

“LET LOVE BE GENUINE, II.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 12:9-13

Introduction.

Therefore, by the mercies of God, therefore because of the mercies of God, therefore because of the superabounding saving grace of God that overcomes all our sin, therefore because of the Gospel of God’s redeeming love, who loved us even while we were yet sinners, *therefore* let us be changed and transformed into the character and likeness of Him who sacrificed everything for us, and now by His Spirit in us enables us to present our bodies, our lives as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God.

How do we do that? By no longer being conformed to the ways of the world but transformed by the renewing of our minds. And what does that look like? Let me count the ways, twenty-five ways, twenty-five imperative exhortations of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, a disciple of Christ. If you are infected by the Gospel, these are the symptoms you will have.

I hope you have been reading Romans 12:9-21 at your dinner table every night, or most nights. Let me urge you to continue that for the rest of September. And mix up the translations. If you don’t have different translations in your home, just Google them and print them out.

Please talk about these things at home, with your spouse, with your children. This is vastly more important than anything on the news, in the social media, in politics, in sports. Talk about these things, what they mean, what they don’t mean. Chase down the cross references in your Bible.

Soak in this passage, drink deeply from this well of life-giving and life-changing water.

Be *humbled* by how far short you fall, but be *hopeful* in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Come to this passage at just such a time as this in your life and in the life of our flock. God has us all here right now for a reason. Let him who has ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying.

The Christians in the church in Rome were a diverse mix of young and old, rich and poor, slaves and free, Gentiles and Jews, racially and ethnically divided, learning how to love each other.

Let love be genuine, let your love be without hypocrisy, not fake but authentic, for everyone. Where is the greatest demonstration of love in the Bible? The cross, right. And what does that tell us about love? That love is way more than a feeling. Love is an action.

Vs. 9 Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Why does Paul say this to the Christians in the church in Rome? Because they aren't doing it.

Notice it isn't just abstain from evil and do good. It is abhor what is evil and cling to, hold fast to, love what is good. Not just with our actions but with our heart.

How does that work?

One problem we face in our culture is agreeing what is evil and what is good. The world doesn't have an objective standard to work from. Evil is whatever I don't like and good is whatever I like. The Bible teaches us to reject that false idea. As Christians we know from God's revealed Word what is good and what is evil.

We have seen evil on display the past couple of weeks. We had the anniversary of 9/11, then the murder of Charlie Kirk, another school shooting in Colorado, a shooting in Chicago and at the naval academy.

Abhor evil, be horrified by evil, don't be jaded or cavalier or dismiss lightly. Detest it.

Abhor it because of what it does, how it separates us from God and His holiness.

Evil is bad for people, it does bad things to us. When you play with fire you will be burned.

But don't abhor evil in a way that is like the evil or contributes to the evil.

Keep in mind Paul's exhortations in verses 17 and 21.

17 Repay no one evil for evil.

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry and do not sin.

Don't take Satan's bait. Abhor evil the way Jesus abhorred evil.

May His life be an example of how we should all live a life of courageous faith.

Speak the truth in love. Be salt and light in a dark world.

Live in such a way that takes away all excuses or accusations.

Before we direct this kind of passion outward, we must first direct it inward, to hate the evil in our own hearts, to be intolerant of our own private, secret, besetting sins. Don't be indifferent toward sin; toleration of sin is not love.

Root out sins like pride, anger, lust, envy, selfishness, stubbornness, those sins that "so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1) and resists our efforts to overcome them.

To abhor warns us not to become jaded and desensitized to the horror of sin in our culture. The English poet Alexander Pope warned it would happen.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace. (Alexander Pope)

Any immoral thing seen too often, makes us less sensitive and more tolerant until we then embrace it as just part of life we must accept. We have become jaded and desensitized to the horror of sexual sin in our culture, viewing naked flesh over and over.

Think about what we have embraced in our lifetimes, the filth, the rot, the degradation that we have allowed into our homes, computers, eyes and hearts.

Abhor impurity by clinging to your wife. If you are not married, cling to your future wife.

How do we unsee evil? Plead in prayer for God to cast it away and make us chaste and pure again, and to desire it more. Read the prayers/psalms of David.

Psalm 101:2-4 I will walk with integrity of heart within my house;
3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.
I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.
4 A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

I don't know if that was before or after Bathsheba. We do know how we prayed after he fell into sexual sin. Psalm 51 is a most helpful prayer of repentance toward abhorring our own evil.

Psalm 51:10-12 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Turn away from and cling to what is good. Hold fast, be glued to it, be welded to it. Be married to good. Love truth, beauty and goodness. Love purity and holiness.

II Timothy 2:22 Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

Romans 12:10

10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Love one another with brotherly affection.

Love one another with tender affection, with genuine feelings of love..
Love like family.

Well, OK, some families fight like cats and dogs. So, love like families are supposed to love.

Who knows what city in America is called the city of brotherly love? Philadelphia. Philadelphia is the Greek word for brotherly love or brotherly affection.

This is family love. This is “he ain’t heavy, he’s my brother” kind of affection and sacrifice. This is why I don’t like to hear elderly say they don’t want to be a burden to their families. We aren’t a burden when we are family, it is a privilege to love and serve and sacrifice. And may you never make anyone in your family feel that way by your own attitudes or actions.

All Christians are brothers and sisters because all Christians have one and the same Father. Love each other as brothers and sisters. We love our family, flaws and all, so we are to love each other as family. Not just in actions or words, but in feelings, with open hearts.

Think about how long it takes you to warm up to and love a new baby or grandbaby in your family. Our dear friends Von and Sue Golder had a new grandson last week and their daughter wrote on Facebook, “We have only had this little guy a week and we are head over heels in love with him.”

It is an instant choice, you begin loving. So it is with us. We just added some new family members to our church last week and they are instantly welcomed, embraced, loved. God is commanding us how to feel toward each other. In a few verses He will command us to weep with those who weep.

The kind of love we bestow on our children and grandchildren, is the kind of tender affection we are to show toward each other.

I get it that there are broken, dysfunctional families, so think in terms of what a healthy family does. If a sibling is sick, you come along side and care. If our parents have needs in their old age, we are there for them. We care, we carry burdens, we sacrifice, we love, we are family.

The problems of one family member become all our problem. This is not just a weekend event we attend, this is our spiritual family and that calls for a higher level of commitment than weekend sports team or a trial membership to a streaming service. If we have differences or disagreements, we pray and work them out, letting love cover a multitude of sins.

Be devoted in brotherly and sisterly love, thus proving you are part of God's family.

But what if you don't feel tender affection toward some of our church family? Start with prayer, asking God to change your heart. Then focus on the mercies of God, how He loves you and how He loves that other person. You can't say you love God, if you don't seek to love others.

Implications and application.

Resist the temptation to sink into discouragement or despair over how short of the mark you fall. That means you are looking to yourself and your ability to live up to the Gospel. Look instead to the cross, cast yourself on the mercy and grace of God, pray for the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in you. Direct your children to think the same way.

It's only through faith in what God has done for us that we are enabled to do what we ought. The ability to do the Christian life comes from what God has already done. We are able to love only because God first loved us.