

## Romans

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Romans 12:9-13



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Paul here in Chapter 12 is in full Preacher mode. In the previous chapters he was teaching theological truths, primarily using a debate format as a platform to introduce the Truths he needed convey. Most of these chapters were directed either to the Jewish members of the church or to the controversy swirling around them. Here in these verses Paul is addressing the whole church, specifically as to what day to day Christian life is to look like, how this new life in Christ is to be lived out. John says that the difference between Christians and non-Christians should be “obvious” (1 John 3:10) and here Paul gets into the specifics.

- Let love be without hypocrisy – completely sincere without ulterior motives; often in the world an empty version of love is given only to see what can be gained; Christian love knows no such love, for our “self” has been crucified with Christ; we love others unconditionally just as Christ loves us.
- Abhor what is evil – evil often comes to us in an appealing way; remember that Lucifer was the most beautiful of all the angels; too often it is not evil that people hate but merely the **consequences** of evil as when they do not see cocaine as evil, only the addiction; we are to see evil as Christ does, as He saw the money changers in the Temple and hated it with a passion.
- Cling to what is good – the word here for cling means to stick like glue; stick like glue to the Way of Jesus; remember that Jesus said there was no one good but God, so it is only the Way of God that is good; this is why Jesus gave us the Sermon on the Mount, so we would know what good looks like and then stick to it like glue.
- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love – Paul here uses the “phileo brotherly love” word for love; we are all part of the Family of God, brothers and sisters with Christ and with God as our Father; its been said that you can pick your friends but you’re stuck with your family, so it has always been with the Church of Jesus Christ; remember that Jesus chose Matthew the tax collector to follow him as well as Simon the zealot, two sworn enemies; in Paul’s church there were Jews and Gentiles, two people groups who barely tolerated each other; in the world a Jew would never enter the home of a Gentile nor have a Gentile in their own home, but in the Church of Jesus Christ, Jews and Gentiles worshipped and ate respectfully with each other in each other’s homes as one family in Christ’s name.
- Give preference to one another in honor – so much of the conflict that arises in churches are concerned with rights, privileges, and prestige, in others words, Pride; here we are to kill our own pride and defer to others; did not Jesus say that when you are invited to a dinner to take the unwanted seat and that “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted? (Luke 14:7-11); “The Christian has no rights, only duties”.
- Not lagging behind in diligence – There is a certain energy in the true life of a Christian; the true Christian life has no room for laziness; the world is a constant battleground between Good and Evil, so the Christian

does not have the luxury of sitting idly by as others do the work and fighting; “The true Christian may burn out, but never rust out”.

- Fervent in Spirit – For a steam engine to work, the boiler must stay hot, so it is also with the Christian; in Christ’s letter to Laodicea in Revelation 3 we find the one thing that He will not tolerate is the one who is neither hot nor cold; an apathetic church without any fire, where people aren’t motivated to serve in any capacity, is a Laodicean church.
- Serving the Lord – There is a sense of serving in the opportune time in this statement; the Lord gives us opportunities to serve Him every day, to learn more and grow in our faith and to more and more crucify our old self so that our new self may look more like Him; it is always a tragedy when we fail to take hold of the opportunities to serve the Lord as he sends them past us; “There are three things which cannot come back: the spent arrow, the spoken word, and the lost opportunity.”
- Rejoicing in Hope – the Christian life is to be one of divine optimism; we are not hopeful for hope’s sake, but we rejoice in hope because God is at work; we believe that because God is with us, we can be safe in the Valley of the Shadow and that come what may, that the best is yet to be; “Just because he knows of the grace that is sufficient for all things and the strength that is made perfect in weakness, the Christian knows that no task is too much for him...There can never be any such thing as a hopeless Christian” (Barclay).
- Persevering in tribulation – “Suffering colors all of life, doesn’t it?”, the cynic one remarked. “Yes”, replied the Christian, “but I prefer to choose the color”; it is the presence of Christ in our life that empowers us to choose the color; in the face of tribulation the presence of Christ can empower us to sing in Philippian jails, forgive our executioners, and shine in the darkness
- Devoted to Prayer – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 tells us to “Rejoice always! Pray without ceasing!”; prayer is to be an ongoing conversation with the Father; imagine getting in a car with Jesus and driving to Alaska, so that however long the journey took the two of you just had one long conversation; this is prayer, so that throughout the journey of your life you and God were simply in one long conversation.
- Contributing to the needs of the saints – in a materialistic world that’s all about getting, the Christian is to be all about giving; that was Victor Hugo’s underlying theme in *Les Misérables*, how much could Valjean give in order to repay all that God had done for him; 1 John 3:17-18; James 2:15-17
- Practicing hospitality – William Tyndale used a magnificent word when he translated it that the Christian should have a “harborous” disposition, in that we are to be welcoming to all who come; the Christian can never be happy when he is selfish; Christianity is the life of the open hand, the open heart, and the open door (Barclay); Hebrews 13:2; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9