

## **Romans (74)** **Practical Words of Exhortation**

Today we enter a section of Paul's epistle in which he was very straightforward in providing practical instruction on how to live as Christians both in the church and in the world. He had just completed directing his readers that each them serve God by serving one another through their individual spiritual gifts. But he then gave this series of practical commands that touch on how all Christians are to relate to others and to one another. And so before today, we considered how each of us are to serve God through our individual spiritual gifts, but now we read how all of us are to serve our Lord and His people at all times and in all situations. This is the kind of actions and behavior that should characterize us as Christians. **Verses 9-21** read:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

There are at least 17 commands listed, and that number includes several commands that are linked together in one sentence. There is some order, as we will see, but for the most part, it would seem that these are a list of spontaneously worded commands that Paul gave as the Holy Spirit prompted his thinking and his reflection upon this church and its needs. Of course they remain as God's authoritative word of instruction for us today as the teaching of the Bible is normative for all people, at all times, and in all places. First we read...

**1. *Let love be genuine.*** Some would say, "Let love be sincere." The adjective translated "genuine" is literally the word hypocrisy with a three letter preface attached that negates the word (*anupokritos* = *ana* + *hupokritos*).<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the New King James Translation is best: "Let love be without hypocrisy."

The Holy Scriptures teach us that the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (Prov. 27:6). The enemy can pretend love toward you. They are often insincere; their pretention to love is hypocritical. The fact is that love is easily feigned.

And respecting this (i.e. love) he enjoins what is especially necessary, that all disguises are to be cast aside, and that love is to arise from pure sincerity of mind. It is indeed difficult to express how ingenious almost all men are to pretend a love which they really have not, for they not only deceive others, but impose also on themselves, while they persuade themselves that those are not loved amiss by them, whom they not only neglect, but really slight.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> ἀνυπόκριτος = ἀνα + ὑπόκριτος. The commonly used Greek word for "sincere" is *elikriveis* (εἰλικρινεῖς).

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Baker Book House, 1993), vol. 19, p. 464.

And so, what does love without hypocrisy look like? It is genuine and is seen in action, not in word only. The apostle John wrote about genuine love:

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. <sup>15</sup>Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. <sup>17</sup>But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:14-18)

In order for love to be genuine, it must be more than just the words we speak, but it must be seen in the actions we perform.

Now one might see this command not only as the first in a list of commands, but also as the lead subject, to which the subsequent commands support. In other words, the first command is to love with sincerity, or without hypocrisy, and then the following commands convey how it is we may love others without hypocrisy.<sup>3</sup>

**2. *Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*** If we love rightly and we love the right things, then we will also hate rightly and we will hate that which God hates. One could say that to love with hypocrisy would be seen in one who claims to love, but fails to abhor what is evil and fails to hold fast to that which is good. God loves that which is holy and righteous; He hates that which is unholy and unrighteous. God’s people should do so likewise. For example, “The LORD tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence” (Psalm 11:5). So should we. This does not mean that we are to refuse or fail to do good unto them; after all, we are to be loving to our enemies as God is loving to His enemies.

We live in a world which imposes a value system on us not to think or call anything evil. To state clearly and forthrightly that something is wrong, evil, or false, is viewed as unloving. The Word of God teaches us that if we claim that we love but fail to “abhor what is evil”, we are loving insincerely, or in hypocrisy.

Now I would like us to stand back and reflect as Christians, ones who stand at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not only what it is we are to believe and do, but that He would also shape how should think and reason as Christians within this world that He has placed us. We saw in 12:1f that the way that we may be renewed in our lives by the grace of God is to have our thinking transformed.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:1, 2)

I would argue that this includes not only what it is we are think and believe—the content of our faith, but it even reaches to a deeper level, the very way in which we think and believe—the manner in which we think. Because we live in the world and we are creatures of this world, we Christians are easily influenced by the world about us. We tend to embrace quite readily the beliefs of the world. Frequently we modify the world’s thinking so as to “Christianize” it, transforming worldly thought patterns so that they seem to us to be biblical. It becomes easy to assume that the way we think is Christian and biblical. And once this is the case, it becomes very difficult to identify in what areas our thinking is truly biblical and in what ways our thinking has been shaped by the world. It is only through a careful and continual study of Scripture that our

---

<sup>3</sup> This was Matthew Henry’s take on this passage, which appears to me to be quite fitting. For he shows how the many commands have a connection with one another rather than just reading the passage as a list of disconnected commands. See Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the* (Fleming H. Revell Company), vol. 6, pp. 461f.

errant beliefs are identified and corrected. We should be aware that we will be conformed to this world unless we take definitive steps to be renewed in our minds through Scripture.

