

Panel Discussion - Romans 12:11-12

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So as the moderator, I suppose I get to sit and ask all the questions. It's a Bible student's dream job. Right. We discussed earlier the setting of this gem of Romans, chapter 12, verses 11 and 12, and now we want to take that gem and process it. That sounds kind of clinical, doesn't it?

We're going to process this. What I mean is I want to give you a handle on something that is actionable, useful in your Christian life, and if we can make this convention a convention where you take 1, 2, 3 things home with you that have an impact in your Christian walk, I think that's a phenomenal success rate. So that is what we will attempt to do. Brother David, would you read Romans 12:11 and 12, and let us know what translation you're reading from.

Okay. I was just going to read from the NIV what the brethren have chosen for us. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Thank you very much. In my preparation for this, I sent out really, in essence, 14 questions to our panelists, and some of you are smiling. A Bible student panel discussion with 14 questions. That would be a miracle to get through it all. But we're going to attempt that.

But I would like to also read the Weymouth rendition of these verses.

Weymouth reads, do not be indolent when zeal is required. Be thoroughly warm hearted, the Lord's own servants, full of joyful hope, patient under persecution, earnest and persistent in prayer.

So I guess the first thing we really need to do is discuss what proper Christian zeal is, and we're going to turn to you, Brother Comey, to get your thoughts on what is Christian zeal.

Well, again, this is a wonderful privilege to be here. I was paneled to draft behind my two other panelists, but you called on me first. So that plan's out, you know, as we think of, and you did this, Brother Obi, in your setup, you talked about the very first verse of the chapter where it says therefore. I'm always keed in where the Scripture says therefore, because that means there's something before that, because it's telling us something and says therefore.

So it's really on the strength of all of the doctrinal things that he had laid out. You know, the sinfulness of sin, the justification of faith and call of Israel, the irrevocable call that we have. All of those things are now on the table for us, and Paul is saying, therefore, given all These things that you're privileged to know and have present your bodies, and so part of that then leads to a scripture that talks about having not lagging behind in zeal.

You know, it talks, I think, in the New American. In the New American, it says not lagging behind in diligence, and so the opposite of lagging behind is to nurture that zeal, and so being not slothful, but in jealousy, and I think one of the things that we feel is so important is you have to understand zeal about what? What exactly are you zealous for?

And having that definition in front of you then begins to create the guardrail for your expression of zeal. Then it gives you a sense of purpose as to what you need to then fulfill the objectives or the mission objectives of that which you need to design. Having the truth as that essence of our skill, I think is important. So we need to know what that is. What is our commission?

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Then how do I develop all of what it takes to execute on that commission?

Understanding the truth. Understanding, and again, this is like open book exam here, because it's right, all right here that we have this work to do. It's not just a call to be so selfish about looking out for myself, but also looking out for my brethren, and so part of Brazil is open.

What am I doing for the brethren? What am I doing for the body of Christ? And what it starts with, what am I doing to have myself ready for service? So a phrase or a concept that I really appreciate is that the world of me is very small and claustrophobic. If I'm focused on me, me, me, that world just keeps getting smaller and smaller and smaller.

But if, as Brother Comey said, we expand our view and we reach out and we are open, vulnerable, available to people and the interests of the brotherhood, there is a source of zeal and strength. Brother Arbor, do you have any thoughts on this issue of zeal? I do. In answer to your question about how we may nurture zeal in ourselves, as Brother Comey pointed out, it starts in Romans 12. One, we yield ourselves, and we yield ourselves in that we sacrifice this life.

And we are appointed to bring praise and honor to God's holy name. We know that we do that. It then starts with the heart and the giving of the heart to God and the Holy Spirit. The new man must take control of our flesh daily and make it obedient. We manage ourselves and keep ourselves pointed in the obedience of God's commands.

Keep pointed. When I stray, I often say I think of Jesus Words I must be about my father's business. It just helps me snap back to from where I was to doing the right thing.

