

# Living the Christian Life --- Romans 12:9-13

September 20, 2020

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; <sup>11</sup>not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup>rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, <sup>13</sup>contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

## Introduction

I want to remind you of a truth about pastors that I have said occasionally in the past. Pastors have the tremendous privilege and responsibility to be in God's Word each week at an intense level. It is both a joy and a heavy concern at the same time. As I study, I come face-to-face with holy God and I see how far short I fall. I desire to preach to you with conviction, but understand this, pastors are no different than any other person. We are in process, we are fellow sheep given the responsibility of an under-shepherd.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:5-7, "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. <sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves . . . ." I resonate with Paul's term "earthen vessel." So I ask that you pray for your leaders; pray for Eric, Dylan, and myself. Pray for the Church that the Holy Spirit would use us to Christ's glory.

As we come back to our study of Romans after our series on Spiritual Gifts, I want to paraphrase a section of John MacArthur's commentary on Romans 12. He succinctly introduces this next section of Romans. "Our society is obsessed with sports, recreation, entertainment, and emotional gratification, and it is paying the consequences of that unbalanced preoccupation. When such pursuits surpass their reasonable roles, they become indications of the shallow, superficial and decaying culture that cultivates them." I wholeheartedly agree.

Teddy Roosevelt once commented, "The things that will destroy America are: prosperity at any price, peace at any price, safety first instead of duty first, the love of soft living, and the get rich quick theory of life." Seems to me that Roosevelt was prophetic.

The only productive life, as well as the only truly satisfying life, is the life of one subjected to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our spiritual power and guidance come from the Lord, at the same time we put forth maximum effort.

*1 Corinthians 9:25-27 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

Simply put, the Christian life involves the willingness to subordinate personal desires and objectives to those that are selfless and that are from God. The believer subordinates that which is attractive and easy to that which is right and necessary. For the Christian, self-control involves obedience to the Word of God; meaning: the willingness to subordinate everything in our lives—physical, social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—to God's will and control. And all this for the glory of Christ.

If Christ is our Savior and Lord, the deepest desire of our hearts will be to serve and to please Him. That desire will be expressed in a longing for holiness and a pattern of growing into the image of Christ. It is not that our lives will have become perfect or that we will never waver in our commitment and obedience. It does mean that the direction of our lives will be Christ-ward and our supreme desire will be to become more and more like Christ.

It is unbiblical to think that you can live a faithful, fruitful Christian life on just good intentions and warm feelings for the Lord and His work. The Christian life involves accountability to Christ's revealed principles and standards. It is because we are accountable that the Lord disciplines us when we disobey His Word and ignore His will.

There is a saying, "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian. It just takes all of him." A person who has been justified by God's grace [who has presented his body as "a living sacrifice" (Romans 1:21) and who is exercising the spiritual gifts the Lord has given him (Romans 12:3-8)] will be applying maximum effort towards sanctification. God will be giving that person the desire and ability to work for His good pleasure.

In other words, a person who is truly saved will evidence his salvation by the way he lives. And because the obedient and productive Christian life is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, it is unnatural and cannot be attained by the unsaved man . . . the unregenerate man.

The Christian life, according to Scripture, is not a mystical, undefined life based on elusive good impulses and sincere intentions. It is practical living that results from conscious obedience to God's standards of righteousness. It is thinking, speaking and acting in daily conformity with God's Word and will.

So as we come to Romans 12:9 to the end of the chapter, Paul has laid the doctrinal foundations of justification, sanctification, and the dedicated Christian life. In the rest of the letter, he focuses on specific ways in which believers must live their lives in obedience to God's Word and to the glory of Christ's name. This call to practical, holy living is really the climax of this amazing epistle.

Salvation is designed to produce in us a pattern of godly, Christlike living. In the rest of this chapter Paul gives a number of characteristics that help define what it means to be conformed into the image of Christ. As we consider these, some will be convicting because they will make us aware of our short-comings. On the other hand, some will be encouraging as we see the Holy Spirit producing these in our lives.

## Review

Last week we finished our study of spiritual gifts as we focused on the gift of an evangelist. We saw that there is the mentality in the Church at large concerning evangelism of "try Jesus because things will go better with Him." People get the impression that they can take up Jesus like they do jogging. It's a "what's in it for me" message. One of the foundational reasons for the existence of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, but the Church has so muddled the message that she has become ineffective.

