

**weep with them that weep."** If we try to obey this verse out of duty, we will probably struggle with our attitudes. As we have already noted, bad attitudes are common when others are rejoicing, and we are not, or others are weeping when we want them to get on with life.

- 2) Christian love will motivate us to rejoice with rejoicing ones, and weep with weeping ones.
  - a) Back in Romans 12:9, we learned that love is the sacrificial giving of ourselves to meet the needs of another, expecting nothing in return. Love is primarily an action rather than a feeling. Our love must be sincere, not hypocritical. It must hate evil and cleave to good. **Love gives of self to meet needs of others.**
  - b) In Romans 12:10, Paul addressed family love and brotherly love and applied them both to our Christian family. We are to put the needs of others ahead of ourselves. Treat them as dear brothers or sisters.
  - c) If we have these kinds of genuine love, they will motivate us to rejoice sincerely with others who rejoice and to weep tenderly with those who weep.
  - d) Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. We must depend on Him to help us love with Christian empathy.

**Conclusion:** When we are on the **receiving end**, we like it when friends rejoice with us when we are rejoicing. We also appreciate it when friends seek to understand our hurts and take time to cry and pray with us.

Unfortunately, when we are on the **giving end**, it takes work to fulfil these duties properly. I challenge you this morning to ask God to give you a good attitude toward those who rejoice, and to give you greater compassion and empathy so that you can weep with those who weep. **Empathising with others is the Christian way to live.**

Both of these duties are Christian duties. If you do not yet asked Christ to forgive your sin and save you from hell, you are not yet a Christian. I would be happy to show you from the Bible how you can do that if you will speak to me about it.

**Song:** Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord - 337

# Christian Empathy

*25 September 2022 AM – Romans 12:15 – Rom2022 – Scott Childs*

**Introduction:** Most of us can remember a time as a child when we got hurt and Mum came to our rescue with tender empathy. Her hug and loving kiss could do wonders. Similarly, God calls every Christian to show Christian empathy toward those who rejoice or weep.

**Transition:** Read Romans 12:15. This text gives us two duties that we must put into practice.

## 1. First, I want to describe these duties

### a. God tells us to rejoice with rejoicing ones.

- 1) To **rejoice** is to be glad, cheerful, happy or delighted.
- 2) God is not encouraging us to rejoice in anything that is sinful or evil. That would be against His character. **For example, we ought not to rejoice if our neighbour wins the lottery, because gambling is sinful. Gambling is motivated by greed and covetousness, the root of all evil (1Ti 6:10; Pr 28:20; Pr 11:13; Pr 28:22). God wants us to labour for our income (Pr 12:11; Eph 4:28).**
- 3) However, joy is an exciting emotion. When good things cause people to rejoice, we ought to rejoice with them, especially if the person is a Christian.

### b. God tells us to weep with weeping ones.

- 1) To **weep** is to sob, wail, lament or cry.
- 2) We weep because of pain or grief. God created us with the ability to weep to help us overcome the agony of pain or grief. God does not reserve weeping for babies, children, women and weaklings. It is not unmanly for men to cry when we feel pain or grief.
- 3) Here, the Lord instructs each of us to weep with others who are suffering.
- 4) We would all rather rejoice than cry, but both have their place, and we should not run from either. The world's motto is "**Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone.**" But that is not true of the believer. We are to enter into the joys and sorrows of other

## 2. Now let us examine these duties.

### a. These duties call for right attitudes

- 1) The idea of rejoicing with those who rejoice finds **resistance in our sinful nature.**
  - a) If a friend received a large bonus from work, we ought to rejoice with him. However, we may be tempted to jealousy or even resentment that we did not get such a bonus.
  - b) It could spark a covetous wish that we had more. Covetousness is sinful (Mr 7:22; Ro 1:29; Eph 5:3). In Colossians 3:5, God calls covetousness idolatry because it places higher value on **things** than on God.
  - c) Selfishness may keep us from genuinely rejoicing with our friend. Selfishness puts "Me first".
  - d) Such blessings cause some people to become revengeful, like hoping that their friend may lose his bonus. God does not take that lightly. (Proverbs 17:5) **"... he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished."**
- 2) God wants our attitude of rejoicing to be sincere and selfless. Writing to Timothy about contentment, the Apostle Paul said, (1 Timothy 6:6-8) **"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."**
- 3) When someone is weeping, our attitude ought NOT to be toughen up, dry the tears, and get on with life. Instead, God calls us to weep sincerely with the weeping.

### b. These duties call for empathy

- 1) Empathy is understanding and entering into another's feelings.
- 2) If that person is rejoicing, feel the excitement he feels and share his delight. If we can keep our attitude right, rejoicing with an excited friend can be very enjoyable.
- 3) However, if that person is weeping, it takes more effort to

feel his pain and sorrow and to take the time to weep with him. We must enter into his feelings. Seek to feel the hurt, pain, or loss that he is feeling. Put yourself in his shoes. We must ask, **"How would I be feeling if I were the one enduring the pain?"**

- 4) Note how Paul commended the Philippian believers. (Philippians 4:14) **"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction."** The words "communicate with" come from one Greek word meaning to share with another. They were empathising with his tribulations.
- 5) Many people are weeping on the inside, but trying to hide it on the outside. **Rebellious teens** are hurting inside. **Mistreated wives** are crying inside. **Discouraged fathers** and husbands are weeping internally. **Parents of wayward children** endure internal pain. **Lonely widows** are aching inside. Emotional pain stabs both genders, young and old. Emotional hurts can be as painful as physical hurts, and often take longer to heal. We may weep with those weeping, simply by showing that we truly care.
- 6) Empathy and compassion share common ground. Many times during His ministry, Jesus had compassion on hurting people. Being God, He had perfect empathy. (Hebrews 4:15) **"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."** (Leaving out the lightened words makes the statement positive). He thoroughly understands our trials, pain and sorrows.
- 7) Life is busy, and we have sufficient problems of our own, but I believe that you and I could show more empathy for those who are weeping if we worked harder to understand how they are feeling. (Philippians 2:4) **"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."** This takes time and genuine compassion.

### c. These duties call for Christian love

- 1) (Romans 12:15) **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and**