

Romans

- I. The proper functioning of the Church
 - A. **Romans 12:9-13** . . . Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. [10] Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; [11] not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; [12] rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, [13] contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.
 - B. Review:
 1. For the purpose of keeping these verses in their larger context, I want to remind you that **Romans 12** through **Romans 15** contains Paul's teaching on what our response to God is to be in light of all He has done for us – which Paul described in **Romans 1-11**.
 2. Here in **Romans 12**, Paul begins teaching us what our response to God is to be by, first of all, exhorting us to holy living.
 - a. After his exhortation to holy living, Paul adds the exhortation to cast off those ways in which we have been conformed to this world, and to take on new, transformed ways of thinking.
 - b. On top of this, Paul adds that we are to flee self-conceit, which is a form of insane thinking, and we are to replace prideful thinking with sound judgment.
 - c. In **vs 3-8**, Paul deals with our place and function within the church. And he presents this in a way that, if we live according to his teaching, we as individual members of the church and the church as a whole will function according to God's will.
 3. So, I am encouraging you to plant this progressive picture firmly in your mind.
 - a. The first thing Paul talks about is holiness.
 - b. The second is transformed thinking.
 - c. The third is humility, protected by sound judgment, which is necessary for taking our God given place and fulfilling our function in the church.
 - d. The fourth is an explanation of what God's gifts of places and functions look like so that the church functions in a healthy way.
 - e. Then, the very next thing Paul talks about is love – a love that when built upon holiness, transformed thinking, humility, sound

judgment, and taking our God given place in the church, forms a solid, unshakeable foundation for making us healthy Christians, and hence, a healthy church family who express love according to the ways Paul talks about in **vs 9-13**.

C. Prayer

II. Godly ways of dealing with the other members of the church

A. **Romans 12:9a** . . . Let love be without hypocrisy. To consider love without hypocrisy, let's consider some of the things the scripture says about love.

1. Question: What compares to the love we are to have for others?
 - a. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:13** . . . that these three things will remain – faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love.
 - b. Jesus said in **Mark 12:30-31** . . . The foremost commandment is this, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second [*and equally important commandment*] is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.
 - c. In **Romans 13:8,10**, Paul said that we are to owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
 - d. In **1 John 4:7-8**, John said we are to love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God (*i.e., justified, born again*) and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
2. Question: What compares to love in relation to God's dealings with us?
 - a. Jesus said in **John 3:16-17** . . . For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.
 - b. John wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (**1 John 4:10**).
 - c. Paul said in **Romans 5:8** . . . that God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - d. And one of the most comprehensive statements about God's love toward us is found in **Ephesians 2:1-7** . . . And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [2] in which you formerly walked

according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. [3] Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, **because of His great love with which He loved us**, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), [6] and **raised us up** with Him, and **seated us** with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, [7] **so that** in the ages to come (*throughout eternity*) He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

3. Question: What compares to love in our relationships and in the everyday exchanges that take place in those relationships?
 - a. What compares to love when it comes to making a child feel safe and secure?
 - b. What compares to love when it comes to making a wife feel like she is the most important person to her husband, or making a husband feel like he is the most important person to his wife?
 - c. What compares to love when it comes to making strangers or the poor and needy or the hurting who come into the church feel like they and their situations matter to the rest of us?
 - d. What compares to love when it comes to making us, a diverse group of people, humbly work together in unity for the common good and the glory of God?
 - e. It is because of these inherent powers of love that Paul said that love is the perfect bond of unity, or the perfect glue that holds us together in unity (**Colossians 3:14**).
4. Who of us doesn't want to feel loved by those nearest and dearest? Who doesn't feel pain, or at least a sense of deep loss, over not being loved? Who hasn't behaved in both good and bad ways in an effort to get the love longed for? And isn't it true that many are emotionally moved to shed at least a few tears by compelling stories of love?
5. The point of considering these scriptures and human experiences is to show that love is required, powerful, and needful for our well-being. Therefore, to keep love acting like love, Paul says, "**Let love be without hypocrisy.**" In other words, let love be love. Don't dilute it, don't use it for personal gain, don't let your longing for love turn

into a selfish pursuit of attention – as if attention is equal to love, and don't mistreat or refuse to love those who won't love you.

- a. You see, the problem of hypocrisy is not with love, it's with us. Paul affirms this in **1 Corinthians 13:8**, where he says that love never fails – or in other words, love never fails to act like love.
 - b. And why does love never fail to act like love? Because there are no impurities in love. There is no selfishness or pride or injustice or jealousy or greed or hatred in love. Love is pure.
 - c. We are the ones with impurities. We are the ones who pollute love by dragging impurities from our own lives into love. We are the ones who desensitize ourselves to the purity of love by saying “I love you” as casually as we say “Have a nice day.”
6. Therefore, Paul exhorts us to let love be without hypocrisy, that is, to protect the purity of love so it will consistently act like love.
- a. Now I want to remind you that the context is important here, because to keep the love we express hypocrisy free – in our home, in the church, and in the world – we must pursue holiness of life, we must guard against being influenced by the world, we must nurture a transformed mind, we must reject conceit, we must use sound judgment, and we must live within God's will.
 - b. Now you may be thinking that keeping love pure is too daunting or too demanding. However, keeping our love perfectly pure is not the issue here. The issue is what race are we running? What goal are we aiming for? Who are we trying to please?
 - c. If we are running the race of keeping love pure, if we are aiming at the goal of pure love, if we are trying to please God in how we love, then we will be in the spiritual condition to significantly protect the purity of love.
 - d. And of course, we are capable of doing this because, as Peter says, God has given us everything necessary for life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**).
7. I don't know if you noticed, but in talking about running the right race and heading toward the right goal and pleasing the right person, there was no mention of self. And here is the reason –
- a. No one can maintain a humble attitude toward those in their home, their church, or the world who seeks personal glory and the praises of others.
 - b. No one will generously share what they have when money is their security and possessions their treasures.