Paul said in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* The desire of God is for the Church to be built up in the Truth and in the exercise of spiritual gifts so that it can be effective in calling a rebellious world to repentance and trust in Jesus as Savior who has provided salvation through His death and resurrection and will save from an eternal hell and give an inheritance in heaven.

We considered that Matthew 28:18-20 has rightly been called "The Great Commission." Jesus gives His last great charge to those whom He has left behind concerning what they are to be doing. Matthew 28:18-20, *"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

*20teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "*

The imperatives in the passage are: Go—Make Disciples—Baptize—Teach. There is no mistaking the clear purpose of the Church in regards to evangelism. We saw that the Church has the best news in the world. We can tell people how they got here, why they are here, what their current condition is, and how they can miss the coming judgment; how they can be reconciled to their Creator, and receive eternal heaven which is beyond what they can ever imagine. This is the Truth concerning Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection.

We considered that God calls men to salvation through the Gospel. Since the Gospel is God's message to men it demands decision and imposes obedience. εὐαγγελίζω refers to bringing the good news of salvation. It is the powerful proclamation of the good news. We as the Church are left here to spread that amazing truth and make disciples.

### Living the Christian Life

So we bring to a completion our study of spiritual gifts. As we return to our study in Romans this morning, I want to remind you of the context of Romans 12. The first two verses apply all the sound doctrine of the preceding eleven chapters to godly living.

*Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

We spent a few weeks delving into this rich transition from doctrine to duty; from theology to application. You can go on our website and review that if need be.

After these verses, Paul begins to write about the Church. He gets very practical concerning the dynamics of the body. He begins by addressing the humble attitude of believers.

*Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone 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.*

Next in verses 4-8, Paul conveys the nature of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. We have considered over the last few months, in our series on spiritual gifts, that God has given gifts to all members of the Church and that these must be exercised faithfully for the benefit of all.

Paul continues to address the Church in verses 9 and following as he transitions to Christian attitudes and actions. Paul focuses on specific ways in which believers must live their lives in obedience to God's Word and to the glory of Christ's name to the end of the chapter and beyond. So I want to consider just the first couple of verses in the section by way of introduction.

### Love Is Genuine

***Let love be without hypocrisy. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.***

Romans 12:10

The first Christian virtue on Paul's list is no surprise, namely love. We saw in our study of 1 Corinthians 12 that after a whole chapter explaining spiritual gifts, Paul launches into what is one of the greatest descriptions and explanations concerning love found in human history, 1 Corinthians 13. So Romans 12 has some parallels to Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13.

Romans 12: 9 states, "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*"

You will notice here, as in 1 Corinthians 13, that Paul describes love in terms of what love does. Love is a verb not an adjective. This verse states two specific truths about love: first, Christian love is sincere and genuine; and second, Christian love is discerning.

First, true Christian love is genuine. The New International Version translates the first half of verse 9 as "Love must be sincere." *Sincere* is a word based on the Latin words "sine cera" (seenay kayrra) meaning "without wax."

It refers to the ancient practice of using wax to hide cracks in inferior pottery so the vessel could be sold for a higher price than what it is worth. High quality pottery was stamped "sine cera" (without wax) to show that it had not been doctored. In regard to people, this says that a sincere person is one who is not hiding his true nature by hypocritical words or actions.

In the Greek text, the word translated "without hypocrisy" is ἀν-υπόκριτος. We get our word "hypocrite" and "hypocritical" from the last part of this word. ἀν-υπόκριτος means "without a mask." I can't wait until we can be ἀν-υπόκριτος

concerning these COVID masks. It refers to the way in which Greek actors would show tragedy or comedy or melodrama by the masks that they wore. When Paul tells us that love is to be *ὄν* (“not”) hypocritical, he is saying that love is not an outward show, but is genuine. In other words, we are to get off the stage and drop our masks.

Probably the clearest example of hypocritical love in Scripture is Judas. He pretended devotion to Jesus to achieve his own selfish purposes. His hypocrisy was unmasked and his true intentions were evident when he betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Conversely, one of the best examples of un-hypocritical love is Joseph in the Old Testament. Joseph is one of my heroes for a number of reasons. He is such an example of diligence, perseverance, and integrity. But probably one of his greatest virtues is his dedication to and love for his family and especially to his brothers who severely mistreated him. At the end of all his abused life, he takes care of his brothers. He refuses to be bitter towards them.

