

Romans Chapter 12: (9 – 21)

- 9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.
- 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
- 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
- 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
- 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
- 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.
- 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
- 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
- 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
- 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
- 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."
- 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."
- 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This text is easy to understand but very difficult to do and this is something where we have to practice in our lives. The text is a whole bunch of exhortations of do this, do that and we have the tendency to maybe get legalistic about those things as well.

How Paul is telling us to react towards the gospel in three different ways.

1. Personal behavior (verse 9, 11 and 12).
2. Behavior in relation to other believers (verse 10, 13, 15 and 16)
3. Behavior in relation to enemies.

When non-Christians look at us they will always look at three things.

- 1) How we are living our lives personally,
- 2) How are you interacting with one another,
- 3) How you are treating those outside of your group? The epitome of that is how you are treating people who are your enemies.

We also evaluate everybody based on those three things and Paul gives us insight on as Christians or how we are supposed to live out our lives in those three different areas.

The passage in Chapter 12 started with, I appeal to you therefore. Chapter 1 to 11 goes before that and we talked about the mercies of God. So Paul is saying, because you have been saved by grace through faith, therefore do all things. So we have to keep on remembering. This is always a response to the gospel. We don't live that way to be saved; we live that way because we are saved by God.

1. Personal Behavior (verse 9, 11 and 12).

How are we living our lives personally with God? How is our reaction towards the gospel personally?

We are supposed to be genuine. It says, **9 Let love be genuine**. It is not just pretending to love others, really love them. We all that famous passage in 1-Corinthians 13, it says, Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant. We go to intellectual places and we hear deep inside on how love is supposed to be and we walk away thinking we have some great knowledge on how love is supposed to be acted out. But I do not think Paul put it there, so we know how love looks like. He put it there for the Corinthian church will go and actually genuinely love people. It is not supposed to be an intellectual exercise, okay love has this kind of facets but it is for us to really go out and genuinely love people. The problem is that it is difficult. Social media trains us to be fake to a certain extent. Social media in itself is not evil but what we do it makes it so easy for us to pretend to be people we are really not and we are not even lying. So the pictures we are putting up are real pictures of our lives, but they just don't display the whole of our life. They just display the good parts of our lives. We always put the family picture where everybody is smiling; nobody has the picture where you are trying to get your children dressed for one hour. We don't have those pictures up there and you don't have the picture of when you are fighting with your spouse. You only have the picture of when you are hugging each other lovingly at a coffee shop. So everybody thinks, O that person's life is so fantastic, they always love each other. They are always going for coffee together. They are having so much fun with their children. Their children are always behaving, they always look so dressed so well because they are only seeing a certain part of people's life and not the whole version. Social media gives us that reality we live in. My question is, are we the same when we come to church. Are we giving people a fake picture that everything is okay? We are okay in every area of our lives. We are always presenting the best of our selves and actually deep down we pretend, I care for you, I love you, but when you go back home there is actually no love and no care for the person and eventually people will notice. We know in our own lives who really loves us and who really cares for us. These are the people who are going to be around when times get difficult and when difficulties happen. So one person, Richard Baxter wrote this,

They will hardly believe a man that seemeth not to believe himself. If one bid you run for your lives, because a bear, or an enemy is at your backs, and yet do not mend his own pace, you will be tempted to think that he is but in jest, and that there is really no such danger as he alleges.

He is saying if somebody comes up to you and says, there is a bear run but he is not running, you will think that he is joking. So people are going to look not just what you say but how you behave and people will see your personal lives on how you are behaving. So it is very difficult for us as Christian to preach a Christian message and tell people, our lives have been changed by Jesus, we are responding to the gospel if personally there is no change in our lives. So our personal lives really matter. Question, are we just Sunday Christians? Because

the only person that is going to see us on Sunday are the Christians. What is important is, are other people who are not Christians seeing our Christianity in our everyday life, Mondays through Saturdays or Sundays when you go home. Because that is going to be depending on if your love is real and are we genuine with each other, are we getting into spaces, are we getting into communities, are we getting into places where we being real with showing our real brokenness, showing the not so Instagram pictures of our lives, showing the realness of our lives, brokenness of our lives. Are we putting ourselves in positions where people can really loving to our lives.

