

Romans Chapter 12 v 12

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning one and all. If you are visiting this morning, you're not normally here in Whitby, a very special welcome. Me and my family are also visiting. We're not normally here. We used to live here in Whitby many years ago and it is good to come back and be home amongst friends. Let's hope at the end of the service you're still my friend, so we will see. In God's word in Psalm 67, it says, may God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. That I think is our heart's desire that the truth that we know in Christ Jesus and the hope that we've received is known in all nations across the world and indeed in ours as well here in the UK. Let us turn to our God in prayer. Let us pray together.

Dear Lord God, we thank you that we can come together as a community of faith, that we can sit here, Lord, and wait, Lord, for you to speak to us. Thank you that you have promised that when one are gathered in your name you will be in the midst of the world, you will be in the midst.

And so we thank you, Lord, that you are with us now and that as we come, Lord, before your throne, we may give you thanks. We praise you, Lord, that you are the creator God. Lord, that you have made heaven and earth and that you are sovereign, Lord, over your creation. We thank you, Lord, that you sustain the seasons, Lord, year by year and that we can trust you and that our lives, Lord, are in your hands. And most of all, Father God, we thank you for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was willing to suffer and bleed and die on the cross. Lord, to take our sins, to be punished for our wrong doing and through the resurrection and through the resurrection to conquer death and to claim the victory that we may receive forgiveness of sins and an eternal hope that we may one day be called home to be with you in heaven. Lord, for all here this morning who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, we give you thanks. Lord, we thank you for your mercy to us, for answers of prayer and that, Lord, whether we enjoy good days or hard days, we know that you are with us, you care for us and through the most difficult times, you will carry us and shield us and guard us because of your abounding love and grace. So may you speak to us this day. Thank you for this time we have to reflect and consider your greatness and what you would have to say to us this morning. Thank you, Lord, that you've brought us from different places around the UK and maybe beyond, that together we are a family. So may we bless one another this morning, encourage one another that we may continue on every day, acknowledging you as saviour and Lord and praising you aright. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Such a beautiful chorus, isn't it? And a lovely truth, God's faithfulness to each one of us. Okay, we're going to turn to read God's words together. If you'd like to turn to Romans chapter 12.

We're going to be reading the whole chapter, although during this morning's time of consideration, we're actually going to be looking at one verse. I think you could spend a lifetime studying this chapter, to be honest. But Romans chapter 12, starting to read at verse 1.

[4 : 54] Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me, I say to every one of you, do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.

So in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve. If it is teaching, let him teach. If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with the people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written, it is mine to avenge. I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him.

[8 : 01] If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. May God bless his word to us as we consider this later on.

Thank you.

First of all, can we give you thanks for inviting us to come back to Whitby and also thank you for your prayers and support for us over many, many years.

And it is good to be back. We were last here in August when the beach missions was here actually, which was very encouraging to be part of that ministry.

It was lovely to drive over the moors to see the different sort of weather, the different colours. It was quite beautiful actually. And we played the game that we always play, who can see the first person to see the abbey?

[9 : 30] Which I think we began in York. The children were rather tired. Now, I have a slight problem which I'm hoping in Whitby I'll be able to resolve.

And that is, one pair of my shoes has a hole in it. These shoes are having more sermon illustrations than anything else. But my right shoe here has a hole in it.

I discovered this about three weeks ago when it was raining. My foot got wet, obviously. But I haven't had time to replace them.

And in my house with five females, we have a plethora of shoes. Many, many shoes. And in fact, one of our children, Grace, when we travel, we always say one pair of shoes only.

She always manages to bring, by hook or by crook, three or four pairs, hidden away in bags or personally belonging or under her jumper. But I have a hole in my shoe.

[10 : 31] And here in Whitby I will be scouring the charity shops looking for a size eight. You get used to your shoes as men, you know, like wallets. We get used to them. So we don't like to change them quickly.

And in fact, these shoes have changed colour as well. My wife said we had to go to a wedding and these were brown shoes. And I needed black shoes for the wedding.

