

34:36

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

church, believers, Paul, verse, enemies, Christ, love, Rom, means, spiritual gifts, notice, God, tribulation, retaliating, devoted, person, life, hospitality, tells, Lord

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## Introduction

Well, some people might think that there are perfect churches out there. But the reality is there are no perfect churches because churches are full of sinners, sinners. Sure, we are sinners who are saved by grace. But nonetheless, we are sinners, every one of us. And when you get sinners together who are not always walking in the Spirit, the flesh gets in the way, and problems occur. One of the quarrels that Christians have within the church is over spiritual gifts. Christians will fight over spiritual gifts, as one commentator says, *"To the detriment of the church, discussions over spiritual gifts have resulted in Corinthian-like carnality in the church, how ironic that the very instruments given to manifest and encourage the unity of the Body of Christ should so divide it."*

And Paul knew this reality. He knew the reality of this within the church. He knew it with the Corinthian church, which he addressed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, through chapter 14. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 12:24, speaking of spiritual gifts, Paul says this, *"But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."* (1 Cor 12:24)

God has given spiritual gifts to each individual within His body as He pleases, and there should be no division then in the body of Christ, as each member uses the spiritual gift that we have been given. And as Paul writes to the church at Corinth about spiritual gifts, in chapters 12 through 14 -- right in the middle of those three chapters (in chapter 13) what does Paul write about? Love. He writes about love. He tells them in chapter 13, about *"faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is"* what? *"love."* (1 Cor 13:13) and just like he did with the church at Corinth, notice what Paul does here in Romans chapter 12.

In fact, what did we study last week in Romans 12:3-8? Paul told us about the use of spiritual gifts in the body. And he wants each of us to use our gifts in the proper way. So that there will not be any disunity within the body of Christ. But notice what Paul comes to next, in Romans chapter 12 in verse 9, what does he say there? Love, love, he comes right to love. How can we make sure that there is no

division in the body over spiritual gifts? Or any other type of division in the body? Answer, love. We need to love one another.

And Paul, now comes to verse 9 and he begins talking about loving relationships that you and I are to have, both in the church and outside of the church. And he's going to tell us how to live out the reality of what has happened inside of every one of us. That is that you and I have been justified, we've been sanctified, we've been redeemed by Christ. That is what has happened inside of us. And so now he says, because of what has happened inside of you, you are then to live that out in your life. We're called to live as a sacrificial offering unto the Lord, a sacrificial life, which is what he told us up in verse 1.

What does that look like? Well, he tells us continues to tell us in verses 3 through 8 and now in verses 9 through 21. And so, we're going to look at our outline here. Tonight, we're going to break it up into two points. Two points.

1. Point number one, we're going to call Love for the Believers, verses 9-16.
2. Then point number two we'll call Love for the Unbelievers.

Love for the Believers, and Love for the Unbelievers. And as we look at each of these points, we're going to see how Paul gives lots of commands, and exhortations as to how these Christians in Rome are to live.

## 1. Love for the Believers

And so, let's jump into our first point here, Love for the Believers. Now as we work our way through our first point here tonight, you're going to see how Paul begins broad and then he gets narrower with each command that he gives to the church. So, notice what he says first in verse 9, he says, "[Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. \(Rom 12:9\)](#) Notice that word "love" there.

In the Greek there are two kinds of love, two different words for love. There is a Greek word "phileo", which is brotherly love. This tends to be a love that's based upon emotions. It's an emotional love that we would have for family members, brotherly love. You love someone because of the close relationship that you have with them, that close person within your family, you love them because of the close relationship that you have with them.

But then there's the Greek word "agape." Agape love, which is a volitional love. It is having regard for or interest in another person, regardless of the circumstances, attractiveness, or emotions that you have for that person. It's a love that does not change with the situation. It's a love that decides to keep on loving, even if you have been hurt. Even if you've been sinned against, you will continue to love that person. And that is the kind of love that Paul is talking about here in verse 9.

