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November 3, 2013

**Our Relationship to Believers (Primarily):**  
***A Call to Sincere Love***  
**Romans 12:9-16**

**Introduction:**

He made free use of **Christian** vocabulary. He talked about the **blessing** of the **Almighty** and the **Christian confessions** which would become the **pillars** of the new government he would establish. He **assumed** the earnestness of a man weighed down by historic responsibility. He handed out **pious stories** to the press, especially to the **church papers**. He showed his **tattered Bible** and declared that he drew the **strength** for his great work from it as scores of pious people welcomed him as **a man sent from God**.

Indeed, **Adolf Hitler** was a **master** of **outward religiosity**, but with him there was **no inward reality!** He was a **prime example** of a **hypocrite**, which is someone who **pretends** to have **virtues, morals** or **religious beliefs** that he does not actually possess. This morning we are going to see how **hypocrisy** is to have **no place** in the lives of believers.

Now as we came to **Romans 12** we saw that the **fundamental obligation** in every believer's **relationship to God** is their **total commitment** to Christ in **vv. 1-2**. But if this **commitment** has been truly **made** and is **reaffirmed** on a daily basis then it is **lived out** in **all** of our **relationships** described in **12:3-15:13**. **First**, in our **relationship to ourselves**, as we saw in **vv. 3-8**, and now in the **quality** of our **love relationship to believers** in **vv. 9-16**, although Paul will include **unbelievers** in **v. 14**. Turn with me in your Bible to **Romans 12**.

In Romans 12:9-16 we see fourteen manifestations of love, which mainly describe how believers are to relate to one another.

The *first manifestation* of love is:

### I. Love is Sincere and doesn't Pretend

A. Look at the **first part** of v. 12: Let **love** be **without hypocrisy**.

1. The Greek word translated “**love**” here is “**agape**,” which is the **highest form** of love. It is the **perfect love** that God **is** (1 Jn. 4:8, 16) and is **manifested perfectly** among each member of the **Trinity** (Jn. 15:10; 17:26).
2. So far in Romans all references to **agape love** have been used for **God's love for us** (5:5; 8:35, 39), except in **8:28** where it is the **believer's love for God**. But **here** it is used to indicate the kind of love **Christians** are to show **primarily** to one another.
3. **Agape love** is the **supreme virtue** of the Christian life and is to be the **distinguishing mark** of every believer. Jesus said in **John 13:34-35**, “A new commandment I give to you, that you **love** one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also **love** one another. **By this** all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** for one another.”
4. **Agape love** is the “**all give**” kind of love that **selflessly** and **sacrificially gives** irrespective of the **response** or **worthiness** of the one loved. It is predominately **volitional**, a determined **act of the will** or **choice** and not a **feeling**.
5. Notice that Paul says agape love is “**without hypocrisy**” (anupokritos), which means to be **genuine** or **sincere**. The word “**hypocrite**” was actually used of the Greek and Roman

**actors** who wore large **masks** and played a part on the stage where they **pretended** to be what they were not.

6. As believers we are to **love one another** with **sincere love**, in other words, with the **real thing** (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Pet. 1:22). In **sincere agape love** there is no **pretense** or **play-acting**.
7. Whereas people can be “**nice**” and “**polite**” and still lack **genuine love, true love** doesn’t **pretend** or have any **ulterior motives**.
8. **John Murray** accurately stated, “No **vice** is more **reprehensible** than **hypocrisy**. No **vice** is more **destructive** of **integrity** because it is the **contradiction** of **truth**. Our Lord **exposed** its **diabolical character** when he said to **Judas**, ‘**Betrayest** thou the Son of man with a **kiss**?’ (Luke 22:48). If **love** is the sum of virtue and **hypocrisy** the epitome of vice, what a **contradiction** to bring these **together**.” (pg. 128)
9. Just as Paul followed his discussion of **spiritual gifts** in the body of Christ **1 Corinthians 12** with **chapter 13** on **love**, so Paul does the **same thing** here. A **call to sincere love** is the **heading** of this passage and **everything** that follows falls under it.
10. In **vv. 9-16** Paul gives a **series** of **rapid-fire ethical exhortations** or **commands** that give us a **comprehensive** (not exhaustive) **look** at what **sincere agape love** looks like in our lives.
11. The **second manifestation** of love is:

