

HOW TO HANDLE ADVERSITY LIKE JESUS

Romans 12:12

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Turn in your Bible to Romans 12.
2. We are in a sermon series on Romans 12 called Be Transformed. If you are a Christian, then God's goal for you is that you become more and more like Jesus. And Romans 12 is full of information about how to live like Christ.
3. One of the challenges of the Christian life is that even after you become a Christian you still have problems. You might assume that now that God is on your side, that He will protect you from life's problems. But that doesn't happen. Even though they follow Jesus, Christians face sickness, failure, layoffs, financial setbacks, relational problems, you name it.
4. So the question I want to answer this morning is how do you handle adversity like Jesus? How should Christians respond to problems in life? Should you respond just like nonbelievers, or is there a unique approach to problems that you are supposed to take? Another way to ask this question is how do you glorify God as you face problems?

II. TEXT

1. **Romans 12:12** "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer."

III. THREE DIRECTIVES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES

1. Rejoice in hope.

- i. **Romans 12:12** "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer."
- i. The Greek word for rejoice (chairō, 5463) means to rejoice or be glad. It is used in Mt 18:13 of a man who rejoices after he finds a lost sheep. It is used of the father in the story of the prodigal son who rejoiced because his son had come home (Lk 15:32). So it means to be exceedingly happy. It means to walk through life with a celebratory attitude, countenance, and vocabulary.

- ii. If you are a Christian, God doesn't want you to walk around sad, depressed, gloomy, negative, complaining. He wants you to be positive, upbeat, joyful, happy.
- iii. Even when we are facing difficulties? Yes!
- iv. **Philippians 4:4** "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"
- v. Did you notice the word "always"? And just to make sure that you didn't misunderstand him, Paul said it twice. "I will say it again: Rejoice!" What's amazing about this is that Paul wrote these words from prison. When he wrote this he was in jail, and he didn't if he was going to be set free, or spend the rest of his life in prison, or be executed.
- vi. Jesus told his disciples to rejoice even when they were being persecuted.
- vii. **Matthew 5:12** "Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
- viii. And they took His words to heart. Later in the book of Acts, Peter and the apostles were arrested for preaching about Jesus. Then they were flogged (whipped severely) and ordered to shut up about Jesus. Notice how they responded.
- ix. **Acts 5:40-41** "After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name."
- x. Now this doesn't mean that Christians are never to express emotions of sadness. The Bible says there is a season for everything; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance (Eccl 3:4). The Bible says that Jesus wept (Jn 11:35). The Bible even commands us to weep and mourn over our sins (Jas 4:9). There is a time for everything. But as a Christian the overall flavor and note and mood of your life should be that of rejoicing. If we asked people to describe you, they should be able to say, "He's always joyful. She's always

happy.” Obviously they don’t mean that you were joyful when you found out that your close relative passed away; but the overall mood of your life is that of happiness and rejoicing.

- xi. Look back at Romans 12:12.
- xii. **Romans 12:12** “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.”
- xiii. Notice that it is a command. We are commanded to rejoice.
- xiv. That means that your attitude is your choice. No matter what you are facing, you can choose to be happy. You can choose to rejoice. You don’t have to be sad and gloomy and depressed.
- xv. As well, not only can you choose to rejoice in adversity, but you must. This is God’s will for you. God does not want you to walk around sad and negative and complaining and feeling sorry for yourself.
- xvi. But that leads to an important question. Where do you get the inner strength to choose to rejoice in the midst of adversity? I don’t know if you have ever tried this, but it is not easy. How do you pull this off? The answer is found in the second part of the phrase: “Rejoice in hope.” We are to rejoice *in hope*.
- xvii. The word hope in Scripture does not mean a wish, a dream, a fantasy. It’s not like saying, “I hope we have good weather tomorrow.” It is not optimism, or a positive attitude. In Scripture the word “hope” refers to the confident expectation that God’s promises will be fulfilled. It is the settled assurance that God’s promises will come to pass.
- xviii. Specifically, in Scripture the Christian’s hope is heaven.
- xix. **Acts 23:6** “I am being judged because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.”
- xx. Paul was arguing that he was being persecuted for his belief in life after death. That’s the Christian’s hope.
- xxi. The Christian’s hope can be described this way:
 - a. You may suffer in this life, but this is the closest you will ever get to hell.
 - b. You may face afflictions in this life, but in heaven it will be only peace.