Now as we look at verse 9 closely, we read, “Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.” This is a very common way in which truth and biblical behavior is set before the people of God. God’s Word sets two statements opposite to one another in stark contrast. The one is good and desirable, and the other is evil and to be rejected. What God is doing and has always done among His people is to teach them to embrace thinking that tends to recognize two categories that are in contrast to one another and are often opposed to one another. There are two ways of thinking, two ways of behaving, two ways of acting and reacting to the world in which we live. God’s Word reinforces continually in the mind of God’s people to see and assess the world in this manner. There is truth and there is error. There is right and wrong. There is good and bad. Christians are to discern or distinguish between these two, and then choose to believe what is truth, value what is good, and purpose to do right in their daily lives. This way of thinking and living can be technically described as to think *antithetically*.

**What is it to think and speak antithetically?** To think antithetically is a tendency to view matters in terms of contrasts or opposites, based on an understanding of certain absolutes respecting truth and error, right and wrong, and good and evil. One who views the world in this manner will recognize and highlight contrasts, rather than similarities. A person who thinks antithetically will see contrasts in issues of morality and truth. Things are seen as black and white rather than shades of grey. He will recognize logical inconsistencies and see deviation from Scriptural norms everywhere he turns.

In contrast, a person who does not think antithetically will tend to view matters as relative. Jay Adams, who wrote a book on Christian discernment, described this way of the thinking of the world as having a *continuum mentality*.<sup>4</sup> Issues of this life are as points on a long line so it is difficult even impossible to make distinctions. Although this one may affirm there is such a thing as truth, right, and the good, generally these are indistinguishable because they are so mixed with error, wrong, and evil. So, since there is some good in all and everything, and there is some bad in all and everything, one cannot distinguish clearly these matters. “Besides,” one might reason, “it serves no real purpose if one could do so, therefore, we should ‘live and let live.’ I’m okay and you’re okay and we will mutually ignore what may be not okay within each of us.”

The person who thinks antithetically will be seen as a maverick, perhaps stubborn, intolerant, and uncompromising, and certainly unloving. He will be seen as a loner who has a tendency to alienate others from himself. But the person who is relativistic in thinking will be seen as a one who gets along with everybody, is co-operative, tolerant of everybody and everything, and is one who can work in just about any kind of situation with any group of people. It is easy to see which kind of person will be most liked and lauded by the world and which one would be viewed as a troublesome figure who stirs controversy wherever he has input.

Throughout out the Scriptures antithetical thinking is assumed and reinforced as being a good thing. God’s ways and words are all right, and any deviation from them is wrong. For example, consider the conditions described in Genesis of the **Garden of Eden**. In the garden of God of all trees in the garden, two trees are set before man as having particular significance--the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life

And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:9)

Here are two trees, each signifying a different way of life, one resulting in death, the other resulting in life everlasting. The two cannot be eaten together. One cancels the other, or choosing the one means exclusion from the fruit of the other.

---

<sup>4</sup> Jay Adams, *A Call to Discernment* (Harvest House Publishers, 1987).

This kind of antithetical choice is found here at the beginning and throughout the Scriptures. It serves to set mankind in a way of thinking, there is good, it is clear and knowable; there is evil, it too is recognizable. They may be distinguished one from another.

Now what the devil would do is make "the bad" relative, showing it as but one among many so as to not look so evil,

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, 'You shall not eat of **every tree** of the garden?' (Gen 3:1)

And worldly-thinking men do the same today, mixing the evil and the good so that they are not able to be distinguished. "There's good in all" we are told. Or if there is "bad" it will at least bring *some* benefit to you. What results is the bad corrupts the good. It is said of the world before the flood: "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:12).

We might also consider the nature of the **Mosaic Law**. When Israel's national life was ordered under the Law of Moses, antithetical thinking was embedded in the mindset of the people. God established a covenant with Israel. He gave them laws touching every aspect of life which they would encounter daily. They were not only told how to behave respecting their worship, but they were told how to live in their community. Always, there were two ways set before them.