## II. Love is Discerning of God’s Morality

A. Paul says at the end of v. 9: **Abhor** what is **evil**; **cling** to what is **good**.

1. We are told a similar thing in **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**, “But **examine** everything carefully; **hold fast** to that which is **good**; **abstain** from every form of **evil**.”
2. Although it is a common saying that “**Love is blind**,” here we are told that **love is discerning**. Love **demand**s God-honoring **moral resolve** regarding **good** and **evil**.
3. Some might think that **love** is **soft on sin**, but that is **not so!** **William Newell** was right when he said, “To be a **good Christian**, a man must be a **good hater!**” (pg. 469)
4. Paul says, “**Abhor** what is **evil**...” The word “**abhor**” (apostugountes) is a strong word that means to **hate exceedingly** and to feel **horror** at something.
5. The believer who **sincerely loves** will have a **holy hatred** and **intense revulsion** for every evil thing. **Why?** Because God **hates evil**; it is the antithesis of **holiness** and **godliness** (Ps. 34:14; 97:10; 119:104, 128, 163; Prov. 8:13; 13:5; 28:16; Heb. 1:9; Rev. 2:6).
6. Therefore, **sincere love** will not **condone** or **tolerate** sin in any way.

B. Not only does sincere love **abhors** evil, but it also “**clings** to what is **good**.”

1. The word “**cling**” (kollomenoi) is also a strong word and means to be **glued** or **cemented together**. It is used in Scripture to refer to the **intimate union** that is to **characterize** the **marriage relationship** (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:16-17).

2. Here we see that sincere love is **glued** to what is **ethically good**, as **measured** by the **standard** of the Word of God (Ps. 119:31). For in **1 Corinthians 13:6** we read that love “does not **rejoice** in **unrighteousness**, but **rejoices** with the **truth**.”
3. Paul gives us an **indication** of what **good** is when he says in **Philippians 4:8**, “...whatever is **true**, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **right**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is of **good repute**, if there is any **excellence** and if anything **worthy of praise**,  **dwell** on (or **cling to**) these things.”
4. The **third manifestation** of love is:

### III. Love shows Affection toward all Believers

- A. Look at **v. 10**: Be **devoted** to one another in **brotherly love**;
  1. Whereas **agape love** is predominantly a **choice** and **action**, not a **feeling**, it is the **soil** from which **heartfelt affection** toward fellow believers **grows**. Both the words “**devoted**” (philostorgoi) and “**brotherly love**” (philadelphia) here describe the **warm** and **tender loving affection** that members of a **good** and **healthy family** have for each other.
  2. Likewise, as **spiritual brothers** and **sisters** in Christ in the **one family** of God, our **sincere love** will show itself in a **warm** and **tender loving affection** toward all believers.
  3. This is because **brotherly love** reflects the **new nature** of every believer and that we are **truly** a child of God (1 Jn. 2:9-11; 3:10-18, 23; 4:7-8, 11-12, 20-21; 5:1). This is why Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 4:9**, “Now as to the **love of the brethren**,

you have **no need** for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to **love one another.**”

4. Peter describes this **loving affection** like this in **1 Peter 1:22**, “Since you have in **obedience** to the truth purified your souls for a **sincere love** of the brethren, **fervently** love one another from the **heart.**”
5. And again in **4:8** he said, “Above all, keep **fervent** in your love for one another, because love **covers** a multitude of sins.”
6. The **fourth manifestation** of love is:

#### **IV. Love will Honor others above Ourselves**

- A. Look at the second part of **v. 10**: give **preference** to one another in **honor**;
  1. The one Greek word translated “**give preference to**” (proegoumenoi) here best refers to **putting** others before ourselves. And we are to do this to “**honor**” (time) them, which means to show **esteem, value, and respect** to them.
  2. This **honoring, other-centered love** is seen most clearly and concisely in **Philippians 2:3-4**, “Do nothing from **selfishness** or **empty conceit**, but with **humility** of mind **regard** one another as **more important** than yourselves; do not merely **look out** for your **own personal interests**, but **also** for the **interests of others.**”
  3. When we are truly **Christ-centered**, we will be **other-centered** not **self-centered**. And this **honoring, other-centered love** is a **prerequisite** for true body life to take place in the church.
  4. The **fifth manifestation** of love is:

