The Challenge To Love
Romans 12:9-16

Introduction

“Love, love, love, Christians this is your call, love your neighbor as yourself for God loves all.”

In Romans chapter 12 Paul has issued a call of dedication (vv.1-3), transformation (v.2) and honest evaluation. You are gifted. “Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not to toys to play with or weapons to fight with” (Warren Wiersbe). We sometimes lose perspective of the purpose of gifts—to glorify God and edify the Body of Christ. Gifts were given in order to be used. A failure to exercise our God given gifts results in a weak, and ineffective Church.

We should not only have an honest evaluation of our gift; we must lovingly participate in the Body of Christ! We must exercise grace! We are to love people in the Church (vv. 9-16) and the people in the world (vv.17-21).

We all know Jesus wants us to love each other. We also know how difficult love can be.

Matthew 22:37-39 (NKJV)
37 Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’
38 This is the first and great commandment.
39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

John 13:34 (NKJV)
34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

We must lovingly participate in each others lives. For some of you this is very difficult. You would much rather be alone. Yet we are commanded by Christ to love each other. How do we do what Jesus expects? We must be empowered by the Holy Spirit and filled with Jesus so that we can be mastered by love. We are to be mastered by Christ so we can be mastered by love. We must love the church and the world. In the first portion of this passage (through verse 16) the emphasis is on our attitude.


“I don’t want to. I guess I’ll just have to pretend, to make my wife happy, to make my children happy, to make my church happy.” You can pretend. But Jesus will find you out.

Loving the Brethren (vv.9-13)

(v.9a) “Let love be without hypocrisy”. People need love.
Here Paul addresses the quality of love; it must be without hypocrisy—that is in all sincerity. The word for love is the familiar word agape. Agape love has often been described as undeserved love. J. B. Phillips renders the passage “Let us have no imitation love”. No posers please.

“it is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way” (Wiersbe). Paul makes the same observation in the classic passage of 1 Corinthians 13. Love must be genuine, honest, sincere. This kind of love is humble and not proud.

**But we live in a culture that values the image rather than the thing itself. We value symbol more than substance. Our commercials tell us, “image is everything”. No—love must be sincere.** This love is not limited to the saints—it extends to the ain’ts those outside the family of God. The believer must never pretend, be hypocritical, play-act or have an ulterior motive when dealing with others. We must show love, respect, interest, attention, care, concern—but not from an impure motive. Can you think of some impure motives? “What’s in it for me?” To seek gain, to gain advantage, to gain position, to gain attention, to fulfill duty, to push self forward, to court favor, to boost self. Do you go to church to sell your product and network? Don’t get me wrong—God bless you and your product—and God bless your business—but is that the primary reason? Do you really go to church to love the Lord and others?

John 13:35 (NKJV)
35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 John 3:18 (NKJV)
18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

If the quality of love is ‘no hypocrisy’ than the morality of love is found next.

**(v.9b) “abhorr what is evil”.** One very practical way to love others—is to hate evil. The word ‘abhorr’ is one of the strongest words available in the Greek language. It means to hate with intense feeling, to loathe, to look upon with horror. Love desires the very best for people—and hating evil is necessary—because evil seeks to destroy life.

**Cling to what is good. Love is not soft on evil. Evil must be hated. Sincere love demands a recognition to hate what is evil.** “Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good” (Phillips).

C.S. Lewis wrote,

“I remember Christian teachers telling me long ago that I must hate a bad man's actions, but not hate the bad man: or, as they would say, hate the sin but not the sinner. For a long time I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how
could you hate what a man did and not hate the man? But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself.

However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact the very reason why I hated the things was that I loved the man. Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things.

Consequently, Christianity does not want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery. We ought to hate them. Not one word of what we have said about them needs to be unsaid. But it does want us to hate them in the same way in which we hate things in ourselves: being sorry that the man should have done such things, and hoping, if it is anyway possible, that somehow, sometime, somewhere, he can be cured and made human again”.


In order to hate what is evil—you must break with evil.

(v.10) Love affects our character as well as our contacts—we change on the inside—and we act differently on the outside.

