

## Romans 12:9-21

“Everybody Get Along”

We read in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor Ch 13 that, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love; I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*” 1 Cor 13:1-3 Or to understand all that another way, no matter how noble of an act I may engage in, or regardless of how benevolent I may *be*, or how gifted I may be *spiritually*, even if I sacrifice my life *personally*, but don’t do it motivated by, or out of the overflow of the love of God in me, it counts for nothing *eternally*.

You see the love *of* God, is the essential element in my service *to* God. So it stands to reason that as Paul is speaking there in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians about the gifts of the Spirit, the unity through diversity, how that we’re the members of the body *individually* but that together we form the body of Christ *collectively*, and what “Body Life” looks like *practically*, that he pauses right in the middle of all of that to emphasize the essential element of love, God’s agape’ (all giving, non self seeking, love.) Because truly the love of God is to be right in the middle of everything we do, our lives are to be centered *on* it, and revolving *around* it, the love of God is the circulatory system of the Body of Christ.

We see the same thing here in Ch 12, Paul has been speaking about how the doctrinal revelation that we’ve received so far throughout this letter spills out into practical application in our lives. 1<sup>st</sup> things 1<sup>st</sup>, it starts with personal consecration, and dedication to God, and we mentioned last week that the bridge that spans the gap between our spiritual consecration to God and our personal interrelations with one another is *humility*. We realize that God has called us all uniquely to form and function as apart of His body collectively, we all function in different roles, and we all depend on one another *individually* if we’re to function properly in *totality*. So the eye can’t be all puffed up and prideful because the body sees by the means of that member, because apart from the ears I’d never hear a thing, apart from the hands nothing would get done. Apart from the legs and feet we wouldn’t get anywhere, apart from a mouth it’d be difficult to receive nourishment, so we’re to function in *humility*, excelling in the calling that God has given us *specifically*.

Now, keeping in the context of the interaction of the members of the body, if the *bridge* that links spiritual consecration with personal/practical application is *humility*, Paul tells us here that the *bond* that keeps us flowing together *cohesively* is love.

You see, we’re to minister to one another by means of the spiritual gifts God has given us, absolutely. But realistically you’re not always going to be moving in the gift of prophesy, I won’t always be teaching people practically, that’s just not *reality*. But we’re still to interact and interrelate, getting along with one another *generally*.

One might be tempted to think that in Christ, we could all just get along; we're new creations, robed in righteousness, washed by the blood and all the rest. Can't we all just get along? Well, idealistically "Yes" but unfortunately, in reality such is not always the case. It's true we've been saved by God's grace, we've been forgiven of our sin, but we haven't been exhumed, or removed from our sin nature. We're completely sanctified positionally, but in the here and now it's an on going work practically. and When we see Jesus we'll be like Jesus for we'll see Him as He is, but until that day we're a work in progress. and Unfortunately anytime you get 2 sinners together it's only a matter of time until there's problems.

When there are 200 sinners together, or 2,000, you see the potential problem. So Paul is here instructing us in light of how we relate to one another as a body, and he tells us that God's love is going to be the bond that keeps us flowing together cohesively.

Not only is it the bond that keeps us flowing together cohesively, it's a witness to the world specifically. Remember Jesus said, "*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.*" John 13:34-35 So if you're a note taker you might jot this down. God's love, #1 It's to undergird our motives *personally*, #2 It bonds us together *collectively*, and #3 It's a witness to the world *specifically*. Notice with me

Vs 9-13

What's body life look like, everyday interaction with one another as Christians (and later on with the nonbelievers around us)? Paul tells us right here.

In Vs 9 he says, "Let love be with out hypocrisy." Peter put it like this, "*Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,*" 1 Peter 1:22 We're to be sincere in our love for one another, not hypocritical. Genuine, the bible has much to say about our relationship one to another and how we're to interact in love. As a matter of fact God's love coursing *through* us and being a reality *to* us is so integral to Christian living that John declares, "*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.*" 1 John 3:14 Now that's not to say that there's never going to be a problem that arises between Christians, or else there'd be no need for this portion of scripture, but we're to have a love for the body of Christ. and When there's a problem that arises, do what you can do to work it out, he'll tell us later, "as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Unfortunately on this side of Heaven problems present themselves even between fellow believers, but we're to make sure that if there's no peace, it's not on our end, we've done what we can to avail ourselves to reconciliation. As much as depends on you, or on me, we're to live peaceably, our love is to be with out hypocrisy.