This may be seen clearly in two mountains which were made to be significant reminders to the people. These were mount Gerizim and mount Ebal. Moses gave commandment respecting these (Deut. 27:12ff). Later this was done upon entering the land (Joshua 8:33).

Antithetical thinking is reinforced in the many laws which were given to Israel, particularly those respecting things which were clean and those which were unclean. What was the purpose of these things? Some seem so arbitrary and senseless. Jay Adams made a good point:

May I suggest that all problems of arbitrariness are resolved when you see the clean/unclean system as a means of alerting the Jew to the fact that all day long, every day, in whatever he does, he must constantly choose God's way" (Adams, p.32)

We may consider other portions of the Old Testament. In **Psalms 1** we read of the way of the righteous vs. the way of the ungodly.

Blessed *is* the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
<sup>2</sup>But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
<sup>3</sup>He shall be like a tree  
Planted by the rivers of water,  
That brings forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also shall not wither;  
And whatever he does shall prosper.  
<sup>4</sup>The ungodly *are* not so,  
But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away.  
<sup>5</sup>Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.  
<sup>6</sup>For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

In **Proverbs 4:14** and **18** we read that the paths of the wicked and the upright are contrasted.

The very literary nature of so much **Hebrew poetry** is what is called “antithetical parallelism. There are many examples in Proverbs 13 and 14. This is where two statements stand side-by-side. The first is a statement of truth, the second is a statement of error, or the first is a statement of what is good and the second is what is evil. The point is this, the people of God through biblical history have always been taught to see the world and assess the world antithetically.

When we come to the New Testament we see the same kind of thinking reflected. The **Lord Jesus** taught in this way. There are two choices, a narrow way and a wide way.

“Enter by the narrow gate;  
for the gate is wide and the way is easy,  
that leads to destruction,  
and those who enter by it are many.  
For the gate is narrow and the way is hard,  
that leads to life,  
and those who find it are few” (Mat. 7:13f).

The Lord Jesus declared that you are either with Him or against Him. “He who is not with me is **against** me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Matt. 12:30). There is present either light or darkness. “Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of **light**; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness” (Luke 11:34). Consider the general tenor of our Lord’s entire life and ministry. He was always confronting, correcting, instructing, rebuking. When He saw error, He taught the truth. When He saw evil, He denounced it and said what was right. This is what resulted in opposition to Him and why so many abandoned Him and would have Him killed.

In the book of Acts we see the same thing. Peter’s message and method was one of direct confrontation, showing people wherein they were wrong and needed to repent and believe. Paul’s approach when witnessing assumed two ways (cf. Acts 13:5-12). Also in his defense of the truth, Paul would see a right course and a wrong course clearly distinguished before him (cf. Acts 15:1ff).

In the **epistles** we see the same kind of thinking. Consider Peter’s words,

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” <sup>8</sup> and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.” (1 Pet. 2:7f)

And also I 1 Peter 3:10-12

For “He who would love life  
And see good days,  
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,  
And his lips from speaking deceit.  
<sup>11</sup>Let him turn away from evil and do good;  
Let him seek peace and pursue it.  
<sup>12</sup>For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
And His ears are open to their prayers;  
But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

And then the **Apostle Paul** used this language throughout his epistles. “You were once dead, now alive” (Eph. 2:1ff). “For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). You were once enemies, now reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10).

Paul reasoned that there is no common ground for agreement or fellowship between Christians and non-Christians with respect to truth.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." (2 Co 6:14-16)

We also read in **The Epistle of James**, written by the half- brother of our Lord"

"You adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4)

And lastly, we read that this was the very clear and common style of the **Apostle John**. Notice the antithesis of two ways and two kinds of persons. There is a sharp distinction between "light and darkness." "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still" (1 John 2:9). There is a distinction between love and hate.

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:10).

"Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

There is a sharp distinction between the righteous person and the unrighteous person.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (1 John 3:7-10).

Now one might ask, "But does not everyone think this way?" No, not at all. In fact, the world thinks entirely differently. The world's way is to blur and conceal, to integrate and merge, growing larger and becoming more diffuse. The Scriptures' way is to clarify and reveal, to distinguish and separate, becoming fewer and growing purer. The world would have "peace nearly at any cost." The world has a perverted view of love: "Love means you never tell people they are wrong." The world says "We must respect and value another person's views."

