

Show You Are a Christian

Introduction

Welcome to this edition of *"My Thoughts with Dale Van De Bogart."* I would like to welcome all of our faithful watchers and our new ones as well. As a reminder, all notes are in PDF, and located on our website, vdbm.org. Click on My Thoughts Video Series, scroll down on the page to choose the series, and download our notes.

In this week's segment, *"Show You Are a Christian,"* How are we as Christians to show the *"Godkind"* of love? I will discuss commands the apostle Paul wants Christians to follow using the Book of Romans 12:9-21. How Paul broke this passage down in the same way I will also:

- Verse 9 is the theme of the message
- Verses 10-16 applies to relationships with all believers
- Verses 17-21 applies to relationships with all unbelievers

Paul's Overview of Gifts and Practical Commands

In Romans chapter 12, Paul starts out commanding us to become a *"living sacrifice"* for our service to God (v. 1). Then, in verse two, it would not be ideal to conform to the world's standards as they bring nothing but misery and disappointment. Better to transform and renew our minds to the perfect will of God.

Verses 3-8 point to individual contributions each believer can make to the body and progress from the use of our spiritual gifts to the motivation behind those gifts, which is love. Love starts everything. Faith without love is not faith at all. Look at the nine Fruits of the Spirit or our Christian character in Galatians 5:22-23. You cannot exhibit them without love being first.

These verses in our segment include practical commands that require all Christians to apply in their lives. These command, which I will cover, they have two distinct concerns:

- Among believers, there must be evidence that love is being practiced
- Evil and the works of the devil are being defeated.

Passage Text - Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Let Love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit serving the Lord,

¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints given to hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

¹⁹ Beloved do not avenge yourselves but rather give place to wrath: for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

²⁰ Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

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

The Theme is Love, Abhor, and Cling - Romans 12:9

The first three commands start the theme of Paul's message to the believers in the Roman church.

1. Love

As I mentioned in the introduction, love starts everything. It is the spark that starts everything moving forward. It is the key ingredient in relationships. It is not the sexual kind of love that most individuals think of first. This love is the "**Godkind**" of love or agape love. It is the love that is self-sacrificing, cares about others, and is the most accurate indicator of spiritual health.

In this verse, Paul uses the word "**hypocrisy**." In Greek, it means genuine or sincere. Other words used are deceit and falseness. Sincere love is genuine love. Jesus referred to sincere love in John 13:34-35, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

2. Abhor and Cling

I am combining the last two commands as they both share common ground. Abhor, is used as a verb, meaning to hate. So, what Paul is telling us is to simply hate what is evil. Evil comes from Satan, and we should not hate each other. Place your hate on Satan as he caused all the evil in the world.

The word "**cling**," is also used as a verb, meaning to glue, or unite. Other words used in place of cling are associate, hired, join, or plied. I like to use the phrase "**hold on**." So, when I read this part of the verse, I can say to "**hold on to what is good**."

There needs to be emotional involvement and energetic action to hate and cling. Believers are to hate evil and turning from evil means to turn towards what is good and cling or hold on to it. In regard to spiritual gifts, we should never use our gifts in an unloving way or to promote evil motives, attitudes, or actions.

Relationships with Believers - Romans 12:10-16

In the next seven verses, Paul commands us to have good relationships with other believers. Remember, we will all be in heaven together, so while we are here on earth, let's get along with each other.

1. Be Kindly Affectionate to One Another with Brotherly Love – Romans 12:10

The word "**affectionate**" used in this verse does not have a sexual meaning behind it. A common word used in place of "**affectionate**" would "**be devoted**." Devoted (**philostorgos**) in Greek means "**tenderly loving**" or "**family affection**." Brotherly love is translated in Greek as philo and is where we get the word "**Philadelphia**" meaning the "**love of brothers**."

What both of these phrases mean is the type of loyalty and affection family members have for one another. We should be humble and not proud of how we treat each other.

2. In Honor Giving Preference to One Another – Romans 12:10

God's command is for us to honor each other, which means to give a person high value and respect. We should honor others as they also were created in the image of God, and they are our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Most importantly, they also have great value and can make a unique contribution to the church and further the kingdom. The phrase "**preference to one another**" means treating others as more important than ourselves.

3. Not Lacking in Diligence, Fervent in Spirit, Serving the Lord – Romans 12:11

We have three keywords here in verse 11:

- Diligence (*spoude*) meaning earnestness or effort
- Fervent (*zeo*) meaning to boil or to be hot
- Serving (*douleuo*) means to serve or render service

Zeal is another word that can replace diligence. As we are serving the Lord, we must never become lazy or lose our zeal or diligence. We should be enthusiastic about serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been called, challenged, and equipped to serve Jesus. Sure, we will get fatigued at times as we are human, but apathy or lack of zeal must never be a part of our Christian lives. We have the Lord Jesus Christ to lean on to help us fight discouragement, depression, and negativeness.

4. Rejoicing in Hope, Patient in Tribulation, and Steadfast in Prayer – Romans 12:12

Again, Paul uses three keywords in verse 12:

- Rejoicing (*chairo*) meaning to be glad. Another word used in place of rejoicing is joy as in being joyful. Paul uses this word many times throughout his epistles and letters.
- Patient (*makrothumeo*) meaning to persevere.
- Steadfast (*hedraios*) means to stand firm.

Rejoicing in hope means we should be looking forward with happy expectation to everything God has in store for us. We are not to fear our future as we trust God fully. The reason we are joyful is we have Jesus Christ in our lives.

