

## **Romans 12:9 (NKJV)**

**9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**

This morning we are moving into new territory in Romans. So let's put the wide angle lens back on our camera and see where we are in Paul's flow of thought. Remember what the first 8 chapters of Romans **explained**? In one word, the Gospel. That is what it is all about.

Then remember how the next 3 chapters explained the purpose of God in salvation as it pertained to the Jews.

Then Paul moved on in Chapter 12 to how a saved person **lives**. He is talking about sanctification or the **logical consequences** of **the Gospel** on a **believer's life**.

In verses one and two we see sanctified living in a nutshell.

## **Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)**

**1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

**2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Then Paul talks about how the Body of Christ is comprised. He is talking about the church and describes it **as a body**. He talks about **its essence**. And he tells us how it works and how we should play our parts. Then he moves into our verse this morning.

It is interesting that he shows this exact same flow of thought in I Corinthians 12 and 13. This is the great thing about scripture. There is a continuity and congruity about it. Often one passage is expanded and **more fully explained** in another. This morning's text is a good example of this.

First let's look at verses 4 and 5 from our text.

## **Romans 12:4-5 (NKJV)**

**4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,**

**5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.**

Let's compare that to verses 12-27 of First Corinthians 12

**12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.**

**13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.**

**14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.**

**15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?**

**16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?**

**17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?**

**18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.**

**19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?**

**20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.**

**21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."**

**22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.**

**23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,**

**24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,**

**25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.**

**26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

**27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**

So the essence of this first point in **both texts** is the fact of the Body of Christ. We exist as an **interdependent** organism.

Now let's look at verses 6-8 of Romans 12

**6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;**

**7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;**

**8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

Look how it compares to I Cor 12:28-30

**28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.**

**29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?**

**30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?**

Both Corinthians and Romans describe the diversity of ministry within the body of Christ.

And then where does Paul go next in his discussion?

I Corinthians goes here

**31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.**

Guess what is next? The love chapter. I Corinthians 13 is where Paul lays out what Agape love **looks like** and **acts like**. And what does he do in Romans? He does the same thing but in a much more concise fashion. He says

**9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**

The next point in Paul's flow of thought is that love is the requirement for the Christian life. It is the core of Christian operations. Just as verses 1 and 2 of Chapter 12 lay out the basis of sanctified living, verse 9 lays out the core attribute of our treatment of all humans and our response to all situations.

It is interesting that up to this point in Romans, Agape love has only been used in reference to God.

Romans 5:5,8 (NKJV)

**5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

**8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Then again in

**Romans 8:35-39 (NKJV)**

**35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?**

**37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.**

**38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,**

**39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

So it has been firmly established that God loves us with an Agape love. It has been firmly established that **we have a loving God**, a God that loves us at **His** expense. Now Paul makes the great plunge. He tells us that this is the **same love** that we are to apply to others.

What is this love that he is talking about? What is agape love? What does it do? I once did a study in I John and came up with a working definition that has been helpful to me over the years. It is not so much a definition of what Agape love **is** but how **it acts**.

Agape love reaches out to meet another's need without regard for what it costs the giver and it springs out of devotion to Christ.

This is something that is only true of Christians. By definition it cannot be true of a non-believer with the best of motives. Because it all finds its basis in the Mercies of God from verse 1.

From here, Paul will move into applying this love in various situations.

**Here is a simple outline.**

Verse 9 paints the broad picture of how a believer lives. It is the overriding principle about how we regard and treat others.

Verses 10, 11 lay out how we should regard other believers. Then verses 12 and 13 tell us how to think about and react to the circumstances of life. Verses 14-16 tell us how to respond to people in various circumstances. Then verses 17 through 21 tell us how to respond to wrong and evil.

Now let's look again at verse 9

**9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**

First thing we need to note is that this cannot be obeyed until we submit to verse 1. None of this can be done in the flesh. It can only be done by a person in faith. It can only be done by a person who knows **what God has done for them** and responds in appreciation to **what God has given to them**. It is "in view of God's mercy" that a believer would do such a thing.

The second thing to note is that this is a command. We are told **what** to do and **how** to do it. Some may act like they have no obligation to apply their wills in carrying out what God says. But clearly scripture does not give us that idea.

Now let's look at what we are commanded to do.

After being told that we should exercise our gifts for the good of each other we are told that the love that we are to carry these gifts out **in** should be without hypocrisy.

Let's first look more at the word love. That is as far as we will get this morning.

I want to remind us today of some things I am sure most of us know.