- c. You may experience poverty in this life, but in heaven the streets are made of gold.
 - d. You may experience worry and sadness in this life, but in heaven it will be only joy.
 - e. You may experience rejection in this in this life, but in heaven you will be loved and welcomed and accepted.
 - f. You may last in this life, but in heaven you will be first.
 - g. You may weep in this life, but in heaven you will be comforted.
 - h. You may be lonely in this life, but in heaven you will be in the company of Jesus, and the saints, and the angels.
- xxii. When Paul says to rejoice in hope he is saying to **be happy because you are heaven-bound**. Rejoice because you heaven to look forward to.
- xxiii. In other words, rejoice in hope means that you must not base your happiness on this world, on what you can see, and feel, and touch. It must not be on your relationships, or your job, or your income, or your health. All of those things will constantly change on you, and they are temporary. Instead, base your happiness on where you are headed – heaven.
- xxiv. One time Albert Einstein was traveling by train through Europe. The ticket collector was going down the aisles collecting tickets. When he got to Einstein, Einstein looked all over, through his bags, in his pockets, but he couldn't find his ticket. The ticket collector said, "That's okay, Mr. Einstein, we know who you are." The ticket collector moved on down the aisle. But a few minutes later he looked back and saw that Einstein was still vigorously searching for his ticket, now on the ground on his hands and feet. The ticket inspector approached him again and said, "Mr. Einstein, it's okay. You don't need your ticket. We know who you are." Einstein said, "You don't understand. I need the ticket. I need to know where I'm going."
- xxv. As a Christian, God wants you to handle adversity by rejoicing always, and you can do that because you know where you are going. You know how the story ends. You know that even

though you might have to go through some terrible situations, they are only temporary, because eventually you are going to go to heaven and be in paradise for all eternity.

2. Be patient in affliction.

- i. **Romans 12:12** “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.”
- ii. There are two words in the New Testament that are translated “patience.”
 1. Makrothumeo
 - a. The first is makrothumeo. Makrothumeo refers to patience with people and their faults and flaws. It has to do with loving and forgiving people even when they let you down and hurt you.
 - b. **Colossians 3:12-13** Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.
 - c. This is not the word that is used in Romans 12:12.
 2. Hupomeno
 - a. The second is the word hupomeno, and that’s what we find in Romans 12:12.
 - b. Hupomeno refers to patience with your circumstances. It has to do with your response to affliction, adversity, trouble, trials, persecutions, etc.
 - c. Hupomeno is a compound word. The first word, hupo, means under, and meno means to remain.
 - d. The idea of hupomeno is that when you are under the pressure of affliction, remain Christlike. Keep doing the right thing no matter how bad it gets.
 - e. Hupomeno is usually translated as endurance or perseverance. What does that mean? Don’t quit. Don’t give up. Keep going. Stick with it.

- f. Spiritually endurance means remain Christlike under pressure. **Keep doing the right thing no matter how bad it gets.**
- iii. The Greek word for “affliction” can be translated trouble, tribulation, trials, or oppression. One Greek scholar said that literally refers to distress caused by painful pressure. Another says it refers to crushing pressure. One commentator said that according to the law in ancient England, when a man refused to plead guilty to his crime, they would lay him on his back and place heavy weights on their chest until they were crushed to death. That’s a picture of affliction.
- iv. And Romans 12:12 just assumes that you will experience affliction. It doesn’t matter how much faith you have, or how devoted you are, you will have affliction. And Romans 12:12 says to be patient; endure; persevere; remain Christlike; keep doing the right thing.
- v. What does patience in affliction look like? It’s helpful to imagine what it doesn’t look like. Think about the wrong ways to respond to affliction:
1. To self-medicate with drugs and alcohol.
 2. To comfort yourself with unhealthy eating.
 3. To mentally and emotionally escape by turning to sexual sin.
 4. To get angry with God and run away from him.
 5. To try to solve the problem by doing something sinful, unethical, or unlawful.
 6. To panic with fear and anxiety.
 7. To get depressed.
 8. To commit suicide.
 9. To get angry and bitter, taking it out on the people around you.
 10. To seek revenge.
 11. To turn inward and stop serving and ministering to others.
 12. To quit and give up prematurely.
 13. To drop out of church and isolate yourself.