Patient in tribulation means when we face trials or persecution, we go through it patiently, as we know God is in control of the situation and we are filled with the Holy Spirit being led, guided, and directed. Trusting God to see us through.

Another word for steadfast is faithful as we are in prayer. A characteristic of a Christian is prayer. It is our lifeline or wireless connection to God. We must be persistent in praying, both individually and corporately within the church.

5. Sharing with God's People Who are in Need – Romans 12:13

All I have talked about so far, gifts, love, hope, patience, and prayer are all valuable traits of a Christian. As the body of Christ, we must take care of one another in every way possible. This trademark is what drew unbelievers to Christ. Sharing with one another to meet needs.

Also in verse 13, Paul mentions the practice of hospitality. It means to be friendly to strangers and not just having friends over. Christian hospitality differs from social entertainment. Entertaining focuses on the host as hospitality focuses on the guest and their needs. Paul uses the word "*practice*" to remind us hospitality will improve with practice.

6. Bless Those Who Persecute You and Do Not Curse – Romans 12:14

While Paul was in Rome awaiting his trial and future execution, he noticed that the community of believers was very small. They faced consistent harassment and persecution from the people of Rome and the government officials. Paul reminded them to avoid trouble by not retaliating with evil but to respond with good.

By the believers obeying Paul, they will also obey Jesus' words in Matthew 5:44, "***But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.***" By this, they would also be imitating Jesus.

Most of us today have trouble visualizing what Jesus and Paul meant when they commanded us to "bless persecutors." It will intensify when we are under personal attack. We need to make a choice on how we will respond to persecution, and we are responsible for our own actions. Remember, to bless means to not curse. Instead of speaking words of hate, let us speak words of encouragement and truth toward those who intentionally want to hurt us. Most of all, pray for them!

7. Rejoice and Live in Harmony – Romans 12:15-16

As believers, we need to be able to empathize with others. We need to rejoice, and as Paul stated in Philippians 4:4, "***Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice!***" We must offer kindness, concern, compassion, and a shoulder to cry on, if necessary. Believers need this as we also deal with the ups and downs of daily living.

Christianity is neither denying life's hardships nor dulling life's excitements. Both laughter and tears are appropriate before God, and they have an important place in representing our feelings. Let us identify with the joys and heartaches of others and show them our love to build them up.

While we are rejoicing, let us also live in harmony with each other. We must be willing to associate with everyone regardless of race, color, or origin. Jesus loved and associated with everyone. He had no prejudice, jealousy, or conceit. An example is in James 2:1-9 as he warned us about practicing partiality. Jesus thought everyone was worth dying for, so let us associate with everyone, and let them see the Christian in all of us!

Relationships with Unbelievers - Romans 12:17-21

In the next five verses, Paul commands us to have good relationships with unbelievers. We are commanded to share the Gospel with everyone (Matthew 28:18-20) and we must show them Jesus lives in us!

1. Never Repay Evil for Evil – Romans 12:17

Let me ask this question, “Is it right to repay evil for evil?” Certainly not! As much as we would like to, it is not right to repay someone for the evil they did to us. We will not be able to hate evil (Romans 12:9) if we are actively using it as a method of exchange with others.

Instead, we are to do what is right in the eyes of others. Let us look at the word “right.” The word in Greek, agathopoieo, is a combination of two words. Agathos means “good” and poieo means “**to make.**” We can also translate it into “**noble**” or “**honorable.**”

Paul’s standard for behavior is godliness. The behavior of believers must be where no one can rightfully claim wrongdoing. Repaying evil for evil makes us no better than the one who did the wrong to us.

2. Live at Peace with Everyone – Romans 12:18

1 Corinthians 7:15, “**But God has called us to peace.**” So, Paul counsels believers to have peaceable relations as much as possible with unbelieving people. In a perfect world, we can live peacefully together, but since we do not live in a perfect world, this would be impossible.

So, what do we do as believers to live in peace? We need to do our best to live in peace with everyone. How about a kind word to others? Show everyone you care about them. Never be the cause of dissension and always seek reconciliation.

3. Do Not Avenge Yourself – Romans 12:19-20

Going back to verse 17, not repaying evil for evil, then do not avenge yourself. Paul reminds us to leave the avenging in God’s hands. Refusing to take revenge avoids grudges and feuds. As humans, revenge is repaying evil for evil with interest, and we want justice. Unfortunately, with our wounded pride, hatred, and sinfulness, we miss the opportunity to turn it over to God and let Him handle the situation.

Deuteronomy 32:35, “**It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.**” When we take revenge into our own hands, nothing good comes from it. We destroy the good it tries to defend and make evil grow by feeding on itself. We need to trust God as He will ensure justice is served!

As Christians, one thing we can do is the opposite of repaying evil for evil and taking revenge is caring for our enemies. I know, easier said than done! We need to actively pursue opportunities to bring the Gospel to our enemies.

Take a look at Proverbs 25:21-22, “**If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you.**” The principle of this proverb is we should care and show mercy for our enemy’s needs.

4. Overcome Evil with Good – Romans 12:21

Again, do not give in to your desire to take revenge or retaliate with evil on others who do wrong or persecute you. Instead, act positively. To hate evil is to overcome it with good. All I can say is **REJOICE!** When someone hates you, **REJOICE!** When you are persecuted for your Christian beliefs, **REJOICE!** We can accomplish this when we allow God to create in us sincere love for one another, Amen!

I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God's Word!

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