May I expand a bit? My second point is the opposite of zeal is apathy, which means a complete lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern, and an antonym of apathy is lukewarmness. This is where discouragement can set in, and lastly, for me to nurture zeal, my fight, my walk with the Lord is different than yours.

For me to nurture zeal, there is a constant fight of my dozen or so diseases, disabilities, illnesses, and I fight to generate zeal within myself. Stop there. Glad you brought up Revelation 3:16 about because you are neither hot nor cold, but you're lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth. Brother David, you've been sitting there listening to the three of us chat. I'd like to hear your thoughts on how we can increase personal zeal and maybe combine that with how we can increase the zeal that our brethren feel.

Alright, I appreciate the thoughts of the brethren. I think to me, the way I'd like to frame this is zeal is the energy or the driving force of the machine. It's what propels forward my new creature, and in order to do this, what energy? When I look at this, I find the largest element that keeps on driving my new creature is my interaction with the brethren.

And so it could be in ecclesia comments where everyone's comments help me to grow. It could be listening to discourses, it could be listening to testimonies where I enter in with the brethren and they inspire me in their faith and their example to keep on moving. Especially when brethren have situations that are very dire sometimes and they show extreme. So it's that energy that I get from that that would propel me maybe going through something that's even less dire. What also has helped me propel me forward is my wider interaction with the brethren.

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I find not only just local brethren, but join the Brethren, for example, in Ukraine to see their energy and their perspectives on things and their faith in a real hard situation that I can't fully imagine or sympathize with, living in a war torn country and exhibiting the faith in the Lord that they do under those circumstances, and then I would say in our same cultural confines we have our cross Canada studies and I get to see and interact with brethren right across the whole country, and to me, to have that same cultural outlook and desire to serve the Lord in a wider aspect. So even when the meeting stops, I have these Images of our brethren in my mind, which keeps me going forward. Now, the second part of your question was, how do we inspire this in our brethren?

And I would say that we're all aware of the concept. Every joint supplies to the body, and so I think we all have a role, we all have a part, and I think Romans 12 talks about this. God has given gifts, and the members are different and the gifts are different, but they all work together.

We're members one of another.

It's by our presence, by our participation, and I'm going to say it's an educated participation, and what I mean by that is that in interactions one with another, we don't participate for ourselves as much as we are participating to edify one another, and I think we all understand that there's a big difference between the two. So we're not serving ourselves in the meeting.

We're saying we're coming up. We're showing up and saying, what can I do to serve the interests of the brethren? And sometimes that means that we restrain our comments, sacrifice our preferences because we're thinking of the wider aspect. The question is, how do we nurture zeal in our brethren? Sometimes it's by not saying certain things, perhaps that may cause the brethren to react in a way that's untoward.

So I'll stop there. I think those are some of the ways that provide energy to the machine by interaction with the brethren. Something as simple as this can give energy to the brethren, and that is show up. I appreciate the comment from Brother David very much. Show up.

And I'm not trying to rebuke any of you, but I will notice something, a phenomenon that I've seen with our zoom meetings. Brethren sign on, and we're delighted to have them, but they don't show themselves. All I see is their name. I try not to do that. You know, ov.

Albert, I'd rather they see my face, and there's just something about at least seeing faces in a zoom meeting that is affirming. Now, we're all familiar with Hebrews 10, 25 and 26. Forsake not the gathering of yourselves together, as is the habit of some, and all the more so as you see the day approaching and whether you think that day is the fulfillment of the promise of the kingdom or your time on earth is short. Participate.

And I will say also I think one of the greatest sources of zeal and excitement, maybe I can use the word excitement instead of zealous. How to be excited about the truth is to live it daily and I want to read from Romans 5. It's just so powerful and I love this. If you'll follow with me here. Romans chapter 5.

And the apostle is saying that we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and then. I like the next phrase, and not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope will not leave us disappointed because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us.

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We don't believe in fanciful dreams. We believe in an eventual reality. Our hope will not leave us disappointed. It's going to happen, and by faith we need to continually grasp that concept.

