

Romans 12:9-10
July 19, 2015

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Last week I suggested that Paul has put together a checklist of how our lives should be lived as children of God. There are multiple areas that he covers. I compared it to a performance review at the office. When your boss evaluates your work, you are being evaluated in different areas, e.g. skill level, people skills, the ability to problem-solve, identify strengths or weaknesses, etc.

Transition: As we go through Paul's checklist, I want to again give you a word of encouragement: We could easily read this chapter and see only our shortfalls, but let's remember that there are things we are doing right. Let's read this text and determine what our "next step" would be to help us become well-rounded as Christians. **All of us CAN strengthen our spiritual walk with the Lord BY honestly evaluating ourselves in each of the AREAS of our walk Paul identifies for us.** We will go through the text slowly and take each verse and process the meaning. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Romans 12:9-21]

V.9:

- Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

V.10:

- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.9: What does "sincere love" look like? [This is God's love, which has been ministered to believers by the Holy Spirit (5:5) and must be ministered by them to others in the Holy Spirit's power. "Sincere" translates *anypokritos* (lit., "**without hypocrisy**"); X-REF I Peter 1:22]

Observation: The Greek word behind "Hypocrisy" means "play acting." Picture a theatre or perhaps a Halloween party you've attended, and someone has a costume and is holding a stick with a mask to hide the face. This is the idea Paul is pursuing. So when Paul tells us that love must be "sincere," it means it shouldn't be an "act." Get rid of the mask.

Q: What does it look like to "hate what is evil; cling to what is good?" [Many Bible students consider these two clauses as explanatory of the sincerity of love, translating the verse, "Let love be unfeigned, abhorring the evil and cleaving to the good." Hating various forms of sin is frequently mentioned in Scripture (Pss. 97:10; 119:104, 128, 163; Prov. 8:13; 13:5; 28:16; Heb. 1:9; Rev. 2:6). Turning from evil is to accompany adhering to the good (cf. 1 Peter 3:11).]

Q v.10: What do you think it means to "be devoted in brotherly love and to honor one another above yourselves?" [God's love is to be exercised with other believers. The Greek adjective *philostorgoi*, translated **devoted**, suggests family affection. As in Romans 12:9, the second clause in verse 10 can be understood as explaining the first command. Verse 10 may be

translated, “With **brotherly love** have family affection for **one another**, in **honor** giving place to **one another**” (X-Ref Phil. 2:3, “consider others better than yourselves”; X-Ref I Peter 2:17).]

Application Q: How will you make sure that you “honor others above yourself,” or “consider others better than yourself?” Do you tape this on your bathroom mirror? Pray that the Lord help you every morning? Think about someone you don’t particularly like. Or think of someone who has less authority than you in the workplace. How does your relationship change to these individuals when you “honor them above yourself?”

LOOK:

We need to hear this because it’s time to do an assessment on how we are living out our calling as God’s children. Paul provided multiple scales to be measured by, but the goal is to do an act on the information you learn from it. Since our spiritual growth is a process, we need to think in terms of baby steps in areas we need to improve. If you haven’t been faithful in prayer, then figure out a small baby step that works for you to sharpen your prayer life. If it’s practicing hospitality, then figure out a baby step that works for you to sharpen your hospitality efforts. Let the Holy Spirit use this chapter to illumine the baby step(s) HE wants you to take and be open to it. You can’t lose!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 555–573). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Loving participation (vv. 9–16). Here the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise the spiritual gifts. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way. Paul makes this same point in 1 Corinthians 13, the great “love chapter” of the New Testament. Love is the circulatory system of the spiritual body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way. This must be an honest love, not a hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9); and it must be humble, not proud (Rom. 12:10). “Preferring one another” means treating others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:1–4).

Serving Christ usually means satanic opposition and days of discouragement. Paul admonished his readers to maintain their spiritual zeal because they were serving the Lord and

not men. When life becomes difficult, the Christian cannot permit his zeal to grow cold. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12, NIV).

Finally, Paul reminded them that they must enter into the feelings of others. Christian fellowship is much more than a pat on the back and a handshake. It means sharing the burdens and the blessings of others so that we all grow together and glorify the Lord. If Christians cannot get along with one another, how can they ever face their enemies? A humble attitude and a willingness to share are the marks of a Christian who truly ministers to the body. Our Lord ministered to the common people, and they heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37). When a local church decides it wants only a certain “high class” of people, it departs from the Christian ideal for ministry.

RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS MEAN RIGHT LIVING

Romans 12–13

In all of his letters, Paul concluded with a list of practical duties that were based on the doctrines he had discussed. In the Christian life, doctrine and duty always go together. What we believe helps to determine how we behave. It is not enough for us to understand Paul’s doctrinal explanations. We must translate our *learning* into *living* and show by our daily lives that we trust God’s Word.

The key idea in this section is *relationships*. The term “relational theology” is a relatively new one, but the idea is not new. If we have a right relationship to God, we will have a right relationship to the people who are a part of our lives. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20).

Our Relationship to Our Enemies (Rom. 12:17–21)

The believer who seeks to obey God is going to have his enemies. When our Lord was ministering on earth, He had enemies. No matter where Paul and the other apostles traveled, there were enemies who opposed their work. Jesus warned His disciples that their worst enemies might be those of their own household (Matt. 10:36). Unfortunately, some believers have enemies because they lack love and patience, and not because they are faithful in their witness. There is a difference between sharing in “the offense of the cross” (Gal. 5:11; 6:12–15) and being an offensive Christian!

The Christian must not play God and try to avenge himself. Returning evil for evil, or good for good, is the way most people live. But the Christian must live on a higher level and return good for evil. Of course, this requires *love*, because our first inclination is to fight back. It also requires *faith*, believing that God can work and accomplish His will in our lives and in the lives of those who hurt us. We must give place to “the wrath”—the wrath of God (Deut. 32:35).

A friend of mine once heard a preacher criticize him over the radio and tell things that were not only unkind, but also untrue. My friend became very angry and was planning to fight back, when a godly preacher said, “Don’t do it. If you defend yourself, then the Lord can’t defend you. Leave it in His hands.” My friend followed that wise counsel, and the Lord vindicated him.

The admonition in Romans 12:20 reminds us of Christ’s words in Matthew 5:44–48. These words are easy to read but difficult to practice. Surely we need to pray and ask God for love as

we try to show kindness to our enemies. Will they take advantage of us? Will they hate us more? Only the Lord knows. Our task is not to protect ourselves but to obey the Lord and leave the results with Him. Paul referred to Proverbs 25:21–22 as he urged us to return good for evil in the name of the Lord. The “coals of fire” refer perhaps to the feeling of shame our enemies will experience when we return good for evil.

As children of God, we must live on the highest level—returning good for evil. Anyone can return good for good and evil for evil. The only way to overcome evil is with good. If we return evil for evil, we only add fuel to the fire. And even if our enemy is not converted, we have still experienced the love of God in our own hearts and have grown in grace.

Witmer, J. A. (1985). Romans. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 488–497). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

C. In social relationships (12:9–21)

This section consists of a lengthy series of short exhortations or commands. The statements relate to a Christian’s relationships to other people, both saved and unsaved.

12:9–10. Paul began these specific exhortations with the key ingredient for success: **Love must be sincere**. This is God’s love, which has been ministered to believers by the Holy Spirit (5:5) and must be ministered by them to others in the Holy Spirit’s power. “Sincere” translates *anypokritos* (lit., “without hypocrisy”), also used of love (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), of faith (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5), and of wisdom (James 3:17).

This first command is followed by a pair of related basic commands—**Hate what is evil; cling to what is good**. Many Bible students consider these two clauses as explanatory of the sincerity of love, translating the verse, “Let love be unfeigned, abhorring the evil and cleaving to the good.” Hating various forms of sin is frequently mentioned in Scripture (Pss. 97:10; 119:104, 128, 163; Prov. 8:13; 13:5; 28:16; Heb. 1:9; Rev. 2:6). Turning from evil is to accompany adhering to the good (cf. 1 Peter 3:11).

Divine love is to be exercised with other believers. The Greek adjective *philostorgoi*, translated **devoted**, suggests family affection. As in Romans 12:9, the second clause in verse 10 can be understood as explaining the first command. Verse 10 may be translated, “With **brotherly love** have family affection for **one another**, in **honor** giving place to **one another**” (cf. Phil. 2:3, “consider others better than yourselves”).