow believer? For a fellow saint who persecutes us, our aim is for them to come to the knowledge of the truth. That is the “bless” part of the verse for them. How do we know that one day, those that hate us and persecute us will not be affected by the truth of our message?

They may not, but it should not be because we responded to them like the world. God is not asking us to become a door mat for those who persecute us, but He is asking us to be more committed to the spiritual work He wants to do in this world than we are to “getting even” with those who persecute us.

Let it not be our pride, our anger, or our vengeful attitude that keeps anyone from being saved or from coming to the knowledge of the truth. If our persecutor is going to remain lost, if he, being saved, is going to continue to reject the truth, then let it be on him and not on us.

Persecution is like any other suffering; if we can avoid it, then we should. God is not asking us to find ways to be persecuted. At the same time, however, our apostle tells us that persecution is unavoidable for those who are godly.

2 Timothy 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, ¹¹ Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what **persecutions I endured**: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. ¹² Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

The “delivered” in vs. 11 is not delivered in that the persecutions did not take place, but the “delivered” was in the “enduring” of them; delivered from the intended effects of the persecution. In other words, in the persecutions Paul endured, they did not force him to doubt God or denounce the truth.

Under persecution, some have renounced their faith in Christ. Others have converted to a religion they do not believe in order to avoid further persecution. These did not “endure persecutions” because they gave up. Paul said He “endured” his persecutions. Those who did not endure persecutions were manifestly not “delivered” from the intended effects of persecution.

And when Paul asked folks to pray for him that he would be delivered from persecutions, he wasn’t asking them to pray for God to keep them from happening to him, but rather that he would not succumb to them; that he would remain faithful to the truth and to God.

The “bless” and “curse” of Romans 12:14 has to do with what we say to our persecutors that allows us to do our Father’s business; to carry out the work of the ministry in the midst of every situation.

We don’t just witness to the people who are nice to us, and we do not publish the knowledge of the truth only with saints who are friendly toward us. We do it even with those who do not like us, who persecute us and despise us. The only way to accomplish the work of the ministry with people is by keeping the door of communication open as much as possible. That is what Romans 12:14 is talking about.

When it came to persecution of the believing remnant, the Lord Himself gave them similar type instruction as Paul gives to us, but not identical!

Self-Test

1. Persecution takes a lot of different forms:

Political persecution involves things like:

- _____
- _____

Religious persecution involves things like:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Gender and age persecution involves things like:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Cultural persecution which involves things like:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Persecution involves an attitude of hostility with intent to produce some kind of _____ or _____.

3. Persecution that prohibits church assembly, public expression of teaching or preaching, and controlling of every message and writing is most often carried out by _____.

4. If we can “bless” those who persecute, it will allow us to do our _____ business; to carry out the work of the _____.

Summary

Persecution takes many forms. It involves an attitude of hostility with intent to produce some kind of harm or pain.

It can be mental in nature; or physical. Mental persecutions can include attacks against our faith by argument or criticism. This is mostly carried out by individuals who are opposed to Christianity.

There can also be a physical persecution carried out against Christians by individuals, rival religions or governments (for example: churches not allowed to assemble; no public expression of teaching or preaching, and the controlling of every message and writing.) Not all persecution is carried out by lost people; Christians have persecuted fellow Christians.

Other forms of persecution include, political, religious, gender and age, and cultural. God is asking us to “bless” those who persecute us because we are His ambassadors and our actions should be in line with what He is doing in this world. We should no longer look at persecution the way we would have before; we should now look at persecution in light of the work of the ministry.

The “bless” and “curse” of Romans 12:14 has to do with what we say to our persecutors that allow us to do our Father’s business; to carry out the work of the ministry in the midst of every situation. In order to help lost people get the gospel so they can be saved, the “good things” which come out of our mouth should be the word of reconciliation; the good news of the gospel of Christ.

The only way to accomplish the work of the ministry is by keeping the door of communication open as much as possible.

Answers to Self-Test

1. Persecution takes a lot of different forms:

Political persecution involves things like:

- Arrest/Imprisonment
- Assassination/Martyrdom

Religious persecution involves things like:

- Restrictions on churches
- Forced conversions
- Arrest/Imprisonment

Gender and age persecution involves things like:

- Man stealing for workforce
- Crimes against women: forced prostitution/education restrictions
- Kidnapping of children for sale

Cultural persecution which involves things like:

- Racial discrimination
- Job discrimination
- Denial of rights
- Attacks on life and property

2. Persecution involves an attitude of hostility with intent to produce some kind of **harm** or **pain**.

3. Persecution that prohibits church assembly, public expression of teaching or preaching, and controlling of every message and writing is most often carried out by **governments**.

