

The Christian Arsenal

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Live in Love Romans Chapter 12:9-21

- So Paul has changed gears again and now gets down where the rubber meets the road in his letter to the Roman church. This is the practical section of this letter. Now that he has explained what it means to be a Christian, he now gets to the good stuff. How do I live for God each day? How do I live like He wants me to?
- Paul has made the case for Christ. Man is sinful and lost. Man is in need of a Savior and a change of direction. Man cannot save his-self by living good and doing good things. We must accept the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ His Son and His atoning death on the cross to be saved from the payment for our sin. Death, spiritual death. Eternal separation from God.
- God in His mercy has given salvation to any and all who confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in Him. Believers are called to be faithful in spreading the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ. He has also explained how Israel figures in to Gods plan and that God still has plans for this tiny nation that has rejected her Messiah.
- So how can we be right with God? Paul has already explained we cannot find salvation or favor with God by religiously keeping to a set of rules and rituals. This leads us into a life of legalism every bit as flawed as the legalism the Pharisees were living. So what do we do?
- I want you to keep in mind the character of our heavenly Father as we go through today's scripture. God loves with a capacity that people will not. Most of our feelings we call love are not. We place conditions on our love for most people. We can love them as long as they love us back or at least treat us as though they like us. Remember that God loved you before you loved Him. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"(5:8). God loved us first. When there was nothing good about us, while we were lost and wallowing in our sin, He loved us. Can you love with that capacity?
- Paul tells us a good place to start in verse 3 of chapter 12. He says we should get over ourselves. Don't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. It is not about us. In order to know and understand how to live for God we have start with our focus on Him, not on ourselves.
- Look in verse 9. Paul tells us we are to love others they way God loves each of us. Without hypocrisy. Showing love to deserving lovable people is easy. Blessing those whom in a worldly view are undeserving, is difficult and loving your enemy is even harder. But this is the love that God has shown and continues to show the world. Love, faith, and hope are core virtues for a Christian and Christian living. Here Paul uses Greek word *agape* for love. This is a selfless, self-giving, and unconditional love that God has shown the world. In order to get a good definition of *agape*, all you have to do is look to the gospels not in a dictionary. Because this love is an action not a feeling. I am sure than

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we all know someone who has cared for or is caring for another person, maybe an elderly family member or friend. They sacrifice their own desires to provide for others. This is not only an act of **agape love** (love your neighbor, care for widows and orphans, bless those who persecute you), but a command from Jesus to feed His sheep and care for those around you. The same agape love motivated God to send His Son.

- One thing Paul encourages all believers to do is to edify others around you. To bless them and love them is to edify them or build them up not tear them down. That is why Paul is telling us to love without hypocrisy, or to love with a genuine, sincere, Godly love. Agape.
- Verse 10, This is an honest love, a humble love, not proud. Preferring one another means treating others as more important than ourselves. Christ is our model for this love, for this kind of action. Flip over to Philippians 2:3-5. Read. Jesus is our model, first God, then you, then me. We need to adopt a mind-set of "me third".
- Verse 10 Paul uses two other Greek words for love, one translates to a family love or brotherly love (*philos*) and the other is an affectionate love (*philostorgos*). (There is one other Greek word for love which describes physical love is but is not used in the New Testament - *eros*.)
- These words that Paul uses describe for us the behavior of the church. While we are to show a Godly agape love to the world, in the church we are to demonstrate a brotherly family love, also and affectionate love for one another. This is more than just fond feelings. These words express a sense of devotion and loyalty.
- Verses 15 & 16 Paul reminds us to be sensitive to the feelings of our brothers and sisters. We are happy when things are good for you and we cry with you when things hit those tribulations and storms of life. Christian fellowship is so much more than a slap on the back and a handshake. It means sharing our burdens and blessings, by doing that we all grow together and glorify God. Humble attitudes, willingness to share someone else's burdens are actions of a Christian who truly ministers to the Body.
- Now when you name the name of Christ, you will be going against the grain of the world most of the time. Serving Christ will mean Satanic opposition and you will experience some discouraging days. These unfortunately are facts of this world. Jesus while ministering here on earth had enemies. Wherever Paul and the other Apostles went, they had enemies who opposed their work.
- Look in verse 14. Paul here focuses on love directed to those who persecute the church. There is no known teaching in the Greek or Jewish worlds prior to Jesus being on earth that commanded this response to someone cursing you. This was and is radical stuff. This type of thinking continues to go against the world's way. Understand that this reflects God's love. God has always loved and continues to love those in rebellion to Him. He sent His Son for them and Paul knew this fact all too well. This is the love that turned a persecutor into an evangelist. The power to bless belongs to God; our usual reaction is to get those who have come against us. We even will ask God's help in returning destruction on those opponents. **So how do we bless those who persecute us?**

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- Look in verse 17. Here is how Paul tells us we are to relate to an unbelieving world. Love should guide us, as children of God we must separate our behavior from the behavior of the world. Any one can return good for good or repay evil for evil. The only way to overcome evil is with good. Paul says try to do what is honorable, vs. 18 and as far as it is up to us, live in peace with others. This is not always possible. The gospel of Christ will always stir up anger and we cannot control that, but we can control ourselves. There is a big difference between the offense of the cross (Gal. 5:11, 6:12-15) and being an offensive Christian. We are to do what we can to promote peace. This is the command Jesus gives us in Matt.5:44-48. This kind of love can only come from God.
- Look in verse 19, we are not to seek our own revenge, judgment is best left up to God. He sees more clearly, waits more patiently, forgives more freely, and punishes justly.
- Again in 20, Paul encourages us to respond to evil with good by quoting from Proverbs (25:21-22). This response will heap fiery coals upon the head of our enemies. Now this is **absolutely not** a way of getting back at them. “ I am just gonna pray some fire from heaven down on this no good rotten person!” People can always fight against our points and arguments we make for the gospel, but they cannot protect themselves against our prayers. This proverb refers to shedding light on their evil actions and deeds, and represents the shame they will feel when they realize what they are doing. The shame they feel can lead them to repentance and redemption.
- Can you love with a Godly capacity? With the Lord we can! Matthew 19:26 “with God all things are possible”