It's a love that does not seek its own. But a love that seeks the welfare of another person. Therefore, when this kind of love happens, notice he says this, "[love is to be without hypocrisy. \(Rom 12:9\)](#) Or so

some of your translations might say it's to be genuine, to be a genuine love, a sincere love that we are to have for one another. That word hypocrisy there means -- to pretend or to make believe or to play act. Agape love does not pretend. There's no pretending in the agape love. It's not make-believe love. It's real love, real love that we are to have for one another. As one commentator says, *"you don't pat another believer on the back and say something that you don't mean."* It's real, genuine love that we are to have for one another. And we're to have a genuine love for our brothers and sisters in Christ in the church, no matter what they have done to you, or what circumstances you are in, or they are in in life.

You know, people can be kind and nice, and yet they can lack genuine love for people. There are many people who are kind people, they're nice people, and yet they lack genuine love for other people. When people come to Faith Bible Church, they shouldn't say that we are kind people. They shouldn't say that. Wow, that church, they're really "nice" to one another. No, when they come to Faith Bible Church, they should say they "love" one another there. Those are loving people. And isn't that what Jesus said in John 13:35? *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples..."* if you are nice to one another. No, that's not what he said. *"If you love one another."* (John 13:35) If you have love for one another. We are to be selfless, and gracious and compassionate with one another. We are to love each other.

What does that kind of love look like? He continues on in verse 9. We abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. "Abhor" there is a, it's a present active participle in the Greek which means that we are to be continually abhorring or hating evil. We are to be those who hate evil. And how do we show our hatred of evil? We continually withdraw from it. We separate ourselves from evil, we get further and further away from evil. What do we do then in that process of getting away from evil? Well notice what he says there, *"we cling to what is good."* (Rom 12:9) That is we hold fast, or we bind ourselves to what is good. That word "cling" there has the picture of bonding or gluing or cementing something together. We hold it tightly.

And in the Greek this word "cling" is in the present middle tense -- which means we continually do this ourselves. We have to do this ourselves. In the middle -- that middle tense there -- means that we do this to ourselves. That is, you and I have a responsibility to cling to that which is good. It's our job to do this. We don't sit back, let go and let God. That's not biblical. We don't do that. We cling, we pursue that which is good, that which is righteous that which is holy. We have a responsibility to do that as believers.

Now we get a little, a little bit narrower in our love. Look at verse 10. He says, *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; (Rom 12:10)* One translation says it this way, I love how it says it. *"Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. outdo one another in showing honor."* (Rom 12:10) That word there, "devoted" in the Greek means loving, dearly, loving dearly. And Paul has familial love here in mind when he says this. That as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to have this kind of familial love for one another. We're a family, we all have the same Father. Every one of us has the same Father. And so, our love for each other should be that of familial love -- which is the Greek word that he uses there for brotherly love. That's the Greek word phileo, which means to have tender brotherly love and affection for one another. So not only are we to have agape love for each other, but we're also to have phileo love for one another -- family love.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 10:34, he said, this, "[Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. \(Matt 10:34\)](#) And he goes on and says, "[For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; 36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. \(Matt 10:35\)](#) But it's not this way in the church, right? It's not this way. We're to have familial love, family love for one another. We're to have this family love because we have one Father. And listen, church, we are going to spend eternity together with each other. Look around. This is eternity. These are the people you're going to be spending eternity with. Start loving them. Love them now. We're all one big happy family. Because God is our Father.

Therefore, he goes on and he says we give preference to one another in honor, or, as one translation says, "[outdo one another in showing love.](#)" We outdo one another. That is, we're to show humility toward each other, not thinking highly of ourselves, which is exactly what Paul says in verse 3 right? Remember that from last week. Notice what he says in verse 11, "[not lagging behind in diligence, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.](#)" (Rom 12:11) Notice they're not lagging behind in diligence. This means that we are not to be lazy. Just as the leaders in verse eight are to be diligent leaders. They're not to be lazy leaders. We're to be hard workers and work hard for the Lord. Then he says, "[fervent in spirit.](#)" This has the idea of burning in the spirit, that there's a boiling point that happens in our spirit. And it has to do with the attitude of our service to the Lord. And it means that we are to be so enthusiastic about our work, that we can hardly contain the excitement. We're so excited. You know, Jesus says in Matthew 24:12, that in the last days, he says "[because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.](#)" (Matt 24:12) Love for one another is going to grow cold. But that shouldn't be the attitude of believers. Not in his house, not in the church. We never grow cold, of loving one another.

