

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
© Dr. Stephen Felker, Interim Pastor
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Romans 12:9-10a, 13, 15 “Love and Hatred in the Christian Life”

Intro. I assume you noticed the title for today’s message, “Love and Hatred in the Christian Life.” We all know that love is an essential aspect of the Christian life. But do you realize that there is a place for a certain kind of hatred in the Christian life as well? Indeed, there is. Though we are to love people, according to v.9 we are to hate or abhor evil. Non-Christians may love sin and hate people, but we should love people and hate sin. Actually, to abhor what is evil is an expression of love for those who would be harmed by such evil. Abortion kills an innocent life. Adultery wounds deeply, and typically destroys a marriage.

In v.2 of this chapter Paul says that our lives are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. So beginning in v.9 Paul shares over 20 specific commands¹ for living a new kind of life that comes from a new way of thinking. Much of what I will share with you over the next several weeks is the opposite of how we think and act by nature. But just because our actions are natural, that does not make them right. After all, we are sinners by nature. So with the words of these verses, I hope to renew your thinking about the subject of love and hate in the Christian life.

So notice with me first of all the fact that:

I. WE MUST EXPRESS OUR LOVE IN THE RIGHT WAYS

As Paul gives us some of the duties which all believers are to observe, we might expect that he would begin with love. After all, Paul says in Col. 3:14, “And above all these put on love...” (cf. Gal. 5:14; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Pet. 4:8). So he says in v.9, “Let love be genuine.” God is love, and God dwells within if you are a Christian. Therefore, the chief characteristic of God must become the chief characteristic of the believer. Jesus said in Jn. 13:35, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (NKJV). If there is one thing above all that should characterize us as Christians, it is that we have love for one another.

What a contrast with the religions of that day. Paganism was characterized by lust, not love and compassion. Christianity came into the pagan world as a breath of fresh air. Christians were immediately drawn to each other, shared each other’s woes, bore each other’s burdens, and comforted one another in times of sickness, trouble and sorrow.

It is well to note that no definition of love is given here. Instead of what Paul does in these verses is to show the characteristics and actions of true love. He is not encouraging a mere sentimental love that you hear about in much of the world’s music. He is talking about real love. So what kind of love should we have for one another? First of all, we should have a:

A. Sincere Love – Paul says in v.9, “Let love be genuine” or literally “without hypocrisy.” Likewise, 1 Peter 2:22 says we should have “a sincere brotherly love” and that we should “love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” Our word “hypocrite” is a transliteration of the ancient Greek word used for the acting that took place on the stage of the theater. The Greek actors would hold a mask in front of their faces. If the actor was playing a happy character, he would have a mask with a

¹ Douglas Moo (pp. 414-415) has a fairly lengthy discussion of the paraenesis style of writing that Paul employs here that was common in the Greco-Roman world and is also similar to Hebrew wisdom literature. Proverbs strings together moral exhortations without clear organization.

smile on his face, regardless of how he really felt. If he was playing a villain, he would wear a mask that clearly portrayed him as a villain. In either case it was just a mask that did not necessarily reflect the feelings or character of the actor. Thus, the word easily came to mean putting on an act in real life, or being a hypocrite.

So Paul is saying that our love should not be just an act. Instead, our love for one another should be sincere and genuine. Some Christians have smiled to another Christian, and given some gesture of love, and then turned around and talked bad about them behind their backs. That is not true love. Or someone may say, “I love you *in the Lord*,” and what they may mean is, “I don’t even like you but as a Christian I know I’m supposed to love you.”

Of course, one of the greatest examples of hypocritical love was Judas. When he led that crowd of armed men to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and identified Him by giving Him a kiss, Jesus responded in Luke 22:48, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Emphasize “with a kiss” since that phrase is in the emphatic position). What hypocrisy Judas showed! That kiss led to betrayal and the death of Jesus!

So in the future, make sure your expressions of love are genuine, free from ulterior motives or manipulation. If you find yourself giving someone a fake smile, stop and ask the Lord to give you a genuine love for that person. Seek the true love that comes from the heart and produced by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 says, “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (NKJV). Especially if we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will bear the fruit of the Spirit, the first of which is love (Gal. 5:22).