If anyone had a right to be bitter, certainly Joseph is among the top of the list. His brothers verbally and emotionally abused him. They physically abused him and threw him in a pit. They sold him into slavery as a young man. In slavery, he was falsely accused and went to prison for a crime he did not commit. He was ripped away from his family that he dearly loved. Even when he saw his brothers again, they were still lying and telling Joseph that they had a brother who was dead.

But when all is said and done, Joseph demonstrated sincere love for his brothers. That is a supernatural love. He brought them down to Egypt and put them in the best place that Egypt had to offer. He fed them and provided for them. His love was not just a warm fuzzy. There was a clear demonstration of love for them.

The source of this love was God’s work in his life. He understood the sovereignty of God and how God worked all the trials and difficulties for good. When he was in a position to retaliate against his brothers, his attitude was, “Who am I to act as if I am in the position of God?” What an example of un-hypocritical love. Of course, there is a greater example of love than this—it is the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for us, even when we hated Him.

He commands those who are transferred into His family to love one another as He has loved them. This command is not to give one another a warm fuzzy; rather, it demands a selfless commitment to love one another. God designed

new life in Christ to be lived out in a community, a family setting. The Christian life requires relationships of mutual affection among the members of God's family.

Peter reiterates this kind of sincere love, this un-hypocritical love that is to be demonstrated in the Church. 1 Peter 1:22 reads, "*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart . . . .*"

*Sincere love of the brethren* – This describes the natural bent produced in the heart of one who is born again and whose soul is purified. Salvation brings an innate desire to love other believers. Jesus commanded in John 13:34, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*"

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, there comes a change of life, and one of the changes is this supernatural desire and ability to love others. This command to love cuts across cultural norms, personality make-up, geographic and time barriers. His command is for every believer of every age.

The noun that Peter uses is philadelphia, which is "*love for your brothers or brotherly love.*" It was used in secular Greek of the mutual love of natural brothers and sisters; but in the New Testament, it is always used of affection for those who are spiritual brothers and sisters in the faith. This affectionate relationship to fellow believers is the sure mark of the new birth.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.* [Simply put, if you have no love for Christian brothers and sisters, you are still abiding in death.]

This verse applies to testing ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Love for other believers is a sure test. Do you have a supernatural commitment and affection to other believers no matter what the circumstance that demonstrates itself in acts of love?

The word "sincere" that Peter uses here is the same Greek word that Paul uses in our Romans passage. Again, there was the practice of ancient Greek actors who wore a mask to represent some fictitious character, and so they played a pretended part. Peter insists that this brother-love should be sincere or without hypocrisy. There should be a true, heart-felt love; not just an outward show that lacks inner drive.

Hypocrisy is when we wear one mask when we are with one person or one group of people, then another mask with others. Paul exhorted the Corinthians who were known to have strife and relational chaos among themselves in 2 Corinthians 12:20 when he wrote, *“For I am afraid that perhaps when I come . . . that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance . . . .”* All those adjectives go together. For example, when you and I participate in gossip you can know that there is also, jealousy, anger, arrogance and other deeds of the flesh. We are not demonstrating sincere love. One of the six things that God hates in Proverbs 6 is “. . . the one who spreads strife among brothers.”

Hebrews 12:14 *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled . . . .*

Gossip, hypocrisy and spreading bitterness defile all those who come into contact and are not part of sincere love from a purified heart. Hypocritical love spreads bitterness, jealousy and is a demonstration of arrogance.

As I said, Peter used philadelphia to describe love in the Church. It may help us to realize that the word for love that Paul uses in verse 9 is agape. It is the love of God that is shown to fallen mankind through the death of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This love is shed abroad in the hear of Christians by the Holy Spirit.

This agapê is sincere by definition. God is utterly unvarying and authentic in His love for us. It is this true, Godlike love that we are to have for other people. God commands us in 1 Peter 4:8, *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.”*

If we are new creatures in Christ, then we must love without hypocrisy since this is the very nature of the love that has been placed within us by the Father. We must be “sine cera” (seenay kayrra), “without wax,” sincere. The second truth about love that v.9 states is love is discerning.

