

## Romans 12:9-21

### Introduction

1. Last week we began the practical application section of Romans, chapters 12-15
2. We learned that the first two verses of chapter 12 are where we find the primary imperative(s) for all of 12-15:
  - a. Present your bodies as living sacrifices to God
  - b. Be transformed by the renewing of our minds, not conformed to the world
3. Each of the remaining sections in chapters 12-15 are a description, or instructions, on how to carry this out:
  - a. The first thing Paul chose to address in regard to living such a transformed life is found in 12:3-21 and deals with making sure we have a proper view of our place and value in the body of Christ (e.g. not thinking too highly of ourselves than we should)
  - b. He covers three related topics or areas of concern in regard to this in vs. 3-21:
    - 1) 3-8: Spiritual gifts
    - 2) 9-13: Love for one another
    - 3) 14-21: blessing those who persecute us
  - c. Last week we learned how God has equipped each of us with spiritual gifts, and that no gift is more important than another, and that we should use these gifts to serve one another
  - d. Today we are going to look at the remaining two areas—love for one another and blessing those who persecute us

### A. Our love for one another should be without hypocrisy (12:9-13)

1. Most English translation treat/translate verses 9-13 as a series of imperatives (commands), but there are actually no imperatives in these verses.
2. In fact, there is no main verb in the passage, but rather the verb is implied and it is then followed by a list of participles (ing words) and datives (think phrases that begin with “to” in English like “to brotherly love”, “to honor”, etc.) which serve to modify or clarify the main point of the verses
3. The main point of these verses is found in v. 9: **“Let love be without hypocrisy...”**
  - a. The Greek is literally three words: “love (noun) without hypocrisy” --the verb has to be supplied so most translations render it “let love be” or “love must be” and either is appropriate
    - 1) Love here is agapao which refers to sincere appreciation or high regard for others
    - 2) To be without hypocrisy means that it is genuine or sincere
    - 3) In other words, Paul is referring to real, Christ-like love
  - b. The context indicates Paul’s intent is for this to carry the weight of a command
  - c. There are two participles that follow this and they modify the implied verb:
    - 1) The first is found in the phrase **“Abhor what is evil”** which is actually **“abhorring what is evil”** (9b):
      - a) To abhor something means to hate or despise something strongly, to be repulsed by it, to the point of wanting to avoid it

- b) So what does Paul say we should despise? Evil: the word he uses can connote a number of things but generally speaking it refers to moral filth and wickedness

Faith Baptist counselor calling out adultery who called his sin “an affair” — “No, let’s call what you did what it is: adultery. It wasn’t an affair. It was wickedness.”

- c) Since Paul is addressing interpersonal relationships here, he is referring to evil or wicked behavior towards one another, and we are to despise that kind of behavior if our love is to be sincere
- 2) The second participle is found in the phrase “**cling to what is good**” which is actually “**clinging to what is good**” (9c):
- a) In a literal sense, the word for “cling” here refers to joining things together by gluing or cementing them. Figuratively in the NT it’s used to refer to clinging to something, coming into close contact, and associating with someone or something
  - b) Here, we are to cling (glue ourselves to???) to that which is “good” (morally good)
  - c) As was the case with “evil” above, the good to which Paul refers here refers to behavior toward one another
  - d) In other words, in order for our love to be sincere, we must despise wicked and immoral behavior and cling to behavior which is morally good toward one another
- d. Everything else that comes in v. 10-13 now defines for us the MANNER in which we are to cling to good by using eight participles (Note: the reason I believe 10-13 modifies 9c above is because the structure changes here with each of the following phrases beginning with the dative, unlike v. 9 where the participle leads the phrase):
- 1) We are to give preference to one another: “**Be devoted to one another with mutual love; give preference to one another in honor**” (10)—more literally, “**in brotherly love [and] devotion toward one another, in honor giving preference to one another**”
  - 2) We are to diligently serve the Lord (by serving one another is implied): “**not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord**” (11)—more literally, “**in haste without lagging, being fervent in spirit, serving the Lord**”
  - 3) We are to rejoice in hope: “**rejoicing in hope**” (12a)
  - 4) We are to persevere in difficulty: “**persevering in tribulation**” (12b)
  - 5) We are to pray continually: “**devoted to prayer**” (12c)—more literally, “**in prayer continuing intensely**”
  - 6) We are to meet one another’s needs: “**contributing to the needs of the saints**” (13a)
  - 7) We are to be hospitable: “**practicing hospitality**” (13b)—more literally, “pursuing hospitality” (the Greek word implies hospitality to those outside the immediately family and close friends)
  - 8) These are the “good” that we are to cling to, and anything that runs contrary to these things we should despise
  - 9) This is what it means for our love to be sincere, without hypocrisy
- e. So, last week Paul reminded us that to keep ourselves from thinking too highly of ourselves, we should consider that God has gifted each of us with spiritual gifts, none being more important than another, but each designed to serve the body
- f. Here, he reminds also to not think too highly of ourselves by reminding us to love one another sincerely, without hypocrisy