Then he goes on and he says, "[serving the Lord.](#)" That word "serve" there and the Greek is the word *douleo*, which means "to serve as a slave," that we serve as a slave. We are slaves for the Lord, and therefore we do exactly what he tells us to do. Tom Schreiner says this, "*the baseline for Christian living is not ecstatic experience, but submission to the Lordship of Christ.*" That's the baseline for Christian living that we submit to the Lordship of Christ. We are slaves of Christ; He is our Lord. And we are His slaves. And therefore, we do exactly what He commands us to do.

Going on. Paul says in verse 12, rejoicing in hope, persevering and tribulation, devoted to prayer. Three more exhortations that Paul gives here. Notice he says, rejoicing in hope. Notice, there's two words that are there in that phrase, notice the two words, joy, and what? Hope. Joy and hope. Believers have joy and we have hope. How do we have a joy-filled life? Because we have hope. The world doesn't have hope. But we do. Not that we hope in the future that the future might turn out for good for us. That's not the kind of hope that we have -- some kind of wishful thinking, I hope this is going to happen. No, we have confidence and assurance that God has said what He said in His Word, and therefore we know it to be true. We know exactly what our future is to be like, we know exactly what is going to happen in our future. We know exactly where we are going and spending eternity. Why? Because God said it. That's our hope. We don't wish for that to happen. We hope for that to happen. We have assurance that

we're going to be in Heaven with Him one day. We know that. We can have confidence in God and His Word because we rejoice in hope.

Then he says, "[persevering and tribulation.](#)" (Rom 12:12) Now on the although we have joy and hope, does that mean that the future life here on earth is going to be easy? No, there's still going to be trials, and tribulation. Both Jesus and Paul tell us that there will be tribulation in this life. Jesus says in John 15:20, "[Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.](#)" (John 15:20)

Paul said in Acts 14:22, "[Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.](#)" (Acts 14:22) We have joy and hope, but we also have tribulation in this world, right? We have tribulation. But we are to persevere through those trials, as we trust in Christ. What is that tribulation in our life do? Notice what he says there next... We're to be devoted to prayer, devoted to prayer. It drives us to Christ in prayer. When we go through trials and tribulation in our life, it drives us on our knees.

Charles Spurgeon said, "*Whenever your hope seems to fail you, and your joy begins to sink, the shortest method is to take to your knees. By remembering the promise in prayer, hope will be sustained, and then joy is sure to spring from it.*" We should go to our knees in times of trial and tribulation, but that shouldn't be the only time that we pray in life, right? That's not the only time our whole life should be devoted to a complete reliance upon Christ. Notice he says we're to be devoted. That means to be steadfast and unwavering. And our prayer life needs to be this way -- always in prayer to God. We're devoted to prayer. Because we rely upon Him in all areas of life.

Now we get even narrower in our love for each other. Look at what he says in verse 13, "[contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.](#)" (Rom 12:13) This is very practical living among brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to be contributing to the needs of the saints. This means that we're to be generous towards those who are in the church who have a need.

Look, everything that we have is the Lord's, right? It's not yours, you don't own it. God has entrusted everything that you have over to you, and He tells you to be a good steward, with what you have. It's all His. He owns it all. And therefore, as good stewards, if we see a brother or a sister in need, what do we do? We help them out. We give generously to them. And we also practice hospitality. In Paul's days, believers in ministries, such as Paul himself, relied on the hospitality of other believers, because they didn't have the financial means to pay for a lot of stuff. That word "hospitality" there means "pursuing the love of strangers." Pursuing the love of strangers. As strangers came through town, and they needed a place to stay. The believers they opened up their homes, so that those believers that were coming through town, strangers, they didn't know who they were, they had a place to stay. And they welcomed them in, and they showed hospitality.