4. If we can “bless” those who persecute, it will allow us to do our **Father’s** business; to carry out the work of the **ministry**.

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Wisdom – Romans 12

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward **the local assembly**

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward **business**

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward **tribulations**

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward **giving**

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward **our enemies**

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward **others' circumstances**

In vs. 16, Paul deals with our attitude toward _____

Session 22: Romans 12:15-16

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.¹⁶ *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward our enemies

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward others' circumstances

When we talk about the circumstances of others, we are talking about everyone; those who are lost and those who are saved, about saints who are part of our local assembly and those who are not. Depending on which group we are talking about, vs. 15 will have something different in mind, and you should have already discerned that.

What we have been looking at in these last verses has sometimes been described as Paul's beatitudes. We are all familiar with the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount in the book of Matthew where Jesus is giving instruction (corrective doctrine) to the members of his little flock.

Well, here in Romans 12:9-16, you could look at a similar kind of list; short, pithy instructions as the description of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ. I understand why they say that, but I would caution about two things: 1) this is not a list for us to do ourselves, in the energy of our flesh, which is the way these verses are normally taught, and 2) this is not the ultimate description of a believer in Christ, as so many make it out to be, but it is only the beginning of our instruction.

If these things are true, it is not an indication that we have reached the summit, but the things in these verses are an indication that we have been successful in the first part (wisdom) of the first level of our education (simple son). Even though this is not the "finish line," this is an essential part of our education and edification.

As you look at vs. 15, I want you to see something that may easily go unnoticed. You will see my point more and more as we progress through the session, but as it applies to other saved people, and especially those in our local assembly, vs. 15 is an expression of our unity, our togetherness. Or, to say it another way, when godly selflessness and lovingkindness are working in us effectually, they will produce what vs. 15 is describing.

For fellow saints, they will produce a real connectedness, which is exactly what members of a body are supposed to have. After all, we are on our way to the heavenly places...together! When we get up there and placed in our positions, we will be working like the members of Christ's body which we are...together.

We are not just together "in Christ" but we are meant to be together in function; together in our thinking, our living and our laboring.

For our fellow believers (especially those in our own assembly) rejoicing and weeping together is a mark of real unity. It is the litmus test, so to speak, of just how much we truly are "members one of another." (Rom. 12:5)

This is especially important in this day when a whole generation of people are obsessing over self-identification and individualism. This generation is overly addicted to "who I am" and "what are my dreams?"

I have said this before and now I am going to say it again; Paul and what he writes in his epistles concerning being the sons and daughters which God intends for us to be, knows nothing of isolated, individual sonship believers. What I mean is that Paul always assumes the fact that every believer is in some way, connected to a local assembly. In fact, there are a number of injunctions from our apostle, which cannot be obeyed unless we are, in some way, connected with a local assembly of believers.

And when I say connected, I have specific things in mind. This was a problem before we were able to utilize various technologies to allow for interaction between folks around the country and the people who are physically present at this assembly. Even with the ability to participate live from somewhere else in the world, this still requires real connectivity which means you can't just listen on Sunday and that is the end of it.

We need to interact with each other out of the attributes of godly love and charity. That is true for the folks who show up in this building on Sunday too. We cannot just see each other on Sunday and have no further interaction or thought for one another until the next Sunday. It will be even harder for those on Zoom, as you will have to make a greater effort.

When I say “connected” I mean like we are members of a body together (which we are!) I mean connection that stems from our godly love one for another to the extent that we actually, purposefully, visibly, genuinely, and authentically enter into each other’s joy and pain.

Not superficially, which is the way most people relate today. When we hear of a struggle or suffering of some kind, we just give a pat on the back and let that be it. Or when we hear of a success that someone has had, we tend to give a patronizing applause. No, this is not what vs. 15 has in mind.

This is entering in to the lives of our fellow members in a deeper way than before. The world has been teaching all of us from the day we were born that *we* are the primary thing that should matter to us; *we* are to be our priority. But Paul does not teach us that way. We are supposed to be looking outside of ourselves, not in our flesh, but out of the godly love that has been generated in us.