Romans 12:10 (NKJV)
10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

This is love’s commitment to the church. ‘Be kindly affectionate to one another’ means devoted to one another. Here Paul combines family devotion and friendship devotion. Look at what Paul does not say, “cool-indifference or even routine acceptance”. We should long to see others honored other than ourselves.

Why don’t you call up channel seven and name someone in your church an every-day hero?

“Once a beloved servant of Christ was in a side room with other notables before a meeting. Several had already moved on to the platform and then it was his turn. When he appeared at the door, thunderous applause broke out for him. He quickly stepped aside and applauded so that he would not share the honor he sincerely thought was intended for others” (Believers Bible Commentary p.546).

Love for the bretheren is proof of spiritual life.

1 John 3:14 (NKJV)
14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.
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To dwell above, with saints in love,
   That will indeed be glory;
To dwell below with saints we know;
   Well, that's a different story!

(v.11) The exercise of love affects our character, our contacts and our conduct!

Romans 12:11 (NKJV)
11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Romans 12:11 (NLT)
11 Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Yes—we are saved by faith and justified by faith—alone—but it is never alone. Our works are external—and our enthusiasm internal.

This is love’s energetic expression. Fervent in spirit means ‘burning’. “Never lag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord”(RSV).

“If Christians cannot get along with each other how can they face their enemies?” (Warren Wiersbe).

“No lagging in diligence or even never be lazy in your work” does not apply primarily to your business employment. I am not suggesting you be lazy at work. Rather—I want to remind you about the context—of your gifts and your grace—you are to not to be lazy in the exercise of your gifts! Boil over in enthusiasm!

(v.12) we go from character, to contacts to conduct—to convictions!

Romans 12:12 (NKJV)
12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

Romans 12:12 (NLT)
12 Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.

This is love’s realistic expectation.

Those who follow Jesus face Satanic opposition and discouragement. The Christian knows that trial and suffering and persecution are a part of the Christian commitment. Humility and a willingness to share the burdens of others are true marks of the Christian who will make a difference in ministering to the body of believers in Christ Jesus the Lord.

When we love each other with fervor—you can bet it will cost you something.

“patient in tribulation”—just remember—present circumstances cannot diminish our future hope. We are to exercise patience and endure hardship like good soldiers.
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“and always be prayerful”.

Pray. Pray in Jesus name. Do you realize that when you pray in “Jesus’ name” you approach the omnipotence of God? Prayer unites our will with the will of God.

“Praise! Patience! Prayer! The Christian has an anchor for the future; he has hope! Not just a vague and sentimental optimism, but hope as bright as the promise of God. The Christian does not rebel in tribulation nor rashly accuse God. He is patient, knowing that God is too wise to make mistakes, too loving to be unkind and too powerful to be thwarted in His ultimate aims” (John Phillips pp.199-200).

(v.13) We exercise grace—and love—these affect our character, our contacts, conduct, convictions and our concerns;

CONCERN

Romans 12:13 (NKJV)
13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Love cares. Love shares. The idea is aggressive opportunities to help not just kicking back and waiting to see what might come your way!

When Paul saw the needy he took up a collection and gave it to the poor.

“A lavish generosity with one’s worldly goods is a mark of true discipleship” (John Phillips p.200).

“There (in the temple court in Jerusalem) stood thirteen chests, each with a brazen, trumpet-shaped receiver into which the worshippers dropped their offerings; nine of them were marked ‘for Jehovah,’ and four of them were marked ‘for the poor’. The widow would fain manifest her love to the Lord and to her neighbor as well. If she cast the mite into His chest it will be known in heaven that one of the Lord’s lovers has been in the treasury that day; if she casts it into the box marked ‘for the poor’ it will show her care for her fellows, but it will it not seem to place human need above divine worship? The solution she adopts is both simple and costly; she will balance the claims of heaven and earth, and drop tow mites into separate chests. With eager joy the Lord called the attention of the twelve to her actions, and offers them a problem in the arithmetic of heaven. She loved God and her neighbor.” (Harold St. John quoted by A. Naismith, 1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes (Chicago Moody Press, 1962), p.80).

Loving The Othern (vv.14-21)