

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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NORMAL LIVING

FOR THE

CHURCH LIFE

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Living Stream Ministry
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A NORMAL LIVING FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

In Romans 12:9 through 13:14 we can see the believers' transformation in practicing the Body life and in subjection, love, and warfare. The base of the Body life is the living of a normal life.

TOWARD OTHERS

In living a normal life, we firstly should have love toward others. In Romans 12:9 Paul says, “Let love be without hypocrisy,” and in verse 10 he says, “Love one another warmly in brotherly love.”

Verse 10 also speaks of “vying with one another in showing honor.” In the matter of showing honor we must move quickly and be the first one to show honor to others.

Furthermore, we need to communicate to the needs of the saints and to pursue hospitality (v. 13).

In verse 15 Paul says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” We must be transformed before we can rejoice and weep

with others. Some people were born in such a way that they are unable to weep or to rejoice. Regardless of how happy or joyful you are, they remain expressionless. Some brothers and sisters do not know how to rejoice or to weep with others; they seem to be stones without human affection. However, the church life needs emotional people. We all must be properly emotional and full of expression. I would like to have a face that can express all my emotions properly and adequately. We cannot put together people with stone faces and call it the church life; we must be living stones, stones full of affection. We must learn to rejoice and to weep with others.

Then Paul admonishes us saying, “Be of the same mind toward one another, not minding high things, but being led away to the lowly. Do not be wise in yourselves” ([v. 16](#)). Paul was practical. When he tells us to be led away to lowly things, he includes everything. We should try to be led away to whatever is lowly. Do not be so high, but be led away to lowly things.

TOWARD GOD

[Verse 11](#) describes the way we should be toward God: “Not slothful in zeal, burning in spirit, serving the Lord as a slave.”

In the church life we need to be diligent. No slothful person can prevail in practicing the church life. For the sake of the Body our slothfulness must be dealt with.

Burning in Spirit

For the Body life, we need a body that is presented, a mind that is renewed in the transformation of the soul, and a spirit that is burning. Our whole being—spirit, soul, and body—is included in the church life. For the sake of the church life, our body needs to be presented, our soul needs to be transformed, and our mind needs to be metabolically changed. Our mind must be renewed, not simply by being taught, but by being transformed, having the element of Christ spread into it to produce a metabolic change. The transformation of our soul primarily depends upon the renewing of our mind. If we are serious about practicing the church life, we need to present our body, to have our soul transformed, and to be burned and burning in our spirit. If we have a heart for the church life, but fail to present our body to the church, we are impractical. However, suppose we are bodily in the church life, yet our mind is filled with old concepts, thoughts, and traditions. Suppose our mind is occupied by our

own natural cleverness, imaginations, and concepts. We may come to the church with our body, but we bring with us our very troublesome mind. Such an unrenewed mind will be a great problem to the church. Our body must be presented, and our mind must be renewed. Suppose, by the Lord's mercy, our body has been presented and our mind has been renewed, but our spirit remains cold. That will never work for the church life. After the presenting of the body and the renewing of the mind, we need the burning of the spirit. How we long to see that all the believers would have three characteristics: a body that has been absolutely presented for the church life; a mind that has been completely renewed by metabolic transformation in the soul, a mind that is free from worldly, natural, and religious thoughts, wholly saturated with the Lord's mind, and purely for the Lord; and a spirit that is set on fire. If all the saints are like this, how wonderful the church life will be.

Serving as a Slave

In the church life we must serve the Lord as a slave. A slave is one who has been sold to his master and who no longer has any freedom. We need to be this kind of person for the Body life,

serving the Lord as slaves and having no freedom to do things according to ourselves. Therefore, toward God we must not be slothful. We must burn in our spirit and serve Him as a slave.

TOWARD OURSELVES

In [Romans 12](#) we also see four aspects of a normal life toward ourselves: rejoicing in hope, enduring in tribulation, persevering in prayer ([v. 12](#)), and abhorring and conquering what is evil and cleaving to what is good ([vv. 9, 21](#)).

We Christians should be a rejoicing people because we always have the enjoyment of the Lord. If we enjoy the Lord in His riches, we will not only be joyful inwardly, but we will be rejoicing outwardly. Even in times of trouble we should and can rejoice in hope. We are not people who are without God and without Christ, having no hope ([Eph. 2:12](#)). We have God and we have Christ. So, regardless of the situation, we have hope and we can rejoice in hope.

We Christians must also be able to endure tribulation. We must be an enduring people. By rejoicing in hope we can endure any kind of tribulation. [Romans 5:3](#) says that we can exult in tribulation. We not only endure, but also exult in tribulation.

In order to endure tribulation we need to be persevering in prayer. We need to pray persistently. This will not only enable us to endure tribulation, but also to remain in the enjoyment of the Lord, in His presence, and in His will.

In addition to all this, as God's holy people, we must abhor and conquer the evil things and cleave to the good things. We Christians, who are separated unto God, must maintain the highest standard of behavior, a standard above that of moral and ethical people.