## V. Love serves Christ with wholehearted Passion

- A. Look at v. 11: not **lagging behind** in **diligence**, **fervent** in **spirit**, **serving** the Lord;
1. These **three exhortations** are very **closely related** and have to do with our **service** to Jesus Christ: **what it should not be** and **what it should be**. **First**, what our service to Christ **should not be** is “...**lagging behind** in **diligence**.”
  2. Whereas the word “**diligence**” (spoude) speaks of “eagerness, earnestness and zeal” in our Christian actions, the one Greek word translated “**lagging behind**” (okneroi) refers to be slothful, slack or lazy.
  3. We are repeatedly warned in Scripture against **laziness**, **apathy** and **complacency** (Prov. 6:6-11; 20:4; 21:25; 26:13-16; 31:27; Matt. 25:26).
  4. **Second**, what our service to Christ **should be** is “**fervent in spirit**.” Whereas “**diligence**” pertains mainly to our **actions**, “**fervent in spirit**” pertains to our **heart attitude**.
  5. The word “**fervent**” (zeontes) means to **boil** with intensity, to **burn** with zeal, to be on fire. This is how **Apollo** was described in **Acts 18:25**.
  6. Notice that this **fervency** in our **human spirit**, but this is only because we are **filled** and **controlled** by the **Holy Spirit**.
  7. There is absolutely no place for **laziness**, **apathy**, **indifference** or **lukewarmness** in **serving** the Lord. The church in **Laodicea** was **rebuked** for this very thing in **Revelation 3:15-16**, which says, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are

**lukewarm**, and neither hot nor cold, I will **spit** you out of My mouth.”

8. **Beloved**, sincere love for the Lord and others will be seen in **serving** the Lord with **wholehearted passion**. The Lord’s service calls for **our best**, our **commitment to excellence**.
9. Solomon said in **Ecclesiastes 9:10**, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with **all your might...**”
10. **Why?** Because when Paul says, “**serving** the Lord” at the end of **v. 11** the word “**serving**” (douleuontes) refers to the service of a **bond-slave**.
11. May we **never forget** that having been **bought** with the **price** of His precious blood, we are **not our own** but the **bond-slaves of Christ** (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Therefore, **our will** is to be only to do the **will** of our **Master wholeheartedly**.
12. The **sixth manifestation** of love is:

## **VI. Love is Joyful because of Hope**

- A. Look at **v. 12**: rejoicing in **hope**,
  1. As we have already seen in **Romans** (4:18; 5:2, 5), the word “**hope**” (elpida) doesn’t mean that we are **uncertain** about something and **hope** it will happen. It refers to the **confident expectation** that what God has promised **will happen** and so we **wait patiently** and **trust Him** for its **certain** fulfillment.
  2. As believers we **always have hope**, no matter what may happen in our lives. This is because the **Source** of our **hope** is the **Lord Jesus Himself** and the **promises** of His **unchanging Word**.
  3. It is the Lord who gives us **living hope** (1 Pet. 1:3), **dying hope** (1 Cor. 15:55-57), **resurrection hope** (Rev. 20:6), the **blessed**

**hope** (1 Cor. 15:51-52), and **eternal hope** (Tit. 3:7). Therefore, we can always **rejoice in hope** right now in the **present** because we have **Christ in us**, who is “the **hope of glory**” (Col. 1:27) one day in the **future**.