But let's move on. Regarding spiritual fervor, Romans 12:11. Keep your spiritual fervor. It's related to your spiritual excess, excitement or zeal. Reverend Comey, can you give us a working definition of spiritual fervor?

Well, the word itself, the word fervor has this sense of boiling, right? When something's fervent, it's got some heat to it, and how many of you remember when you first came into the troops, right? What happened to you? I had fervor, probably too much.

I remember going nuts when it came to my realization that the Bible was correlated with history in the book of Daniel, and I think I lost my mind because I drove to go tell my then girlfriend and, and ultimately wife about it because I could not wait to tell somebody else about it, and I, you know, when I think back again, I could have waited. I could have waited days and later on we'll see each other.

But I. I needed to share that you would not believe this because it always. It was almost as if nobody else knows this. I just came into something that is so profound that it was boiling over in me, and I think that's the sense of fervor. Now, you don't want.

I mean, this is no suggestion that we just go crazy and jumping on everybody that we see and telling them about this. But it's really the realization that we have once we get. Paul talks about this in Romans 10, where he talks about the Jews having this zeal that's not according to knowledge. In Romans 10, 2 says, For I bear them witness that they have a zeal of God that is not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

When we have come to taste of what God's righteousness and God's love is, when we've come to appreciate what the kingdom is about, it's very hard to repress it if you truly come to that appreciation, and that's what boils over. That's where the fervor in the Spirit is, because it enlivens you and makes you want to know more about it, makes you want to live by it, and the more you live by it, the more energized you get as a result. I'm going to stop there and see if there are other additions.

For me, I like to imagine or dream conscious dreaming about the kingdom. Of course, my career was focused in health care for nearly 50 years, and the thought of finding someone who had a severe disability or a severe illness and the church, the Christ being able to reach out and touch that one person, heal them, make them whole. You know, Isaiah 35, the lame shall leap as a hart. The ears of the deaf will be opened and the dumb will sing.

So that happens in one instance, and think of the happiness, the joy there. But it's going to happen billions of times and there's going to be a whole lot of smart miles. Enjoy the yeah, if I can just throw in one more scripture that I think comes to mind in terms of fervor, because it really to be fervent about something requires you to have a deep sense of what it is so you can. So it bubbles over in you.

And this scripture stays with me. It's in Colossians 3:23. It says, Whatever you do, do your work hardening as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve, and this is so resonant because it

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takes a really deep understanding of what this means for us to then face each day with that commitment that what we are doing is in service of the Lord and then be able to live each day that way.

And at the end of the day where we don't need that to course correct because we want to do that every day, I think that's part of the fervency that you have in spirit. Thank you, Brother Arbor. I just wanted to connect a couple of the thoughts expressed. I appreciate the thought of boiling. When the Greeks were using the word for zeal, they meant to boil with heat and they were referring to boiling water.

And when you imagine the process, it has to start with a fire, and it takes work and fire management to bring that pot to boil and keeping that fire going to generate the boil. We see your boiling pot and it makes us want to boil water and keep up with you. That's that sharing in the body, and we do that until God says this age is over.

And then. I appreciate Brother David's thought. Us being joints in this body, we find our place, and, you know, whether we make cookies or whether we set up chairs, whatever it is that there is to do, we find that place. We encourage one another, we love one another.

We treat everyone equally without partiality, and by openly sharing our zeal and passion, we help one another keep the water, our fervor, boiling, and that's what we're looking to do. We need this fervor to overcome the powerful spirit of the world, and that's what you do for me and I hope I do for you.

I'll stop there. Oh, and thank you, brethren, for taking all my scriptures.

We know that we have passed from death unto life. For what reason? Because we love the brethren. So there's a real evidence right there. We love the brethren.

We do what we can for them. Love the comment about cookies. Chocolate chip? No. Raisins.

Walnuts, maybe.

