

ROMANS

From Wretchedness to Righteousness

Study 19

How it Changes us on the Outside

Romans 12:9-21

True Worship Through Transformed Relationships

Recap

Romans 12:1-8 addressed serving God and serving in the Body of Christ. Romans 12:9-21 exhorts us to love one another and enemies.

Part 3 of 4: Loving One Another (Romans 12:9-16)

Verse 9-16

Romans 12:9-16

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

1) Comprehension question. With the help of the definitions given in the video lecture, rephrase or give a modern example of the act of love.

Recipe for Love	Verse	Modern example or rephrase
1) Sincerity	Love must be sincere.	
2) Discernment	Hate what is evil; cling to what is good	
3) Affection	Be devoted to one another in love.	
4) Honour	Honor one another above yourselves.	
5) Enthusiasm	Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.	
6) Patience	Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.	
7) Generosity	Share with the Lord's people who are in	

	need.	
8) Hospitality	Practice hospitality.	
9) Good will	Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.	
10) Sympathy	Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.	
11) Harmony	Live in harmony with one another.	
12) Humility	Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.	

Part 4 of 4: Loving Our Enemies (Romans 12:14, 17-21)

Verse 14, 17-21

Romans 12:14, 17-21
 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
 if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

2) a) Fill in the blanks. Just not retaliating our enemies isn't what the Christian philosophy is, what are the do's and don'ts for our enemies according to Paul in verse 14 and 17-21?

Verses	Don'ts	Do's
14		
17		
18		
19		

20	-	
21		

b) Fill in the blanks. What is the burning coals metaphor in verse 19? Isn't it a bad thing? Fill in the blanks on what John Stott's comment on the burning coals are in the video lecture.

Burning coals represent a dynamic symbol of		Which takes place as a result of
	...the coals of fire heaped on him are	Not to hurt,
	In fact, to	

c) Fill in the blanks. Why must we love our enemies according to Martin Luther King Jr's quote in the video lecture?

"Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, "Love your enemies." It is this: that love			
has within it a		And there is a power there that eventually	
	Just keep being friendly to that person. Just keep loving them, and		
they can't stand it too long ..."	"... Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning.		
They react with guilt feelings, and sometimes they'll hate you a little more at that transition			
period, but		And by	
they will break down under the load..."	"... That's love, you see. It is		
and this is why Jesus says love. There's something about love that			
	There is something about hate that		
	So love your enemies."		

Takeaway for Romans 12:9-21

Part 3 of 4: Loving One Another (Romans 12:9-16)

Part 4 of 4: Loving Our Enemies (Romans 12:14, 17-21)

Case Study

Case 1

Barbie Khew, a new believer learns about “love is sincere”, she asks you, a bible study leader: “How to be sincere to someone with a bad personality? Pretend for 5 minutes can I do that but from the heart cannot I do that.”

3) a) Discussion question. How do you answer Barbie?

Model Answer

This does not mean that you should never do a loving deed unless you “feel” loving! It means rather, that as we do loving deeds, we must work on our hearts to put aside condescension, irritability, bias, and selfishness. It is hypocritical to act loving when in your heart you despise someone. On the other hand it is unrealistic to insist that one’s heart be warm and kindly disposed before we do kind actions of love. So what is the solution?

There is a third way. A Christian goes about doing love while repenting, softening the heart through the recollection of his sacrifice for us (Rom.12:1-2). How does this work? The gospel is this: we are not loved because we are lovely, in spite of our unloveliness. We are not loved because we have made ourselves worthy of love, but because Jesus died for us when unattractive in order to make us attractive. Now if Christians think of this as they are serving unattractive persons, they will find a repentance growing. “Oh, Lord! I was so much more unattractive to you than this person is to me. Yet you were tortured and killed — you gave up your life for me! And all I need to do is to give up some time and effort for this person.” Now a person who does not understand the gospel cannot do this. A person who is just generally moral and nice cannot do this. They have to choose between the two inadequate alternatives, either: a) phony love (niceness toward people you dislike) or b) sporadic love (kindness only toward people you like). But if you show love as you repent, your heart is softened as you serve, and your service is sincere toward God at that moment, and becomes more sincere toward the people as you go along.

b) Reflection question. How does the gospel (as opposed to mere moralism) give us the only answer to really sincere love?

Case 2

Toh Ai Latt after learning that Christians promote sacrificial love says: “Not practical la, how can? Who will take care of us if we think of others first? We must be able to love ourselves first before loving others! If people know Christians are supposed to sacrifice, they abuse us for sure!”

4) a) Discussion question. How do you respond to Ai Latt?

Model Answer

The Bible makes much of Jesus’ sacrificial love for us. He was stripped and killed in order to love us. In our day, there is a great emphasis in the psychology/ therapy culture on “being good to yourself.” Why? Many counselors see people who are so needy for love (out of a deep conviction that they are unlovely) that they allow others to walk all over them and abuse them. As a result, the wisdom of our age says: “Find out what you want and go for it. Stay in a relationship if it is mutually beneficial for you both. But if you have to make lots of sacrifices, that is unhealthy. Have a better estimate of your own value! You don’t need this. Get out. Let the person stand on his/her own feet!” The problem with this is that it is too simple and reductionistic. The world does not understand the gospel nor the forms of sin and self-righteousness, and therefore it cannot tell the difference between someone who is trying to serve others as a means of finding justification and salvation from someone who is trying to serve others as a response to having justification and salvation. The classic “enabler” or “co-dependent” is someone who uses sacrifice as a way to feel worthwhile and valuable. If you don’t feel acceptable in Christ, you may get that feeling of acceptability from the love of another person. In that case, you make an idol of the beloved, and cannot say “no.” Or you make an idol of being needed, and you happily allow yourself to be abused and your martyrdom makes you feel worthy. When this dynamic occurs, the problem is not primarily too little self-love, but too much! The abused person doesn’t love the abuser, but loves the love. The abused person is too selfish to tell the abuser the truth and risk his or her loss.

