

## Love Towards Believers & The World (12:9-21)

- Beginning with Romans 12:9-21, we find a series of commands or exhortations concerning our daily walk. These exhortations are essentially an injunction to deep, practical love. Love is the mark that God truly is working in and through our lives (John 13:35). Christian or agape love is expressed in what it DOES; it is seen in its ACTIONS, not by lofty concepts (1 John 3:18). 14 traits of love:

### 1. Love Towards Fellow Believers (12:9-13)

- Paul deals with the importance of demonstrating love to fellow believers.
- Love Must Be Sincere (v9a). Love must not be hypocritical (cf Luke 22:48). Everything we do for one another has to be done out of love. And this love must be genuine, sincere, and unfeigned.
- Love Must Be Holy/Pure (v9b). Love does not embrace evil; it clings to that which is good. To “abhor” evil is to hate evil so much that we turn away in disgust from it (Ps 97:10; Gen 39:9). True love involves a deep hatred for all that is evil. The opposite of abhorring what is evil is to “cleave” or be glued to what is good (Phil 4:8). Christians must take a clear and unequivocal stand against the evil and for the good. The 2 go together.
- Love Must Be Affectionate/Devoted (v10a). The expression “*kindly affectioned*” means “to love as family” (philostorgos) - just as we would love our own family members. To stress the point, Paul adds “*with brotherly love*” (philadelphia). Believers should have a strong, natural affection for one another (1 John 4:20-21).
- Love Must Honour Others (v10b). When it comes to being honoured, put others ahead of ourselves (Phil 2:3). Love is happy to see others honored and preferred (eg. Jonathan recognized David would be king of Israel).
- Love Must Be Enthusiastic (v11). Our love is to be active; it is not to be a lazy love.
  - “*Not slothful in business*” is translated as “not lagging behind in diligence.” The idea is that we should be diligent in all that we do, with intense effort and motivation (Eccl 9:10).
  - “*Fervent in spirit.*” The word “fervent” means “to bubble, boil” (cf Luke 24:32; Acts 18:25). It is the opposite of apathy and indifference, the plague of Christian service (Rev 3:15-16). Every Christian should have a zeal and enthusiasm for Christ that is obvious to the world.
  - The key is because we are “*servicing the Lord.*”
- Love Must Be Patient (v12). While we wait for Jesus to return from heaven, we must be patient in hard times, constantly praying, and rejoicing in the hope of better days to come (Rom 8:24-26).
  - Believers should be the most joyful people in the world (1 Thess 5:16). To be joyful, we must have the hope of eternal life & glory which the gospel produces.

- It is because of hope that we can endure and persevere in the midst of tribulation and pressure. Hope looks beyond the present trial and lays hold of the promises of God.
- No matter what happens, we must keep on praying. Prayer is the lifeline that lays hold of the living God to supply our needs during times of tribulation. Our lives will be as hopeful, joyful, and patient, as they are prayerful.
- Love Must Be Generous (v13a). Love is not really love if it does not communicate. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them (Acts 4:34; Gal 6:10).
- Love Must Pursue Hospitality (v13b). Hospitality is literally the love of strangers, or a friend of strangers and thus one who entertains strangers (Gen 18:1-6). This is a duty often enjoined in the Scriptures (Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9).

## 2. Love Amid a Hostile & Unbelieving World (12:14-16)

- Paul broadens this responsibility to show love to include the world in general. How do you show love to a hostile & unbelieving world?
- Love Must Be Kind (v14; cf Matt 5:44). To bless means literally to "speak well." It means to say good things about the person who persecutes you. It contrasts with "*curse not*." The word "curse" means to "wish evil" upon someone. You don't wish evil upon the person who persecutes you. We do not instinctively bless those who persecute us. It is impossible on our own. It takes divine love. But if we are abiding in Jesus, we have an endless capacity to show love (Rom 5:5).
- Love Must Show Sympathy (v15). Love tries to enter into the emotions of others – Jesus wept (John 11:33-35). It is easier to weep with those who are weeping than to rejoice with those who are particularly favoured (eg. elder brother vs the prodigal son).
- Love Must Live in Harmony (v16a). Paul frequently exhorts believers to be of the same mind (Phil 2:2; 4:2). What Paul is saying is, live in harmony with one another.
- Love Must Show Humility (v16b). This is a warning not to be haughty, proud, snobbish, or exclusive (Diotrephes loves to have the pre-eminence in 3 John 9), but to make friends with ordinary people. Jesus was a friend to the publicans, sinners, outcasts and poor, etc. With God there is no respect of persons. Do not think that you are wiser than you really are (v3).

## 3. Love Towards Enemies (12:17-21)

- Paul explains what love looks like in our dealings with our enemies. The biblical principle is that Christians are to love their enemies (Matt 5:43-44).
- Love Must Be Peaceable (vv17-18). These verses contain a negative and two positive statements.

- Never pay back evil with evil (cf Luke 19:54). Paul makes it very clear that getting even is NEVER the response of love (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9; cf Matt 5:38-39).
- Give careful thought to do what is right or honourable in the sight of all men. We should think about our testimony to a watching world (2 Cor 8:21).
- We are to live peaceably with others. Paul adds two qualifications: (i) As much as that is possible - "*if it be possible*." We are not to "begin" or to "originate" a quarrel. (ii) As far as you can - "*as much as lieth in you*." We are to seek peace. If we do our part and the "irreconcilable difference" remains, it is important not to hold on to resentment.
- Love Must Not Seek Revenge (vv9-21). Love does not retaliate. The Christian response to being wronged is to do right toward his enemy, leaving all vengeance with God. Paul gives us 3 reasons for ruling out all attempts at revenge:
  - Revenge is God's Work (v19). Paul says, "Let God handle the revenge." Vengeance is one aspect of God's justice; He is the avenger of wrath. God is better at it!
  - There is a better way to get even (v20). The way to overcome wrong is to do good even to our enemies (Prov 25:21-22). "Coals of fire on the head" probably refers to the burning pain of shame and remorse which a man feels whose hostility is repaid by love. The Christian does not destroy its enemies by violence but converts them by love (1 Sam 24:16-19). The best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend.
  - Revenge destroys us but good overcomes evil (v21). To stoop to vengeance is to be conquered by evil. We have given the devil a foothold in our heart (Eph 4:26-27). Evil can never be conquered by evil (cf Prov 26:4). It is overcome with good (Luke 23:34; 1 Pet 2:21-23).
- It takes supernatural power to love our enemies because it is contrary to human nature. This kind of love is a supernatural love that can only be produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian (Phil 4:13; Rom 5:5). Only those who have experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus can manifest the love of Christ in their lives. Have you experienced the love of God in Christ?

## Notes