Brother David, you look like you had a thought. I do, I do, and it's slightly different than some of the thoughts here, but it's related. This kind of ties into the thought of Brother Comey's scripture in Romans 10:2, the zeal not according to knowledge. So to me, when I look at the Scripture, it says, never be lacking in zeal.

But. So this is a clause that's a difference that Paul's making. Keep your spiritual fervor, and to me, the word spiritual is what I understand Paul to be talking about. Zeal, I think, is a big general picture.

There's energy driving the machine that moves us and propels us forward. But I think the way I read this, Paul is now narrowing the concept.

What drives you forward has to be for a spiritual purpose and according to spiritual principles. So we're not here talking about natural character traits and being an extrovert and bubbling over and all of these things, which, as the brethren mentioned, the word certainly implies. I think to me that this is a reminder that our zeal has to be educated and purposeful from a spiritual perspective, and I have an example if we want to get to that, from the early church. Okay.

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The Corinthian brethren had a great zeal for the gifts of the Spirit, and they were very blessed because many of them had them and they used them Very often, and they had, as we know, gifts of prophecy, gifts of healing, gifts of interpretation, gifts of tongues, all these things, and at first, the Corinthian brethren didn't know how to handle them, and in their enthusiasm and excitement, they were really not using them in an edifying way when they met together. Rather, I think that the zeal was disruptive and in some cases, counterproductive.

And so Paul, I think, counseled him to set some boundaries. So he says that if no one can interpret tongues, then it's best to refrain from, you know, refrain your zeal. If brethren had special gifts of prophecy or knowledge, Paul said that he should not just blurt them out and talk over one another. You know, he says one, one at a time, and he says if there was new interest in the meaning, be mindful of how these gifts would look to the new interest.

He counseled that instead of speaking in tongues, it would be more helpful to use prophecy to explain the Scriptures to those that were of new interest. Otherwise, I think some translations say that the brethren might look like they're out of their minds, you know, when someone come to the meeting. So to me, this example of Paul delineates the functional elements of how to channel zeal for a spiritual purpose and according to spiritual purposes. So I think he's narrowing the focus a little.

A lesson I have learned in the last couple of years. Wow, I'm so glad I've learned it now that I'm the age I am in the last couple of years. Is this when I have something to do and it's Monday? I don't think, you know, I'll do that on Friday. I've got more time on Friday.

And then Friday comes and I'm tired. It's the end of the week. I'll take care of it tomorrow. So if you know where that's going, you procrastinate, do it now. Do it now.

And it's a liberating feeling to take care of things right now. I'm fortunate to have a helpmate who encourages me in that direction. Why don't you call so and so and say this, this, and this? Or did you answer that email and thank you for the reminders, but do it now.

So I'm going to turn to you, Brother Arbor, with a difficult, maybe difficult task. Sometimes when I ask questions, people say, could you repeat the question? And I realize probably not. But the question that we're about to go with here, this is number two, two letter B, and I was talking earlier about being very clinical in our Questioning.

Here's the question. Delineate its functional elements. How does it manifest itself in Christian life? Okay, Brother Arbor, translate the question into plain English and give us comments on it, please. Regarding spirit, my apologies for sending folks that question regarding spiritual fervor.

How does it manifest or reveal itself in Christian life? I just have a few short points. I thought of Joshua, Joshua 24:15. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua's final plea to Israel.

Who will you serve? Simple question. You say? Hmm. I think at first Samuel 12:24, only reverence the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.

Ah, the heart again. Okay, and then how do we pull this off?

What really weighs on us, on some of us? Matthew 6:24. No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. So how does it reveal itself?

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You know, action is required on our part. Jesus was fervent in spirit. The fervency of his spirit for God and his arrangements consumed his life and they should consume our life, and I think we've kind of expressed that here, right? And it must be with us for whom we are trying to emulate Christ Jesus.

I think I'll stop there. I remember when Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers.

I remember when Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers, and what a spectacle that was, and do you remember what the disciples said? They remembered the scripture. The zeal of thy house has consumed me, so let zeal consume us.