Now we come to verse 14. This verse could fit down with our second point; love for unbelievers, but because we can't move verses around, this is how Paul put it. And so, it stays in our first point here. But notice what he says in verse 14 there, "[Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse.](#)" (Rom 12:14) Who's he dealing with here? Not believers, but he's talking about those outside of the church,

"Bless those who persecute you." Notice this is not natural to sinful man. This is not a natural thing for us to do. That's why we need to be told to do this. Bless those who persecute you. Bless here means to treat them as if they're your friends. Now, this doesn't mean that we have to go out of our way to befriend enemies. But it means that when we are face to face with an enemy, we bless them, and we don't curse them. We treat them as if we would treat a friend.

Well, Paul then goes back to the love that we have for believers in verse 15. And he says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." (Rom 12:15) Now, when does this rejoicing become difficult for us as believers? How about when someone else in the church gets the promotion that you want it? How about when someone else gets the job that you wanted? How about when someone else in the church gets the gift that you really need? We can easily become jealous in those times when that person is rejoicing. But Paul tells us here we need to rejoice with those who rejoice. We need to be excited for them. We need to rejoice when God meets their needs, and they are rejoicing. And we also need to weep with them as well. We need to weep with other believers out of love for them, we weep with them, which shows compassion and care for them. When another believer is weeping, we come alongside them out of love and care and compassion for them. And we weep alongside of them.

We've had many hospital visits. When you go to a hospital, all you do is -- they would tell us this in seminary too -- you stay for about 10 minutes. You're just there to love them and pray with them. And watch and see what it does with them. You come alongside them, and you weep with them. You don't have to spend hours and hours and hours there. You just go and visit them. Spend a little time, read them some scripture, and pray with them. You weep with those who weep. That's what we are called to do within the body of Christ.

Finally, in our love for brothers and sisters in Christ, notice what he says in verse 16, "Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." (Rom 12:16) There was possibly some internal conflict that was going on in the church in Rome, most likely showing impartiality toward one another. This is possibly happening between the Jews and the gentiles. As the Jews would have thought that they were superior to the gentiles. They are God's chosen people. They are superior. And so, there's this conflict, and that happens within the church. And Paul says that they need to be of the same mind.

Now obviously, if you think about Jews and gentiles, were they raised the same? They weren't. They were raised differently. Jews were raised a lot differently than gentiles were raised. And therefore, they thought very differently. But in Christ, they're to be unified in thought, and not think that they are higher than someone else, especially in some social or economic class, as if we're better than you. No - he says, "Be of the same mind...do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly."

We also need to associate with the lowly. James speaks of this in James 2. He says this, "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. 2 For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, 3 and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with



evil motives? 5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? 6 But you have dishonored the poor man. (James 2:1-6)

He says, were to associate with the lowly, and love them, we are to care for them. Were to treat them with honor and respect, and care for the lowly and the poor.

And then Paul ends the section to loving other believers with this, this phrase, "*Do not be wise in your own estimation.*" (Rom 12:16) That is, do not think that you are superior to any other believer. We must be humble and love one another, and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

## 2. Love for the Unbelievers

Well, what about how we deal with the world and those who are outside of the church? As we are living as those who are "a living sacrifice" unto God, being pleasing to Him? How are we to then live in light of our relationships to those in the world? Well, that leads to our second point here tonight. Love for the unbelievers. Look at verse 17. "*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*" (Rom 12:17)

Just as in Paul said in verse 14, "*Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse.*" What he does here in verse 17, is he goes a little further now, he goes a little further with that statement. Not only do we not use verbal cursing toward our enemy, but we don't use physical revenge either. One commentator says, "*the desire to retaliate almost overwhelms us when we have been treated unjustly.*"

Growing up in California, I lived in a neighborhood that was full of gangs, gang members, shootings, stabbings everywhere, all the time. And most of those shootings, were all because they were retaliating against something that happened to them. That's what they did, it was all a big retaliation game. Someone did something to so and so someone's going to do something back to him. Why did they do that? Because that's the heart of sinful man, they retaliate, they want to get even. But as believers, we must remember that every person is made in the image of God. Every person, even our enemies, are made in the image of God. Every person is an image-bearer, and therefore we are to treat them as such.