“Abhor what is evil.” Now to me that’s pretty clear, I don’t see any real ambiguity in that statement, he doesn’t say, “Put up with evil, tolerate evil, try not to hang around it,” he says, “Abhor it.” The word, “Abhor” means to utterly detest, to loathe it. A commentator by the name of Adam Clarke said, “Hate sin as you would hate that hell to which it leads.” If it has the potential to destroy your soul, you are and I am to detest it, we’re to be repelled and repulsed by evil. The bible says, “*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;*” Prov 8:13

But conversely we’re to *cling* to what is good. The word “Cling” speaking of adhering or being cemented to, glued to that which is good. Those things that are edifying, encouraging, that provoke us unto godliness, allow me to quote one more time from Adam Clarke. He said, “Have an unalterable attachment to whatever leads to God,” So, “Abstain from evil, grab on to what’s good.” To the Thessalonians Paul said it like this, “*Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*” 1 Thess 5:21-22 Later on in the book of Romans Paul will say, “*I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple (or innocent) concerning evil.*” Rom 16:19 So grab hold of the good, those things that are true, peaceable, pure, noble, just, and of good report, that which edifies, encourages, points you *to* and builds you up *in* Christ, Cling to those things.

Vs10

So this principle of love being fleshed out for us in the practical, its not simply an abstract concept discussed throughout the scriptures but rather it’s to be a way of life, we’re to be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love. That is, we’re to recognize that the body of Christ is a family, we’re brothers and sisters in Christ and we’re to love one another accordingly.

Again John said, “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*” 1 John 4:20 Kindly affectionate, with brotherly love, “in honor giving preference to one another,” or to understand that another way, “Get out from under the ‘me 1<sup>st</sup>’ mentality.” Honor your brother, or your sister above yourself, consider them 1<sup>st</sup>. To the Galatians Paul wrote, “*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” Gal 5:13-14 Jesus calls us to be the one who serves rather than the one who’s being served. He said, “*...whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” Matt 7:12 The golden rule right? Do unto others as you’d have others do unto you, He didn’t say do to them what they *have* done to you, as if it’s a right a retribution. He said, do to/for them what you’d *desire* them to do to/for you.

You see, “In honor giving preference to one another.” If you’d like to be 1<sup>st</sup> (which is human nature) than give that to your brother, your sister, if you’d like to be served, than serve as you’d like to be served, we’re to consider others above ourselves. We read in Phil 2, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*” Phil 2:3-4 That’s essentially what Paul is saying here, looking out not for my own interests, but for the best interest of others, in honor giving preference to one another.

### Vs11

You get the idea, in our serving of one another we’re to realize we’re serving the Lord. Paul said, “*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*” Col 3:23-24 and We begin to understand what Jesus was saying when He said, “I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” We essentially become one *with* Christ being *in* Christ, so that in serving the body of Christ, by default we’re serving Christ because He is one with His body. Even as every individual member of my body creates a collective unit, so to with Christ, so as we serve one another we have the honor of serving the Lord. If you serve my stomach by providing me a meal, you’ve served me, not just my stomach. and Such is the body of Christ, as we serve one another we’re serving the Lord, and when it comes to our service unto the Lord, we’re to serve Him diligently, with a fervency. Now we realize that as believers we’re to be hard workers in general. But with in the confines of the context he’s saying that whatever we do placing a stamp of “Service to the Lord” over, we’re to do it diligently, not lazily, with a fervency, not a complacency, whole heartedly with all that we are.

