

“PRACTICAL RULES FOR LIFE”

Romans 12:9-16

Message 1889

I have found that to live right takes effort. You must work at it. Our natural desires often lead us in the wrong way. No doubt, we all have wondered, “Why is it so much easier to do wrong than it is to do right?” Well, our natural desires lead us the wrong way. Right can be thought of as walking uphill. We are always under tension. Some places the path is steeper than others, it is more difficult.

Our lives must be lived where we are, however. We may sometimes have severe difficulties. Perhaps you are having some such difficulties right now. So we need help, but where do we go for it. We need rules to guide us. We need someone to tell us how we should do.

The Bible gives us rules which are truly practical. The great Apostle Paul gives PRACTICAL RULES FOR LIFE in Romans 12:9-16.

9. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*
10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*
11. *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*
12. *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*
13. *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*
14. *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.*
15. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*
16. *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

From these verses I have found some practical RULES for life.

LOVE HEARTILY is a basic rule for worthy Christian living. Avoid hypocrisy. The Apostle says, Let love be without hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is appearing to be what one is not. I understand that the word comes from the Greek dramas long ago when the actors wore masks so that what people saw was not their real faces. That is hypocrisy. The actor’s real face was behind the mask, the artificial face. The Apostle says we ought not to love like that.

Then he says, “Abhor that which is evil.” I found that the word abhor means to utterly hate. Utterly hate evil: don’t find any fellowship with evil at all. Instead, “cleave to that which is good.” Cleave means be glued to, join with that which is good.

And love as brothers: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.” Like you are in a good family, a loving family, a caring family, love like brothers.

And then honor and respect each other. “In honor preferring one another.” Give the other person the benefit. Make room for him. Don’t allow your brother’s success to threaten you. Don’t be selfish. In other words, love heartily.

Now I observe that this kind of love does not come naturally. This is an unnatural love. Our natural

love does not love like this. This is supernatural love. It is what the Bible calls God's love--agape. It is the kind of love that God has. When we are God's children, we can open our hearts to that love which is only possible from God. We can let His love flow through us. This is a very practical rule for life: love heartily. Love like God loves.

LABOR HONESTLY is a necessary rule for successful Christian living. What does this phrase mean, "Not slothful in business?" It means not shrinking from zeal. Some people have a false front. It can be false in a negative or positive way. This means a kind of shrinking from effort.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit." The contrast here is very pronounced. One who is slothful in business is one who doesn't care. But one who is boiling in spirit really desires to do God's will. "Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Of course, we should be very hot, boiling in spirit in serving the Lord. Serve the Lord with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

And then be joyful in hope. This is verse 12: "Rejoicing in hope." Joyful in hope, for hope brings us joy if it is properly based. Hope based on the Bible is properly based.

Then "patient in tribulation," enduring trial. We all know a little of what that means for we have gone through some trials. But to be patient in those trials and tribulations is the challenge Paul holds out.

Continuing constantly in prayer. Continuing constantly in prayer is our great source of help. We should be continuing diligently, steadfastly in prayer.

Look at verse 13 now, "Distributing to the necessity of saints." Join in with the saints and be used to supply their needs. This opens the door to practice hospitality, showing love not alone to your brothers but also to strangers.

What practical suggestions and rules these are for living honestly. Again these are more than natural. These are not the natural way or the way of the natural heart. It is supernatural. These are qualities found only in really born again Christians. It is so important for us to understand that these practical rules for living are given to Christians.

LIVE HUMBLY is the Christ-honoring rule for Christian living. Now here are some very hard ones. Verse 14 says, "Bless them which persecute you," accept persecution. When people persecute you don't react but bless them. Bless but do not curse. Understand that persecution is under God's hand for blessing.

Then, "Rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those that weep." In other words, identify with the joyful and the sorrowful. Find a way that you can be glad with people that are joyful, especially new born children of God. Find a way that you can stand beside those that are mourning and share in their sorrow.

"Be of the same mind one toward another." Think alike. Don't be outside of the thinking of the body of Christ. Be of the same mind one towards another and avoid pride, "mind not high things," fellowship with the lowly. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.

Let us think with the lowly and do not become wise in our own ways. Notice that last sentence of verse 16: "Be not wise in your own conceits," in your own eyes.

Again this is not natural. This is not what the normal natural person would do. No, these qualities are supernatural. Those who follow Satan cannot show these characteristics but born again people can because they have help from the Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. People who are born again,

people who are Christians, have the Spirit of God. Through His control they can carry out these rules and cultivate these qualities.

These are practical rules and can be followed when a person receives Jesus Christ into his heart. Let me review them for you: love heartily, labor honestly and live humbly. Come to Jesus so He can nurture these principles in your life.