Before anyone gets to thinking that this is just not the way things can be done today because we live in different times, let me say that same thinking has always been true.

In Paul’s day, the excuse was stoicism; a very popular Greek philosophy which people practiced. Those who practiced it were called Stoics. In a nutshell, these people repressed their emotions and were indifferent to pleasure or pain. They believed everything that happens is up to “fate.”

But to make the application, Stoicism does not weep or rejoice for it finds no value in either and it does not recognize the reality of either. A Stoic, who has an attack of kidney stones will not admit he is hurting. A Stoic whose family has fallen apart will not admit that he is brokenhearted. A Stoic who has a loved one who has died will not admit to being sad.

Stoicism says that all emotional responses are wrong and must be resisted. Stoicism says the right way to live life, the way to experience a conquering life, the key to a successful life was to abstain from emotionally engaging in the world around you.

That was the accepted lifestyle of Paul's day when he writes about rejoicing and weeping. You think it's tough now, it was tougher back then when stoicism was the order of the day.

In vs. 15, Paul is telling us to do the very opposite of stoicism. And I will tell you that vs. 15 must occur within any assembly that values unity.

There is a picture of this in the life of Jesus Christ. I know this is in Israel's program, but this is another one of those similar type doctrines that happens to occur in both programs. In both programs, believers are supposed to love one another. In both programs we should expect suffering. And in both programs we are going to see the principle of rejoicing with those that rejoice and weeping with those who weep. In the gospels, there is an account of Lazarus dying and Jesus raising him from the dead. Probably you all know the story. I want us to turn there for a moment.

Just to set the stage, Jesus is especially close to Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus.

John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick but He stays in Jerusalem for two more days.

John 11:6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Lazarus is in Bethany and Jesus is in Jerusalem; two miles apart. Finally Jesus decides to go to Bethany and he knows Lazarus had died and he tells his disciples so.

John 11:14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

Now we take up the account in vs. 17.

John 11:17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: ¹⁹ And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. ²¹ Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. ²² But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. ²³ Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. ²⁴ Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? ²⁷ She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. ²⁸ And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. ²⁹ As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. ³⁰ Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. ³¹ The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. ³² Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. ³³ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, ³⁴ And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

When I was in Bible College, I heard lots of discussions about why Jesus wept. Well, I want to tell you why I think He wept and it is directly related to Romans 12:15.

I know from the scripture that Jesus loved Lazarus, but I do not think that Jesus wept because He loved Lazarus and Lazarus was dead. Why not? Because Jesus knew before He ever left Jerusalem that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but **I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.**

¹² Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. ¹³ Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

So Jesus knew He would raise Lazarus from the dead. If He knew that, why would He cry over Lazarus' death? He wouldn't.

I think Jesus wept (vs. 35) for the same reason that He "groaned in the spirit" (vs. 33). And, I do not think He groaned or wept because He was disappointed in them for what they did not know or believe. As you can see from the text, the reason Jesus groaned in the spirit was because He saw "Mary and the Jews weeping."

John 11:33 **When Jesus therefore saw her weeping**, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, **he groaned in the spirit**, and was troubled,

Was He troubled because Mary was mourning the loss of her brother? No, that was a natural response unless you were a stoic. Was he troubled because this was somehow going to prevent Him from raising Lazarus? Again, no. He raised Lazarus without any problem. So what troubled Jesus? And why did He weep? Especially knowing what He knew (that He would raise Lazarus from the dead), why would Jesus weep?

If this were one of us, we might be tempted to do something completely different. Instead of weeping, we might want to say to them something like this: "I don't want to be insensitive, I know you have just lost your brother, but there is no reason for you to cry. This isn't the end of the story, you are going to love what is about to happen, for I am going to raise your brother from the dead and he is going to be eating supper with you in your home tonight! So, calm down, I've got this. Don't cry, be happy because you are getting your brother back. This is going to be a great day!"

But, knowing full well what He is about to do, when He sees Mary, who is broken over the death of her brother, bawling her eyes out, He enters in to that emotion with her. He feels with her exactly what it means for Lazarus to have died.

This is Jesus' dear friends. He has fellowshiped with them and taught them. And when Jesus sees Mary and the Jews weeping and crying, He feels their sorrow in his own spirit. That is the "trouble" that He feels in His spirit.