We pray for our brethren. We pray for spiritual zeal. We pray that we might be found faithful. But how often have you prayed for joy?

And you don't have to raise your hand. I used to be a big hand raising type person, you know, everybody raised your hands if you prayed for joy recently. But then that kind of like divides the room out, and I like for us all to be on the same page. So I'm not a hand raising, question asking guy anymore.

Is that a hyphenated phrase? I don't know.

But joy is a fruit of the spirit and I was inspired by brother Benjamin Barton's article on that. You'll find it in the little blue book called Pilgrim Echoes, one of my favorites, and he talks about praying for this, that and the other thing, but not joy. Well, don't we want to be joyful in life? The Lord doesn't want us to go around being sad sacks and depressed.

He wants us to be joyful. So joy, as we learned in Galatians, chapter five, is a fruit of the spirit. Brother David, what is the relationship of hope and Christian joy?

Well, when I look at this Scripture, I once again look at the apostle. Paul is kind of narrowing the focus and he's putting boundaries on the joy. Joy is a type of gladness, and I think in this scripture, this type of gladness is in response to something. It's most often translated as rejoice.

And you read Romans 5 that, and I think you read the Scripture, rejoice in suffering. So it's in response to something that we have this inner gladness. In Philippians 1:18 is another example where Paul says, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

So Paul's rejoicing was in response to the preaching of Christ, and some were coming at it from different angles. But his response was, as Christians, Christ was being, and that created that gladness, that rejoicing within. To see that the relationship in this scripture, to answer your question, between joy and hope, is that our hope, which is our trust, our confidence in God, that he is dealing with us, that we are his, that we shall live by faith, is, I think, in response to experiences that he provides.

Whether it would be in joyful, true causing gladness because of joyful experiences or hard experiences. We know these are coming from God. We are responding to them perhaps in the right way, which gives us gladness apart. It gives us that inner joy that we can rejoice even in some of our sufferings. So I think this is defining a continual state of mind as we live in hope.

Our hope is to be with our Father, to continue the course as we respond to the shaping elements that he's given us, which causes us gladness and causes us to rejoice.

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I love the hymn. Am I getting the right title of this? The hymn all of the. Is that the One? And it tells a story.

And the story is someone who's new to the faith, and they said, all of self, none of thee, and then gradually we get to the last verse and, lord, at last your love is conquered. All of the none of self, and I have found that to be a source of joy.

Because when we're trying to hold back, we feel like, well, yeah, I've given my life to the Lord, but I'm sweeping this under the COVID here. I'm sweeping this under the rug so I can pull it out at an opportune moment.

Now my prayers have come to the point where I literally pray to the Lord. I do not want one single atom of my being to not be Totally yours, and then when you get to that point spiritually, it's very liberating because you're not serving two masters anymore.

Brother Comey, do you have any further thoughts on this issue? Well, I think I do, as a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, I do. I think the concept of joy is contextual. We have to look at it in the context in which we find it.

If things are going well, it could give me a really nice meal. I'll be joyful. That's easy. But then the Apostle James tells us to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials, and that creates a whole different context for joy.

And he's not the only one. I think Peter also talks about this and I and you took my scripture in Romans 5:2 on this, where you know it's not just that. For we are exceedingly joyful, and Peter uses that phrase in 1st Peter 4. It says, Beloved, do not verse 12.

Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you. But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing. In other words, if you truly are enduring sufferings, then your rejoicing is ramped up, too, because it talks about. I mean, the apostle in Hebrews, it talks about being chastised as an indication that we have a heavenly Father that cares about us, right? And so it talks about to the extent, to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing.

So that also. So there's an end to this. It's not just that. So that also, at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exultation, and when you look at the Greek words in there, it's almost like it's talking about a mega rejoicing, kind of a rejoicing on top of a rejoicing at the revealing of his glory.