TOWARD THE PERSECUTOR AND ENEMY

We must also live a normal life in relation to our persecutors and enemies. We should bless those who persecute us and not curse them ([Rom. 12:14](#)). Regardless of how bad people may be toward us, our mouth should only express blessing, not cursing. How the Lord blessed us when we were His enemies! We should bless our enemies and persecutors in the same way. This also is an aspect of the life that follows the Lord's steps.

We should repay no one evil for evil ([v. 17](#)). Under the law it was eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Today we are not under law but under

grace. We must not repay evil for evil, but rather repay good for evil, as the Lord has done to us.

Furthermore, we should not avenge ourselves, but give place to the wrath of God; for vengeance belongs to the Lord (v. 19). While we are practicing the church life with a normal human life, we should not avenge ourselves in any way. We should be willing to suffer people's wrongdoing and the loss of everything. We should leave the whole situation in the sovereign hand of the Lord and give Him the place to do whatever He likes according to His sovereignty.

In verse 20 Paul says, "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap coals of fire upon his head." This is actually loving our enemies. Our love to them will be coals of fire heaped upon their heads to turn them to the Lord. The best way to calm our enemies is to give them something to eat and drink. Thus, Paul commands us, "Do not be conquered by the evil, but conquer the evil with the good" (v. 21).

Finally, we need to live in peace with all men, as far as it depends upon us to do so (v. 18). Sometimes it is not possible to live in peace with all men because the other parties

are not willing to have a life of peace. In such a situation, there is nothing we can do. Therefore, Paul says that we should live in peace with all men “if possible.”

In general, we must take “forethought for things honorable in the sight of all men” ([v. 17](#)). We must be very thoughtful before all men about honorable things, and we must be thoughtful beforehand. In order to keep from offending people we should not oppose anything that is honorable. However, we should not care for these honorable things in a blind way lest we be distracted from the Lord’s way. Since we are not only living before God but also before men, we need to take forethought for things honorable in the sight of men. [Second Corinthians 8:21](#) says, “We take forethought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (lit.).

IN SUBJECTION

[Romans 13:1](#) says, “Let every person be subject to the authorities over them. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are appointed by God.” A natural character is a rebellious character, but a transformed character is submissive. Subjecting ourselves to the

authorities appointed by God requires a certain amount of transformation. Sisters, if you want to submit to your husbands, you need transformation. If we are submissive to God's appointed authorities, it is an indicator that we have a certain amount of transformation, because our natural character and disposition are rebellious. We were born rebellious, and our natural response to authority is to say, "No." Thus, subjection to authority requires transformation from the growth in life. "Therefore he who resists the authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose will receive to themselves judgment" (v. 2). It is not good to resist authority. Either the judgment will descend upon you from the authority, or it will come to you directly from God.

In verse 5 Paul says that "it is necessary to be subject, not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience." Because of conscience, we need to learn, by being transformed, to be subject to authorities.

Furthermore, we need to pay taxes and to render revenue to whom they are due. We also must render fear and honor to whom they are due. To render tax, fear, and honor to whom they are due indicates that we are subject to authority.

IN LOVE

“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does not work evil to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” ([Rom. 13:8-10](#)). The commandment to love sums up all the other commandments. We need the Holy Spirit to work in us and to give us an amount of transformation in life that we may practice love toward all men. Love is the expression of life. It is not just an outward behavior, but an expression of inward life. Simply trying to love without the supply of life does not work. In order to love people and spontaneously fulfill the commandments, we need the life supply and the transformation in life. Our natural life is not a life of God’s love. We need to be transformed in life that we may have God’s nature of love to love people. If we are careless in loving others, we do not need transformation in life. But if we are going to practice love toward all men, we need to be transformed in life.

IN WARFARE

Now we come to transformation in waging the warfare, meaning spiritual warfare. Verse 11 says, “And this, knowing the time, that now is the hour for you to be raised out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.” Salvation here means salvation in the last stage, which is the redemption of our body. Salvation encompasses our spirit, soul, and body. In the first stage of salvation, the Lord regenerates our spirit; in the second stage, He transforms our soul; and in the third stage, which is the last, at the time of His return He will transfigure our vile body into a glorious one ([Phil. 3:21](#)). When [Romans 13:11](#) says that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, it is referring to the third stage of salvation, the transfiguration of our body. In other words, this refers to the redemption of our body, or, to use another term, the full sonship revealed in [Romans 8:19, 21](#), and [23](#).

We need to realize that now is the time to wake up from sleep. Although night is the time for sleep, “the night is far advanced” ([Rom. 13:12](#)). So, we should wake up, be watchful, and sleep no more.

The present age is the nighttime. When the Lord Jesus returns, day will dawn. The next age will be the daytime. Since the night is advanced and the day is near, we need not only to wake up from sleep but also to cast off the works of darkness and put on the weapons of light ([v. 12](#)). This indicates a warfare.

