

## **“LET LOVE BE GENUINE, IV.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**October 12, 2025, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Romans 12:12-13**

### **Introduction.**

This morning we will focus on the three exhortations, this triad of imperatives in verse 12. This verse is like a vein of gold, it is rich in wisdom and instruction, food for our souls.

Once again Paul is exhorting the Christians in the church in Rome, and it is timeless so it is for us as well. Why is Paul saying these things? Because they are hard to do. If this was easy, if everyone was doing them, it wouldn't be necessary to remind us.

These three commands are hard. I know that, I find them hard to do. I do not preach to you as one who has arrived or has accomplished these things. I am like Paul in Philippians 3,

**Philippians 3:12-14** Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I preach not from confidence in my own flesh and ability, but from confidence in the truth of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to do this, to bring it to completion. Only those who already have Christ and His Holy Spirit can rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

### **Rejoice in hope.**

Have you ever told your kids to be happy? Does it work? So how does it work for us as God's children to be told by God, be happy, be joyful? How does it work to command us to be joyful when we don't feel joyful or want to be joyful? Can God command our feelings?

When Jesus says, "Let not your hearts be troubled" He is saying we are to control our fears. Here we are being told to control our happiness or joy. How do we control our feelings?

We know people who are ruled by their emotions, their life is like a roller coaster, somedays happy, somedays miserable.

Paul is saying, yes we can control our emotions and our joy by making our feelings and joy controlled or governed by our hope. Our feelings are to be submitted to our hope. Our hope is the reason for our joy.

What do you hope for in your life? What do you hope will happen?

Can you rejoice in the hope that the Mariners will win the World Series this year? Can you rejoice in the hope that you will win the lottery? Can you rejoice in the hope that you will live a happy, healthy life until you are 90 and peacefully die in your sleep?

No, you can't. Why not? Because those are uncertainties. Hope is not fluffy clouds, hope is not just hopefully, maybe, if everything turns out OK, hope is not crossing your fingers. Biblical hope is a rock, it is solid granite. It is confident certainty in God's promises, knowing God will never fail to do what He has promised. This is what joy rests on, this is why it is lasting joy, it is grounded in our certain hope.

**Hebrews 11:1** Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Jesus is our hope, the cross is our hope, the Holy Spirit's power and presence is our hope. The truth of the Gospel is our hope. The objects of our hope are fixed, real, substantive, secure in heaven. Our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven, eternally secure. Our joy flows from our certain hope.

Our hope is a living hope, as sure and certain as the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the throne at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

When our hope is in these unchangeable realities, our joy doesn't change with the shifting winds of circumstance and hardships of life.

So when we find ourselves grumbling, murmuring, whining, complaining, fretting, stewing, wringing our hands, where are our joy and happiness located? On earth and in earthly things, in things that are temporary and transient and changing.

We've all seen a lot of bad things in recent years. For some, their hope has been crushed. The only person who has true and lasting joy and happiness is the person who has learned to find their joy beyond this world.

This is the kind of hope that can rejoice when everything around us is falling apart. No matter how bad circumstances and life gets, no matter how overwhelming our trials and troubles, we are fixed on the joy of knowing Jesus and that nothing can separate us from His love.

Ask God by His Holy Spirit to increase in you the Spirit's joy in response to the hope we have in Christ, that we might endure our cross as Christ did His.

Only this person can calmly and patiently bear the trials and tribulations of this life.

**Romans 8:24-25** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### **Be patient in tribulation**

Patient in tribulation. "Really, Paul. Patient in tribulation. But you don't know what I am going through, what I am enduring right now. Do you know how hard that is?"

Do you think this admonition to be patient in trials and tribulations is going too far? Is this a command that asks of us more than we can do?

Think about how the world deals with trials. Anger, wrath, malice, impatience, temper, despair, depression, bitterness.

Is this saying we must buckle down and *grit our teeth* and be brave? Having a stifle upper lip, powering through in our own strength. Doing that implies self-reliance. This is not about just endeavoring to persevere or about enduring.

Patience is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Being patient in suffering is made possible not by us but by God. We have the Holy Spirit's strength and enabling grace. We have the example of Jesus on the cross. We have the promise of God that He causes all things to be for our good, meaning that any trials are always purposeful, meaningful, with a good end in view.

Patience is a faith-filled submission to God's will and God's timing and God's purpose.

If our joy is grounded in the future then we can have patience in our present adversity, in these light and momentary trials which God sends if necessary.

How many Christians believe the TV preachers, that if we just find the secret to living a victorious life we will be free from all sorrows and suffering.

Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). When Paul traveled to the churches "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, [he said] through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

This is Christianity 101. The sooner we learn this the better it will go for us in this life. Jesus said plain and simple, in this life you will have trials and tribulations and that it is through many trials and tribulations you must enter the kingdom of heaven.

