

Serve The Lord; Romans 12:12

I. Servant

- A. Romans 12:11 (ESV); Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
- B. To be owned by another, be a slave, be subjected; to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another, perform the duties of a slave, serve, obey. ¹
- C. We view slavery with disdain — and with good reason
 - 1. We normally think of slavery as one person owning another
 - 2. We see this constantly in the Bible — Israel suffered slavery under Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome
 - 3. Even under the law of Moses people could choose to be indentured servants (slaves) until their debt was paid or until the year of Jubilee
 - 4. There was an option to remain a slave if the person chose to do so
 - 5. Exodus 21:5–6 (ESV); ⁵ But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.
 - 6. For one human to own another is not consistent with the Gospel
 - 7. Philemon 12–16 (ESV); ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.
- D. However, we are slaves
 - 1. Either to sin, or to righteousness
 - 2. Romans 6:16–19 (ESV); ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.
- E. Our Master, The Most Holy God, has determined what righteousness is
- F. It is our task to live that righteousness

II. Rejoice

- A. And Part of that living is to rejoice
- B. We have a hope — that hope is centered on the resurrection of Jesus
- C. No matter what we are in the middle of — good or bad — we rejoice in Jesus’ resurrection because that means our salvation
- D. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (ESV); Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- E. Whatever circumstance you find yourself in, joy (rejoicing) is the right answer
 - 1. We rejoice at the death of a beloved brother or sister because we know (and await) their victory

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 259.

2. We rejoice in any tragedy because nothing can compare to the immeasurable joy of salvation
 3. 2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (ESV); ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
 4. Rejoicing, a joyful spirit, should permeate our entire lives — “in all circumstances”
 5. Nothing can take our hope (and our joy) away from us
- F. We constantly remember Jesus’ resurrection and rejoice
- III. Patient
- A. To maintain a belief or course of action in the face of opposition, stand one’s ground, hold out, endure ²
 - B. This, I think, is one of the hardest things we can do — and impatience is likely the cause of those who allow their tribulation to rule over them
 - C. We have invented so many ways to be impatient
 1. Credit cards
 2. Microwave ovens
 3. Drive through (and fast food)
 4. Imagine traveling from the New York to the Rockies in covered wagons (probably 10-12 weeks of travel) — Today we measure that in hours (27 by car according to Google Maps, or we can fly there in 4 hours)
 5. Granted, impatience had led to some pretty cool inventions
 6. But our society today is built on it — 55 was not fast enough, we had to change the speed limits to 75 (and even 85 in some places)
 - D. Patience is a virtue — it is the fruit of the Spirit
 1. I often find myself saying, “How quick can I get out of (or through) this?” when I should be saying, “What does God want me to understand from this?”
 2. While it is a very easy thing to talk about, it is not so easy to accomplish
 3. Pain hurts and we don’t like that
 4. So we do whatever we can do dampen, to dull, to get rid of the pain
 5. But pain is also a great teacher; we should listen to what God is trying to tell us during the pain — pick up your Bible and read, study, meditate on Scripture
 6. Tune into God’s word
 7. Often you will find some area where you are lacking, giving you opportunity to improve
 - E. Be patient in tribulation
- IV. Constant
- A. To stick by or be close at hand, attach oneself to, wait on, be faithful to someone, to persist in something, busy oneself with, be busily engaged in, be devoted to ³
 - B. We have a particular form of prayer that we used based on tradition — ACTS; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication
 1. Have we really brought conversation with the almighty God to an acronym?
 2. We are so caught with form we miss function
 3. Matthew 6:7–13 (ESV); ⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and

² Ibid, 1039.

³ Ibid, 881

- forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
4. There are so many commentaries that break this down into form — first you praise the Father, second you acknowledge His will, third you ask for what you need, fourth you ask for forgiveness
 5. But, listen to some of Paul's prayers
 - a) Ephesians 1:16–19 (ESV); ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might
 - b) A very powerful prayer for wisdom and knowledge of Jesus — to understand the sacrifice He made on our behalf
 - c) A prayer of thanks for the church in Ephesus
 - d) A prayer to understand the power that God wields through us for true spiritual discernment
 - e) Colossians 1:9–12 (ESV); ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
 - f) Knowledge, understanding, living, serving, growing, and salvation
 - g) Paul's prayers are not about form, but about function
 6. The function is to be in constant — busily engaged in — communication with God
- C. This is our communication with the Father — for everything!
- D. Whether we are asking, thanking, praising, adoring, or supplicating we are talking to the Father — communing with Him, petitioning Him for His intervention in our lives
1. Out of 22 years in the service, I never had a job with unfettered immediate access to the wing commander
 2. I always had to have my cause vetted by someone in my chain of command to see if it was worthy enough to get to the boss
 3. Even “open door” and “action line” policies came with a caveat, “give your supervisor a chance to solve the problem first, before you call me”
 4. Our God — the Creator of the universe, of life, of salvation — has given us unfettered access to Him
 5. He even desires that it be all the time, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 6. I could not imagine being at the Wing Commanders office (or phone) all the time — I'm sure he/she would tire of that rather quickly
 7. But God does NOT TIRE OF US!
- E. “This isn't part of Christianity, it is Christianity” Francis Chan
- V. Serve The Lord
- A. Rejoice in hope
 - B. Patient in tribulation
 - C. Constant in prayer