

Romans 12:11-12
January 1, 2022
Serve the Lord

Primary Text

Romans 12:11-12 ... *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

Big Idea

Jesus transforms our hearts and everyday life.

Supporting Texts

- Ezekiel 36:26 ... *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 ... *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
- Philippians 4:4
- Colossians 1:27

Summary

Paul is turning to very specific and practical advice. Yet all of his direct counsel can and should be taken as an overflow of his initial command to, ***“let love be genuine.”*** A life free from hypocrisy is passionate in spiritual service, rejoices with hope, patience in suffering, and never stops praying. We have new hearts that come from new habits.

Potential Outline

1. Jesus Gives Us a New Heart (vv.1-10, esp v.9)
2. Our New Hearts Have New Habits (vv.11-12)
 - a. We have new passions about spiritual things that honor the Lord.
 - i. Old Heart: Loves self and physical things.
 - ii. New Heart: Loves what the Lord loves, eternal things.
 - b. We have new hope which gives us joy about the future.
 - i. Old Heart: Loves tangible and instant gratification.
 - ii. New Heart: Love the Lord and trust his care and providence.
 - c. We have new patience which endures through suffering.

- i. Old Heart: Loves comfort, avoids all suffering.
 - ii. New Heart: Loves God's will, trust God through suffering.
 - d. We have new faith which manifests in constant prayer.
 - i. Old Heart: Loves entertainment and quick distraction.
 - ii. New Heart: Loves communing and communicating with God.
3. Our New Habits Cultivate a New Community (reference, vv.1-21)

Pillar Commentary (Morris)

11. Zeal translates a word that combines the ideas of haste and diligence. It is an important aspect of the Christian's commitment. Never be lacking is another use of the adjective in the sense of an imperative,⁶⁹ but be lacking does not give the sense as well as "do not be lazy" (GNB). The word signifies "indolent" or "lazy", and Paul is telling the Romans that where zeal is needed they must not be lazy people.

But keep your spiritual fervor is perhaps not the best translation. There is nothing in the Greek corresponding to NIV's *but*; Paul has a long series of these injunctions with no connective, and we lose something of the flavor with such insertions. And his imperative is something like "with respect to the spirit, boiling." It is not easy to determine whether we should spell the noun with a capital letter (to refer to the Holy Spirit) or with a small letter (to refer to the human spirit). Great names can be cited to support either view, and it is difficult to see a convincing reason for excluding either. There is much to be said for the view of Leenhardt: "the spirit of man, of course, when filled and aglow with the Spirit of God" (cf. Käsemann, "according to Rev 3:15 lukewarmness is the worst offence. If nothing burns, there can be no light" [p. 346]). **It is important that the human spirit be on fire, but Paul is not referring to something that occurs by some natural process but as a result of the indwelling Spirit of God.**

The verse is rounded off with *serving the Lord*, where the verb points to thoroughgoing devotion, service like that of a slave. **There is nothing half-hearted about it.** There is a textual problem in this part of the verse, with some MSS reading "the time". If we adopt this reading, the meaning will be "meet the demands of the hour" (NEB mg.) or "Seize your opportunities" (Barclay). It might also be understood in an eschatological sense; the children of the new age should accept the challenges of that age. All these give a good sense, but we should probably accept the reading as "the Lord".⁷³

12. The first of three more clauses is *Be joyful in hope*. Both joy and hope are characteristic New Testament concepts. **The early Christians often had little to be joyful about or to hope for in this world, but they rejoiced in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4) and they knew Christ in them, "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).** It is not that hope is itself the object of the Christian's joy; rather, it is that which, being what it is, inevitably leads the

Christian to rejoice. Hope lifts him out of his present difficult circumstances, and rejoicing is the inevitable result.

Patient in affliction is another characteristic New Testament attitude. *Patient* may give a wrong impression; Paul's word denotes not a passive putting up with things but an active, steadfast endurance. And something like that is needed, for *affliction* denotes not some minor pinprick, but deep and serious trouble (see the note on 2:9).

Faithful in prayer brings us to another characteristic of New Testament Christianity. Paul has a great deal to say about prayer, and it is clear that he himself was constant in his praying. It is a very important part of the Pauline understanding of Christianity. *Faithful* is perhaps not forceful enough for the word Paul uses. "The strong word suggests not only the constancy with which they are to pray, but the effort that is needed to maintain a habit so much above nature" (Denney). We are left in no doubt but that persistent prayer is a necessary part of the Christian life.

Leon Morris, [*The Epistle to the Romans*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 446–448.