First- the source of love

Second- the importance of love

Third- the focus of love

Fourth- the proof of love

First- the source of love

**1 John 4:16 (NKJV)**

**16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.**

It is very clear that this love we are to exhibit does not come from us. This love comes from God. In fact, God is defined by this love. God **is** love.

We need to be careful with this. A lot of people take that idea and run with it and they are soon off the pages of scripture with a picture of God that is nothing but sentimental drivel. We can't go there. God is also Holy and Just and lots of other things. So we must keep everything in perspective.

But I do have a simple question for us this morning. **Do you believe it?** Do you really believe that God is looking out for your best interest this morning without regard of the cost to Himself? Do you **really think** that He cares for you like this? When you think of God, is that how you think of Him? Do you come to Him as the one who cares the most for you? As the one who has the **least selfish motive** for giving you what you need? And yet someone who will **only always** give you what you need? How about when He **commands** something? How about when scripture says **no** to something our flesh wants? What motive do we attribute to God?

How easy it is to make a God of our own image, a God that we must rebel against in order to be happy. That is not the God who is. That is not the God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the oldest lie of the devil. And it may be the most deceitful and the most devastating. Because your view of God affects everything that you do. When you find yourself wanting to resist God this week, ask yourself this simple question. Why? Do we not believe that **God loves us**? Do we not want the **best** for our lives which we can only receive at **God's hand**? What does your **LIFE** say you think about God? At the end of the day that is what you **REALLY** think.

I figure every one of us would get the multiple choice question right. But look at how we treat God. Do we respond to Him as if He is our primary care giver? Do we obey Him because we know that He would only **do us good** and His demands

are only **for our good**? Or do we buck what He says because we think the things that will **really** please us are only found by rebellion to Him? Do we buck what He says and choose another strategy for our happiness.

Think about this. How would you act if you really believed that God has your best interest in mind in everything He does? That is the truth according to God's word. It is a wondrous glorious truth. And it is a truth that demands a faithful response from us.

Second- the importance of love

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NKJV)**

**37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'**

**38 This is the first and great commandment.**

**39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'**

**40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

The Christian faith is based on relationship, not perfect performance. As such the highest, most important quality is love. It is a quality that accentuates relationship, it is a relationship word. By the definition I use, love cannot even exist without relationship.

So when Christ talked about the law, his focus was not on the list of **do's and don'ts**. He didn't **deny** them. But He spoke of something **higher**, something that transcended the lists. He spoke of loving God. And He spoke of loving people. He focused on that which He most cares about. The **"what"** of the Christian life is important but the **"why"** is more important. Christ focused on the root of the tree. The fruit would follow.

We fail to understand what the Christian life is all about if we miss the point that God loves us and wants us to love Him. And it is not for His need that He wants us to love Him. He isn't pining in heaven for our attention. A lot of Armenian preachers present God in such a fashion but scripture does not. God has no **needs** that we can meet. He isn't like us in that way. But He wants us to love Him for OUR sakes. He wants us to love Him because that is what we are designed for. That is how we best exist, in a loving relationship with our Creator.

So love is vitally important, of first importance. Romans tells us a little bit more about why.

**Romans 13:8 (NKJV)**

**8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.**

We see here that when we truly love a person with God's agape love, we have fulfilled God's **best intention** toward that person. We have represented God accurately. We have carried out His interest toward that person. Every law that He created **to express His will to humans** has been carried out when we love them. That is a huge statement. I think we underestimate the value of Spirit led meeting of needs that should be commonplace in the church. That is central in the carrying out of God's will on our planet. It is huge in the kingdom of God.

A little later in Romans we see this

**Romans 13:10 (NKJV)**

**10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

Love does good and does no harm. It carries out the "thou shalt's" and refuses to do the "thou shalt not's" It is vital to God's purposes.

Let's look at our parallel passage in I Corinthians

**1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)**

**13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

When faith and hope are no longer needed, love will remain. Love will be the thing that heaven runs on. Imagine a place where no law enforcement is needed, where no harm is done by one person to another, where selfish motives will no longer interfere in knowing and being known. If you want a good use for your imagination, here is a good use for it. Imagine what life would be like without deceit and fear, without lust or envy, where everyone is **only** and **always** looking out for the best interest of others. That is what heaven will look like. Now how much would a destination like that be worth?

One more verse.

**Galatians 5:22 (NKJV)**

**22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

What is first on the list? Love Why? It is the most important thing.

**Third- the focus of love**

We go back to Jesus's words

**Matthew 22:37-40 (NKJV)**

**37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'**

**38 This is the first and great commandment.**

**39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'**

**40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

It is very clear. God loves us. He loved us first.