We have seen the kind of love we should *not* have, a hypocritical love. Now let’s see what kind of love we *should* have.² In v.10 we see that we should have:

B. Family Love – There Paul says, “Love one another with brotherly affection....” He uses two different compound Greek words to emphasize the fact that our love for one another should be similar to that of a loving family. One is the word *philadelphia* in Greek, referring to the kind of love brothers *should* have for one another. Then he adds another compound Greek word (*philostorgos*³) that refers to the kind of love (*philos*) that is expressed with natural affection (*storge*), like that of a mother for her child. So in the family of God, we are to express the kind of love and affection that family members should have for one another.

In the life of a church, there needs to be an emphasis on the family-type of love as seen here. Look around at others in the congregation. We ought to be like one big, happy family. You are to love other believers just like you love other members of your own family.

Now let’s get specific. Our greetings to one another should express a family-kind of affection, such as a warm handshake or an appropriate kind of hug. Writing to those in a Middle Eastern culture, Paul often commanded greeting other believers with a holy kiss on the cheek, as he does in Romans 16:16 (see also 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Th. 5:26). In western culture a handshake or hug is a much more common greeting. We need to be recipients of appropriate loving affection. It promotes health and emotional well-being. We also obey this Scripture by referring to one another as brother or sister. After all, God is our Father and we are His children. There’s an old Gaither chorus that says, “You may notice that we say brother and sister ‘round here, well it’s because we’re a family, and each one’s so dear. When one has a heartache, we all share a tear....” Then the chorus says, “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.” Furthermore, family members

² There is not even a verb in that first little “sentence” of v.9. It could be considered a heading for what follows. Thus, Paul shows us in these verses what genuine love looks like.

³ This word is only found here in the New Testament and *storge* is not found at all. *Storge* or *storgos* is based on the verb *stergo* (to cherish affectionately). In 1 Timothy 3:2 Paul did warn that in the last days men would be “heartless” or “unloving” (NKJV), actually *astorgos*, “without natural affection.”

usually say “I love you” to one another. We should tell each other verbally of our love for each other. By the way, Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:2 that he was to express his love and minister to “older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.”

Next, we should have a:

C. Sharing Love – Paul says in v.13, “Contribute to the needs of the saints....” “Contribute” (*koinoneo*) is the verb form of *koinonia*, which refers to fellowship or partnership. So it means that we should participate or share in meeting the needs of the saints. We are to identify ourselves with their needs and treat their needs as if they were our own. After all, we are part of the same body (v.5). So we see that true love is a giving love. If you are not willing to give, you have a hypocritical love, rather than a true love.⁴

Our church does have a benevolence fund. If you know someone that is clearly in need, you can ask a deacon to consider using the fund to help them. However, there are other times when we should meet a need of a brother or sister in Christ directly, without going through the church. If you know of a need, and God has blessed you with the means to meet that need, then just take care of that need directly or give through another believer to remain anonymous.

By the way, the emphasis in giving is typically on the saints (v.13). Paul said in Gal. 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (NKJV). We will not be able to meet the needs of the whole world, but we can make sure that there is not a single Christian among us who is lacking in the true necessities of life. We ought to take care of our own, just as members of a physical family should be the first to help another family member (1 Tim. 5:8).

Next, we should have:

D. Hospitable Love – Paul also says in v.13 that we are to “seek to show hospitality.” “Hospitality” (*philonexia*) is literally translated “love to stranger.” Thus, it is an expression of love that extends beyond our family and friends. Even so, Heb. 13:2 says, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (NKJV), a reference to Abraham and Sarah. Furthermore, don’t just give hospitality grudgingly when asked. In fact, 1 Peter 4:9 says, “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” Paul even says we are to “seek” such opportunities. The word “seek” is literally translated “to follow after or pursue” and implies that we are to be active in the pursuit of hospitality. If a fellow Christian needs a place to stay, or a meal to eat, take the initiative to offer hospitality to that person.