Romans 8-16 For You (Keller)

Real love is patient. Verses 11-12 give us four imperatives that are really calls to patience. At first, these two verses only seem to be about our relationship to God, but we must notice that they stand in the middle of numerous directions about Christian relationships. Therefore, Paul is really exhorting us to use all our spiritual resources not to give up on our Christian brothers and sisters. We must keep our "hope," be "patient" in all the troubles we meet, and address all this with "prayer." How does this relate to Christian fellowship? Perhaps Paul just means that we are to be models to our brothers and sisters when we go through difficulties. But it may be that we are to meet the troubles of Christian relationships with patience and prayer! To be involved deeply in people's lives is hard work. As C.S. Lewis once pointed out, the only way to be sure not to have your heart broken is never to give it to anyone. Since we will give our hearts to people, our "zeal" (v 11) and our "hope" (v 12) will flag. We are to remember our hope of triumph through Christ, and meet it with prayer (v 12).

Then in verse 14 we are told to "bless and do not curse." We will look at this below, but this is another aspect of patience. We are to forgive each other--not only are we not to pay each other back, we are positively to put ourselves out to build up those who have hurt us.

John Witmer

12:11–12. Paul then provided a series of exhortations concerning a believer's personal attitudes, attitudes that will make him more attractive to others. In verse 11 the key thought is the last clause—serving (*douleuontes*; *diakonian* in v. 7 is trans. “serving”) the Lord—and the first two clauses explain how a believer is to serve as the Lord's “slave” (*doulos*; cf. 1:1): never ... lacking (“not shrinking, not hesitating, not being lazy”) in zeal (*en spoudē*, “diligence,” rendered “diligently” in 12:8), and being fervent in spirit. Keep your spiritual fervor is literally, “being fervent, or boiling (*zeontes*, used only here and in Acts 18:25 of Apollos) in the spirit” (either the Holy Spirit or one's inner life). These two commands also balance each other as negative and positive commands (cf. Rom. 12:9). As believers serve God as His slaves they should be enthusiastic and diligent.

The three exhortations in verse 12 can be understood either as independent items or as additional descriptions of how believers should serve the Lord. They are to be joyful in hope, because their hope in Christ is the basis of their rejoicing (5:2–5; 1 Peter 1:6–9). In affliction (*thlipsei*, “distress, trouble, pressure”; cf. Rom. 8:35) believers are to be patient (*hypomēnontes*, “being steadfast, having endurance”; cf. 5:3). Also Christians should continue in prayer to God for wisdom, guidance, and strength (cf. 1 Thes. 5:17). Being faithful, NIV's translation of *proskarterountes*, should be rendered “persisting in” or “devoted to” (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42; Col. 4:2).

John A. Witmer, “Romans,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 489.

Manuscript

Good morning, Church and Happy New Year. Its good to gather. A year ago this time we were shut down and still virtual. WOW. It seems impossible that is true. As we gather today and come together for this first day of a new year we find ourselves in an all too familiar position as follower of Christ. The world is turning over from potential old to new or different. Closing the door on things, relationships, feelings, emotions, and experiences of the past year. The world for the next month will try and steal your attention and explain that this...is...the....year too. . . For followers of Jesus its Sunday. It's the day we gather and worship as a collection of humans that are called the body of

Christ. This Sunday, today, we live out as we are called to do, the writer of Hebrews says “ Not neglecting to meet together”. We are here. Right here. In our space to worship with the God of the universe. To fill our souls with teachings that point us to the one constant, the consistent one, a man who was born last week, a savior we long for in the ages to come, and God that draws near to us each day and desires us to seek Him in all we do so that we may be full of whom He is. And that while the world is turning over, scratching, clawing, aching, and urning for something to new or old or unique or unknown to cling to this year we sit in real time and space knowing that He is God. SCRIPTURE. He has not changed. King Jesus still rules our lives yesterday in 2022 and today in 2023.

Only God’s providence today, the first day of the new year, does our Romans series take us to the intersection of where the world is at on New Years Day and where followers of Christ remain. This intersection of an old way and new way. The intersection of a new heart and an old heart. So, today, January 1st 2023, we are gonna talk about the same Jesus, the same God, the same Way, the same light, and the same new heart our God offers us through His son Jesus Christ from Paul’s letter to the Romans. Amen?

We’ll structure our time like this and by God’s grace see Jesus bit more today through Paul’s letter.