### Love is Discerning

*Let love be without hypocrisy. **Hate what is evil**; cling to what is good.*

Romans 12:9

In the Greek text, “hate and cling” are participles meaning “hating and clinging” so it literally says, “hating what is evil; clinging to what is good.” So it is clear that they are linked to the former statement and describe how love is to operate.



These are not independent statements or commands. Paul is saying, "Let love be without hypocrisy, hating what is evil; clinging to what is good."

What this teaches us is that love is discerning. For some people it may come as a shock to discover the word "hate" immediately after the words "love must be sincere." First, love; then hate! The two seem contradictory to most of us. But they are not. Their positioning in this verse teaches an important truth: love must be discerning. Real love does not love everything; on the contrary, it hates what is evil and clings to what is good.

One of the greatest statements in the Bible is that God is love. But God is not only love. He is also light which refers to His holiness. He also hates some things in the sense that He hates what is evil with a proper, righteous hatred.

Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us seven things that God hates: *"haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers."*

Isaiah 1:12-15 tells us that God hates religion that is merely formal: *When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.*

In Amos 5:21 God says, *"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies."* The reason for God's hate is that these merely formal observances are hypocritical, and love is not hypocritical. What a penetrating question to ask ourselves, "Is my religion merely formal? Are my religious trappings only exterior?"

Psalms 97:10 *Hate evil, you who love the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.*

Genuine hatred of evil inclines us to avoid evil. Someone has said that the best security against sin is to be shocked by it. But the constant bombardment of our senses through TV, magazines, movies, the internet, our smartphones with the immoralities, violence, and perversions of modern society makes it difficult to be shocked by anything. Sadly, we can find ourselves turning to these things for

entertainment thinking that we are somehow immune from their influences.

So if we love as God loves then there will be things that we must hate, just as there will also be things we must love. For example, we will hate the violence done to people by whatever name—nationalism, ethnic cleansing, racial or religious pride, abortion. At the same time, we will demonstrate love to those who are guilty of doing the violence because we desire for them to turn from their ways.

Furthermore, we will hate lying, especially by those who are in important positions—CEOs and other heads of corporations, political figures, presidents, and even pastors. We will hate what their lies do to others. Yet we will love the Truth and will at the same time also love those who are lying for we will see them as people who need the Savior.

### Love Clings to Good

*Let love be without hypocrisy. Hate what is evil; **cling to what is good.***

Romans 12:10

That is what love does. Love hates evil. But love also clings to what is good. The Greek word rendered “cling” means “to glue.” So the idea is that true love will bond us to the good. We will stick to it like epoxy. As servants of Jesus Christ, we are to bind ourselves to what is good—that which is inherently right and worthy.

Philippians 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell\* on these things. (\*Cling to these things)*

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 *But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22abstain from every form of evil.*

This is a clear call to discernment. Paul has already told us not to be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. As we separate ourselves from the things of the world and saturate ourselves with the Word of God, the things that are good will more and more replace the things that are evil.

So the love that Paul is talking about is not sentimental mush but rather is concerned for what is good. It is both genuine and discriminating. The next verse flows right out of verse 9, and I will conclude by just introducing it.

## Conclusion

Romans 12:9,10 *Let love be without hypocrisy...hating what is evil; clinging to what is good. 10Be devoted to one another in brotherly love;*

I get the strong sense that love in the Church is very important to Christ. These words mean “in respect to the love of our Christian brothers and sisters, we are to be marked by a devotion that is characteristic of a loving, close-knit, and mutually supportive family.”

Verse 10 in the King James Version reads, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love.” “*Kindly*” is based on the word “kin/kinfolk” meaning family. So again, we are being told that we are to love and treat Christians as we would members of our family. For example, if three men are sitting together and two of the men are identical twins and one is a believer and the other is not. But the third man is a believer from some distant land. His culture, background and language are all different. The color of his skin is different, but he knows the Lord as Savior. The Christian twin is actually closer to the “foreigner” than he is to his twin brother.

Christians are family regardless of their background, ethnicity, nationality, occupation, wealth, or education—or even whether we are attracted to or like another believer. That is irrelevant. My dad always had us sing “Blessed Be the Tie That Binds” whenever we got together for family reunions. The first verse of goes like this: “Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.”

“Kindred minds” means the minds of those who are spiritual kin—members of God’s new family on earth. So our devotion to one another is a matter of life. The contemporary church will never have the power of the early church until today’s Christians love one another as a close-knit family.