So I decided to get out the shoe polish and made them black. After only about 12 coats, they are black, you see. So anyway, these shoes represent in many ways, especially with the whole, the man standing before you today.

Okay. And indeed, each one of you. We are not, when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, transformed into perfect Christians.

We are, as people, like a pair of shoes with a hole. We are not perfect. Far from it.

[11 : 40] And as God works in us over the years, we do not follow a straight line graph of improvement.

We grow, we fall, we grow, we grow, we fall, we falter, we stumble, we grow. It is an interesting journey.

And this morning's reflection is really for us, as people who are not perfect, but people who are learning.

And the older I get, the more that is true. But we are learning. C.S. Lewis said, I love this quote, The self you were really intended to be is something that lives not from nature, but from God.

I'll say that again. The self you were really intended to be is something that lives not from nature, but from God. You see, when God calls us to be his people, he begins a journey of transforming us.

[13 : 00] But he doesn't just discard the person. He transforms the person. He works with our nature, with our faults.

But the intended person that God wants us to be is rooted in God through his spirit as it changes us.

But it doesn't happen overnight, and it will not fully happen until the day when we are with him in heaven. But it is a journey.

And this morning, I want us to consider the development of our Christian character. And we're going to look at just one of those verses in Romans. You'll be thankful we're not looking at all of them because we would be here for about two weeks.

We're going to look at Romans 12, verse 12. So young people, you can remember that. 12, 12. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

[14 : 09] Now, Paul wrote to the church in Rome. It was around AD 57, and it was to the church, the Gentiles and the Jews.

And in the previous 11 chapters, Paul outlines great theological truths and lays a foundation of the truth of what God has done for us.

That while we were sinners, Christ died for us. He's laid the foundation of truths of our faith, justification, sanctification, and he ends in chapter 11 with this doxology which kind of summarizes that entire 11 chapters of biblical theological truth.

Oh, the depth of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been this counselor?

Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. And it kind of ends the theological discourse of the Christian faith.

[15 : 27] The importance of justification and by grace and sanctification and that journey we're all on. And then he begins to apply it to the Christian.

And Romans 12, the heading I have is living sacrifices. So he says, therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, and then he continues what we should do.

So in the light of God, having worked out our salvation through sending his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, all by grace, none of us, he then says, this is how you should respond.

Now it's important before we look at verse 12 that we remind ourselves and pause that those previous 11 chapters, that theological truth is really important.

you cannot live out your Christian faith. You cannot live out the words of verse 12, joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, unless you have an understanding and a teaching of what God has done for you, unless you have the right foundation.

[16 : 59] I can be hopeful and joyful as a person, but that isn't what this is about. This is about Christian character and Christian growth, and it will only take place on a foundation of good teaching.

And it does sadden me that in the missionary community, in the church community, that many people are kind of ignoring that aspect of the Christian walk.

It's like they want to shortcut from the moment you come to Jesus to then just be joyful, just be hopeful, just do this, just do that. No, there's a whole foundation of understanding of God and what he's done and the means by grace that needs to be in place in our lives.

And even as Christians of many years, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of the theological basis by which we stand. Otherwise, we proclaim a gospel that is not truly the gospel.

We deny the cross of Christ. We deny the fact that God is creator. And if you look at today's society, compared to, say, 20 years ago, or 40 years ago, or 100 years ago, how many of the truths have been denied by the church?

[18 : 33] Or how many of the truths have been watered down by the Christian community so that it will fit more, taste better, like applying sugar to grapefruit to make it taste sweeter?

I can't list all of the ways and things that have changed, but you can think of them yourself.

What is marriage? Who is the creator? How are we saved? Are we Christians who want to just make it easy for people to know God?

Or are we Christians who want to tell the truth that there is only one creator? That there is only one form of marriage?

That there are no other gods? That you can only be saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his death on the cross and his resurrection.

[19 : 51] Now some of us that are in certain church communities, we are protected by good teaching, but it's when you go out into the broader Christian community that you realise that many of these teachings, these truths do not exist anymore.