- Jesus gives us a new heart
- Our new hearts have new habits
- Our new habits cultivate new community

Pray

Romans 12:11-12 - *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

Jesus Gives Us a New Heart (vv.1-10, esp v.9)

Receiving a new heart from Jesus sounds like the perfect message on a the first day of a New Year. And in many ways it is exactly what we need to hear. That because of original sin we are born into darkness and its only because of grace that we are saved from our self and eternal separation and the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross gave way for us today, on earth, in Logan square, to actually change our heart toward

each other. To be sure there is much to say about receiving a new heart that is drawn to gospel centered truths and beauties. A new heart that glorifies King Jesus and not our self and puts us in relationship with the God of the bible so that we become less like our selves and more like Him. See I wish it was as easy, quick and clean as the prophet Ezekiel decides... *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* In truth it is all those things but in practice in change and in growth there is time, and nuance, and complexities, and joy, and hope, and discomfort that comes with your old heart being transformed into a new heart. And today Paul is helping to articulate this heart change not only in self and habit but in in relationship with each other as brothers and sister in Christ whom have called upon King Jesus and said Lord of Lord, Kings of Kings rule my life, change my heart, for I am weak, and you are strong. So right here is where we get our New Year new me Instagram quote, wait for it.... Its not about you...Its not about me.... This new heart Jesus promises isn't just about you and your isolated relationship with the most high. This heart is exhorting you to use all your spiritual resources to never give up on your brothers and sisters And as Kellers commentary says "We must keep our "hope", be "Patient" in all the trouble we meet, and address all this with "prayer.

Paul says in Romans 12:11-12 - *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.* Oh if I was just NOT slothful in zeal this year....oh if I could be fervent in spirit this year....oh lord If I could serve you more than me this year....Oh God if I could rejoice in the hope I see modeled by my brothers and sisters...oh if I could be patient alongside my group through trials and suffering...oh god if I could just pray constantly over the toil and plight of this year with a spirit on fire for what Jesus desires and not weaving my wants within it. Oh church here Paul gives us the playbook, the checklist, the tweet, the memory verse, the devo, or any other New Year, new me, new you, new us strategy to use this heart to alongside your brothers and sisters to remove more of ourselves this year by the power of God and not yourself. You need not white knuckle it this year because He has captured your heart and is infecting you with a fervent spirit towards himself. You need not plan and excute better because His dwelling within you will align your service to Himself. You must not be anxious for tomorrow MATHEW because His people, your brothers and sisters have a hope that remains uncracked with tribulation. Lastly, he has given us himself to communicate directly with and offers us access through prayer that never returns void Isaiah 55:11 "

So this year when you set a path forward.... pray. Then pray some more. Then ask God. Ask him again. Then pray again. After that pray with your group. Then pray again.

Before you leave pray. Pray in your room. Pray on the road. Pray before that meeting. Pray after that meeting. Pray on the way to school drop off. Pray during. Pray with those who need. Pray with those who have. Pray with each other. Pray for help. Pray for guidance. Be constant in prayer with the knowledge that the spirit of God dwells in you.

Our New Hearts Have New Habits (vv.11-12)

So how does this new heart work? The bible talks a lot about this and we do here on Sundays and in group and throughout the weekly reading guides. See coming to faith in my early twenties and lacking a foundation of biblical verbiage and general fancy church language when we discussed a new heart it was a bit of head scratcher for me. My heart function was fine obviously and I understood there was no physical heart swap happening in church but what time and discipleship has shown me is that I was led by my head or just me and not a heart aligned with things of bible. Or the desires of someone else, specifically Jesus, rather led solely by me. . My thoughts, my passions, my desires, my hope, my identity, just myself. Just Derek. Extremely narrow in scope. And rich in this world. See what a new heart that is secured in Jesus begins to desire are the things of with whom gave you the new heart. Let me say that again, a new heart that is secured in Jesus begins to desire the things of with whom gave you this new heart. Here in Romans Paul's give us these practical and applicable habits that help shape a new heart. Mind you this direct counsel is based on a foundation Paul speaks to in verse 9 *"Let love be genuine, Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good"* Here, like we sang earlier, we will build our life upon your love, it is a firm foundation. Genuine love is hard to come by but Jesus models this without blemish. Abhor or HATE what is evil is difficult this side of heaven. We are drawn to darkness and fruits of this world and we must be constant in armoring our selves with the cloak of Jesus. Holding fast to what is good requires spiritual discipline and steadfastness like we see Jesus in the face of Devil SCRIPTURE. A mistake here is taking what God created, all things to be clear, and making it central which then becomes where your heart rests for comfort, healing, and security. Those false goods or gods will turn to dust and always leave you needing more.

