

“Sincere Love”
Romans 12:9-10
(Preached at Trinity, January 9, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The first two verses of **Chapter 12** establish the pattern for Christian living. **Verse 1** declares that we must present our bodies to Christ as a living sacrifice of submission and obedience. And then **Verse 2** describes the necessity of having our minds continually renewed and transformed so that we might be able to properly discern God's good and perfect and acceptable will.
2. After these two verses Paul turns his attention to the local church. He speaks of the necessity of each member properly assessing himself in humility. Then he begins to describe the great diversity in the church. God has gifted each member distinctly for their particular ministry within the body of Christ so that the entire church might benefit.
3. These spiritual gifts are given to every believer but there is great diversity as to the distribution of the gifts. One Christian may not possess the same gifts as another Christian. In **Verses 9-13** Paul sets forth virtues possessed by every believer. He begins with love followed by virtues that flow out of love. These virtues are not to be viewed as belonging to a few select Christians but virtues that should be seen in all who call themselves Christians.
The virtue of brotherly love – of caring for our brothers and sisters – **Verses 10, 13**
The virtue of zeal in service – **Verse 11**;
The virtue of joy – **Verse 12**;
The virtue of perseverance in suffering – **Verse 12**;
The virtue of prayer – **Verse 12**
The virtue of mercy towards our enemies – **Verses 14-21**
4. He begins with the most important – the virtue of love.
This subject is uniquely connected to the topic of spiritual gifts. In **1 Corinthians** Paul spends two entire chapters on the topic of spiritual gifts. Sandwiched between these two chapters is a chapter he devotes to the subject of love.
5. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they should desire the greatest gifts but then he tells them,
1 Corinthians 12:31 – “And I show you a still more excellent way.”
Love is essential. Love is supreme.
6. The problem with the Corinthian church was not a lack of giftedness. They were abounding with spiritual gifts.
 - A. Their problem was they had become proud and arrogant with their gifts. Their abundance of blessings became the source of their pride. Everyone was boasting of their gifts and using them to their own glory.

- B. This is the problem with our giftedness. It can cause our sinful pride to rise up. This is the reason pastors must not be new to the faith.
1 Timothy 3:6 – “not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”
- C. This is Paul’s warning in **Verse 3**
Romans 12:3 – “I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”
- D. The problem with the Corinthian church was in their pride they had lost Christ. By falling in love with their gifts they had lost their love for Christ. This is why Paul pointed them to necessity of love. And now in **Romans 12** he once again links the spiritual gifts to love.
7. Without love your greatest labors in the Kingdom of Christ are futile. The nature of evangelical obedience is the issue of your heart. Every Christian act must be motivated by our love for Christ.
 Paul tells us that without love our greatest religious activity is vain. This was his point in 1 Cor. 13:
1 Corinthians 13:1-3 – “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”
8. In other words, you may have the gift of giving to such a degree that you give *everything* away, and yet if it is not mingled with love it is nothing.
9. Love is the rudder that must guide the use of our gifts. It is our chief duty. It is the sum of the Law. Love is the anchor that keeps us firmly planted in the faith
Ephesians 3:17 – “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”
 “rooted” - ῥιζόω – firmly rooted, fixed, established
 “grounded” - θεμελιόω - to lay the foundation, to establish
10. Our love for Christ, His people, and His church must serve as our motivation for using our gifts.
 As Christians we are not identified by our spiritual giftedness but by our love,
John 13:35 - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
11. Paul says our love for one another must be without “hypocrisy.” The word means our love must be genuine, sincere. This implies we can know genuine love from the love of hypocrisy.
- I. The first task before us is to define love
- A. This is one of the most difficult of all tasks
1. The word Paul uses here is ἀγάπη
 There are two primary Greek words that are translated love.
 One is ἀγάπη and the other is φιλέω.
 - a. They are distinct and yet they are often used interchangeably.