“Let us walk becomingly as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy” ([v. 13](#)). All of these works must be cast aside. They are the works of darkness, and we are the children of the day.

Put On Christ

[Verse 14](#) is very important. “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.” In [verse 12](#) we are told to “put on the weapons of light” and in [verse 14](#) to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” By placing these two phrases together, we can see that the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the weapons of light. Furthermore, the phrase “make no provision for the flesh” corresponds to [8:12](#), where Paul says that “we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to flesh.” The warfare in [Romans 13:14](#) is between the lusts and the Spirit

as in [Galatians 5:17](#). Christ is the Spirit ([2 Cor. 3:17](#)). Thus, we must put on Christ in order to fight the battle against our lusts. Here the warfare does not concern the devil or the principalities in the air as in [Ephesians 6:12](#); it concerns the lusts against which we must fight by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as our weapons of light. This kind of warfare is different from that in [Romans 7:23](#). There it is the evil law in our flesh warring against the good law in our mind; it has nothing to do with the Spirit. But here it is that we, by putting on Christ, fight against the fleshy works of darkness.

What does it mean to put on Christ? We have been baptized into Christ and are already in Christ ([Rom. 6:4](#); [Gal. 3:27](#)). Why then must we still put on Christ? To put on Christ actually means to live by Christ and to live out Christ. Although we are in Christ, we need to live by Christ and to live out Christ practically. We need to have a daily living that is by Christ and that expresses Christ. The expression of Christ in our daily life is our weapon for fighting against the flesh. Since the battle in [verse 14](#) is not against the devil and spiritual wickedness, but against the flesh with all of its lusts, we need to live by Christ. The more we live by Christ, the

more He becomes our weapons against the lusts of the flesh.

Make No Provision for the Flesh

Paul says that we should “make no provision for the flesh.” We should not supply the flesh with anything. This indicates that the flesh continues to exist. Regardless of how spiritual we become, the flesh can still be revived. The flesh is hungry and desires food, but we must starve it to death, making no provision that will allow it to fulfill its lusts.

What does it mean to make provision for the flesh? Since the young people especially may find it difficult to understand this, I would like to give some illustrations. The present human society is dark and evil, containing numerous provisions for the flesh. Consider, for instance, the newspapers with their pictures and advertisements. I do not believe that anyone is so spiritual that when he sees an evil picture in the newspaper that he will not be influenced. Your experiences will testify to you that when you looked at some of the advertisements and pictures in the newspapers your flesh was aroused. Those movie advertisements were a provision for the flesh. Furthermore, television has also

been much used by the enemy to provide food for the hungry flesh. I am not legal to say that Christians should not watch television, but I do say that it is better to keep away from it. Do not think that you are so strong. Suppose there is a deep well nearby. If I do not wish to fall into the well, I should stay away from it and not walk around it. However, if I continue to walk near the well, although I may not fall in it today, I probably will in the future. It is better to be protected and stay away from the well. Likewise, it is dangerous to watch television. If you intend to watch television, you should pray, "Lord, look at the television with me. Be one with me in my spirit to watch television." If you pray in this way, it may be all right for you to do it. Otherwise, perhaps you should consider giving it up. At any rate, television has been a powerful means for the enemy to make provision for the flesh, and many evil things have occurred as a result of its influence.

It is difficult to determine in which subsection of the book of Romans to place [chapter thirteen](#). It may be a continuation of [chapter twelve](#). If it does not actually belong to the portion on the living of a normal life, it is at least closely associated with it. [Romans 12:9 through 13:14](#) may be

considered as a whole portion concerning the living of a normal life. Undoubtedly 12:1-8 concerns the practice of the Body life. Along with this practice of the Body life, we need the living of a normal life which is portrayed in 12:9-21 and possibly in [chapter thirteen](#) as well. We should not neglect this part of Romans. All of the verses in this section are very clear, and we need not say much about them. It would be a great help to the young people to memorize some of these verses such as, “Let love be without hypocrisy” and “Abhor what is evil; cleave to what is good” and “Love one another warmly in brotherly love.” These sayings are almost proverbs. If the young people memorize these verses, it will help them to experience the transformation which will give them the living of a normal life to practice the proper church life. Without the living of such a normal life, we are lacking the necessary base for the church life. I believe that this was the reason that, immediately after describing the practice of the church life, Paul presents the requirements of the living of a normal human life. The best presentation of the normal living in the entire Bible is found in these verses. Therefore, we need to pray over

them and fellowship with one another concerning them.

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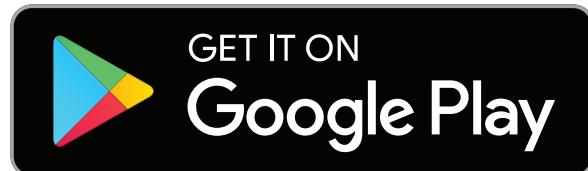
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