So if you're like me and need to confess that you already feel anxious about being behind in 2023 and are chomping at the bit to sit down and look back at 2022 to see if you accomplished your goals or came up short and then super pumped to look ahead to

2023 to map out this years goals and desire. And man do I need to read these over and over again. Because I can tell you nothing of myself is fulfilled in this list and that is true Grace from God. So here is some practical advice for the way in which an old heart operates and new heart should function

- We have new passions about spiritual things that honor the Lord.
 - o Old Heart: Loves self and physical things. We love our body and cling to its appeal. We love who we are in ourselves. We hold tight the image we show the world. We love stuff. Amazon packages. New cloths, home décor, self care items.
 - o New Heart: Loves what the Lord loves, eternal things.
- We have new hope which gives us joy about the future.
 - o Old Heart: Loves tangible and instant gratification.
 - o New Heart: Love the Lord and trust his care and providence.
- We have new patience which endures through suffering.
 - o Old Heart: Loves comfort, avoids all suffering.
 - o New Heart: Loves God's will, trust God through suffering.
- We have new faith which manifests in constant prayer.
 - o Old Heart: Loves entertainment and quick distraction.
 - o New Heart: Loves communing and communicating with God.

Our New Habits Cultivate a New Community (reference, vv.1-21)

Lastly, we have this new heart, these new desires, and this new way forward. We have a new way to apply this new heart to our daily lives. As we begin to align our habits with Paul's direct and clear counsel then we begin to see new hearts cultivate a new community and new world. This third way forward in all things. This way of Jesus and not us. Not you or me or CITS. Jesus way. Here is where we find Joy as a collection of believers that desire to be less like themselves and more like Jesus. Cultivating a new community is not a wise marketing strategy or way we at CITS try and grow in number but it's the tangible outpouring and consequence of obedience of changing hearts. Over time our old selves begin to lay down and the community around simply sees you as son or daughter of most high. Not just Derec the husband, the father, the sales rep, the prideful, the adulterer, the arrogant. But the Community see's me Son of the living God. See here is where the darkness is pushed way back because we can see the line between old and new heart. This is where we will see more Jesus inside each other, our brothers and sister than themselves. Right here is where Paul is writing to the Romans

to be and act like Jesus who walked the earth and lived with zeal for his father, on fire with spirit, full of hope, in the middle of tribulation and always in contact with His father, our father, God.

To end, lets discuss 4 aspects of Community that are vital to the habits, the health, and the holiness of a New Community rooted in heart of the lord.

- Fully entering community (Don't not be slothful in zeal)
- Cultivating community in relationship with brothers and sisters
- Remaining in Community (Patient in suffering, constant in prayer)

Fully entering community seems easy at first blush. Just go to church, join a group, and begin walking with those who proclaim the name of Jesus. It pains me to think about how broken this process and actuality has become or plays out across the church. For some of you this has never been a barrier and you have been able to show up into church gathering, group, or Christian community without angst or effort. These spaces have been safe and live giving. You feel cared for and seen. Others have experienced separation and deep pain from fellow brothers and sisters. Even here. In this room. In CITS group. I want to make it clear that this should never be the case. You should not experience isolation, abuse, or hatred from any fellows Christians. Yet it happens. Yet its gonna happen.

Fully showing up in community with zeal and fervent spirit will cost you something and it wont be perfect. Let me say it again. To fully enter community and experience the fruits of gathering as a collection of believers that proclaim jesus is lord and not themselves will cost you something.

- It will cost you your time. You'll have to arrange your week to make Sundays morning gathering, group, and needs that arise within your community.
- It will cost you financially. Dollars over donuts somewhere you will incur a financial cost to be with your group, your church body and your lord.
- It will cost you relationships. Fully aligning yourself to things of the lord will expose those whom....
- It will cost you suffering

One of my biggest fears as an elder is that I become the reason someone walks away, they leave, they experience something I say, or do, or act on as anti-gospel. My group reminds me I am not Jesus. The remind me that I cannot save. They remind me that

this side of heaven its going to be messy. These are truths not opinions that help remind me that I am not anymore important than anyone else in this walk. Without fully extending ourselves and committing to each other we are unable to receive the truths we cannot see because of our blindness. God has given each of us unique ears to hear and eyes to see. Allow each other to hear you and see you fully.

Second, Cultivating community takes time and planting seeds in good soil to watch them flourish as a collection of believers and not in a silo of self. A common way I have experienced this silo of self in group and walking in community is this faux presentation of self pre, during, and post - struggle, tribulation, decision, or prayer.