### Vs12

3 More characteristics of practical Christian living, “Praise, patience, and prayer” Rejoicing in hope. and We remember what biblical “Hope” is, it’s not a “Perhaps if I’m lucky it’ll go this way,” it’s that concrete reality, the guaranteed certainty, and assured expectation. We rejoice in the guaranteed certainty of life in Christ, the concrete reality of the forgiveness of sin, the assured expectation of the culmination of all things, being forever in His presence, no more tears, no more pain, no more death, the former things having passed away.

“Patient in tribulation” of course studying the book of Job on Wednesday evenings we’re getting a 1<sup>st</sup> hand look at what that means. To hold up in godliness, integrity, uprightness of heart, fearing God and shunning evil under intense, otherwise crushing stress and pressure. and The idea here is that even in times of intense trial, there’s no viable excuse for a lack of love towards one another, God’s love will hold you up under the trials and tribulations of life.

“Continuing steadfastly in prayer,” over and over again we’re reminded of how the bible calls us to be a people of persistent prayer. Be anxious for nothing, but in all things through prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. “*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;*” Col 4:2  
 “...*pray without ceasing,*” 1 Thess 5:17 I don’t think it would be possible to *over emphasize* the importance of being a people of prayer.

### Vs13

Put bluntly, “If you see a need, be available to meet it if it’s within your power.” That’s the love of God in action, genuine, non-hypocritical love will be concerned with not only the practical needs of our brothers and sisters, but doing practical *deeds* to help meet those needs. The bible says, “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*” Gal 6:10 The word, “Hospitality” literally speaks of “Pursuing the love of strangers.” The hospitable person is going to pursue opportunity to display the love of Christ, even to those whom he doesn’t know. He’s going to, she’s going to walk through those doors on Sunday morning and say, “You know I sit with the same group of people week after month after year, I’m not going to sit in that niche today I’m going to sit somewhere completely different and share the love of God with someone I’ve hopefully never met. Now that goes against human nature, because we don’t like getting out of our comfort zones, we thrive on familiarity. But give this a shot, be given to hospitality, share the love of God with someone you don’t know personally, meet new people, get to know your Calvary Chapel family. Oh obviously hospitality extends beyond the 4 walls of a church, but that’s one practical way you can seek out showing and sharing God’s love with those you’d otherwise perhaps never meet, an avenue through which you can be given to hospitality.

### Vs14

Hmm, this sounds familiar, where have I heard this before? Remember the Sermon on the MT? Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 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, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” Matt 5:43-46 and Portions of scripture like this are those that remind us that grace, far from relaxing the standard of godliness, actually (if anything) raises the standard of godliness. Under the law the right was given, “Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” of course that was laid out to establish limits so that I wouldn’t take 2 teeth for 1, it’s tooth for tooth, no more. But Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.*” Matt 5:38-40*

Now was He teaching us not to defend ourselves, or take care of our families in a time of clear and present danger? No, but much like what we're reading here, we're not to be about personal revenge, getting even, settling the score, we're to exude common grace, to forgive those who have violated us, or done wrong to us, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. Doesn't mean the civil authorities won't deal with it if the need is there (Paul speaks about that in Ch 13), so if you need to call the police, call the police. But we're not to exact personal retribution, we're to bless those who pick on and persecute us, pray for those who spitefully use us, a heavy exhortation.

Vs15-16/

The idea here being that Christian fellowship goes beyond a pat on the back and a handshake on Sunday morning, it's about bearing one another's blessings, as well as burdens. and Sometimes it's probably easier to bear one another's burdens than it is their blessings. Something about our sin infested flesh can't stand to see others being blessed, why? Because we want to be the one being blessed, Paul says, "You see someone being blessed, rejoicing, rejoice with them." Someone going through the fire, love on them, bear their burdens with them and so fulfill the law of Christ, the law of love. Remember the bible says that if one member of the body suffers, we're all to suffer with that member. In Hebrews we read, "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them -- those who are mistreated -- since you yourselves are in the body also.*" Heb 13:3

Vs16 bandc

Don't strive to be somebody, or feel like you need to hang with the "Who's who" better to associate with the "Who's he?" Jesus said when you go to a feast, don't look for the honorable seats, grab a seat in the low place. Because then if someone says, "Hey what are you doing down there, come up here." You'll receive honor in front of everyone, but if you sit in a high place, and then someone says, "Excuse me, could you move down there so that 'so and so' can sit here?" Then with shame you're forced to take a lower seat, for whoever humbles himself will be exalted, but whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Don't set your mind on high things, it's unhealthy for your inner man, you start getting all puffed up and prideful, God hates pride, just associate with the humble, it's far better for you, and for me.