And it's tragic because it's ripping out the heart of the gospel to make it easier for people to believe. But there is then no truth and no belief.

So we look at this verse in the light of our theological understanding of God. We don't want to sink in the understanding.

It should enable us to grow. And that's what we should teach our children. children. So this morning we're going to look at three points as we apply this teaching to ourselves.

They're there in the verse. Joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Joyful in hope. I found a quote and I cannot remember where it's from so please forgive me.

[21 : 05] It may have been my own quote. I don't think so. Many of us have as much religion as makes us sombre but we have not enough to make us glad.

If you know where that quote is from please tell me afterwards. Many of us have as much religion as makes us sombre but we have not enough to make us glad. I really like that quote because sometimes we do have the theological understanding.

We do have the theological truth. We do understand by grace. We do understand that we are sinners. But then we do not move away into the joy of that.

we stay as sombre people browbeating ourselves that we indeed are sinners that it is all of God which is true but that should make us more joyful than any person.

That is the joy. That is the truth. It is a solemn truth. Christ did suffer and die. He paid the price.

[22 : 27] It is something serious but it is wonderfully joyful. Wonderful love that God had for us. Wonderful love that he did send his son.

You see the more we understand the depth of God's love through the cross the more we understand the depth of the cross the suffering the pain the more joyful we should feel knowing that he did that for us.

It shouldn't keep us sombre. Yes it should humble us as in this chapter it says do not think highly of yourself but it also should give us a joy in hope of eternal salvation.

I've given up hoping to look handsome. It's completely gone. I've given up hoping to look well dressed. This is as good as it gets. You know but we should be hopeful in the things of God in our eternal dwelling.

What a wonderful thing. in the prayer meeting on Thursday in our home church in Gloucester they had to announce that a lady called Sybil has died and gone to be with God.

[23 : 55] But when they announced it there wasn't a sort of a despair there was a grieving there was a sadness but there was a wonderful acknowledgement that she has gone home to be with her Lord.

that's precious. And I'm not just saying that you know because that's the right thing to say when you get old. It's wonderful you know when we get old I'm an older person I'm elderly oh I can now be joyful in going home.

No. Young people you know the younger generations we shouldn't be hopeful in what we can achieve or you know hopeful in the things of this world.

We should be looking forward and being joyful knowing that this world is passing. It is temporary. I feel I've lived too long. I'm probably the only person I've ever met who thinks life is just too long.

My wife says I'm miserable about that but it really is long isn't it? I mean Christian if you are here today and believe that you have been saved for eternity and that there's a heaven awaiting this is a long life.

[25 : 12] It is a moment in time before God but it does feel long sometimes doesn't it? But when you know you can hope for heaven that is a joy.

In Psalm 33 Sing joyfully to the Lord you righteous it is fitting for the upright to praise him praise the Lord with the harp make music to him on the ten stringed lyle sing to him a new song play skillfully and shout for joy why?

For the word of the Lord is right and true he's faithful in all he does the Lord loves righteousness and justice the earth is full of his unfailing love we sing we praise we shout for joy for the word of the Lord is right and true wow how many times have you been in a church where they're singing and praising and shouting saying this is the Bible you know that's fantastic if they did that but they often don't do that they just sing and shout and praise and then don't read the Bible we should be joyful we should be joyful in the hope that we have and it's not about temperament you do get joyful witty happy people I'm sure in Yorkshire there'll be one or two I haven't ever met them but you do get the odd witty person or happy person and you get the odd sanguine kind of quiet reflective person our joy is not in our temperament the joy comes in the deep joy and hope that we have reflective acknowledging God for who God is accepting our salvation and when I was thinking this

I thought to myself how can we help ourselves in this area because most days I wake up exhausted drag myself out of the bed try to wake up children to get in the car to go to a bus to go to school meet people like Muslims who don't really like me you know it's a tough life isn't it so how can we help ourselves well we do have a choice we can dwell on disappointments we can spend time churning over things in our mind people who have hurt us stresses at work pressure pressure but we can actually kind of go to God and get assistance from him turn on some Christian music turn and read God's word just a verse