2. Christians Love Righteousness.

Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

As Christians we are supposed to love righteousness. It says “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Do we want just things which are beneficial for us or do we want things which are truly good, truly righteous in the eyes of God not in the eyes of our current situation. So Christians are supposed to love the truth and they supposed to love righteousness. Different passages in the Bible where Paul says over and over again,

Galatians 4:

16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

18 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

This is a situation where Paul is talking to the Galatians and he is talking about false teachers. So there were many false teachers and they were coming and telling people good things about them for one reason so that people respond positively back to them. It is never truly loving to tell people something nice about them if it helps them to continue to sin. It is never loving to tell people something so they feel good to continue to sin. Another person once said, *It is better to say the truth and make somebody cry than lie and make them smile.* It is genuine care for others. It is sometimes the most loving thing is to able to tell somebody the truth and it is not easy because you got to step out of ourselves. The problem is why we do not tell people when they are sinning or when they are doing something wrong is because we care more about how they feel for us then how God feels for them. It is selfishness for us not to tell people when they are sinning. It takes real love to tell people. Now it says, speak the truth in love in other passages. In Ephesians, we have the teachers, we have the church, we the body of Christ, we have one another to tell each other things in love. It says rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way. So don't give the people the brutal truth. Give people the loving truth, be gentle about it. Jesus was always honest but he was always loving and gentle about it. If we give people the truth without being gentle and loving it is being self-righteousness. If we give people love without truth it is selfishness because we are just doing it for own purposes, just doing it so people feel good about you. So we are supposed to be speaking the truth in love. We are supposed to be genuine and we are supposed to love righteousness. We are supposed to love righteousness more then we love people loving us and that is the hardest thing really in Christian walk with your brothers

and sisters, with your Christian body. It is really the most hardest thing to tell people honestly and lovingly that they are doing something wrong. It is easy to tell somebody, you are doing a great job.

3. Christians Are Zealous.

11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Now we are supposed to be excited about Jesus. In our corporate life we know that. If we have a boss who is fervent about his job, he love his product, who loves his job they are going to be successful. I mean there is hardly ever been a successful CEO who was not fervent about his job. They will be fervent about things, zealous about things, interested, engaged. That is the difference between being a fan or follower. Many of us are fans, few of us are followers. There is a big difference. Fans are some people who go with the fad. The real followers does not matter who is winning, they are always going to stick with their teams and they know all the player names and they know who is playing what position. They wear their jerseys, they are distinguished. You know that they support that team; they make it very loud and clear.

We all know our music and we know the songs and I think the same thing with our Christianity. If we are really in love with Jesus, if we really understand the gospel that is what chapter 1 to 11 tells, it cannot leave us unchanged. It cannot leave us apathetic. If you understand that you have fallen short of the glory of God, there is nothing you can do to save yourself, but then God sent his son to die for you on the cross. If you really believe that Jesus is a real person who really came on earth, who really died and really resurrected, we will really be amazed by that. The problem is that there is some doubt in the way right, we must be fervent. This is God coming down and dying and miracles happen and all this thing, he died for you so you can have eternal life and that is good news. We should be affected by such kind of news. The problem is a lot of us are apathetic in our hearts.

I remember when I wasn't a Christian and I started going to church and I heard a sermon, it really struck me, the sermon was about the love. It was like one of those 40 days of love series in the church and they were talking about the opposite of love is not hate, it is apathy. When I was in college I had a world religion class and we all had to choose a religion to represent, I choose Satanism back then as I was estranged. If we read Anton LaVey satanic bible. It is interesting what he tells people. He says, *if you are going to somebody's home and they disrespect you walk away but if somebody comes in your home and disrespects you destroy them.* But if read further what he says, what is the mean to destroy somebody and he says *ignore them*, cut them out of your life. The worst bullying that happens in schools is when children just ignore that one kid. I was in a boarding school where there are many kids in Switzerland. The kids there had no relationship with their parents, they have lot of money but their parents didn't care. Most of them were chucked off into the boarding school because the father is with the fourth wife. Those kids have rich parents but they were miserable kids, because all the experience in their life was apathy. So they did not care about that. So apathy is what really blocks our heart and that is why Paul says, be fervent, be zealous. We have to be excited about Jesus. He cannot leave us unchanged.

4. Christians Are Persevering.

12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

So Christians are supposed to persevere. There are three things that we have to do when we are facing difficult times and that is a great mark. From the first century until now this is always been the mark of our Christians. These are the estranged people who are able to have joy in the midst of suffering. That is what our Christian life stands for.

People are going to look at our personal lives in three ways. Are we being genuine, are we being truthful to others, do we love what is righteous and what is good and are we persevering when difficult times happen.

2. Behavior in relation to other believers (verse 10, 13, 15 and 16)

How we are relating to other people in our own community.

We are family. We are supposed to love each other like family loves each other. So whether you are real brothers, blood brothers, born of same parents or whether we are just true Christians we are supposed to love each other in its same manner.

It also says do not gossip. We shouldn't slander one another, we shouldn't talk bad about each other, we should honour each other. It is easy for us to slander and talk bad and backbiting goes on in church all the time. It is not a mark of a Christian life.

16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

So if we are really all brothers and sisters, we are supposed to associate with people who are different from us and we are supposed to include people in our lives who are very different from us, who we might not click with, who have many different hobbies than us, who have different ideas than us, speak different languages than us. Now lowly does not always mean associate with economic status, it could be somebody who is new, does not know anybody, and could be somebody who is a bit different in their character.

