

## The Church: The Gospel Made Visible (Part 1)

Romans 12:9-13  
Sunday, June 7, 2020

### Introduction

After eleven weeks of not gathering together in person, we are starting to come back together. It is a sweet time. And yet, it is also a somber time as we consider the disunity and division that is plaguing our nation.

This morning as we turn to God's Word we are going to consider how 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. All around us people are searching for peace and justice and hope – and these are all things that are only ultimately found in Jesus Christ.

And while we are called to proclaim the Gospel with our lips, we must also recognize that our transformed lives, joined together, are designed by God to announce to the world the kind of hope He offers. 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. And it is this kind of living that Paul describes in Romans 12:9-21.

### 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.
- **The recipients of Romans** – As we consider our context, it's worth noting that the original recipients of Paul's letter were facing their own challenges. They were navigating racial divides as well as living under a governmental regime that was increasingly hostile toward them.
- **Romans 12:9-21** – At first read these verses may appear 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 the church – particularly opponents.

### The Gospel is made Visible through our Sincere Love for One Another

- **The overarching command (vs. 9a)** – The first phrase of verse 9 contains a primary verb, while the commands that follow are all supporting verbs. The primary command is that we are to love one another without hypocrisy (with sincere and genuine love). The list of commands that follows helps us understand what it means to live out this kind of love (1 Peter 1:22-23; John 13:34-35).

### The Marks of a Church that is living together in Sincere Love

- **Our love must be discerning and move us to action (vs. 9)** - It's commonly said that love is blind, but genuine love must take notice and take action. If we are to rightly love one another and our world we must hate what God hates and love what God loves and in both cases we must speak the truth in love to those around us. In doing so we show the character of God and the power of the Gospel (Galatians 6:1-2, Psalm 97:10a, Ephesians 2:10).
- **Our love for one another must be loyal and selfless (vs. 10)** - One of the beautiful things about the church is that when God calls us together He doesn't call us based on how similar we are. We come from different backgrounds and we have different experiences and abilities. But we are joined together in the family of God and we are called to love one another as dear family (with brotherly affection) (1 Peter 1:22-23, 1 Thessalonians 4:9). And our love should be accompanied by honor for each member of God's family (Romans 12:3-8).
- **Our love for one another must be earnest and passionate (vs. 11)** As we consider all that God has called us to, or as life becomes more challenging we may be inclined to grow weary or complacent. But we must be faithful; we must not grow lazy or allow our passion to diminish. God's calling is significant and we should serve Him with eagerness and with all of our hearts (Ephesians 5:15-17, Gal. 6:9-10).
- **Our love for one another is shown as we maintain a godly perspective (vs. 12)** – Paul knew suffering and persecution well, but he also knew that God was always at work in His circumstances. Paul exemplified joy and endurance and calls all believers to the same. We may be tempted to look at our world and despair, but we must remember the hope of the Gospel and heed the call to endure (Romans 5:1-5; Philippians 4:4).
- **Our love for one another must be generous and tangible (vs. 13)** As we live out the implications of the Gospel within the community of faith we have a great opportunity to display the character of God and show our world an example of the love of Christ. We must recognize that living for Christ means being willing to give of what we have to those in need.

**Conclusion:** *The church is to be the appearance of the gospel. It is what the gospel looks like when played out in people's lives. Take away the church and you take away the visible manifestation of the gospel in the world . . . Christians, not just as individuals but as God's people bound together in churches are the clearest picture the world sees of who God is and what his will is for them. (Mark Dever, The Church: The Gospel Made Visible)*