- g. Now, he moves on to a final area designed to keep us from thinking too highly of ourselves

B. Love should be reflected in our interactions even when mistreated (14-21)

Note: there are three groups of imperatives, and one set of imperatival infinitives, that create the four points below.

1. We are to be kind when mistreated (14-16a): **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”**—1CO 4:12; 1TH 5:15
  - a. Most instances of persecution in the NT refer to Christians being persecuted by non-Christians and that might be Paul’s intent here
  - b. However, the context seems to suggest animosity among Christians (based on the call to live harmoniously with “one another” in v. 16).
  - c. Bless (eulogeo) is used in three primary ways in the NT:
    - 1) To praise or speak well of someone
    - 2) To bestow divine favor on someone
    - 3) To act kindly toward someone—it is likely this third meaning that Paul has in mind here
    - 4) When we are persecuted, mistreated, etc. we are to respond with kindness
      - a) Matthew 5:44: **“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”**
      - b) 1 Corinthians 4:12: **“...when we are reviled, we bless, when we are persecuted, we endure.”**
      - c) 1 Peter 3:9: **“not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”**
- 5) We are not to **“curse”** those who persecute us (13b)—to curse means to cause harm to someone by means of what we say, or to ask God to do the same
2. We are to be empathetic toward one another (15-16a; the next two commands are actually imperatival infinitives which are extremely rare and found only twice in the NT, here and Philippians 3:16):
  - a. **“Rejoice with those who rejoice”**—another way to say this might be “be happy when others are happy” or celebrate their happiness with them
  - b. **“Weep with those who weep”**
    - 1) **“be[ing] of the same mind toward one another...”**
    - 2) **“not being haughty but associating with the lowly (downcast)”**
3. We are not to return evil for evil, but leave room for God’s judgment (16b-20): **“Do not be wise in your own estimation...”**
  - a. Wise in regard to what? Thinking we should avenge ourselves for the evil done against us:
    - 1) Lit. **“no one giving back evil for evil”** (17a)
    - 2) **“Respect[ing] what is right [good] in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be[ing] at peace with all men.”** (17a-18)
  - b. Instead, we should leave room for God to judge: **“Never tak[ing] your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL**

**REPAY,' says the Lord. 'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD'"**  
(19-20)

4. We are not to be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (21): **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**
  - a. The word for “overcome” means to conquer (as the Holman), to have victory over something
  - b. In this case, Paul says that we conquer evil—have victory over it—by returning good when wronged

Mom’s wisdom and approach when dealing with the public

Rick and Nancy wanting to punch me in the face

#### Conclusion

1. Paul began the practical application section of Romans with a the charge that we are to present our lives as living sacrifices to God in response to what He has done for us
2. He stated that this can only occur if we allow ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, rather than being conformed to this world
3. He then provides real life examples of what this looks like and begins with our interpersonal relationships:
  - a. First by calling on us not to think more highly of ourselves than we should and reminding us that each member of the body has been given spiritual gifts and play a equally important role in the body of Christ
  - b. Then in our passage today he reminded us that our love for one another should be without hypocrisy—we should be driven to reject what is evil and cling to what is good, even when mistreated
4. Isn’t that ultimately what God did with the Gospel?
  - a. Did he not love us without hypocrisy—He is a God of love and mercy and demonstrated this by sending His Son to die in our place when we did not deserve it
  - b. Did He not overcome our evil by His good?