But we only get to that mega exaltation or rejoicing because we have gone through sharing in the sufferings of Christ and rejoicing along the way, and our Lord was an example in this respect, where we're told that our lord in Hebrews 12 is sort of an example for us. Hebrews 12, starting with verses 1 and 2, says, Therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance. So that's that zeal that comes in our running. Let us run with endurance the race that's set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

And here is his example, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. I think brother David talked about, you know, our zeal, our fervor. All of these have to be informed. It can't just be blind fervor and blind zeal. It's informed by our understanding of the graces of God in our lives.

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It's informed by understanding of what is to come, what the kingdom is about, and I appreciated how you read the end of the 11th chapter of Romans that talks about the things that eyes have not seen. The apostle could not imagine what we are in, what's in store for us, such that it's so compelling that we would then be ready to share in the sufferings of Christ and be joyful in the process, and we consider it all joy and the things that come at us in the walk that we're in is because the Lord has permitted it, and how blessed we are that we could be counted worthy of those experiences.

I appreciate the direction the three of you have gone with that and come to maybe a summary statement that I didn't intend on my outline here, and that is that the joy comes from understanding the purpose of the sufferings that we experience.

And we don't say, I'm a doormat, oh, Lord, you want to give me this trial, fine, go ahead, beat me up. That's a defeatist attitude, and that's just what the adversary would like to see us develop. But if we realize that God is in command and that our times are in his hand, these things all have purpose, and they are for the development of us as spiritual creatures, soon to have exultant joy in the presence of the Lord. Thank you, brother Robert. Anything to add to that?

We have a joy unlike any other Christians or any other human beings on planet Earth in its simplest form. You believe that every human being that ever took a breath of life is going to be resurrected from the grave. They're going to hear the voice of Jesus when he says, John Smith, come forth, and John wakes up surrounded by his family who was resurrected before him. You want to talk about joy?

You want. You want to talk about our hope, man in its simplest form? That's where we're standing. That's what we look at. That's what makes my pot boil.

We have a universal hope and salvation for all mankind that ever took A breath of life. Lovely. Brother David, a final word on this issue. Just that I appreciate your thought about the purpose in our experiences and the way I kind of framed it as a responsive gladness to God's grace. God's grace may permit certain experiences to come upon us, certain sufferings.

And I think the purpose, one of the purposes, is to continually realign our perspectives with God's perspectives. I think that's what he's always wanting us, our experiences. If we can learn that, can see things and develop accordingly, then I think that that engenders a deeper desire for his grace, because we are happy that we are seeing at least what we can see of God's perspective, and we say, yes, Lord, I want to continue. I want to grow.

Let's go to the next experience, you know, if you will.

These disciplines are not punishments. They are actually manifestations of God's love. You know, it's often said or not said, it's noted that many young people who tend to act out in life and do things that are very harmful to them or to their families or to their neighbors because they don't have guidance at home, and the supposition is that they're begging for attention. Well, if they got the discipline from their father or their mother that they really needed, maybe they would not have turned out that way.

Just a thought on Hebrews, chapter 12. Okay, number four. Brothers and brother Arbor, we're going to start with you. This isn't so much a question as an invitation. I thought, well, let's see, I have Arbor Pernetz, Komi Ojasi and David Horojczyk, great experienced Christian.

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So I can ask them to share their personal testimonies with us. Question 4 reads, Share your insights from personal experience that exemplify the exercise of patience in affliction. Share your observations from your personal experiences that were a failure, perhaps, regarding the exercise of patience and what you did to correct or fight against the sources of failure. So identify patients in affliction. Perhaps a time that you failed in your mission and what you did to correct that.

Brother Arbor, we'll start with you. My comment is 45 minutes long, so I defer my comment. Talk fast. However. However, last Sunday, I was working with Sister Kim Allen of Our Ecclesia, and most of you know that she has ALS and is facing an impossible life.

She will not be with us much longer. She's a wonderful, brave soul. I'd like you to read to you, if it's okay, Obi, instead of me, I'd like you to read a couple of her paragraphs. Is that okay? Please.