Therefore, v.9 serves as a boundary against any misinterpretation of v.10-16. It is not loving to let the beloved sin against you. To allow or promote sin is never the best thing for anyone. Also, “holding fast to what is good” means we must not sin against ourselves. In other words, we must not love others in such a way as to disobey God and be poor stewards of our physical and emotional health or of our families.

What then is the “boundary” of sacrificial love, practically speaking? The Bible does not say you must confront people the minute they sin. No, we are to forgive and “cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). It is not until we see a beloved person “caught” in a trespass (Gal.6:1ff) that we are to confront. That means we wait until we see a repeated sinful pattern that is harmful. In short, we must only let mercy limit mercy. We are to only stop and confront when to not do so would be unmerciful. We don’t confront out of irritation or love for our own comfort, but out of mercy.

Case 2.1

Toh Ai Latt retorts: “What if our life is in danger? Just let them kill us?”

b) Discussion question. How do you respond to Ai Latt?

Model Answer

a) What things are we to do to those who are hostile to us?

a) The basic principle laid down in summary in v.21 is “overcome evil with good.” The word “overcome” is a military word, and it means to “overpower.” It is an extremely penetrating and radical insight. Paul says that to repay evil with evil is to immediately lose the battle to evil! The only way to defeat evil is with doing good to the one who has done harm. In other words, if you hate a person who has wronged you, that person has won! The only way to defeat the evil is to forgive and love the person. Another way to put it — when we identify “evil” too closely with the “evildoer,” so to destroy evil is to destroy the evildoer, we unwittingly become a pawn of the evil force that is behind the evildoer. (In Lord of the Rings, any good person who uses the Ring of the evil Lord to put down the evil Lord would become evil in the process. It is the same temptation.) So the secret of overcoming evil is for us to see “evil” as something above and distinct from the evil doer. Our basic goal is to forgive and love and show kindness to the evildoer. When we do that, there are two results: 1) The spread of evil is checked toward us. Its hatred and pride does not infect us, and 2) the spread of evil may be checked in the evildoer. He or she may be softened and helped by our love. Paul says that our good deeds and words could “pour burning coals on his head,” which is a way of saying that it is possible that repentance may occur. The hostile person may be lead to shame and alarm and remorse, rebuked by our kind life.

What this means practically:

1. To not avoid the hostile person. v.18 “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all.” It is common, when someone has wronged you, to simply avoid that person. You may say, “I am not paying them back, but I don’t want to see them.” But your avoidance could be a form of payback. To avoid the person does not overcome the evil! (See below for a qualification.)

2. To express loving words and actions. v.14 “bless” and v.20 “feed... your enemy.” This means simply that you are to speak and act courteously and kindly to those who are hostile. We must be careful here! For sometimes we may do kind things to a hostile person simply as a way to shame him/her or “rub their nose” in it. That is not the motive. We thoughtfully find ways to wish the person well and do helpful things and speak respectfully to them.

3. To forgive, and forego any repayment. v.19 “never avenge yourselves” There are boundaries though. Verse 12:9 still reminds us that we are not loving wisely or truly when we enable someone to sin or sin against us. There are great degrees of hostility. Enemies may be so dangerous that for you to have anything to do with them is to invite them to sin. In that case, the “good” you can do them is to stay away from them. See Bold Love by D.Allendar, which distinguishes between loving an evil person, a very foolish person, and a “normal”

sinner.

b) What are we to do then? (i.e. what are our motives and reasons)?

Both the power and the model for this is, of course, the gospel. Christ died for us while we were his enemies. (Romans 5:6-10). That action is not only the paradigm for us, but the thought of it becomes our power to follow through. That is why Paul here reminds us of something very powerful — “leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: ‘vengeance is mine... says the Lord” v.19. What we are being reminded is that all resentment and vengeance is taking on God’s role as judge. It is playing God. But (1) only God is qualified to be judge (we are imperfect and deserve judgment ourselves) and (2) only God knows enough to be judge (we don’t know all about the offender, what he/she has faced and deserves) and (3) Jesus took the judgment of God. So Paul is saying: “Think this! Either these persons you are angry at will repent some day and Jesus will take their judgment, or they will not and God will deal with it. But in either process, you are not involved.”

The gospel should make us remember that, if God decided to square all accounts with us, where would we be?

5) Reflection question. Reflect on yourself and rate the following and discuss ways to strengthen yourselves in these areas.

Type of love	Rate from weakest to strongest (1-9)
Love the unattractive people but with repentance and sincerity. v.9	
Love but don’t make the person an idol who leads you to allow him/her to sin or you to sin. v.9 Love with dogged affection over the long haul, no matter what. Stay loyal. vv.10-12	
Love by making people feel honored and valuable. Listen and show utmost consideration to those around you. v.10	
Love by being generous in a practical way with your home, money, and time. v.13	
Love without bitterness. Don’t pay back or hold resentment against others. v.14	
Love with empathy. Be willing to be emotionally involved with others. v.15	

Love with humility, Be willing to associate with people who are very different from you. v.16	
Love by not avoiding hostile people, but planning appropriate kind and courteous words and deeds. v.21	