He does not dismiss her circumstances or chide her for her weeping, but He does exactly what Romans 12:15 says we should do; He is weeping with those that weep. He is entering in with them into their sorrow and even though He is about to undo the cause for their sorrow, before He does, the godly love that He has for them is manifested by His sympathetic emotional response to their grief.

Jesus is God in the flesh, sinless and perfect. And He demonstrates genuine love and compassion for those who are grieving even though He knew He was about to change all that by raising Lazarus. Jesus knows that before the day is over, Lazarus will be sitting at his own table in his own house eating supper with his sisters, and yet...He enters into their grief with them.

How much was the members of the little flock meant to be at one with their Messiah? How close did He feel to them? And how much were they supposed to have unity among themselves? I think they were supposed to have unity and they are never spoken of as a body. But we are.

Charles Hodge: "How lovely genuine sympathy is. How much like Christ is the person who feels the sorrows and joys of others as though they were his own."

Romans 12:15 **Rejoice with them that do rejoice**, and weep with them that weep.

We have spent a lot of time on the last half of the verse but I do not want to neglect the first half, even though I think we all get the idea. But if we are honest, sometimes it is more difficult to rejoice with someone than it is to weep with them.

Rejoicing with another requires some humility (not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think). Rejoicing with another necessitates godly lovingkindness which does away with envy or covetousness. When our love is without dissimulation (when it is the genuine article), then our joy for another's occasion for rejoicing is founded in selflessness.

When we try to rejoice with them that do rejoice in the energy of our flesh, we find that it is somewhat difficult for us because we feel relegated or lowered in importance. Our flesh feels like we deserve that good thing happening to us. And when that is the case for us, then our rejoicing with them is artificial and not godly. Our rejoicing is not based in our love for them because it is not selfless. Either we have not allowed the doctrine to work in us to produce godly selflessness and lovingkindness, or we let those things lapse from our thinking for a moment. If that happens, then we must return our minds to the doctrine and realize that this is not about us, but it is about our brothers and sisters with whom we share commonness of purpose in the same body, it is about the lost who need to be saved, and it is about fellow saints who have not yet come to the knowledge of the truth.

Truth be told, the rejoicing mechanism is a good indicator of our love for others.

Of course, the easiest place for this rejoicing and weeping to take place is in our own local assembly. It is this sympathetic response to our fellow assembly members that equips us to do the same with members of Christ's body which are not part of our local assembly. It is the same response that equips us to respond to those at our work, our neighbors and the lost in a sympathetic way that may gain us a hearing to present the gospel or the truths of the Bible.

The unity that ought to characterize every assembly, the unity that is indicated by our weeping and rejoicing, does not mean we pretend there are no differences between us. It does not mean that we are all exactly the same, which is why there are different offices. But in our differences and distinctions there is a unity of purpose. The work of the ministry ties us together to get the gospel to the lost and the truth of the mystery to the saints. The fact that there are differences between us does not mean that we cannot love each other with godly love and charity. Unity goes beyond the members of this assembly liking one another (although that is a good thing) and spending time with one another. The kind of unity that our Father wants to produce in us is found in how we are directed to the mission and the cause of Christ. Authentic unity is demonstrated by our ability to weep and rejoice with one another because our lives in Christ are intertwined by godly interaction with each other; by caring so deeply that we look for ways to honor one another, that we

value and esteem one another as necessary to our own function in the body of Christ.

This is not a church without direction or purpose. That means that our unity is found in our purpose; getting the gospel to the lost and the truth of the mystery to the saints so that they are edified unto godliness. The truth of the mystery is more than Paul is our apostle, and we rightly divide the word, and we are living in the DoGG. Those things need to be known, yes, but the truth of the mystery also includes who we are in Christ and how to live out of that new identity. It includes being conformed to the image of God's Son so that we have the ability to truly labor with our Father in His business. It involves preparing ourselves for the work we will do in the heavenly places throughout the ages to come. The unity which should characterize this church is founded in our understanding of what God is doing and our desire to labor with Him in accomplishing His eternal purpose; the exaltation of His Son.

Self-Test

1. We are not just together “in Christ” but we are meant to be together in function; together in our _____, our _____ and our _____.
2. Stoicism says that all _____ are wrong and must be resisted.
3. Romans 12:15 _____ with them that do rejoice, and _____ with them that weep. For our fellow believers this is a mark of real _____.