4. The ***seventh manifestation*** of love is:

## **VII. Love will Endure in every Trial**

A. Look again at **v. 12: persevering in tribulation**,

1. It is because we can **rejoice in hope** that we also can be **persevering in tribulation**, whatever its **form** or **severity**. The word “**persevering**” (hupomenontes) means to remain or bear up under a heavy weight or burden, to endure, and to be steadfast.
2. And the “**tribulation**” (thlipsei) Paul is talking about here refers to all kinds of trials, afflictions, distresses, troubles, and pressures. It is the **persevering in tribulation** that is the **only path** to our spiritual maturity (Rom. 5:3-4; Jam. 1:2-4).
3. And it is because of our **sincere love** for God and others that we will **endure** in every trial. For **1 Corinthians 13:7** says that **love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”**
4. The ***eighth manifestation*** of love is:

## **VIII. Love exhibits Prayer that is Unwavering**

A. The end of **v. 12** says: **devoted to prayer**,

1. One of the **reasons** why the Lord **allows** us to go through various **trials** and **tribulations** is to **drive** us to Himself in **prayer**. For **nothing of eternal significance** is ever accomplished **in** or **through** our lives apart from **prayer**.

2. Since **prayer** is an expression of our absolute **dependence** on God, it is not to be something we do occasionally. The word “**devoted**” (proskarterountes) here literally means to be **strong** toward something, to be **steadfast** and **unwavering**.
3. **Sincere love** for God and others exhibits itself in an **unwavering** prayer life (Lk. 18:1; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17). And it is **prayer** that is God’s **ordained means** to work in and through our lives to accomplish His purposes.
4. **William Barclay** correctly observed, “When a man **ceases** to pray, he **despoils** himself of the **strength** of Almighty God. No man should be **surprised** when life **collapses** if he insists on living it alone.” (pg. 166)
5. The *ninth manifestation* of love is:

#### **IX. Love gives Generously to meet Needs**

- A. Look at the first of **v. 13: contributing** to the **needs** of the saints,
  1. The word “**contributing**” (koinoneo) here means the **sharing** of our own **personal resources** to help meet the **financial** and **material needs** of fellow believers.
  2. Speaking to believers about their **worldly riches**, we are told in **1 Timothy 6:18-19**, “Instruct them to **do good**, to be **rich** in **good works**, to be **generous** and ready to **share**, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”
  3. **John MacArthur** said, “In the eyes of society, we rightfully own certain things, but before the Lord we own nothing. We are simply **stewards** of what He has blessed us with. And one of our

most important responsibilities as His **stewards** is using our personal resources to **contribute** to the needs of the saints, our brothers and sisters in Christ.” (pg. 193)

4. The *tenth manifestation* of love is:

## **X. Love pursues Opportunities to show Hospitality**

A. Look at the end of **v. 13**: practicing **hospitality**.

1. The word “**practicing**” (koinonountes) here means “to actively pursue.” And the word “**hospitality**” (philoxenian) literally means the **love of strangers**.

2. Since **inns** in New Testament times were scarce, expensive, and often dangerous, Christians commonly opened their homes to traveling missionaries and Christian workers who passed through their towns. Although Scripture tells us that **church leaders** are to set an **example** by their own **hospitality** to strangers (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 11:8), Paul is speaking here to **all believers**.

3. **Sincere love** pursues **opportunities** to show **hospitality**. And our hospitality to others is to be viewed as a **joyous privilege** not a **drudging duty**, for **1 Peter 4:9** says, “Be hospitable to one another **without complaint**.”

4. The *eleventh manifestation* of love is:

## **XI. Love actively Blesses all one’s Enemies**

A. Look at **v. 14**: **Bless** those who **persecute** you; **bless** and do not **curse**.

1. This is clearly an **echo** of the words of Jesus from His **Sermon on the Mount** (Matt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27). Now although **believers** can make themselves our **enemies** by terribly sinning against us

and harming us, it is **unbelievers** that Paul is mainly referring to here.

