

One afternoon, a man went to his doctor and told him that he hasn't been feeling well lately. The doctor examined the man, left the room, and **came back with three different bottles of pills.**

The doctor said, "Take the green pill with a big glass of water when you wake up. Take the blue pill with a big glass of water after you eat lunch. Then just before going to bed, take the red pill with another big glass of water." Startled to be put on so much medicine, the man stammered, "Jiminy Doc, what's my problem?" **The doctor replied, "You're not drinking enough water."**

Currently it seems, that every time I go to the doctor, he tries to give me a new prescription for something else. Recently, I was looking at the last prescription I was given and I couldn't make heads or tails out of it but the pharmacist knew exactly what it was.. I think pharmacists must take a special class in cryptography or they have a magic decoder ring or something that deciphers these prescriptions. **I've got bad handwriting but not like my doctor.**

I heard that a local doctor wrote out one prescription that was so hard to read that his one patient used it for two years as a written pass to get into Spartan Stadium. Also, it came in handy as a letter from his employer to the cashier to increase his salary. And to top it off, his daughter played it on the piano and won a scholarship to MSU's music school.

The reason for all the doctor jokes and prescription jokes is that today's passage of scripture dovetails the passage from last week dealing with being a Living Sacrifice. Paul said as *"Living Sacrifices, we're call to live a life "holy and acceptable to God."*

Well, this week is the prescription on how to do that. If we were talking about cooking, this would be the recipe. If we were talking about building, this would be the blueprints. But since we're talking about the Great Physician, it's our prescription for Holiness; our prescription for living a life "holy and acceptable to God." **Let's look at the passage from Romans 12:9-21**

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' ²⁰No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

You can see why I said it was like a prescription. **There's so much here that any one of these 13 verses could be the basis for A SPECIAL MESSAGE in and of itself. But there are a few I'd like to lift up today.**

A Prescription is usually given in response to some need or for the prevention of something. *In our case, this Prescription is given to remind us how to live like Christ.* How to live so that our very lives bring honor and glory to the Son of God who gave His life on the cross so that we might have forgiveness and know the promise of life eternal.

Here Paul tells us to *"Rejoice in Hope."*

However, to do that, we need to remember where that HOPE comes from. It is born of our relationship with God through Christ which reminds us over and over again, that no matter what we might have done in life, God continues to love us, unconditionally. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God proves God's love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us."*

A woman who was dying of AIDS asked a minister to visit her. Her emotional pain was as real as her physical pain. Everything seemed hopeless. *"I'm lost," she said, "I've ruined my life and every life around me. I'm headed straight for the hot place. There's no HOPE for me."*

The minister saw a framed picture of a pretty girl on the dresser and asked, "Who is that?" The woman immediately brightened, *"She's my daughter, the one beautiful thing in my life."*

"Would you help her if she was in trouble," asked the minister, "no matter how many mistakes she'd made? Would you forgive her if she asked you to? Would you still love her, no matter what?"

"Of course, I would," the woman exclaimed. "Why would you even ask a question like that?" The minister explained, *"Because I want you to understand that God has a picture of you on His dresser, too."*

Friends we have reason to Rejoice in Hope. And the reason is our salvation through our faith in the grace and love of God. *That is why, Paul insists, we Rejoice in Hope.*

But while we "Rejoice in Hope, we are also to... SERVE the Lord. There's really only one way in which we can adequately respond to all that God has done for us and continues to do for us through Christ. Someone once said: *"A parent's love isn't to be paid back; it can only be PASSED ON."* And it's the same with our salvation. It can't be paid back. But out of response to God's Grace and Forgiveness, we can honor God and serve the Lord in such a way that we pass it on. **Or as one movie title put it "Pay It Forward."**

In the movie **Pay It Forward**, Trevor McKinney, an eleven-year-old, lives in Las Vegas with his working-class mother, Arlene, who is a recovering alcoholic. She works hard at two jobs to support her son but feels that it is a losing battle. Trevor is a latch-key kid who often has to take care of himself.

This seventh-grader's spirit is lifted on the first day of school when Eugene Simonet, his new social studies teacher, gives the class an extra credit assignment: *"Think of an idea to change our world and put it into action."* Whereas the rest of the class has trouble looking past the teacher's badly scarred face, Trevor realizes that he now has been given a moral adventure.