Summary

In Romans 12: 15 Paul deals with our attitude toward others' circumstances. When we talk about the circumstances of others, it means everyone; those who are lost and those who are saved; saints who are part of our local assembly and those who are not.

Rejoicing and weeping together is a mark of real unity, as we are "truly members one of another." For the saints in the assembly, vs. 15 is an expression of our unity, our togetherness, or what godly selflessness and lovingkindness are working in us effectually to produce a real connectedness within the members of the body. We are not just together "in Christ" but we are meant to be together in function; together in our thinking, our living and our labor.

The example of Jesus weeping with Mary and Martha over Lazarus' death is a wonderful example of how He feels our trouble in his own spirit. Christ knew he would raise Lazarus, but allowed a connection with them to show his compassion for their loss. We as an assembly should learn to show the same response when other's experience loss.

Rejoicing with another requires humility (not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think). Rejoicing with another necessitates godly lovingkindness which does away with envy or covetousness. When we try to rejoice in the energy of our flesh, we find that it is somewhat difficult.

When that happens, we must return our minds to the doctrine and realize that this is not about us, but it is about our brothers and sisters with whom we share commonness of purpose in the same body, it is about the lost who need to be saved, and it is about fellow saints who have not yet come to the knowledge of the truth.

We as an assembly must connect and interact with each other out of the attributes of godly love and charity. This connection should stem from our godly love one for another to the extent that we actually, purposefully, visibly, genuinely, and authentically enter into each other's joy and pain.

Self-Answers

1. We are not just together “in Christ” but we are meant to be together in function; together in our **thinking**, our **living** and our **laboring**.
2. Stoicism says that all **emotional responses** are wrong and must be resisted.
3. Romans 12:15 **Rejoice** with them that do rejoice, and **weep** with them that weep. For our fellow believers this is a mark of real **unity**.

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Wisdom – Romans 12

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

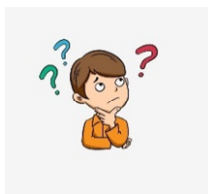
In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward our enemies

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward others' circumstances

In vs. 16, Paul deals with our attitude toward _____

Fig. 2: Romans 12:16



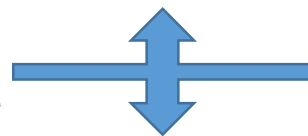




Fig. 3: Godly Steps of Action

- 1) _____
- 2) If your problem is unchangeable, then _____ for
the opportunity to be edified even with that problem
- 3) _____ in dealing with your limitations
- 4) Use your limitations to _____
- 5) _____ for that which you do have
- 6) Remember that God's ideal is _____
- 7) _____ from your fellow members
- 8) _____ in your assembly as possible

Session 23: Romans 12:16

Romans 12:16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

In vv. 3-10, Paul deals with our attitude toward the local assembly.

In vs. 11, Paul deals with our attitude toward business

In vs. 12, Paul deals with our attitude toward tribulations

In vs. 13, Paul deals with our attitude toward giving

In vs. 14, Paul deals with our attitude toward our enemies

In vs. 15, Paul deals with our attitude toward others' circumstances

In vs. 16, Paul deals with our attitude toward those of "low estate"

Romans 12:16 ***Be of the same mind one toward another.*** Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

The "one toward another" indicates that the context is back in the local assembly.

What does it mean for us to be "of the same mind one toward another?" There are a lot of ideas about this verse. For example:

- "Be of the same mind" = Enter into each other's circumstances in order to see how you would yourself feel.

This is not a wrong thing for sure, but this really has more to do with the previous verse where we called upon to rejoice and weep with each other.

- "Be of the same mind" = Be agreed in your opinions and views.

I don't think this hits the mark exactly because the verse is not talking about our opinions and views as it is talking about how we think about each other.

- "Be of the same mind" = What you regard or seek for yourself, seek also for your brethren. Do not have divided interests; do not be pursuing different ends and aims, do not indulge counter plans and purposes, and do not seek honors for yourself which you do not seek for your brethren.

While this is all great and even necessary, I do not think this is what vs. 16 is getting at because all three sentences in vs. 16 are connected and in the same context. So, this is not three separate commands, but three parts to a single whole. And when you see the verse that way, it gives a more specific context to “Be of the same mind...”