2. When people “**persecute**” (diokontas) us it can take many forms, from **verbal** and **emotional abuse** to **social ostracism** to the use of **physical violence**, even resulting in **death**. But regardless of the **persecution** notice that the command to “**Bless**” is **emphasized** by being **repeated twice**, and is then **reinforced** with the **prohibition** of the opposite: “**do not curse.**”
3. Now the word “**bless**” (eulogeite) means to **invoke** God’s **blessings** upon them. This goes absolutely **contrary** to our natural **sinful inclination!**
4. The **supreme example** of blessing one’s persecutors is the **sinless** Son of God Himself, who while hanging on the cross to bear the sins of the world, **prayed** with unimaginable mercy in **Luke 23:34**, “Father, **forgive them**; for they do not know what they are doing.”
5. Following Jesus’ **example**, Stephen did the same thing while being **stoned**. He cried out in **Acts 7:60**, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!”
6. Therefore, if we too are going to **follow** Jesus’ **example** we will not only **lovingly refrain** from **retaliating** against our enemies, but also **actively forgive** them and **pray** for God’s **blessing** of **salvation** or **repentance** on them.
7. **John Calvin** was right in saying, “Although there is hardly any who has made such advance in the law of the Lord that he **fulfills** this precept, **no one** can boast that he is the child of

God, or glory in the name of a Christian, who has not **partially** undertaken this course, and does not **struggle daily** to **resist** the will to do the **opposite.**” (Morris pg. 449)

8. The *twelfth manifestation* of love is:

## **XII. Love deeply Identifies with others Feelings**

A. Paul says in **v. 15: Rejoice** with **those** who **rejoice**, and **weep** with **those** who **weep**.

1. Shifting back to our **relationship** with **fellow believers**, Paul reveals that **sincere love** doesn't stand **aloof** from people's **joys** and **sorrows** but **deeply enters** into their lives and **identifies** with them (1 Cor. 12:26).

2. Now to “**rejoice** with **those** who **rejoice**” is by far more **difficult** because of our on-going struggle with selfishness, jealousy and envy (Gal. 5:20-21; Tit. 3:3). But we are **most like** our loving, compassionate God when we truly feel the **pain** and **sorrow** that others are experiencing and to **weep** with them (Matt. 23:37; Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:35).

3. The *thirteenth manifestation* of love is:

## **XIII. Love preserves Unity within the Church**

A. Look at the first part of **v. 16: Be of the same mind** toward one another;

1. Now having the “**same mind**” doesn't mean that we all **look, think, act, and minister** exactly in the **same way**. **Unity** is not **uniformity**, since we already talked about **diversity in unity** in **vv. 4-5**.

2. Here Paul is talking about having the **same loving attitude** toward everyone in the church, regardless of their ethnic, social,

or economic status. It is this **like-mindedness** that brings **harmony** in the church and “**preserves the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2).

3. The *fourteenth manifestation* of love is:

#### **XIV. Love is Humble and avoids Pride**

A. Look at the end of **v. 16**: do not be **haughty** in mind, but **associate** with the **lowly**. Do not be **wise** in your own estimation.

1. To be “**haughty in mind**” (hupsela phronountes) literally means “**minding high things.**” As we saw back in **v. 3**, Paul is calling believers to be **humble** and to resist **sinful pride** and **haughty arrogance** in their lives.
2. This is why he commands, “Do not be **wise** in your **own estimation.**” For this only leads us to **think** that our **opinions** are always right and others are wrong.
3. But sincere love doesn’t do that, for **1 Corinthians 13:4** says, “...love does not **brag** and is not **arrogant.**”
4. Instead, **love** is **humble** in that it is not a **respector** of persons. For, like Jesus, sincere love will “**associate** with the **lowly,**” which refers to the humble, the outcasts, the poor, and the needy.
5. May we **never forget** that the **ground** is **level** at the foot of the cross!

#### **Conclusion:**

In closing, what a **comprehensive picture** of Christian love! It is **sincere, discerning, affectionate, honoring, passionate, hopeful, enduring, prayerful, generous, hospitable, forgiving, sympathetic, unifying, and humble.** Since **love** is the **mark** of **true**

**spirituality**, no wonder Jesus said, “**By this** all men will **know** that you are My disciples, if you have **love** for one another” (Jn. 13:35).

But we must **remember** that we can never **manifest** this kind of love in our **own strength**. Since **love** is the **fruit** of the **Holy Spirit** (Gal. 5:22), these **manifestations of love** can only be **evidenced** in and through us as we **fully depend** on Him and allow Him to **control** our lives. As Paul **prayed** for the **Philippians**, may **our love** “...**abound** still more and more in **real knowledge** and **all discernment**” (Phil. 1:9) to the **glory** of God!