I've got an app on my phone that my daughter Joy showed me you know which is a Bible app and it's great you can just turn and get the verse of the day and it's fantastic it's a real encouragement praise God for that technology we can help ourselves be more joyful we can help each other definitely being more joyful in God it's a bit like hand warmers Jemima wants me to buy some hand warmers you know if you're in winter it's really cold and you go to school you can get these little hand warmers they used to have charcoal and now you get microwavable ones and you go to school in the playground and you put your hands in your pockets oh it's nice and warm that's what scripture can be to us in difficult days like hand warmers just warms the whole body so we have a choice sometimes to make ourselves more joyful in hope it's acknowledging that this is just a moment that God is there God is sovereign

[29 : 12] God's in charge and one day we will be with him for eternity secondly and I have no idea of the time so please forgive me patient in affliction John Newton wrote though painful at present twill cease before long and then oh how pleasant the conqueror's song we have to be joyful in hope and if we do live in that joy for the eternal hope we have it can help us exercise patience and perseverance in affliction life is tough in our church in Gloucester we were looking at Job and they did something quite unusual really for the church they did a sharing evening where people who'd been through certain types of suffering shared in an informal context someone shared about bereavement about mental health issues and one man which really touched me shared about unemployment through no fault of his own he'd been made unemployed three or four times in his career and he shared about how hard that was for him and his family and he's a very quiet spoken man and actually

I think many of the church didn't realise some of the things he'd gone through life can be really tough all of us will suffer certainly for being Christians and in many ways in the workplace it's really hard because we don't cheat or act corruptly or backbite or act in devious ways if you do that often you become successful but if we apply a Christian walk into the workplace it is really tough it's not easy and we will suffer but also in our life there are many many many challenges difficulties ill health just weariness as I'm getting older my children getting older we worry about our children will they come to faith will they walk in the ways of the

Lord you worry about them and their future we'll face many trials a church will face many trials sometimes the church is growing and vibrant people come into the area it's very positive everyone's very happy it lightens the burden of managing the church the practical things of cleaning and organising the church building other times people move away it breaks your heart when someone will move away you feel grieving that you're losing a good friend it is tough it is difficult life is hard certainly in missionary work it is really challenging it's very hard some of the challenges Antonia have had to face have had us in tears real tragic situations that you've had to go through and yet if you're rooted in God if you're rooted in

God he will enable you to persevere in Romans 8 going back to that foundation I said we needed to have laid verse 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us in us it isn't always easy though is it to have that verse when you're in the middle of the suffering both Antonia and I have been through very difficult times in our lives and in those difficult times sometimes those verses if I'm really honest they hit hard they really hit hard and you don't want to read it and you don't want to believe it and you tell

God it's unfair but the wonderful thing is like the old pair of shoes with the hole in it's okay to say to God that's not fair or certainly in my walk with God because he will listen and when we go through real trials and real difficulties and things that nobody knows and we say God that is just not fair to me he will not turn away from you he will not give up he will stay there even if you think he's gone away he's not gone away he is there and he will give you the space and the time you need to come back reflect he will minister in miraculous ways through people through his word through his spirit and comfort you there were 280

[35 : 00] I think people killed yesterday in Mosul by IS just for being there but whether we believe it or not our God somewhere is there it's hard truths this teaching but God is there and if God is in our life he will help us persevere remember where we're going who died on the cross and took your sins who suffered though he was innocent who wrought your eternal salvation Jesus Christ and finally and briefly faithful in prayer the King

James version translates this continuing instant in prayer now as an ex-teacher that's really terrible grammar but as a little phrase I think it's fantastic continuing instant in prayer steadfast in prayer if we are to be joyful in hope and patient in affliction then we need to be steadfast in prayer you know I read so many quotes about prayer from so many godly people all the big names of history you know it's amazing Corrie ten Boone and Spurgeon and Hudson Taylor and Calvin and Lady Gaga no I'm just checking if you're still listening there was no quote from Lady Gaga that's completely rubbish but all these quotes in prayer and I was reading them thinking wow two hours of prayer and I wouldn't get out of bed until I've done my three hours of prayer and I'm like thinking these people really do pray so much and then I thought to myself a truth hit me

