

# PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

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Romans 12:11

We have surveyed Romans 12:9-21 – the 10 Cars of the Christian Life. What a powerful picture, wouldn't you agree? What is genuine Christian life look like? It begins with a Golden Heart of love – 9; Brotherly Love – 10; the Heat of Love, being fervent in Spirit – 11; a Forward, Upward Direction of Love – 12; the Care of Love – 13; the Graciousness of Love (blessing those who persecute you and not cursing – 14; all the way to the Victory of Love in not overcome by evil but overcoming evil with good – 19-21

Now we need to go beyond **what** Paul said by *description*, and come to **how** this helps us by way of *prescription*.

We need to be these 10 train cars – and not just talk about them, or sigh and say, 'if only'. People have pictures of places they want greatly to visit; but never do. A painted boat on a painted sea will not get you across the ocean, or make you a sailor! And painted fire doesn't burn!

We need to be alive to these things!

And it is only by drawing higher and closer to our lovely, ascended Lord, that we can come back down into our world the stronger as salt and light and power. Moses could not hold back the glory in his face from when he was with the Lord in the mountain.

This is the kind of power that is lacking, it seems, in the church. We don't seem to have too many Richard Baxters today!

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritan was described as a “Freight Train out of Heaven”. These ten cars in Romans 12 are yours. How can you become more like a freight train from above? Of descending like angels into our very dark and devil-filled world?

Paul has a secret key hidden here in verse 11: three words – “serving the Lord.” When this is in place, what a change! Then it is no longer, ‘how can I serve the Lord?’ It is ‘how can I not serve him?’

What does the title Lord mean?

It means He is the one who is the right and worthy object of service. He deserves and commands all service. Every knee to him shall bow.

Even more importantly, the Lord is your Master who bought you with his blood. That is what serving is here.

Paul said onboard the ship to Rome: “This very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; (Act 27:23-24)

See then that the Spirit speaks about the ancient practice of slavery. Men, women and children were bought in the marketplace. Estimates range as high as 80% of the population were slaves. And a slave did not have two masters.

The Son of God descended from heaven to be made lowly, to identify with men enslaved in sin and by Satan. He was made in the form of a – you guessed it – a servant. He obeyed the Father, and obeyed the law, and came not to be served but to serve. It was he who aside his robes and washed our feet. See him willingly give himself over to arrested and then to stretch out his holy hands and feet on the cross!

So this is supreme! There is no serving the Lord without being owned by Him, purchased by his blood. Paul declares to the Corinthians: “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1Co 6:20)

Here is whole-life living and glorifying the Father, all bought by the Son. There is no acceptable service but in Him! Never has! Never will!

Peter wrote: “knowing you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ!” (1Pe 1:18-19)

Redeemed living! That is the key. Jesus my Lord has rescued me, bought me, loved me! He lived for me – and continues to live for me in glory! Oh what glory to him who brought us in his arms out of a far worse bondage of Egypt, into a far greater Country not our own! And yet our own!

This is the first point – is the Lord Jesus worthy of serving, of your whole life, or no? If he is, he should be set before our lives as the object of all devotion, as my new Master, my living Head! His authority is final who ministers to me every day what I need.

He is the Lord my Redeemer.

But here comes our weakness.

Every day we wake up, shake off our sleep, and start the day with: “Lord, I am not my own. What would you have me to do today? I am ready Lord to live as somebody who is not their own today!”

Is that you? Or you? Uhhh, no. It's not me either. The first thoughts of our minds are usually, "I need to" or "I should" or "Wonder what I..." It is "I, I, I, I, I." It takes time and effort to slow down and be reminded, "Oh, yeah, who's the boss here? Lord, how would you have me follow you today?"

What is missing or at a low ebb in the Christian's faith – is the piece AW Pink discovered as the missing link - surrender. Are we surrendered to him? Do we see selfishness as an enemy that must bow the knee?

You hear it in the motto of John Calvin: "My heart I offer to you, Lord, promptly and sincerely."

This brings us to the second word in our verse: Serving the Lord.

The word for *servicing* comes from the root 'to tie, to bind, to enslave.' When applied to servants or slaves, it means one whose will is entirely wrapped up in the will of another. A slave has no will of his own. This was looked down upon by the Greeks and Romans! A lowly slave! But in the Christian religion it is not so. "Not my will, but yours be done; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

**This is our second point then – the first, the Lordship of the Redeemer. Now the Revolutionary Change this implies.**

From what you *were* serving, to what you are *now* serving. For you no longer serve the flesh, but you serve Christ! And oh, what a night and day change has happened in you, for you, around you! You have stepped into a new world of light, of life, of love, when you took the yoke of His service as your Lord!

Earlier in Romans 6, we are redeemed from the old life in Adam; redeemed from death and raised with Christ; redeemed from the bondage of the broken covenant works; redeemed out of the prison house to new service, to a new slavery!

Your Lord broke your shackles and opened the prison doors wide. You he delivered from the Kingdom and Power of Sin as Lord and Slaveholder, and out from the Guilt, Condemnation and Wrath of the Law. He put the pardon in your hand! HIS Grace alone lifted you up and out, into the marvelous light and life of the Son's Beloved Kingdom.

We can summarize: you who were lost slaves are now found and beloved children! Now live accordingly!

If you were to awaken tomorrow and find yourself in the main bedroom of the Hurst Castle, in a bed fit for a king, and it were all yours – how differently would you live?

This is why we have such a hard time with the Christian life, because we buy into what the world is selling us. We are being conformed to this present age of sights and sounds, dying and perishing though it is, and not being conformed to your new world! You are citizens now of the new Jerusalem that is above, where your names, your places, your Lord, and your hopes are all included!

Every day our Lord's smile is upon us as we awaken. He is perfect and sovereign, loving and good, forgiving and holy, our Redeemer, our Protector, our Lord over all.

He says then, live as freed people; live as forgiven people; live resurrected lives, as those from the dead. But instead how do we act as though we are still our own.

We think we have been freed *from* slavery to be freed *from* the Lord! We wouldn't say it that way, but this is how we carry ourselves and our actions speak louder than words.

To wrap things up: everybody is a slave – to something or someone. Even the person enslaved to his freedom. We serve the Lord Christ! This pushes out all lesser commitments.

Jonathan Edwards resolved: “Giving up myself to God, and all that I had to God; to be for the future in no respect my own, to act as one that had no right to be himself, in any respect.”

Aim at being the best version of you, as the servant of the Lord.

Having Christ as Redeemer, is going to have a purifying effect.

That life fixed on Christ above cannot long abide evil; darkness must flee from such light. Such a heart should cleave to all that is good.

We love him, his character, his loves! He possesses us and we possess him as our treasure – his person, his dignity, his worship, his names, his day and his people.

So how serving the Lord ignites all these flames around verse 11 – zeal to all diligence, fervency of soul by the Spirit, taking highest joy in the certain future in verse 12. Yes, Christian, you should be joyful. You should wake up laughing! You should pinch yourself occasionally out of wonder if this real! For this is better than any dream by a long shot!

If all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's, your passion for the fleeting prizes of a world passing away diminishes. Love of the world chokes out the Lord. But if you rejoice in eternal life, you can patiently await the coming of the King and occupy until He comes.