- b. James Renihan in his recent book, *True Love*, writes:
 “While *agape* is often used to express God’s love, it does not inherently carry the sense of sacrificial love. In some ways, it is similar in meaning to *philia*. Scholars tell us that in about 400 BC, *agape* began to grow in prominence in the Greek language. *Philia*, among other things, was associated with kissing, while *agape* was not. They are not perfect synonyms, but there is significant overlap.”
 - c. Sometimes the Bible uses the two words in distinctly different ways. For example in **John 21** I think the distinction is significant:
John 21:16 - "Simon, *son* of John, do you love (ἀγαπάω) Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (φιλέω) You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep."
 - d. ἀγάπη often carries a higher form of love than φιλία
 - e. φιλία is translated “friendship” in **James 4:4** –
 “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?”
2. The mere use of the word ἀγάπη here doesn’t define it for us. Yet, Paul tells us that our love must be genuine love. This implies that we can contrast it with false or hypocritical love.
- B. While Paul doesn’t give us a strict definition here he most certainly tells us what love is. He defines true love by telling us what love does:
- 1. Love causes us to turn from evil.
 - 2. It creates in us humility and diligence in service to Christ.
 - 3. It causes us to live in joy and press on in perseverance.
 - 4. Love keeps us on our knees in prayer.
 - 5. It creates in us a deep concern for the wellbeing of our brethren.
 - 6. Love causes us to respond to our enemies with meekness and compassion.
 - 7. Paul does the same thing in **1 Cor. 13**. He defines love by describing what it does and what it does not do.
- II. The first thing Paul says here is genuine love is discriminating –
 “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”
- A. Textual examination
- 1. The words “abhor” and “cling” in **Verse 9** are participles. This means they are linked to the words, “Let love be without hypocrisy.”
 - 2. The sentence should be read as a unit:
 “love must be without hypocrisy abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good.”
 - 3. In other words, true, genuine, non-hypocritical love is a discriminating love. It hates what is evil and loves what is good.
- B. People often have difficulty reconciling the God of the OT and the NT
- 1. They see Jesus presented in the NT as loving and compassionate
 - 2. They see God in the OT as being vengeful and unloving

3. God is love but love isn't His only attribute. God is also infinitely holy which means He hates sin. God's love is perfectly consistent with His wrath. Hell is not a place for God to display His love but a place of absolute justice.
- C. Love doesn't embrace that which is sinful
1. Our love for Christ demands a hatred of sin
 2. Our love for our brethren sometimes demands speaking to them about their sin. In **Ephesians 4:15** we read: **but speaking the truth in love**"
 3. This demands both a love for our brother and a love for truth. Both are essential.
 4. It is possible to exercise church discipline and yet love the offender. In fact, we *must* love the offender.
- D. Paul says true love is a selfless love
- Romans 12:10 NAU** - "**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor**"
1. The reason the divorce rate is so high is because most people are self-centered. When they say, "I love you" what they really mean is, "I love me, and you satisfy me." In other words, "You satisfy me, you make me feel good, you fill my desires"
 2. God's people are of a completely different sort
Jesus once rebuked His disciples for their unchristian conduct.
Luke 9:51-55 – "When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, *and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;"*
 - a. Jesus rebuked them because they did not realize what was becoming and proper to their character.
 - b. They did not understand the nature of our Lord's Kingdom. His Kingdom is not a Kingdom of revenge, bitterness, and hatred but a kingdom of love, mercy, and compassion – gentleness, goodness, and kindness.
 - c. Peter would later describe the proper mind of a Christian
1 Peter 3:8-9 – "To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."
"brotherly" - φιλάδελφος – "loving your brother"

Conclusion:

1. So what is genuine love? It is a love that full of feeling that overflows into action. It is patient and kind. It is generous and giving. It is forgiving.
2. It is love that drives our service and obedience to Christ. It is all fueled by our love.
3. This is what must mark us. It defines us.
We must remember what manner of people we are.