The world by and large has embraced a Hegelian View of the world and relationships." What is meant by this is that instead of viewing two matters as either generally right or wrong; rather, they are seen as one position which generates an opposing position, they way to resolution is compromise, finding a third alternative somewhere in between. With this kind of mindset, there is a tendency to not take a stand on an issue, but to compromise. Let me explain further. Up until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the western world tended to think in ways that we have described; it thought in terms of two alternatives, right and wrong, truth and error, good and evil. The debate through history was to determine in which of these two categories beliefs and practices should be classified. Debate was conducted, wars were waged, to determine who would win the day with their view over against another's. But toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century everything changed. There was a philosopher who is recognized as signaling or effecting the change. **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** (1770–1831), a German philosopher, set forth another way of thinking. He said that the world really does not operate according to that old model. Rather what happens in history (and theology, and sociology, etc.) is that someone stands forward and asserts a *thesis*, a position or a declaration of "truth" or statement of reality But then someone else stands forward and asserts an opposing idea or "truth", which is

an *antithesis*. (And this is where we are to “stop”, these two and no more), But Hegel said that rather than the thesis or the antithesis winning the day, they settle on a **synthesis**, which is a compromise between the two. In other words, we are to give in a little, acknowledge the value or correctness of the other position, and between the two we come up with a conclusion or an outcome. The problem with this way of thinking, however, is that the new **synthesis** itself becomes a new **thesis**, which is again opposed by an antithesis, which further results in compromise and relativism, and a new synthesis, which again becomes a new thesis. The process goes on and on until an end results. This philosophy was what stood behind Carl Marx, Lenin, and Thomas Dewey, and almost all “thinkers” after them. This way of thinking is desirable and preferable to the world. It is the way of peace, for it is the way of compromise and surrender. And sadly, all too many who claim to be Christian are captivated by this kind of thinking. This is how standards of morality decline in societies over time. This is how theological compromise and error creeps in and takes over formerly “Christian” institutions, like Harvard, Yale, Princeton. This explains how the once biblical puritans morphed over time until today the Unitarians claim to be the spiritual descendants. This is how it is people who claim to be Christian, who once seemed to be wholly committed to the Lord, end up as apostates. It happens by degrees. And if you were able to stand back and see things fully, you would probably determine that they had embraced a different kind of thinking other than what the Word of God has set before them.

Our social institutions now promote **relativism**. This includes our public schools, the media, and politics. This is the way of the world. This socializing tendency of man which results in opposing God and His ways.

There is a tendency for mankind to unite in opposition to God. The tower of Babel reflects this. And Babel is a symbol and paradigm of what occurs commonly in civilization. There is a call to unite, to come together, which it is thought that we can solve problems if we simply can agree to disagree and move onward. Much of cultural pluralism promotes this kind of thinking. These socializing forces tend to marginalize and silence the individual who speaks out.

But God would have our lives transformed by the renewal of our minds. We need to think not only what God has told us but we are to think in the manner that He would have us think.

The ones in history who have had an impact on history and an impact for God’s kingdom are ones who have stood against the tide, who stood in spite of opposition, and who were willing to suffer the consequences for having done so. They have stood and said “no, that is wrong” or have acted out of conviction, generally against convention, and have stood for truth. All of the great men and women of the Bible did so, and many, if not most, suffered for having done so.

The ones who want to make peace by compromise and appeasement may be lauded as great ones by the world presently, but in time they are shown to have been well-meaning, but naive, accomplishing little and perhaps even brought greater heartache and hardship because of their weakness. And eventually, even the world comes to recognize and acknowledge the ones who stood firm with respect to truth and justice were indeed men and women who were visionaries who were morally ahead of their times.

Let us return to our text of Romans 12.

### 3. “*Love one another with brotherly affection*” (12:10).<sup>5</sup>

How does one love without hypocrisy, or with sincerity? Answer, “Love one another with brotherly affection.” We are to have an *affectionate* love.<sup>6</sup> We are to have love for one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. This means that it is not our common humanity that elicits our affection for one another, although “we are brethren in Adam according to the flesh.”<sup>7</sup> Rather, it is because “in and by Christ according to the Spirit”<sup>8</sup> that we are to love one another as brethren in the Lord. “Paul conceives of the church as a family that is even closer than one’s biological family, for all are united to Christ as brothers and

---

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry, vol. 6, p. 460.