And not just in the physical manner, but also in our attitude toward them, which is why Paul says in verse 17 there, "*respect what is right in the sight of all men.*" (Rom 12:17) We are to respect them. Respect is a natural protection against lashing out against our enemies. It's a natural protection for us. That respect for others, as image-bearers will help us to love them. When you respect someone, that is going to help you to love them.

Then he says, verse 18, "*if possible, so far as it depends on you be at peace with all men.*" (Rom 12:18) Not only do we respect them, but we also live at peace with them. But obviously, peace is only possible if both parties are at peace, right? It takes both parties to be at complete peace. But Paul says

here -- on our side of the issue, we must be at total peace. That's our duty. That's our job. We can't control them. But listen, we can control us. And so, we must do all that we can, so far as it depends on us, on you, to be at peace with all men. We must seek peace and build peaceful bridges with our enemies. That's what we're called to do.

Notice what he says in verse 19. "[Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God for it is written, Vengeance is mine. I will repay says the Lord.](#)" (Rom 12:19) We are to leave the punishment into the hands of God. Let God deal with our enemies. Because I guarantee you any punishment that you try and lash out upon another person, doesn't ever, and won't ever compare to the punishment that they will ultimately get from God. To just leave it to Him, let Him deal with them. He'll handle it.

Now, what is one of the ways that God brings punishment upon our enemies? Well, He does it through government, which is what we're going to talk about next week. But here, Paul is talking about personal retaliation. We need to leave that in God's hands and know that God will deal with every one of our enemies.

What are we called to do? Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:44. "[But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.](#)" (Matt 5:44) That's our job. Love them and pray for them. The best way for you to keep yourself from retaliating is to pray for your enemy. It's really difficult to attack someone when you're praying for them. So, pray for them.

Not only to pray for them but look at verse 20. "[But if your enemy is hungry, feed him if he's thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.](#)" (Rom 12:20) What does he mean here by heaping burning coals on his head? It means to bring burning shame to a person with the hopes that it leads them to repentance. We would treat our enemies so kind and so lovingly, that it would cause them shame to treat us with hatred. And then they would ask us, Why are you not retaliating? What's wrong with you? Everyone else retaliates against me, what's wrong with you, and then you give them what? The gospel that leads them to repentance, and faith in Christ. You heap burning coals on their head, you lead them to shame so that it will cause them then to repent of the things that they're doing.

Then Paul ends with this final statement in verse 21. Notice what he says there, "[Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.](#)" (Rom 12:21) There are two meanings here to this verse. First, don't let the evil that is done by other people to you, cause you to be overwhelmed and fall into evil. Don't let the evil that is done by other people to you, cause you to be overwhelmed and fall into evil. But there's a second meaning to this, that we must not allow ourselves to be overcome by our own evil and respond in evil toward others. The worst thing for you to do is act out in evil, because you will fall prey to your enemy. It's exactly what they want you to do. It's exactly what the enemy wants us to do, right? The way that we overcome evil is with what? With good, with good. We love them, and we care for them. That's what we're called to do as believers as we live our lives, not only with one another in the church. But even as we live in this world amongst unbelievers, especially to those who our enemies were to love them and treat them with good. May we be people who love one another, and love our enemies, just as our master has told us to do.



Father, we thank You for our time. In Your Word tonight. Lord, there are many, many commands and exhortations that You've given to us to take and apply to our lives. Father, I pray that You would help us to live these out. Although we cannot do it on our own, we need the help of Your Spirit. So, Father, I pray that You would help us to be those who would walk according to Your Spirit. Lord, we thank You for Your Word that has been given to us, and Your Spirit that speaks to us through Your Word. And I pray that You would help us to take these and that we would live as slaves of Christ in obedience to Him and all that He's commanded us to do, for Your glory. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.