

## The Church: The Gospel Made Visible (Part 2) Reacting and Responding as Christians

Romans 12:14-16  
Sunday, June 14, 2020

### Introduction

Throughout the Bible we find the use of the imagery of light and darkness. God and the things of God are called light, while the ways of the world and those separated from God are called darkness.

As those who are in a relationship with God through Christ, not only are we identified as light (Ephesians 5:8), but we are called to shine as lights so the world can see the work of God and give Him glory (Matthew 5:14-16).

Last week we started considering a section of commands in Romans 12 with this in mind: that God intends to use His church, and our presence in this world, as a means of revealing His character and the power of the Gospel. We must speak the Gospel, but we also have the opportunity to live in a way that makes the power of the Gospel visible to a watching world.

### Context – Romans 12

- **The structure of Romans** – In Romans 1-11 Paul provides a full explanation of the Gospel. He explains our sin condition, how salvation is accomplished and how it is applied. After this foundation is laid, in Romans 12 he begins to explain (in very practical ways) the way those who have been changed by the Gospel should live.
- **Romans 12:9-21** – At first read these verses may appear simply to be a long list of commands – but there is a progression. Paul begins with a focus on relationships within the church and then moves out to include our relationships with those outside of the church – particularly opponents. In addition, the first command of verse 9 (let love be genuine) is the primary command and all of the rest flow out of it.

### The Gospel is made Visible through our Reactions and Responses

- While vv. 9-13 helped us consider how we proactively love one another, vv. 14-16 focus more on our responses to those around us. Of course, these responses are very different from the ways we naturally respond and serve as a witness to of the work of God in our lives.
- **We must be a people who respond to persecution with blessing and not cursing (vs. 14)**
  - **The surety of persecution** – While we live in a time and place where we are often shielded from opposition, the Scriptures are clear that the norm for Christians is persecution. Just as Jesus was hated, we too can expect to be hated (John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12).

- **Blessing our persecutors** – In this context, to bless someone is to ask God to show them favor. We should desire for them to see God and to be changed by Him as we have (Matthew 5:43-44).
- **Bless and don't curse** – Our natural desire may be for God to punish or harm our enemies, but the call of this command is to ask God to show mercy and grant them grace rather than His wrath (Acts 7:59-60; Luke 23:34; 1 Peter 2:19-23).
- **We must be a people who respond to those around us with genuine empathy (vs. 15)**
  - **Rejoice with those who rejoice** – While this may seem like an easy command compared to others, it is often harder than we think. Our flesh struggles with envy and jealousy. When others receive things we may desire we must rely on the Spirit to help us enter into their joy (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).
  - **Weep with those who weep** – True empathy goes beyond saying *I'm sorry* or *I'm praying for you*; this command calls us to bear one another's burdens and walk with others in their grief. We must learn to be present and compassionate (Colossians 3:12).
- **We must be a people who respond with a desire for unity (vs. 16a)**
  - The word 'harmony' in the ESV carries more weight than we may recognize. This is a call for us to be of one mind with one another. We are to strive for agreement in the truth and to be an example of godly unity (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; John 13:35).
- **We must be a people who respond with humility toward others (vs. 16b-c)**
  - The final three commands of verse 16 all encourage us toward humility in our views and attitudes of those around us.
  - **Do not be haughty** – Haughtiness can manifest itself in many ways, but at its' core it means thinking too much of ourselves and it usually leads to us thinking too little of others (1 Timothy 6:17).
  - **Associate with the lowly** – The Scriptures acknowledge that there are those whose situations and gifts are more humble. We honor God as we love all men well, especially those who are perceived as lowly (Luke 14:12-14; James 2:1-9).
  - **Do not be wise in your own sight** – Our temptation is often to think too much of our own wisdom. This sin will lead to haughtiness and make it harder to truly empathize with others.

**Conclusion** – As we live in ways that are contrary to the ways of the world God can use our obedience to show the power of the Gospel and His own glory in the world thereby drawing others to Himself (Matthew 5:14-16)