**1 John 4:19 (NKJV)**

**19 We love Him because He first loved us.**

Then we are told to **first** love God and **second** love people with a priority being on fellow believers.

We are not to love the world- as in the world system and what the world has to offer. We are not to love the praise of man.

It is very simple. Our whole lives should be made up of a love for God that expresses itself in love for people. This extends to why we do everything. I go to work every weekday morning. Why? Because scripture tells me that I must provide for others. So I go to work because I love God.

The Christian housewife takes care of the household. Why? Because scripture talks about a wife helping her husband carrying out of his duties. So she does it because she loves God.

A young person does their chores. Why? Because scripture tells us that children should obey their parents. So a Christian child learns to do it because they love God.

Every faithful action in the Christian life finds its way back to loving God and loving people. That is God's focus. And that must be our focus.

Fourth- the proof of love

How do we know if we love God? How can we tell?

While a lot of people would grant very subjective tests, they would ask you how **you feel** about God, scripture does not do that. This is what scripture says:

**John 14:21 (NKJV)**

**21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."**

And again Christ explained it:

**John 14:22-24 (NKJV)**

**22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"**



**23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.**

**24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.**

We can see very clearly that this love is not just **sentimental intention**. It is not just **emotional idealism**. It isn't just feeling positively toward others. Jesus puts it in very **practical** terms. If we love, we obey. If we love, we do what He says. And He leaves no wiggle room. He **does not** say that the one who rebels against me **doesn't love me very much**. He doesn't say this person loves me but is having a hard day. He says that believers obey Christ. They don't do it perfectly but they do it **habitually**. If they refuse, they don't love Him.

This may be a very good point for application.

Look at your life. If there is a point right now where you know what Christ wants, will you do it? If there is clearly something that you know you should obey, will you do it? Is there a point right now where you are playing with the idea of sin and rebellion? Will you submit to Christ?

If you will not, there is no sense deceiving yourself into thinking you love Christ. If you are planning sin, if you are defending sin, if you are catering to sin, you can just drop the pretense. You do not love Christ. Or **at least** you are not acting as if you love Christ. You will have, and should have, no assurance of your salvation at this point. You should only have self doubt and self loathing. To treat Christ in such a fashion is hideous and you should be feeling that horror throughout your whole body. If you love Christ you will repent of that sin. You will turn from it and obey Christ. That is the only way you will have any assurance of your salvation.

Now does obeying Christ earn your salvation? Surely we know by now that this could never be. We only love Christ because He first loved us. We love by response to the love we have received. It is not possible otherwise.

In fact, this response is so deep, it is so engrained, that the impossible happens. We begin to love the things that God commands. We don't do these things out of some grueling self discipline, hating every step. No. it is completely different than that. We love it. It is what we want to do.

Look at what David said about God's law.

**Psalms 119:143 (NKJV)**

**143 Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, Yet Your commandments are my delights.**

When David faces hard times what cheers him up? What is it that his focus is on? What makes him feel better? It is the things that God commands. It is those things that reflect God's character. It is God's direction on David's life. And just so we don't think this is an exception, it is stated again.

**Psalm 119:97 (NKJV)**

**97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.**

Can you see that this is a miracle? Can you see that this only happens when God works on a person's heart? We only get this way from His work on our hearts. Maybe this morning you are regarding God's authority over your life as something that is restrictive, something that will deprive you of the things you want. Do you realize that was all **part of the strategy that got Eve in so much trouble**. God will never withhold from you something that is **for your good**. You can depend upon Him. If He commands something, it is **for your good**... for your protection. We cannot always know what is good for us. But He does. So we can, by trusting in God's love, learn to love what He commands us to do. That is impossible in the flesh. But it is normal for a believer.

Here is yet another evidence to see if we love God.

**John 13:35 (NKJV)**

**35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

I John goes into a lot of detail about this. If we love God, we will love one another. If we love one another it is evidence that we love God.

Well how do we know if we love one another?

Oddly enough, scripture does not leave that in the realm of intention or feeling.

We love each other if we meet the need we see.

**James 2:14-16 (NKJV)**

**14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?**

**15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,**

**16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?**

Our love for each other must **include** good intentions but it must be **more than** good intentions. It must act. And it must do so without consideration of the cost. That is what love does.

How are we doing as a church at carrying out this most vital command? This is a good thing to bring to the Lord this week. How are we doing at loving Him and His people?

I thought the following verse would be a good one to close with.

**1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)**

**8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."**