I've always thought these people were great men and women of God and did great things and that enabled them to pray but then I thought to myself hold on a minute I've got that the wrong way round these people were great pray people they interceded that's what made them then do great things for God it was the other way round they weren't famous names in history when they were sitting praying were they Hudson Taylor who prayed for many missionaries to go to China was an unknown difficult person that the other mission societies sort of kicked out it was the right problem for the missionary societies so actually the key is this to do great things for God you need to pray great things for God and it is very difficult to be faithful in prayer but it isn't just about having a time of quiet with God

I think the secret to this is to have a communion with God of prayer not just to set aside 15 minutes in the morning or 15 minutes in the evening it's to have an attitude prayerful reflection in commune with God I think that is the meaning of continuing instant in prayer now as a family we do pray often we pray you know in the mornings and in the evening mealtime we have a prayer and devotional we pray when we drive we do a lot of prayer in our house but I don't think we have always that sense of spirit of prayer you know when you go for a walk and you see the beauty of God's creation and it touches your heart and we can develop that sense of prayer doing lots of different things there were some missionaries in Bangkok that we worked with and they did marathon running and they said that was the best time when they prayed when they ran a marathon

I'm not going down that theological route but you see we don't have to just sit and pray it can become part of our commune with God and I think that's something very important to consider I do believe in praying in the morning when you wake and when you rise and having those quiet times I think that's very important but I think as people of God we should have a spirit of prayer we should commune with God in relationship talk to God turn to his word and just have more of a fluid prayer life not just rigid and I think that's something that doesn't necessarily naturally come to us but it can do a quote from Bunyan to show the importance of prayer prayer prayer will make a man cease from sin or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer that is so true isn't it if we spend time with

[40 : 43] God faithful we will cease from sin but if we sin we will certainly cease from prayer prayer is so important as Christians it's our way to maintain relationship with our living God including reading his word worshipping him so we need to be faithful in prayer prayer do not say oh I'll pray for you and then just pray once and forget them and there are some practical things we can do I really like the idea of prayer triplets it was developed many years ago meeting together with someone else at a convenient time during the week where you can pray as a small group together getting up in the morning and having a prayer time in the evening praying as well but I think we need to develop prayer more with our Muslim friends if you say tomorrow can I pray for you especially those in Asia they will accept prayer every time and I think sometimes we don't do that enough as

Christians we might only see each other on a Sunday and we may be talking and you may be sharing about you know your brothers looking for work then say oh let's pray now here let's pray about that I like that it makes our faith real we were doing a new initiative called the living room where we bring international people who want to learn English to come together to meet in the church I do a little bit of teaching but we get other church members to come along and speak together and one man was sharing about he's been in hospital recently and I said oh I'll pray for you open up opportunities and out and about in Whitby it's a testimony to pray for somebody it's a step of faith as well and as we conclude what is our conclusion well like the pair of shoes that

I'm wearing with the hole in please don't just remember that part of the sermon we are not perfect but we are God's people if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour you are his people for this generation and you are called to be joyful in hope patient in affliction and faithful in prayer in order that God may have a people for his own and a witness in the world that is your responsibility to be a witness in the world where you live to whoever you meet for his glory and our good amen I want to just thank

Kath for choosing the hymns are very appropriate this morning let's pray Father God I want to thank you and praise you that you have called us to be your people I want to thank you that you accepted us Lord while we were yet sinners and that Christ died for us we acknowledge Lord that our salvation has been wrought by your love and your mercy to us alone and yet we are joyful in the hope of eternity we give thanks for all that you have done for us and help us Lord as we walk each day in Christian service to remember Lord that you are our God we are your people that we may be the light to the world for we have the good news of salvation for those Lord around us who are lost may you inspire us to share the message of truth with those around us and may you be glorified Lord this day and forever more amen