In apostolic times there was urgent need for the practice of this virtue. 1) There were few inns or hotels, and they typically were not very safe or secure. 2) Because of persecution many Christians were compelled to migrate (e.g., Acts 8:3-4). As they moved into a new community, they needed the hospitality of other believers. 3) Then there were traveling evangelists and missionaries who needed a place to stay in each community. Therefore, hospitality was a prime example of the way in which believers were to be partakers in the needs of the saints.

Just before the pandemic six of us went to South Africa on a mission trip. We went to minister among the Pedi people and a local church. One of the members of that church, Anastasia, opened her home to our team and even cooked our meal over an open fire because of a power outage. The pastor and his wife opened their home to feed us a meal. They practiced Christian hospitality.

⁴ 1 John 3:17 says, “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”

But even where economic and social conditions are more favorable, the practice of hospitality is not irrelevant. Have you ever invited church visitors into your home for lunch? Have you ever hosted a guest evangelist or missionary? Some of you have opened your home to host a community group, which is a great ministry of his church. Will you “seek” that opportunity next time? Susan and her team will host our upcoming Thanksgiving meal. Have you offered to help? May there always be enough to practice such hospitality!

Finally, we should have a:

E. Sympathetic Love – Paul says in v.15, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”⁵ We are to share in the other person’s joy, and also share in their sorrow. Let’s look at each of these expressions of loving sympathy:

1. Rejoice with Those Who Rejoice - The point of the exhortation is that we are to enter into this rejoicing as if the occasion for it were our own. We might be ready to think that it is easy and natural to rejoice with those who rejoice. However, jealousy and envy tend to make us feel just the opposite (cf. Gal. 3:20, 21; Tit. 3:3). When your co-worker gets a promotion and a good raise, and he or she is rejoicing over it, do you rejoice with that person? Or do you have a self-centered focus and begin to say, “Why didn’t I get that promotion?” When that boy or girl in school makes straight A’s and they are rejoicing, do you rejoice with them, or are you jealous because *you* didn’t make straight A’s?

Let us show love by rejoicing with those who rejoice. Weddings, the birth of a child, and graduations are just a few of the times when we can rejoice with those who rejoice with words, hugs, cards and gifts. If you find out that someone has been honored or awarded, you should rejoice with them. Tell them with sincerity that you are happy for them.

Paul also covers the opposite side of Christian sympathy. He said:

2. Weep with Those Who Weep – Even though we are Christians, we will have hardships and heartbreaks in this life. That’s because we still live in a sin-cursed world. Sometimes we even have hardships because of our own sin. So there will be times when we will weep.⁶ And when you see a brother or sister shedding tears, you should weep with them. You should sympathize with them. In fact, the word “sympathize” originates from Greek, and it literally means “to suffer with,” or even “share the same emotion.” Jesus did that. At the grave of Lazarus with Mary and Martha, the Bible says, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

This is especially directed against a vice that is unspeakable in its meanness, to be glad at the calamities of others. You hear about someone who is suffering, and you smugly say, “He had it coming to him.” Yet Prov. 17:5 says, “He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished” (NKJV). God, through the prophet Obadiah, rebuked Israel’s cousin nation Edom for rejoicing over the destruction of the Jewish nation (v.12). That’s just the opposite of Paul’s exhortation.

This is one reason why we should visit a fellow believer who has lost a loved one. At least send a sympathy card. If you hear that a brother or sister is weeping over a job loss, then go and visit them, or encourage them in some other way. Remind them that God is their provider. Say a prayer for or with them. Help them find another job. Perhaps you know of someone who is lonely or in sorrow, and you have some time on your hands. Go and visit them, or call them, and share in their sorrow, and seek to lift their spirits. If you know of a parent who is weeping over a wayward or sick child, then go and weep with them. Pray with them. Let us show love by being sensitive to those who are emotionally down and weep with those who weep. Don’t avoid them, as some are prone to do; minister to them.

⁵ Likewise, 1 Cor 12:26 says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”

⁶ The word so translated is from *klaio*, to shed tears.

So let us share in both joy and sorrow with others. There is an old Swedish proverb that says, “Shared joy is a double joy; shared sorrow is half a sorrow” (Swindoll, p.260).