So what does it mean to be of the same mind one toward another? It does not mean that we think everyone in the assembly is equal, for the fact is, they are not. Being of the same mind with one another does not mean we do acknowledge differences between us. When we have the same mind one toward another, we will not allow the differences between us to cause some schism in the body, every member will be important, and those which seem to be less honorable, we will bestow more abundant honor upon them. Having the same mind means we have the same godly goal for every member; edification unto godliness. Being of the same mind means not allowing anything to impact your thinking and fellowship with the other members of your assembly.

So, this issue of the “same mind” is one of valuing and esteeming every member no matter what their estate.

Romans 12:16 *Be of the same mind one toward another. **Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.*** Be not wise in your own conceits.

There are some words and phrases that we need to have defined so we properly understand what Paul is saying to us. These would be: “high things,” “condescend,” “low estate,” and “conceits.”

Paul sets “high things” in opposition to “low estate” and that will help us define what he means by the terms. When Paul talks about a person’s estate, in this context, he is not talking about their property or possessions. It is true that we think of someone with riches and lots of possessions we think of them as being of a high estate and someone who is poor with few possessions as being of “low estate.” But in this context, Paul is talking about people in a more personal way; a way that has a bearing on how we think of them and treat them within the assembly.

There may be some in our assembly, or who later join our assembly, who have some things about them which will necessitate that the other members take those things into account as we seek to include them, educate them and edify them.

One of those things will pertain to new people who join the assembly who have an edificational difference from the rest of the assembly. The tendency may be to look at them as inferior and to treat them accordingly. Instead of constantly correcting them because they don't know things the rest of the assembly knows, or being impatient with them, it is up to the assembly to devise an operation whereby this deficiency can be addressed.

For our assembly, we are devising the Accelerated Sonship Education program (ASE). Thank you to those of you who are part of that program.

There are some other differences that we need to be prepared for and be thinking about.

Another difference is in how people learn. People learn in different ways. That means we have to devise an operation that allows people to learn in the way best suited for them. That is why we provide the lessons in so many formats. We produce audio lessons, video lessons, printed notes and interactive Notetakers. It is for this reason we produce the books that accompany the lessons.

Mental capacity differences is another. Some people are slower learners than others while some learn very fast. That means that there is another operation that we must engage in order to accommodate those who learn at a slower rate. Therefore, we record the sessions and put them on Vimeo where they can be viewed over and over. We produce the books so learning can take place anywhere, without a computer or internet.

Should we discount those who learn slower? Are they less important to the assembly? Do we think ill of them or treat them with disregard? Should we run off and leave them behind because they cannot keep up with the fastest among us? You know the answer to these questions.

And for those who learn quickly, what is their responsibility?

Since we are talking about learning differences, what about those who have some kind of learning disability?

1 Corinthians 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³ And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴ For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Age differences can have an effect on how well a person can learn. Sometimes, as we get older, it is more difficult to hang on to what we learn, but there is an advantage to being in an assembly that has godly love working in it.

This is not meant to be a complete list of all the differences that can occur with an assembly. What we are doing is recognizing that not everyone is the same within an assembly and the care we are supposed to have for every member. An assembly has to be careful to take into account the inequalities of its members and out of godly love and charity, bring specific operations into action to account for them. And that is part of what it means to condescend to those who are of low estate.

We consider that every member is an important part of the body and we are not going to care for some less because of some difference. That means that we will fellowship with every member and not allow ourselves to become cliquish or clannish.

Paul is teaching us not to allow the inequalities among our members to produce division, discord or distance between us. We care for every member to fullest extent possible and we make considerations for those who for some reason are in a “low estate” as far as their edification goes. It means we go out of our way to make sure they are getting the doctrine. It means we are not only aware, but they are on our mind and we are praying about them and their particular circumstance.

And we all know what that means. When you pray, it means you are now going to get involved.

Now let's take a look at the final sentence in the verse.

Romans 12:16 *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. **Be not wise in your own conceits.**

This is another of those negative instructions:

- 2 And be not conformed to this world
- 3 ...not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think
- 9 *Let* love be without dissimulation
- 11 Not slothful in business
- 14 ...curse not
- 16 ... Be not wise in your own conceits

This last sentence is part of the whole of vs. 16, so this is not some general statement about conceit, but this has the context of our attitude toward those in our assembly who might be, for one reason or another, of low estate.

The phrase “in your own conceits” has to do with your own private opinion and estimation of those of low estate which is colored by personal vanity or pride.