Let me explain. When we come to our groups each week to learn about Jesus, walk together in life, and disciple each other we need each person present both physically and spiritually. Meaning when you don't show up to group or to the gathering you are stealing an opportunity from the body and from yourself to see Jesus more clearly. We can't see the way you are living nor can you see the way I am living without being in proximity with each other. Does that make sense. I know the burdens of life, work, kids, commitments, shame, guilt, depression, busyness, anxiety, and time are real and difficult to manage. Trust me here....I was with the couple this week and I said without a blink that the reason I remained a group leader was to keep a group always meeting at my house so I wouldn't have to deal with travel and kids sleep and logistics. My leading a group is a bit rooted in selfishness. A spade is a spade y'all. Without the couple's proximity and them sharing the difficulties of navigating group, a 10 month old and all life is throwing at them I may never have had to confess this. Does this make sense? Are you seeing it?

One more example, and one I believe is truly the scariest Christian Self Silo is this group going vulnerable heart changing mess that happens when we withhold our changing heart from those around us is this thing we do where we present a fixed self to our group or church body but did the entire thing sans our group or church. Say it again.

Track with me here. I'm positive you have experienced this and positive you have done this. You have a sin that God exposes in your heart. **God is sanctifying you.** And by His grace you recognize it and begin to root it out by yourself. Sundays sermons are speaking to this sin. Your podcast and devo's are exposing it quite regularly. Little conversations here and there are nibbling around the edges of where you're trying to root out this sin and become more like Jesus. You sit in group and share a lot of words about a thing...just a little thing...but its undefined. You wrap it in christianese and fancy bible words dunk it in a bit of religion jelly and slam it into an isolation pie. Now you have a beautiful little pie baked in shame that you actually desire to be let free of but you convinced yourself its easier to keep this pie on the counter and you've believed the lie

that everyone else in your group and church body knows what's baked into this pie so you feel good about. Yet no one knows. And this silo has run its 6 month course and you're ready to share. Now here is where I usually fall out of my seat at group. Its your turn to share and you explain this journey you have been on to root out this sin in your life and you have done it! You share the journey with great detail now and the little shame pie ingredients are shown so nicely to the group so it looks more like a coy advertisement of growth, and maturity and then you weave Jesus into the story with joy and elation for your God and that your back on track...Does this sound familiar to anyone? No one knew, you made the journey along, and now have fixed it alone.

Cultivating a community requires us to live out what we desire to become in Christ Jesus.

- Share your your desires as they arise
- Show
- Show

Remaining in community is the result of a community that applies their new heart to lives of those they are in proximity with. This shouldn't be a goal or a grinding out of sorts to stay. We remain or stay because its fruitful. The lord is produce fruit from a vine that is rooted in the things that are perfect and pleasing to god. The roots are woven together in and throughout the soil and other roots so that you cant tell which root is its own or that of another. The roots need each other to thrive to live to grow larger and deeper. They drink from the same water as each other and share in nutrients without selfishness or power. Each rot placed exactly where the lord would have it so each root, each fruit produced, and each vine would thrive in accordance to its will. You see this becomes the soil where new community that is entering can trust and find refuge in community that's culture is that of Jesus and that relays on each other to be fed, to be shaped, to be discomforted and to growth in the likeness if the potter whom made all things.

As we remain in community we see each other more fully for whom we are in Jesus rather than them selves. It allows time to reveal the character of whom the lord is creating. Without question with imperfection and complexity and nuance but with shared foundation we can see each as brothers and sisters and not competition or enemy or prey. When you step out of whom you are in Christ fellow borthers and sister see you first with a lens that says "I know the heart of this women or this man and that is not in accordance with whom I know" This is a grace we extend. As we remain we need not jump to judgement at first questioning, we need not step into pretentction of what is being exposed, we need not stay isolated with a thought ot desoire because our

brothwrs and isster will receive us as family first and offer us the grace we have all received freely. Oh to stay means to choose each other.

Finally let send with a word from Paul to the church in Philipi Philippians 4: 4-9

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* ⁵ *Let your reasonableness⁴ be known to everyone.* ⁶ *The Lord is at hand;* ⁷ *do not be anxious about anything, ⁸but in everything by prayer and supplication ⁹with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ¹⁰ *And ¹¹the peace of God, ¹²which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

¹³ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* ¹⁴ *What you have learned¹⁵ and ¹⁶received and heard and seen ¹⁷in me—practice these things, and ¹⁸the God of peace will be with you.*

By His grace this year we can rejoice in hope, we can be fully known, we trust a know he is Goid and be constant in conversation and prayer with our Lord.