Meet Each Other Needs

It talks about hospitality. Back then I think when it talks about hospitality, it is not talking too much about serving people and winning and dinning them, although I think it is included as well, opening your homes and letting Christianity invade your houses and your private lives. I think it is part of what Paul is talking about. If we look at anybody who was converted in the Book of Acts or in the gospels the people immediately brought them to their houses. Jesus came to their houses, he came to tax collectors houses, he invited them in. They went to Peter's house, they did ministry in front of Peter's house. There is always hospitality, it is always bringing people into your homes and letting them participate in your life, but it ideally talks about meeting one another needs. So if somebody needs a bed give them a bed, if somebody needs finance give them finance, if somebody needs your time give them your time. It is meeting one another's needs. So hospitality is not just inviting people and giving them a dinner in your house but it is actually being hospitable and being generous. So actually is living a generous lifestyle. So being generous with your home, with your life, with your finance, with your time and I think that is another mark of Christian community.

Share Each Other Burdens Verse 15.

It is very difficult to share one another's burden. If we don't take the time to get to know one another. If we are here on Sundays and we disappear, if we don't take the time to really get to know each other we are going to fail in this command. People don't share their burdens with somebody who they hardly know. The question is are we putting ourselves in a position in a situation in a group where I can actually do that. Are we getting into a small group or in accountability group or am I in a group with somebody where I can actually slowly get to know people, so I can be vulnerable and actually share with them so that they can know my burdens and I can know their burdens. So we can pray for one another and uphold each other one another. I think it can only happen in intimate groups. If we ask right now, who here right now wants to share their burdens probably on a microphone, I think nobody is going to do it. So if we get in touch with each other over a period of five to six months may be you get comfortable with each other, you get trust with each other, so you can share one another burdens. Christian life is not meant to be lived alone.

3. How We Behave In Relation To Enemies.

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If somebody says anything bad to us and we want to do something bad to them. It happens all the time. It is our first instinct talk. We are actually supposed to restrain ourselves from retaliating but he does not stop there, he gives us a reason why.

19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

We are not supposed to be judge. God is judge and he says vengeance is mine. He didn't say, vengeance could possibly be God's. He says vengeance is God's. He is very certain, justice will be done, we can rest in the truth and the satisfaction that Justice will be done. We can never do true justice because we never have the full truth, we never have the full understanding. So when we think that we can do justice, somebody has done something bad to me and I can know justly do something bad to them is actually wrong because we do not know the full truth. We do not know what kind of life that person had, we don't know what situation he grew up into. We have no idea what is happening in that person's life currently, what situation is that person in right now. If somebody rob from you, you have no idea what is happening in their life right now. It will be very different if you will find out that somebody robbed you just because they are greedy, I think you will have a different emotion then if you somebody robbed you because they have not eaten for four months. You are still robbed, you will still be angry but I think you will feel slightly different. You don't ever have to full truth. So we can never be truly judged, only can truly judge and he will bring justice. There is justice going to happen in two ways. Either, we are going to receive justice like any other Christian through the cross of Jesus Christ or on Judgment Day and both are just. So we are not judge. The second reason it says here, why we have difficulty to obey this command to not do evil to another because we have difficulty forgiving. When people do something wrong to us, we want to wrong them back because it is hard for us to forgive people.

If you have truly forgiven we forget the pain. If we are able to look at somebody and we are able to actually start back the relationship the person is able to pray for that person. The

number one thing is to forgive people, start praying for them. It is very difficult to stay angry and not to forgive people that you are praying for. Because when you pray, you are praying to God and you realize how you have fallen short of his glory and every time you communicate with him you realize while has forgiven me and if you are saturated in that love and that forgiveness daily then slowly you will realize that I can give that forgiveness to somebody else who has wrong me as well. So it is really hard to not forgive somebody you pray for them. So pray for your enemies.

Actively Do Good.

So it is not just good enough to not do evil. We are supposed to actively do good onto the people. It is already hard to do that to your friends, but he is asking us to do it to our enemies and there are three reasons why we can do it. It is because Christ was good to his enemies. We see his example in his leadership in that.

The second thing is God was good to you when you were his enemy. Christ died for us when we were yet sinners. Our sin to God is far greater than anybody else's sin to us. We all have fallen short of the glory of God and how much forgiveness he gives us and slowly we can learn how to forgive others as well. So your goodness can convict your enemies.

It says here, give people forgiveness, give them grace, and give them mercy. It is kind of like hot cold on their head. This is not a statement of vengeance, yeah they will burn. This is not what he is trying to say, it is an Old Testament image of repentance. If you give grace and mercy and goodness onto other people it will lead them to repentance. I think Proverbs says that a gentle word can break a bone. So what he is saying is as long as we are good to people we can bring them to repentance.