

Pt 43 Romans 12:9-21 Proper Christian Living

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Romans 12:9-21

- 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.
- 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;
- 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;
- 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;
- 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
- 14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.
- 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.
- 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.
- 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.
- 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
- 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
- 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
- 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

This past Sunday we looked at verses 3-8 which discussed the gifts of grace that God bestows on every believer. We saw that these gifts were given to us in measure, which means every one of us has the exact amount of faith given to us to fulfill the gift and purpose which God has given us. We also saw that these gifts are to be used to glorify God and benefit the Church.

In this message we are going to look at the rest of the Chapter and see what the Bible says about proper Christian living.

9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Love is a powerful word and used in numerous ways. Just to name a few there's:

- Godly love
- Maternal love
- Affectionate love
- Amorous love
- Sexual love
- Devotional love
- Admirational love
- Brotherly love
- Benevolent love

Those are just a few types of love. But here in our text the word "love" is used in a way that means **benevolence or brotherly kindness**, as we are talking about Christian living.

Paul writes that our love is to be "without dissimulation." That's a word you don't hear every day. It means: "**with sincerity and without hypocrisy, self-centeredness, or guile.**"

This kind of love is not something you just say, it is something you do. There is action involved with this kind of love. The true test of real love is whether a person puts into action what rolls off their tongue. I'm afraid we have way too many Christians' going about these days paying lip service with no intentions of ever putting anything into action. Nothing grates me more than someone always saying, "love you" or "love you all," knowing full well they don't really. It's just become a habit for them to say that thinking it makes them seem sincere.

As a Pastor I can name off more than a few people over the years that have told me that they love me, yet their actions proved otherwise. In the last Church I pastored

there was a man had left the church several years before I was pastor there and when he found out I was going to become the pastor he told me straight to my face, "I love to hear you preach and I'm going to start coming back and we're going to see this church grow again. I love you." That man never one single time came to that church the entire 8-years I pastored there. There were several other people who did the same thing to me. Told me they loved me yet never put any action behind their words.

You are probably thinking I'm bitter – well, I might be slightly bitter over being lied to so much but what I'm trying to stress is that's the exact behavior Paul is warning against. It's a hypocritical love. The word **hypocrite** means "a stage actor or one who hides behind a mask."

Abhor that which is evil; The word "abhor" means "to hate and to turn away from." He is warning us to hate evil. The evil he is speaking of is in context with our text and would be hypocritical love and not loving our fellow man or brother in Christ. To not wish the worse on others.

Instead, we are to **cleave to that which is good.** The word "cleave" means "to glue together, to bond in unity." A Christian should desire to stick with that which is good. Good things should become engrained in us.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Kindly affectioned has the thought behind it as that of the love a parent has for a child. We should love our fellow Christian in the same way. We are, after all, related through Christ and are therefore in the same family.

in honour preferring one another; not only are we to be affectionate toward our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, but we are also to treat them with honor and respect and to be a leading example. That word "preferring" means **to lead by example**. So, we are not to wait on others to first treat us with love, affection, honor, and respect, but we are to be the first one to step out in brotherly love and act first.

I'm the world's worst whenever I'm around people that I don't know. I am naturally a shy person so if you put me in a room with a bunch of strangers, I will find a place in a corner somewhere that I can fade off into the background and just wait for things to end. Then I'll come home and tell my wife "**Those people were so unfriendly, no one even said a word to me.**" Of course, what is the answer? "**Who did you speak to?**" Well...

Of course, things are different in a Church setting. I really don't have much of a problem talking to Church folks but I'm still shy. But I won't be in Heaven! 😊

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

That word "slothful" means; "**lazy, inactive, unwilling to put forth effort.**" We don't have any Sloths in North America but in Central and South America there is an animal called Sloth. They are long-haired creatures that look similar to an Ant Eater. They spend their lives hanging on trees and slowly making their way through the Rainforest on all 4 limbs. You've probably seen them on television. They are known for their very slow movement.