- vi. It's not hard to come up with examples of the opposite of patience in affliction, because I've been there. We've all been there.
- vii. But to handle adversity like Jesus you need to be patient in affliction; endure; persevere; stand firm; hold fast; be resilient; hang in there; persist; hang tough; stick with it.
- viii. The Bible uses Job as an example of endurance.
- ix. **James 5:11** "See, we count as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and have seen the outcome that the Lord brought about—the Lord is compassionate and merciful."
- x. What is Job's story? Job was a very godly man; fully-devoted to God. And God blessed him tremendously. He was very wealthy and had ten children. So, Satan went to God and said, "The only reason Job is so devoted to You is because you have blessed him. If you were to take away all of his blessings, he would curse you and abandon you." So, the Lord allowed Satan to afflict Job in a number of ways to prove Job's devotion was true. Satan destroyed all of Job's wealth, took away his health, killed his servants, and even killed all ten of his children. Yet after all this Job did not sin. He did not curse God. He did not reject God. He did not get angry with God. He did not try to comfort Himself with sinful pleasures. He kept doing the right thing. He said, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." That's endurance. That's patience in affliction.
- xi. So, the second directive for dealing with difficulty is to be patient in affliction. Keep doing the right thing no matter how bad it gets.
- xii. Charles Krauthammer was a Pulitzer-Prize winning columnist and frequent contributor on Fox News before his death. He was a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the neck down. When he was in medical school studying to be a doctor he was injured in a freak diving accident. How did he respond? Rather than wallow in self-pity, rather than giving up, he resolved to finish medical

school from his hospital bed, which he did without missing a single semester. That's patience in affliction.

3. Be persistent in prayer.

- i. **Romans 12:12** "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer."
- ii. The Greek word for persistent means to be devoted.
- iii. It is the same word used in Acts 2:42 where it says the early church was devoted to prayer.
- iv. This same word is also found in **Colossians 4:2**. "Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving."
- v. The Greek word for persistent means to be earnest toward prayer; be constantly praying; persist obstinately in prayer. In other words, **when you have a difficulty, pray all the way through it.**
- vi. Why pray? Prayer is the channel through which gives us the resources we need to handle adversity.
- vii. **John Murray** wrote, "The measure of perseverance in the midst of tribulation is the measure of our diligence in prayer. Prayer is the means ordained of God for the supply of grace sufficient for every exigency and particularly against the faintheartedness to which affliction tempts us." NICNT, Romans
- viii. Do you see what he is saying? Remember that you are supposed to rejoice and be patient in affliction. Where do you get the strength? Ultimately it comes through prayer. Prayer is the way that God gives you all that you need, the inner strength, the peace, the joy, the energy that you need to handle adversity.
- ix. Not only that, but usually God's plan is to deliver us from affliction. He usually doesn't leave us in any particular state of affliction our entire lives. Whether it is a financial difficulty, a relationship difficulty, an addiction, an emotional difficulty, a health issue – usually His plan is for us to go through it for a while and then to deliver us from it. And His plan to deliver us from it through prayer.
- x. You say, "I did pray, but nothing happened."
- xi. This is why you must be persistent in prayer.

- xii. The Bible teaches that God often works through persistent prayer. God often wants you to keep praying for something for a prolonged period of time before He will answer. In Luke 18 Jesus told the story of a widow who was being oppressed by an adversary. The judge in town happened to be a man who didn't fear God or respect people. Nevertheless, the widow kept going to the judge and asking for justice. She wouldn't stop. Every day. Finally, the judge relented and helped her. Notice what Jesus said. **Luke 18:7** "Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay in helping them?" In other words, sometimes God doesn't answer after one or two prayer, but only after persistent prayer.
- xiii. When you are going to through a difficulty, pray all the way through it. Pray right when it starts. Pray in the middle of it. Pray multiple times a day about it. Recruit your church family and your Home Group to join you in prayer. And when He finally delivers you, say a prayer of thanksgiving.
- xiv. Sean McDonold is here every single Sunday. Every Sunday, rain or shine, he is at the door greeting people as they come in, and then he always helps us to clean up after church. He brings his family, his wife and five kids to church. But it wasn't always like that. For a long time Sean's job wouldn't give him off on Sundays. So, we started praying about it every week in Home Group, because Sean doesn't miss Home Group. But God didn't answer right away. In fact, God didn't answer for years. But we kept praying, and praying, and praying, until Sean's company gave him off on Sundays so he could go with his family to church and worship the Lord. Be persistent in prayer.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. So, how do you handle adversity like Jesus?
 - i. Rejoice in hope. Be happy because you are heaven-bound.
 - ii. Be patient in affliction. Keep doing the right thing no matter how bad it gets.
 - iii. Be persistent in prayer. Pray all the way through your problems.

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2. If you are going through a particularly difficult trial right now, I want us to pray for you as a church. I'm going to ask you to stand up. Let's pray for you.