- c. No husband will faithfully love his wife who seeks gratification for his sexual passions outside the confines of his marriage.
 - d. No one will indiscriminately and consistently love everyone at church who is selfish at home and partial in their dealings with those in their workplace.
 - e. No one can be a peacemaker who does not do all that is in their power to be at peace with all men all the time.
8. Therefore, to heed the words of **I John 3:18** – “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” we must pursue those spiritual qualities and practices that enable us to keep love pure.

B. Romans 12:9b . . . Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

1. This exhortation is not unique to Paul. We read similar passages in
 - a. **Psalms 97:10a . . . Hate evil, you who love the LORD.**
 - b. **Proverbs 8:13a . . . The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.**
 - c. **Amos 5:15a . . . Hate evil, love good.**
2. Here in **Romans 12**, the context for these words is that of keeping love pure so that our love – in the home, in the church, and in the world – is pure love.
 - a. The underlying essence of Paul’s words in **vs 9** is that keeping love pure requires a focused mind, sound judgment, perseverance, and the kind of energy required to endure a day long tug-of-war.
 - b. And to drive this truth home, Paul uses strong language – **abhor** evil and **cling** to good.
3. To **abhor** evil is to despise evil, to detest it, or to utterly loathe it. This means we are not only to avoid or abstain from evil – which we can do through the right use of self-discipline, we are also to **abhor** evil.
4. But how do we get to that place where we abhor all evil, because the reality is, we have loved and maybe still love some evil.
 - a. Abhorring evil requires putting to death any desire or longing still lurking in our heart for things we ought not to want.
 - b. But abhorring evil doesn’t begin and stop there, it also requires nurturing a view of evil that sees evil the way God sees it.
 - c. In other words, **abstaining** from evil engages our mind and outward behavior. However, **abhorring** evil engages our heart, our emotions, our mind, and our outward behavior.
5. There is one more thing I want to say about abhorring evil. It is easy to be mixed motivated or double-minded as a Christian.

- a. For example, we can agree that certain things are sinful and stop doing them, while still wishing we could do them because we like what they do for us. This is double-mindedness.
 - b. We can agree that something is evil and stop doing it, but not because it is evil, but because we hate the consequences that result from committing that particular evil. This is true of you if you know, deep down, that you would commit the sin if there were no consequences. This is being mixed-motivated.
 - c. The point here is that doing what is right while allowing mixed-motives and double-mindedness to continue unchecked is a spiritual weakness that will, in certain settings and at certain times, effect the purity of your love. Therefore, let us strive to abhor what is evil so that, according to the context here, we can keep love pure.
6. To **cling** to what is good is to hold on so tight that the good we are clinging to cannot get away or be taken away. One of the definitions of the Greek word for **cling** is **to glue to**, and as it is used here it can mean we are to glue ourselves to good so that we keep love pure.
- C. With the words “abhor” and “cling” in mind, let me read **vs 9** once: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”
1. As I have already said, these are strong words, and when kept within their context, they describe the way love is to be practiced, by you and me, in your home and my home, in our church, and in our world.
 2. And to live love and express love as God intends it to be expressed, we must **keep love pure** so that it always acts like love.
 - a. The Christians in James’ letter who warmly welcomed the rich into their church while treating the poor who came through the door as second class people, are an example of introducing our own impurities into love so that it becomes hypocritical (**James 2:1-4**).
 - b. Which raises the question, “Which do you value more, being loved, or love itself?” If we value being loved more than love itself, or if we value the praises or good-will of others more than love itself, we will remain selfish, and in our selfishness bring whatever elements of selfishness we cherish into love, thus polluting love so that it becomes hypocritical love.
 - c. If we value love itself, we will hold the standard of love to be the measurement of our love so that we continue to rise to that standard in how we love everyone around us.

3. The next thing we must do to live love and express love is to **abhor what is evil** so that, like Joseph being tempted by Potiphar's wife, we flee, even when evil promises rewards that are highly gratifying.
 - a. Now it is easy to abhor the evils we despise, but that doesn't mean we abhor evil, it means we abhor some evil.
 - b. And it is easy to abhor those evil ways in others that harm us or make our lives miserable in some way.
 - c. Therefore, the two biggest challenges we face in relation to abhorring evil are –
 - (1) To abhor all evil wherever it is found,
 - (2) And to abhor all evil in myself, first, and then in others.
4. Finally, to live love and express love as God intends requires **clinging to what is good**, just like the three friends of Daniel who treasured faithfulness to God more than freedom from a horrible death in the fiery furnace.
 - a. On the other hand, the Christians in Corinth who were taking other Christians to court are an example of Christians who neither abhorred what is evil nor clung to what is good. And I point this out, not to focus on their hypocritical love, but to remind us how easy it is to bring hypocrisy into love, whether it be our expressions of love in the home, or in the church, or in the world.
 - b. We are all capable of teaching or requiring others to do what is loving, but we become hypocrites ourselves when we do not require of ourselves the same degree of effort and commitment to the pure love that we require of others.
 - c. Therefore, just like abhorring evil, clinging to what is good must begin in me first, then I will be in the right condition to love with the purity of a love that keeps me from being a hypocrite when calling you to love this way too.

III. Conclusion

- A. **1 Corinthians 13:4-8a** . . . Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, [5] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, [6] does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; [7] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8] Love never fails.