Listen, anything worth doing is worth doing right and with enthusiasm. As Christians we are being watched 24/7, right or wrong, that's the way it is. If we are a bunch of lazy good-for-nothings, how does that reflect upon our Lord?

I think a Christian should be the hardest working person on the job. Sadly, I've witnessed a lot of so-called "Christians" be some of the laziest people on earth.

The Bible says we are to be "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." The word "fervent" means "a hot boil." Christians are to be like a hot boiling pot of water going about serving the Lord with enthusiasm whether in the workplace, on the town, or in the Church.

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Paul lists 5 examples of things we should serve in fervent spirit:

1. **Hope** – rejoice in the expectant return of the Lord Jesus.
2. **Tribulation** – patient in the trials that will become all Christians.
3. **Prayer** – continuing in prayer. The Bible tells us in **Acts 2:42** *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
4. **Necessity** – distributing to the saints. There should not be a single Church member in need; whether it be mental, physical, or spiritual. The Church should step-up with fervency to come to the aid of a fellow brother or sister in Christ.
5. **Hospitality** – given to it. We should be willing to be hospitable not only to fellow Christians but to all men. That is a mark of a Christian.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

I have to say, this is one of the most difficult things for us to do but it is the same teaching as the Lord Jesus as we see in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:44 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Have you ever noticed when something good happens to you and you tell someone and instead of being happy for you they turn it around and make it about them? "Oh, that's nothing, you should hear what happened to me!"

Likewise with weeping. Ever been in a horrible time in your life and someone comes along and tells you to suck it up or instead of sympathizing with you they want to tell you about some bad thing going on in their life?

Sadly, that is what the world has become – a bunch of self-centered, narcissistic jerks. There's no compassion anymore or sympathy.

As Christians we should put aside ourselves and come along beside those who are rejoicing or those who are hurting and recognize them. Which is what we see in the next verse:

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

All of this is speaking of pride, which is sinful. Our culture continually tries to make us think we are special and should be treated above everyone else. It's the me, myself, and I generation. This "self-love" mentality is nothing but a bunch of garbage. If we treated others with love and compassion, we would put our pride behind us and realize we are all an equal ground. It doesn't matter if you were born into wealth or poverty or if your skin is white or black. None of us chose to be born and therefore have nothing to do with our place in life.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

What's the first thing you think of whenever someone does something against you? If you are like me, it is REVENGE! That's our natural inclination but that is the Old man's way of thinking and not the New man. Again, it boils down to sinful pride. It is our pride that drives us to seek revenge and retaliation. We want to prove that we can get the better of someone and be seen as superior.

Notice it says in verse 18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you." We are to do everything we can to live peaceably with all men; however, it won't always be possible. Non-Christians and sinful Christians may not allow us to live peaceably. They may always try and instigate trouble and make it impossible.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

It is difficult for us not to want to avenge ourselves. Whether we like it or not, we are to allow justice and laws to take place for such cases. But, in the case of judgement, the Lord has the last say. Paul takes a quote from **Deuteronomy 32:35** *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.* If vengeance is to be dealt out, God will do it. We may not see it here on this earth but in the day of judgement, rest assured the Lord will repay and set everything right.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Again, Paul is quoting from the Old Testament here: **Proverbs 25:21-22** *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.* I will have to admit to you that that I am unclear on the exact meaning of this. You can consult numerous commentaries and get at least a dozen different opinions on it.

According to John MacArthur, the practice of an ancient Egyptian custom in which a person who wanted to show public contrition (*repentance*) carried a pan of burning coals on his head. The coals represented the burning pain of his shame and guilt.

Another explanation you will find out there is this: In Bible times an oriental needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, oriental fashion, back to his home. The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of getting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury.

Whatever the exact meaning is, I don't believe the Lord is describing literal burning coals to consume the person out of vengeance, because this act is an act of love and as our last verse implies, we would not be delving out something evil upon someone: **21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

I guess what it boils down to is, how many of us are willing to feed our enemies? Or give our enemies a drink if he is thirsty? Or to bestow acts of kindness on them? This is where true Christian character must take over and we must allow our New man to control our actions.