From Sister Kim. Patience has never been my strong suit, but I'm working on it, and if I believe that the Lord is working in my life, then who am I to question the timing of things? When I am impatient, I might as well be saying, I know better than God when things should happen or not. Sound familiar?

For the past two years, Sister Kim has been dealing with symptoms of a failing body. But for approximately one year prior, she was dealing with a severe case of COVID followed by a year of variety of infections and extreme fatigue. I sent up many prayers for answers over that year as to what was ailing me, and then I began to to experience more concerning symptoms that affected my balance and physical strength and voice. She lost her voice.

I felt as if my body was deteriorating as I was then sent from one doctor to another with no answers in sight. Finally, I changed my supplications to my heavenly father, and instead of asking for answers to what my ailment was, I had focused on asking for strength. Strength and perseverance and courage. It would still be some time before I was diagnosed, but by that time, I was.

I had been adequately strengthened to handle the answer. Sometimes we have to be able to live without answers, and that in itself strengthens us. God knows what we need. I was impatient initially, Kim says, But over the course of the three years, I learned patience, and when I asked for the right things, God provided in God's two time, I learned the diagnosis, and God prepared me to handle it with strength that only he can provide.

And I am grateful, powerful.

Brother Comey.

You know, I was thinking about the second one first, and where this is where there's been failures. Well, that's like every day.

And I was trying to figure out which one do we talk about? Because it's every day that I run out of patience. There's always something that you need to be waiting for, and you just can't wait, and you exercise your lack of patience only to be humbled by the fact that if you had waited on the Lord and it might have turned out different. But the example that I have that is profound, that's affected me along over the years is at work where I had an employee that was not doing their work.

And so you call them out, and as a result, they started to file all kinds of things, and if you're in the public sector, it's so easy to file allegations against people, and I've been accused of all kinds of things, and I was on A trip. We went to a convention, actually, in Nigeria.

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And I came back and my phone turned on, and I got a message from my boss that said, whenever you get this message, call me and come in the office. That was wild.

The experience lasted almost two years. It was so stressful. I had hives, and all I was waiting for. I mean, I broke out in hives. I carried a bottle of Benadryl with me everywhere that I was chugging.

And I broke out in hives every single day dealing with this, and I was just praying. I got to a point where I finally decided I had to pray, and I was praying that this would be taken from me, and one afternoon, this employee came in and said, I found a job somewhere else.

I'm leaving, and my last day is tomorrow, and I stood there and I wanted to hug her, and I knew that was going to be bad, so I didn't, and that was how it was resolved, and I.

You know, I didn't give a whole lot of detail in the story, but it was a long experience at work that I got to the point of wanting to quit and go find something else to do to be removed from this person.

And I think the Lord was teaching patience, I mean, absolutely was teaching patients that in his time, things would change, and it changed the entire mood of the workplace, and I think if I think back, it's helped me as a supervisor over time in managing people, understanding that we are all imperfect in so many different ways. Beautiful. Thank you for that example, Brother David.

I also had an experience at work that lasted for years, and I think is probably in the same category as Brother Comey's in terms of the stress that it caused. I'm not going to go into details. I'm just going to say that in analyzing this experience as Christians, I think our first thought is, the Lord's will be done. Amen. That's the first thought.

But I found that there was a difference between. Between a mental acknowledgement of that and a heart reliance on that, and so there were some days that I would get to work and feel the Lord's strength. Lord's will be done. The Lord's behind me.

And there were other days that I would get to work, and for whatever reason, I was still. Hear me. I was filled with foreboding, with anxiety, and I think it was in those days I had to struggle in the Lord's. My trust in the Lord's overruling.

And I think, to me, the overall lesson is that the Lord is looking for that struggle of faith. In affliction, it's a period of time. Of course, It just depends how we slept that night, you know, how we meet the day. I think he wants to see us actively putting our faith in him. He is pleased to see us reset and reset and reset.