Don't be wise in your own opinion, the bible says, "*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" Prov 26:12 Why? Because again its indicative of pride, and pride always precedes destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

## Vs17-20

What's the basic gist here? Be a peacemaker, not a peace breaker and trust the Lord to take care of your life. Don't repay evil for evil, have regard for good in the sight of all men, to the Thessalonians Paul put it like this, "*See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*" 1 Thess 5:15 and This sort of circles back to what we were speaking about a few minutes ago, we're to trust in the Lord to be our defense, how can God be your shield if you're all the time defending yourself. Walk in your integrity, and trust in the Lord to vindicate you, and even if people have a twisted thought of you their entire lives in the now (but you're upright in your heart) before the Lord, when we're in the *presence* of the Lord, that'll be clearly seen. (Look at Ps 26, read)

David says, "God there's some people talking smack about me, but You know my heart, my integrity, and I'm going to trust in You to take care of the situation."

That's exactly what Paul is saying here, "Repay no one evil for evil, have regard for good things in the sight of all men." I suppose David and Saul would be a classic example, David could've avenged himself numerous times upon Saul, but he refused to repay evil for evil, he just trusted the Lord, and God took care of the whole thing, removed Saul from the throne and established forever the throne of David.

Again we realize that some people are simply impossible to get along with but as much as depends upon you, upon me, we're to live peaceably with all men. Vengeance is the Lord's.

Now here in Vs 20 there's a little variance of opinion as to what this means exactly, the general consensus is that when you do good to your enemy, it'll cause conviction to burn upon them. Now that doesn't mean that our motive is to make them feel bad, "Well I'm going to bless your life, then you'll feel horrible!" (Though our flesh entertains the idea) but the hope is for their genuine repentance, notice.

## Vs21

Peter said, "*Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this,*" 1 Peter 3:8-9 and Of course this brings us full circle with the fact that none of these things are truly possible apart from the love of God being a real, and active part of our lives. It's God's love that undergirds our motives in these things *personally*, that enables us to interact, and get along this way *collectively*, and allows us to be this kind of witness to the world *specifically*. Blessing our persecutors, giving aid to our enemies.

The Love of God is an amazing thing, the world cries out for peace, why can't everybody just get along. There is no peace "says the Lord" for the wicked, it's impossible to know true peace, until you've 1<sup>st</sup> made peace with God, and that peace comes only by the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. The bible tells us, "*For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*" Col 1:19-20 and When we're at peace with God, we can have peace with one another, His love pouring *into* us, overflowing out *through* us, bonding us together cohesively, as a unified body collectively that we might all get along as a family.

Prayer Points: Father, may Your self-sacrificing, other's oriented, non self seeking love, fill us to the overflow, undergirding our motives personally, enabling us to get along as we need to collectively as a family in unity, that we might be a light to a dark world specifically, that the world would see our love for one another, and be drawn *to* you, come to *know* You through Your work in our lives. Lord it's one thing to see these things and talk about them from Your Word, it's another thing altogether bless our persecutors, pray for those who take advantage of us spitefully, but Lord may it be a working reality in us, for Your glory.

If you're here and perhaps having heard of all this talk about peace and getting along, all of that sounds great but the reality is that before you can worry about having peace with others, you need peace in your own heart. There's a void in your heart, an emptiness, perhaps a sense of guilt, or turmoil, and it's because you've never made peace with your Maker. Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, and if any man hear My voice and open the door, I'll come in." It's that simple, you can have peace with God through the blood of His cross, it doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done, God loves you, longs to forgive you, as far as the east is from the west so He'll cast your sin from you, just let Him do it, open your heart, and invite Him in.