<sup>7</sup> John Trapp, *A Commentary on the Old and the New Testaments* (Tanski Publications, 1997), vol. 5, p. 511.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

sisters.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, this love that we have for one another is not a result of our uniformed affections. We are to love one another recognizing our common bond and relationship with one another in Jesus Christ.

It properly denotes the love of parents to their children, which, as it is most tender, so it is the most natural, of any, unforced, unconstrained; such must our love be to one another, and such it will be where there is a new nature and the law of love is written in the heart. This kind affection puts us on to express ourselves both in word and action with the greatest courtesy and obligingness that may be.<sup>10</sup>

**4. “Outdo one another in showing honor” (12:10b).** How does one love without hypocrisy, or with sincerity? We are to have a *respectful* love.<sup>11</sup> Being in Christ brings great stature and regal status for every Christian. We are to honor one another highly. This means that we should be polite with one another, considerate of one another, and treat others with great respect and dignity. And so, rather than being as persons in the world, clamoring to obtain status and recognition above others about us, within the church we are to seek to render honor and confer preeminence to others. We are to foster an outlook and attitude in which we delight when another is exalted, even above ourselves, not being jealous or envious of another who may seem to have attained higher stature of more authority than ourselves. This is how we shall be in heaven; it ought to be how we think and behave in the church in this life in this world.

**5. “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”** Although we are to attempt to outdo one another in showing honor, this should not result in our laziness or inactivity. All of us, even each of us, are not to be slothful in our zeal for the Lord or for His cause. There should be earnestness about us, and intensity of desire to see our Lord honored, His kingdom advanced, His people secure in their redemption. We serve the Lord by serving these goals.

**6. “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”** Is your life as a Christian characterized in rejoicing? Perhaps it is not, for you are rejoicing in something other than what God has promised you in Jesus Christ.

The Lord’s people bear heavy burdens in this fallen world, but our Lord has so provided for them that He is able to ease the burden of them who serve Him. Indeed, His Words are when He states to His own,

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:29f)

How does He lighten the burden that weighs upon His people? He does not remove them. He does not make them less intense for His people; in fact, generally the difficulty that His people encounter in this world is more severe than those who do not live for Him. The world is no friend to believers. Believers who are walking rightly will have conflict as they battle with sin within and they endure hostility from without. And so, Christ’s burden is light not because the burden is less, rather He enables His own to become stronger so that they are able to better bear that which is upon them. Through Christ the believer is made stronger; and so, his burdens *seem* light as He trusts Jesus and sees clearly the promises that are His in Christ.

What is it that gives believers strength? It is what the Bible describes as *hope*. Discouraged people are hopeless people. But believers who are encouraged to face their trials boldly and with peace are ones who have the hope of God sustaining them.

What is the nature of biblical hope? *Hope is a certain anticipation of what most assuredly will occur.* Because the Christian believes what God has said concerning all that is promised to him through Christ, he is infused with hope, the deep-settled certainty that all the good that God has promised will most certainly come to pass. This joyous anticipation changes the believer’s outlook toward all that he faces. He

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 664.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Henry, vol. 6, p. 461.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

sees what he is enduring is temporary and that a glorious future awaits him. This anticipation of the realization of God's promises is what strengthens him to endure, yes, even rejoice through his present trials.

And so, if you will purpose to "rejoice in hope", you will find yourself being "patient in tribulation." And so, first, *see the glorious future before us with the certain prospect of our God's future blessing.* Because we know with certainty what we shall most surely receive, we are infused with hope which effects the way we live; it is a "living hope". And because the prospect is so bright, it causes earthly matters to fade in significance. What results us that *we become a people living in the prospect of the future.* We are a forward-looking people. Not for what we might purchase with next week's pay check, or the prospect of enjoying next year's vacation, although these are pleasant. These are not the things that drive our lives; rather, it is the prospect of eternity, which moves and shapes our thinking and actions. We are to *anticipate with joy our future resurrection.* We long for God's kingdom to be realized. We look forward to our reunion with loved ones, our coming into God's presence, as the things that give strength to us in living now. This will lead us to be dependent upon God, trusting Him, as we pray to Him faithfully. Let us "**Rejoice in hope** so that we will be *patient in tribulation*, even as we are *constant in prayer.*"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ." (2 Thess. 3:5)