In other words, he doesn't necessarily expect one, and I think this is a thought patient. In affliction, the Lord wants to see our struggle for faith, and I think in that struggle, we are demonstrating our faith.

Sister Janet and I had an extremely difficult experience that lasted about 13 years.

And in the most dire moments of that experience, we would pray. Lord, help us to endure.

Pray again the next day. Lord, help us to endure. Help us to endure, and if you've heard me mention this experience before, you know where this is going. The thing that created the enormous change in the dynamic was one day as we were praying, we didn't say, lord, help us to endure.

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We said, lord, help us to overcome, and from that moment, the change in our attitude, the acceptance of the Lord's providence, fell into place beautifully. Help us to overcome. Prayer is useful. I say prayer is one of our superpowers as Christians.

I don't mean that in a disrespectful or sacrilegious way, but if we were superheroes and we had this belt of things, these utility belts for our superpowers, I think one of the most useful in that utility belt would be our access to prayer with God, and we think of the Scripture in James. The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man or woman avails much. So, brothers, a quick comment. Keep it under 44 seconds on prayer.

Whatever aspect of prayer you would like to mention, Brother Comey. Well, what comes to mind real quickly is Philippians 4:6, which says, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. The reason I like that scripture is it sort of fleshes out the concept of prayer. It's not just a petition, but it's also being able to find a way to be thankful in the process of asking for a petition and having all of that come together in everything we do. When I was going through my experience, I found myself later on being able to come in the office, and the first thing I did was to pray.

And that just brings some calm. 40 seconds. Well done, Brother Arbor.

Our theme from the NIV says faithful in prayer. The original translation is instant in prayer. That's a little different. If we follow this admonition, our minds and hearts are cleared Ready to be instant in communion with God. So we prepare ourselves to be in a state of readiness, and we come back to the heat from our zeal keeps us alert to the details around us.

And we can go instant in prayer.

If we intend on being part of the church, where are we going to go for our instruction? Will we listen to the Messiah? Will we receive that instruction? Today our prayer is, this is what's going around me, Lord, I'm consulting you for advice, and I will listen to your reply. I will look for your response, and I will obey and I will be obedient.

44 seconds, Brother David. Actually, I think 42 seconds. 43 seconds. So you get 47 seconds. Okay.

Just to make it short, I think an element that has of being faithful, prayer, it has to be done regularly, and so at night, you pray. In the morning, you pray. Before meals, you pray. Before meetings, you pray.

Whatever we do, I think to me that implies being faithful in prayer, and I think we all understand that our Lord knows our thoughts and what we need of even before we ask. But he wants us to articulate those thoughts, and I think that's beneficial for us, us.

Amen. A definition of prayer that I've appreciated is that prayer is practicing the presence of God. Appreciate the comment that he knows our thoughts before a word even comes out of our mouth. He knows what it's going to be. But it is beneficial to us to express these things, to impress them on our minds and give a sense of clarity.

Summary thought.

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Okay, Comey. Well, I think a quick summary thought is in this scripture that the class gave us. There are six sort of six requests there, if you count all of them, and there are not six distinct virtues that we need to work for. It seems to me it's a cycle of virtues that sort of lead into each other, that sort of builds us up as Christians, so it's one that gets the other, and it grows from there.

And there's that cycle that keeps going. Brother Robert, a very general comment. I don't know about you, brethren, but at times it gets difficult for me as I see the world in the state it's in. Of course, like you, I have strong faith. We know the end.

We know that the next beginning of the lovely kingdom, and all I can say is, stick with the battle. We can all do this. There's nowhere else to go. It's right here with your brethren.

We're all striving to help one another for the completion of the one body.

And we won't pass from death unto life unless we show our love for one another. So we ask ourselves, what do you want? You want the completion of that church? Because that's what God wants.

And with that, this discussion has come to a conclusion, but not an end. Right? So we carry forward these ideas, instituting them in our Christian life, and just enjoy the blessing of being one of the Lord's people.