



by Mercy

ROMANS 12:9-21

*Devotional*

# *Romans 12:9-21*

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> 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." <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

# Day 1

ROMANS 12:9-12

*<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Out-do one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.*

(focus on the actions)

You have heard it said that love is a verb. It is hard to pin-point a particular author with that quote, and if you do a quick web search looking for it you will find references in every corner accredited to every type of writer. Indeed, as we read Paul here in Romans, we notice that he defines love with action. **Show** honor, **be** zealous, **be** fervent, **serve** the Lord, **Rejoice** in hope, **be** patient, **be** constant in prayer. There is abundant action to how Paul envisions the way love looks.

In what ways is it easier for you to **show** your love?

In what ways is it harder to **show** your love?

Previously Paul was explaining the benefits of spiritual gifts that come from God. He emphatically implores the Jewish and Gentile Jesus followers to exercise their gifts. Yet in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Paul states that "...if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, *I am nothing*. (Italics mine)" Love is a central component of what it means to follow Jesus and to serve others. To put it another way, those who have received the **gifts** of the Spirit must exercise them alongside the **fruit** of the Spirit, including **love**, patience, and kindness (Gal. 5:22). Do you recognize how your gifts could be a love offering to someone else? How might you pursue genuine love today through the use of your gifts?

## *Prayer*

*Father in heaven, we begin this week acknowledging first and foremost that the love you have shown to us is the love we must show. We must be patient, kind, merciful, quick to listen, first to honor others, to be zealous for You and those you love. Father, move our hearts past passive and idle likes, but to passionate and constant love. Love for You. Love for your image-bearers. Love for our neighbors. Love for our enemies. Help us to show and live out our love, modeled after the way you have loved us. Prick our hearts, O Spirit, for those who need the love around us. Be with us Lord Jesus as we seek to glorify your name, through our acts of love. Amen.*

# Day 2

ROMANS 12:9-12

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(focus on the qualifiers)

Yesterday we focused on the content of our actions--love, honor, zeal, service, hope, and prayer. Today we will take some time to reflect on the quality of these actions. The Scriptures do not call us to simply be doers of things. God is after our hearts. Therefore it follows that there is a quality to our actions, reflecting the renewal of life that Christians have in Jesus.

Notice that the qualities described here are natural outworkings of the action. You could rephrase them this way: affectionate love, other-person-elevating honor, unslothful zeal, passionate spirit, joyful hope, and patient suffering. Yet so often our actions do not match up with our heart. Is it possible to love without affection? To be lazy in our effort? Paul exposes this contradiction within us! Is there a statement from the passage that you struggle with in particular?

Ultimately these contradictions in us point us back to Jesus, in whom there is no hypocrisy. The cross atones for our hypocrisy, Christ's righteousness is applied to us, and Jesus shows us a way forward by his example. Take a moment to reflect on how Jesus models this consistency of action and heart.



# Prayer

*Father God, Great is thy faithfulness, there is no shadow of turning with thee. Your love is perfect, genuine, and true. You do not struggle to hate evil and cling to what is good, for you are goodness itself, and all good things come from you. By your Holy Spirit, help me to see the shadows of turning within my own heart, how my head, heart and hands often don't all point in the same direction. Help me to cling to you and your goodness, that I may demonstrate the love of Christ within my faith community and to my neighbors. Thank you, that you are always with us leading us forward by your mercy, justice, and truth.  
For Jesus' sake, Amen.*

# Day 3

ROMANS 12:13

## ***Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*** (focus on the embodied aspect)

The previous section begins with a call to love, to do good, show honor, be zealous but now we come to verse 13 all those actions are put into practice, and they are put into practice in two spheres: the church and the world.

“Contribute to the needs of the church”

There are several questions that we should ask.

