



# New Covenant

*Presbyterian Church*

## ROMANS 12.9-21 SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. How is what Paul writes in Romans 12:9-21 related to what he has said in chapters 1-11 and 12:1? Why is it so important for us to read it and receive it in its proper context?

What Christ has done is always foundational to what we are then called to do. If we take Romans 12-14 out of the context of what Paul has told us in Romans 1-11 we will end up with theological liberalism. The applications that Paul sets out can only and ever be kept “by the mercies of God” (Rom. 12:1). The ideas of Jesus can never be rightly understood or implemented apart from the knowledge of His Person and His atoning work on the cross.

2. Romans 12:9-21 is divided in two parts. What are they?

Love to fellow believers within the church. Love to those within the world (even those who are hostile toward us in the world).

3. What application does Paul start with when he turns his attention to the covenant community on the whole? Why does he begin with this?

Paul begins with love because the Scriptures teach that “love is the bond of perfection,” and “All the law is fulfilled in this one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

4. How is this emphasis on love (as the outworking of our having been redeemed) tie into the Gospel and what Paul says earlier in the letter?

We only know how to love because Christ has first loved us in His death on the cross. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this than to lay down his life for his friends.”

“Jesus Christ has given us a great evidence of His love to us; He bled love at every vein.” - Thomas Watson

5. Why do you think that Paul leads with the qualification “without hypocrisy” (or, “genuine”) in the first imperative about loving one another?

It is possible to pretend love with our mouths and actions while having bitterness and enmity toward an individual in our heart.

Thomas Watson said that hypocritical love is like the bee who holds honey out in his mouth but has a stinger ready to sting you with in his tail. He also said that it is like fire painted on the wall that gives no warmth. It does no one any good. Compare with what Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:1-4.



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6. How is the second part of verse 9 related to the first part? Why is it a necessary step in what Paul is seeking to do? What does it guard against?

It is possible to have skewed understanding of what “love” looks like. One of the descriptions that Paul gives to true love in 1 Corinthians 13 is that “it does not rejoice in iniquity, but it rejoices in the truth.” If we love God we will love the truth of His word. We will love men but will hate all false teaching and false living. This is what it means to love sincerely in the realm of abhorring evil.

7. Why does Paul move from the call for us to love those within the church to those within the world in this passage? Is this order of application intentional or arbitrary?

It must first begin in the church or it will never happen in the world. Sinclair Ferguson notes, “You’re never going to be a bringer of harmony--a peacemaker--in the world if you’re a bringer of disharmony in the church.”

8. What does Paul say earlier in the letter that undergirds this command for us to love our enemies?

God demonstrated His own love to us in that while we were enemies Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-11). No one carried this imperative out like the Lord Jesus. Jesus loved His enemies in the flesh and His spiritual enemies. When he hung on the cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.” Jesus’ last miracle was an act of kindness in healing the ear of the Malcus, the High Priests servant, who came to arrest Him in the Garden. Who has ever loved like Jesus loved. When James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven against those who rejected the Gospel, Jesus said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy lives, but to save them.”

9. What is our natural reaction when someone has wronged us? What ought our response be in light of this text?

Vindication and malice.

10. Why is it important for us to proactively seek to return evil with good? Are there people in your life with whom you might have opportunity to do so?

God commands it. He has blessed us in order that we might be a blessing to others.