Proverbs 28:11 The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

A man may be poor (low estate) and yet wise. A man may be rich (high estate) and yet be foolish. A poor but wise man can discover (and expose) the rich and self-conceited.

So what does this have to do with our Romans verse? Just think of the absurdity of anyone in any assembly being wise in their own conceits, as though they are “self-made” sons. Are we the ones who came up with this education? Are we sons because we are so wise?

We all come to the gospel as unworthy beggars who can do nothing to save ourselves. And now that we are JUEL, do we think we can handle it from here? No, we are just as dependent for our sanctification as we are for justification. We did not create the education and therefore we have nothing to conceit ourselves over.

Paul is asking us to strip away the pride that may come into our minds whether from our own personal estate or from the education we have so far.

Before we end this lesson, I want to step aside and look at this from the standpoint of those of us who are, in some way, of low estate. The natural, worldly tendency is to feel inferior and that leads to thoughts of giving up and not trying. Instead, let us develop a godly response to anything that hinders or limits us. In this lesson we have listed several things that may limit us or hinder us from moving forward like we would want. No matter what the issue may be, let us take some godly steps of action to keep those things from discouraging us and causing us to quit.

- 1) Identify the problem
- 2) If your problem is unchangeable, then thank God for the opportunity to be edified even with that problem

What are unchangeable problems? These would be things like mental capacity, aging, physical limitations; things over which we have no control. Let us say for example that you have a difficult time absorbing everything in the lesson the first time you hear it. There may be very little you can do about that, but what can you do?

Let's say that you have poor eyesight which hinders you. What can you do?

- 3) Be creative in dealing with your limitations
- 4) Use your limitations to develop patience
- 5) Be grateful for that which you do have
- 6) Remember that God's ideal is in your inner man
- 7) Accept help from your fellow members
- 8) Be as active in your assembly as possible

Self-Test

1. A man may be _____ (low estate) and yet _____.
2. A man may be _____ (high estate) and yet be _____.
3. No matter your circumstance, you can take the following two steps of action to keep your limitation from discouraging you or causing you to quit.
 - 1) _____ your problem
 - 2) If the circumstance cannot be changed, thank _____ for the _____ to be _____, even with the limitation.
4. When we _____ and _____ one another, we _____ the assembly.
5. Being of the same mind means to not allow anything to impact your _____ and _____ with the other members of your assembly.

Summary

This lesson lists several issues that may limit us or hinder us from moving forward like we would want. No matter the limitation, let us take godly steps of action to keep those things from discouraging us and causing us to quit. Know that you are valued by God, and He wants you in His business.

Let's strip away the pride that may come into our minds whether from our own personal estate or from the education we have so far. We must learn to develop a godly response to anything that hinders or limits us. In addition, we should learn to recognize and eliminate discouraging thoughts that would lead us to giving up or not trying.

We all come to the gospel as unworthy beggars who can do nothing to save ourselves. And now that we have been JUEL, let us see that we are just as dependent for our sanctification as we are for justification. We did not create the education and therefore we have nothing to conceit ourselves over.

Being of the same mind one toward another, we will not allow differences between us to cause schism in the body. We must ensure that we treat the saints with godly selflessness and lovingkindness. Having this mindset strengthens the assembly. When we value and esteem one another, we will look for opportunities to encourage, and edify unto godliness.

Self-Test Answers

1. A man may be **poor** (low estate) and yet **wise**.
2. A man may be **rich** (high estate) and yet be **foolish**.
3. No matter your circumstance, you can take the following two steps of action to keep your limitation from discouraging you or causing you to quit.
 - 1) **Identify** your problem
 - 2) If the circumstance cannot be changed, thank **God** for the **opportunity** to be **edified**, even with the limitation.
4. When we **value** and **esteem** one another, we **strengthen** the assembly.
5. Being of the same mind means to not allow anything to impact your **thinking** and **fellowship** with the other members of your assembly.

Edification Evaluation

The apostle Paul is exhorting us to have a particular mindset as we deal with everyday life. Our goal should be to have our attitude toward business, tribulations, giving, our enemies, other' circumstances and those of low estate, line up with who we are made to be in Christ Jesus. As we view our circumstances through a spiritual lens, let's identify areas in our own life that may not measure up to these exhortations – Yet.

As we consciously work on having a godly attitude in our circumstances, having this mindset will be useful in communicating with others about Christ.

Do you see areas in your life that will benefit from these sessions?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.