- What kinds of needs do the people of the church have? Think about the various types of needs people could have, especially in the current situation that we are in. They could be material needs: food, shelter, clothes. There could also be emotional needs, and in the midst of all the restrictions right now people are lonely, stressed, and overwhelmed.
- How do I identify those needs? Too often we don't identify the needs of others because we are not looking. So the first thing to do is just to be aware, to look for those that might have needs. Sometimes the best way to find out is to just ask.
- How do I meet those needs? First, ask the Lord how to meet those needs. Then look around at the resources that God has given you. Also, don't be afraid to pull other people in to help.

And let's not forget how we treat each other. How we meet each other's needs will speak volumes to those outside of our community.

What is hospitality? The focus of hospitality shifts from our church community to those outside of it. Calvin says that hospitality is the “kindness and liberality which are shown towards strangers.” It is not about entertaining others, but as Lindsey Carlson says, “about opening your heart and your home, just as you are, and being willing to bring Jesus into the conversation.” Are we looking for the stranger to welcome? Are we willing to invite Jesus as well?

## *Prayer*

*Lord of mercy, help me to see the needs of my sisters and brothers. Help me to recognize the blessings that you have given me. Let your body come together to love one another and through that be a light to the world. Give me the eyes to see the stranger and the courage to introduce them to you.*

# Day 4

ROMANS 12:14-21

<sup>14</sup> *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.*

<sup>15</sup> *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

<sup>16</sup> *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.*

<sup>18</sup> *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

<sup>19</sup> *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.”*

<sup>20</sup> *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.” <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Focus on the what we are to avoid)

In verses 14-21 Paul turns the attention toward those who are in opposition to the believer. He is especially strong with the negative statements: do not curse them, do not be haughty, never be wise in your own eyes, repay no one evil for evil, never avenge yourselves . . . Does the clear, authoritative nature of Paul’s injunctions make you uncomfortable? Which of these injunctions would you want to see some wiggle room in? Why? Take a look at Titus 2:11-14 for the relationship between grace and saying “no”.

In dealing with opponents Paul continues the theme of humility began in vs 3, calling on believers to never be haughty and never be wise in their own sight (16). What are some ways that this is difficult for you or you find yourself straying from this injunction?

In verse 17 and 19 Paul strongly exhorts against vengeance. In what ways (or situations) do you find yourself wanting vengeance? How does our current “cancel culture” promote the idea of vengeance?

Not seeking vengeance does not open the door for others to run over us with injustice and hurt. What does it mean that vengeance belongs to the Lord? Do you need to seek counseling from a wise Christian about how to deal with an issue or a wrong done to you?



## *Prayer*

*Father, I confess that often I forget that your grace sets me free to say “no.” No to pride. No to vengeance. Forgive me for allowing my heart to wander in these directions and not living the Spirit-filled life of humility and forgiveness that you have made me for. Spirit, fill me with your graces so that it becomes my joy to see others elevated and forgiveness thrive. Jesus, thank you for showing the path of both humility and forgiveness, and for offering your life for mine.*

# Day 5

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God has invited us to a supernatural life, totally unnatural to sinners, and totally impossible apart from new birth. Blessing people who persecute you makes no sense if the goal is self-fulfillment. Believing my needs are most important, trusting myself to figure out life, and taking revenge will rule out living in peace and harmony, and will blind me to the joys and sorrows of others. But love is always directed outward.

This is how God lives. While we were enemies, He loved us. Jesus left His perfect home and family, humbled Himself to take our place, so that we could be reconciled to God. He overcame evil with good, and asks us to join in the divine conspiracy.

Where and how in your personal and/or public life can you respond with words or actions that would bless someone who treats you like an enemy?

What happens to "enemies" when we actually love them?

How can we as individuals, but also as a body, enter the joys and sorrows of people around us?

What does honor and respect look like in a cancel culture?

Can we trust God to bring judgment on wrongs?

Can we find an opportunity in the evil we can see around us?

## *Prayer*

*Dear Father, Your love for us is beyond our comprehension! You know how we have failed many times to love unconditionally and impartially. We ask you to fill us today with yourself so that we can see people as you see them, and know the words and acts that would invite lost souls to come to you. And help us love one another at CC so that we can be a light in a dark world.*

*For Jesus sake, Amen*