

Romans 12:9-16; John 8:28-30

We have often looked at the need to be 'message bearers' who are also growing as 'image bearers'. In other words, we need what we say to be supported by how we live in our daily walk. We need the grace. Integrity and power too so especially when you consider this crazy world we live in!

I penned these words in my book, *Rhythm of a Captured Heart*, and they seem very fitting at this hour.

"The Lord is immutable. He never changes, but things around us are constantly changing. There is a constant ebb and flow to life and things change so rapidly. The world around us moves at a dizzying pace. We must maintain our spiritual stability while being flexible and adaptable to the issues and individuals that we encounter. Many Christians struggle to establish and keep a healthy balance under such evolving circumstances. One obstacle we constantly face is being consistent in our walk. We must stay available to God and the desire of His heart while we recalibrate our lives to respond to the un-ending barrage of new information and opportunities. How do we keep in step with the cadence of His heart in a culture that is repeatedly re-inventing itself? We must find ways to walk in league with the Holy Spirit and be a light to and increasingly secular world at the same time. A common tendency has arisen in the church that is truly counterproductive to our cause. It wars against the great commandment (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). What is this tendency, this religious dilemma that plagues many of God's people? Simply stated, we fear compromise and dishonoring God, so in an effort to be spiritually stable and strong, we have become religiously rigid. Having your heart established in God is an absolute must. Letting your heart and mind become rigid and hard is an absolute disaster. I think that we can find genuine counsel and direction for these predicaments in Romans 12:9-16."

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not

be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Romans 12:9-16 NASB

- ***The key element – a fixed and yet flexible heart which has many attributes.***
 - ***We need a heart filled with the love of God...genuine love...the real deal...(v9)***
- ***Love drives out fear and it is fear that pushes our hearts to grow rigid.***
- ***We need to learn from the Holy Spirit to simultaneously love what God loves and hate what he hates. (v9)***
- ***While we hate evil (not evil doers), we must cling to, join ourselves, to what is good. (v9)***
- ***We are to relate to each other with brotherly love...family love...bottom line love...warmly devoted to each other. (v10)***
- ***We are to give preference and deference to each other...“out do one another in showing honor to each other.” (v10)***
- ***We are encouraged to be diligent (not lazy), fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. (v11)***
 - ***Fervent in spirit...literally ‘boiling in the spirit’, ‘percolating’, ‘a glow and burning with the spirit.’ (v11)***
 - ***Serving is ever bit as spiritual as praying or preaching! Serving is part of a spirit empowered life.***
 - ***A servant rejoices in hope. (v12)***
 - ***The hope of ‘glory’ – Jesus***
 - ***The hope that is reinforced by the measure of faith and the grace of gifts He gives us.***
 - ***The hope of Him coming to us now to change us and His coming one day to claim us!***
 - ***A servant is devoted to prayer. (v12)***
 - ***...“Steadfastly maintaining the habit of prayer.” Phillips***
 - ***Persevering in troubled times through prayer.***
 - ***A servant is a giver. (v13)***
 - ***A giver of money and things that money can’t buy.***
- ***We are to bless those who ‘trouble us’, bless and don’t curse them. (v14)***
 - ***We are to be empathetic with people both in celebration and sorrow. (v15)***

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to

***humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.
Romans 12:16 AMPC***

- ***We need to have a readily adjustable heart to people and to things around us. (v16)***
 - ***...“Do not aspire to eminence, but willingly adjust yourselves to humble situations...” Berkley New Testament***
- ***We can readily adjust ourselves:***
 - ***Adjust to cultural differences.***
 - ***Adjust to stylistic differences.***
 - ***Adjust to the unending stream of changes all around us.***
- ***Let’s review Romans 12:9-16 through the lens of the flexible heart. A heart that is flexible and easily adapted to varying circumstances is a necessity in order to live out these truths. Thank God that He has made this kind of heart available to us. Look at these instructions:***
 - Abhor what’s evil. (v9)***
 - Cling to what is good. (v9)***
 - Be devoted in brotherly love. (v10)***
 - Give preference to one another. (v10)***
 - Give preference to one another. (v10)***
 - Be diligent, fervent in spirit and service. (v11)***
 - Rejoice, persevere, pray. (v12)***
 - Give to the needy, be hospitable. (v13)***
 - Bless those who persecute you. (v14)***
 - Rejoice and weep with those who rejoice and weep. (v15)***
 - Be of the same mind with one another. (v16)***
 - Don’t be wise in your own estimation. (v16)***
 - Be readily adjustable.***
- ***Jesus is our example of a most readily adjustable heart.***

²⁸ So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” ³⁰ As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. John 8:28-30 NASB

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- ***Jesus always did what was pleasing to the Father.***
- ***Jesus knew that God had sent Him into the world and He knew that the Holy Spirit was with Him to help Him. In light of these truths, Jesus always did the things that were pleasing to the Father. Did Jesus always do the same thing in every situation? Did He always preach the same words, heal the same way, respond with the same actions, or use the same methods? No, He was readily adjustable to hear what pleased God in each instance and to do accordingly. We can be led by the Holy Spirit to have a similar response if our hearts are sensitive and flexible. Our highest honor is to bring pleasure to the Father. He gives us the capacity to honor Him in this way when our hearts are subject to His bidding.***
 - ***Can you see that if our hearts are readily adjustable to please the Father and walk out the truths we have looked at today, that our lives would more accurately portray the message of the Gospel?***
 - ***Oh God, give us hearts like this so we can bless each other and reach others with the transforming truths of the kingdom.***
 - ***Is your heart fixed...or does it need to get fixed?***
 - ***What isn't flexible or adjustable?***
 - ***Are you firm or rigid?***
 - ***Rock solid vs hard as a rock...***