The energetic and idealistic boy decides he will do a good deed for three people, something they can't do for themselves, and then will ask each one of them to "pay it forward" by doing similarly difficult big favors for three others. Trevor begins by helping out a homeless man (James Caviezel), a heroin addict. He gives him lodging for a night, a chance to take a shower, and some money so the fellow can get it together and look for a job.

Mom is unaware of the arrangement until she awakens one evening to find the homeless man working on her broken-down pickup truck. Holding the man at gunpoint she tells him to explain himself. To show he's telling the truth, he starts the truck and tells her about Trevor's kindness. He says, "Someone comes along like your son and gives me a leg up, I'll take it. I can't mess up again, or I'll be dead. *I'm just paying it forward.*" Quizzically, Trevor's mom asks, *"What's paying it forward."*

The next day Trevor explains to his class his amazing plan of *"Paying it Forward."* His teacher and classmates are enthralled. To explain, he draws a circle and explains, "That's me." Underneath it he draws three other circles and explains, "That's three other people. I'm going to help them, but it has to be something really big, something they can't do for themselves. So, I do it for them, and they do it for three people. That's nine people. And 9 lives turn into 27."

As the movie continues, "Paying It Forward" changes the lives of the rich, the poor, the homeless and a prisoner. And it fulfills this whole idea of the prescription we're talking about because, while serving others, we serve the Lord.

YOU SEE, Part of how we serve the Lord is found in verse 13, *"Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers."*

In our circumstances we could interpret this to mean, contribute so the church can pay the light bill, salaries, buy curriculum and continue reach out to others through evangelism.

The apostle John writes, *"We love because Christ first loved us."* And the same could be said for giving and for evangelism. We give to God through the church because of the life, hope, faith and forgiveness of Christ. We share the Good News of Jesus with others because it was first shared with us.

None of it begins with us. It all begins with God. We don't tithe because we have to. We tithe because God is first and we want to remind ourselves that God comes first.

Is your wallet baptized? On the wall of President Lyndon Johnson's White House office hung a framed letter written by General Sam Houston to Johnson's great-grandfather Baines more than a hundred years earlier. Sam Houston's signature makes the letter valuable, but the story behind it is much more significant. Baines was the man who had led Sam Houston to Christ. Houston was a changed man, no longer coarse and belligerent, but peaceful and content.

The day came for Sam Houston to be baptized, an absolutely incredible event in the eyes of those who knew his previous lifestyle and attitude. After his baptism Houston stated he would like to pay half the local minister's salary. When someone asked him why, his simple response was, *"My pocketbook was baptized too."*

Paul stresses our need to "Rejoice in the Lord" which leads to "Serving Him Also—which means we should CONTRIBUTE TO ALL THAT WE CAN.

Finally, Paul says something that I believe is quite profound. He says, LIVE PEACEABLY. Look at verse 18: *"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*

At the beginning of his ministry, people flocked to him—that is Pat Robertson. They listened carefully and joyfully. They thought he represented Christ, but then his ways changed, **then he needs to be like Christ.** So, instead of loving him they pulled away, and began to JUDGE him, they did not trust him, they felt betrayed. People hear his kind of mean-spirited non-Christ-like garbage and judge ALL WHO CHOSE WHO WERE FOLLOWING HIM.

Jesus didn't teach us to love our enemies for their good. He taught us to love our enemies for our own good, to keep us from becoming the ENEMY OF OTHERS. *"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*
LIVE PEACEABLY.

Rejoice in hope, serve the Lord, contribute, live peaceably – These are just four of the ingredients of this **PRESCRIPTION FOR HOLINESS** given to us by Paul so we can become **LIVING SACRIFICES.**

Michael Diduit tells us that, in St. Martin's Church in Basel, Switzerland, stands a statue of Martin of Tours, a Roman soldier who had come to faith in Christ. It is said that a beggar approached Martin on a winter day, but Martin had no money, so he took off his own coat, tore it in half, and gave half to the beggar. In a dream that night, Martin saw Jesus wearing half of a soldier's coat. The Lord was asked by an angel why he was wearing such a thing, to which Jesus replied, *"My servant Martin gave it to me."*

HAVE YOU SEEN THE DOCTOR LATELY? If you've been following our Faithful for Forty suggestions, then you've spent time in the doctor's presence. If you haven't, it's not too late to start. Either way, today you've been given a *"Prescription for Holiness."* **A Prescription to become a Living Sacrifice.** This one's easy to read.

Rejoice in Hope, Serve the Lord, Contribute, live Peaceably.

If you Live this Prescription --YOU WILL BE ...a Living Sacrifice. Amen.