**James 1:2-3, 12** Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

**Romans 5:3-5** We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

**I Peter 1:6-7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 2:10** Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Satan is out to destroy your faith, and God's design is to refine and strengthen your faith. Life is hard. Tribulations are normal. But a glory is coming that will make it all worth it.

**Hebrews 12:2** Look to Jesus ... *who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross*, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

There is the path through suffering, the joyful hope that is ours and kept in heaven for us.

### ***Illustration of how patience works in our lives.***

Everyone here who has every owned or operated a motor vehicle, whether it is a car, a truck, a tractor, a motorcycle or four-wheeler, even a lawn mower or a power washer, knows about the importance of motor oil. A few of us might even have learned the importance the hard way.

What is the purpose of motor oil? It keeps all the metal surfaces in your engine from grinding together and tearing themselves apart from friction and heat. The oil absorbs and carries away the heat. It carries away the dirt and debris from combustion; it keeps the moving parts coated in oil and it does all of this under tremendous heat and pressure.

Patience is God's engine oil for our lives. Patience enables Christians to absorb and carry away the irritants and annoyances and nasty by products of living in a fallen world. Patience enables Christians to absorb the irritants that come into life from expectations that aren't met, from disappointments, from people who fail us and let us down.

From doctors who are late or worse yet give us bad news, from kids who wreck our cars, from sick people who cough on us, from slow drivers and stupid cows. Patience enables us to absorb the irritants from husbands, wives, kids, students at school, co-workers, bosses, team players, political leaders.

Patience is the oil that absorbs all the irritants of life to keep them from eating us up on the inside or robbing our joy or causing us to blow up and return evil for evil. As oil keeps our engines from much damage, patience keeps us from much damage or doing much damage. Patience is God's gift and grace enabling us to live graciously and gracefully in the heat and pressure of life.

Don't bristle or become bitter when hardships come. Think of how incredibly patient God has been with you. Imagine a God with a temper whenever we got on His nerves. Remember how longsuffering God has been with us, and be patient in your tribulation.

### **Constant in prayer.**

Here is another hard thing to do. What does constant in prayer mean? Does that mean 24/7? This does not mean uninterrupted speech. People mistakenly think being devoted to prayer means that is all we are supposed to do. Husbands are to be devoted to their wives, but that doesn't mean he spends every moment with her.

This is not so much about frequency, but about a posture of habitual dependence and ongoing communion with God. It is about not flying solo, thinking you are alone and on your own in life, but continually relying on His grace.

If it is big enough to worry about, it is big enough to pray about. If you think about it, our lives are filled with a million little things, worries, doubts, anxieties, headaches and heartaches, trials and tribulations of all shapes and sizes. If we cut God out of all of those things, we are cutting Him out of most of our lives. Don't save prayer for the really big things, pray for all things.

God says He knows about the sparrow and the hairs of our heads. Jesus told us to pray for our daily bread. God wants to be included in the littlest of things, in everything.

While Jesus was dying on the cross for the sins of the world, He noticed His mother and had compassion on her and asked John to look after her.

God cares about the details, God is in the details, and the details add up to big things. Pray for the details.

Turn every anxiety, care, worry, concern, fear, doubt into a prayer. When we do that, those things actually become means of grace, because they carry us closer to God.

Be constant in prayer, other translations have be devoted in prayer, faithful, steadfast, not random, occasional, sporadic, intermittent.

The enemy of our souls is constant in his attack, his spiritual warfare never stops. Even the strongest among us is no match without constantly renewing our strength in prayer.

Our armor of defense is constant prayer. Do you feel yourself becoming weak, tired, weary? This happens to the strongest of us. Diligent, constant, faithful, dependent prayer is the remedy.

**Ephesians 6:18** [Pray] at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

**Philippians 4:6-7** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The needs around us are huge and our resources for meeting them are too small. Pray. God can do more in five seconds than we can in five years. Pray. When we pray, God acts.

Treat prayer the way you treat eating, drinking, sleeping, doing your job. You aren't hit or miss about those things, you are intentional, you think about when and where. Going to God in prayer is infinitely and eternally more important than those things.

### **Implications and application.**

How are you going to do Romans 12:9-21? I hope you are continuing to use this for dinner devotions. Talk about genuine love, about honoring others above yourself, about increasing your zeal, and how to serve the Lord, how to be joyful and patient.

Ask for God's Spirit to fill you with everything you need to joyfully fulfill all these exhortations to the glory of God.

I hope my preaching has not hypocritically implied that I consistently do these things. I am one beggar telling other beggars where the bread is.

Our joy is in Jesus, and our hope is for Jesus, and our patience is from Jesus, and our tribulation is making us like Jesus. Join me in constant, devoted prayer through Jesus to our Father to supply all we need for His glory enabling us to rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and constant prayer.