Not only should we show love to one another, but we also see that:

II. WE MUST ABHOR WHAT IS EVIL

That’s what Paul says in v.9 we should do. Likewise, Psa. 97:10 says, “O you who love the LORD, hate evil!”⁷ Paul uses a word (*apostugeo*) which refers to something as detestable and abhorrent, causing reaction that is emotional, and visibly or audibly expressed. The preposition *apo* is added to the word, which means “away from,” and intensifies the meaning. The Christian is to express his hatred and abhorrence of evil by a loathing of it and withdrawal from it. Paul says in 1 Thess. 5:22 that we are to “Abstain (or hold back) from every form of evil.”

I do want to point out that Paul uses the stronger word for evil here (*poneros not kakos*), the kind of evil that is wicked and aggressive. People are frequently afraid to admit that hatred of such evil is a Christian virtue. Yet *true* love abhors what is evil, for evil brings harm to the people we love. We abhor evil because evil destroys relationships. For example, drug and alcohol abuse has destroyed many homes and many lives. Racism and discrimination harms others and we should abhor it.

What a contrast to many in society today. They are entertained by evil such as violence and immorality. They do not abhor it but are drawn to it and even delight in it. Many people in this world love their sin, but we ought to hate sin. Why? If we hate and abhor sin, then we will certainly be less likely to yield to temptation and commit those sins. If you have a sin that you have trouble with, then it is probably because you look upon it with favor rather than with abhorrence. It is your “pet” sin. But victory will come when you come to hate that sin.

In my lifetime I have seen a tremendous change in the general population regarding attitudes toward what the Bible defines as sin and evil. It seems most have completely lost this biblical virtue. At one time most people would be ashamed if their sin was exposed. Then they wanted people to tolerate their sin. “Live and let live” was their slogan. Then they actively promoted and even celebrated their sin. California and some other states are actively promoting abortion, even up to the time of birth, without any regard for the innocent life in the womb. Isa. 5:20 says, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil” Now we have reached the point where if others do not embrace and approve of their sin, they will persecute you. They will take away your job and take away your freedom of speech. Such a society is rapidly heading down the path of destruction. We are not to embrace evil but abhor it!

We need to recognize that this abhorrence of evil is a characteristic of God. The Bible says, “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers” (Prov. 6:16-19). Heb. 1:9 says of Jesus, “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (NKJV). He also loathed pretense and hypocrisy. Furthermore, several passages speak of God’s hatred of false religion. Isa. 1:13-14 says, “Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.” God detests self-righteousness in the cloak of religion. We must be dressed in *His* righteousness. So as we learn to hate evil, we shall become more like God.

⁷ Jude 23 says that as we minister to sinners, we must hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

I find it interesting that this command immediately follows the exhortation regarding *genuine* love. This means that love must also be discerning of what is evil, based on how Scripture defines evil. Paul says in 1 Cor. 13:6 that love “does not rejoice at wrongdoing....” Today, Christians are timid about confronting sin because we are told it would be unloving to do so. When we speak out against immorality, abortion and other sins, we are accused of being haters. Yet this verse, in context, says that love abhors evil. So regardless of what others do, when you see evil, you should abhor it. You should confront it and speak out against it.⁸ Jesus said in Rev. 3:19, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline....” You also should turn away from it, lest you be tempted. Young people, if you go to a classmate’s house and discover that ungodly things are taking place there, don’t stay around and act like you approve of such things as underage drinking, drunkenness, immorality, and profanity. Abhor what is evil. Take a stand against evil. Turn from it as something that is detestable.

Don’t take this to an extreme, like a Pharisee who sees evil in just about everything. Don’t give the impression that you hate the sinner as much as his sin. This hatred must be directed against what is evil, rather than against individuals. Remember, these words are in a context of love. If your abhorrence of evil makes you mean and unloving like a radical Muslim or self-righteous Pharisee, then you are out of balance.

In contrast,⁹ Paul says in the last of v.9 that:

III. WE SHOULD HOLD FAST TO WHAT IS GOOD

“Hold fast” comes from the Greek word for glue (*kola*). The verb is passive, and literally means, “Be glued to what is good.” We are to abhor evil and turn from it and instead embrace what is good. There is a tendency in all of life to allow the good to slip away. We even tend to drift away from the Lord, our highest good.¹⁰ Instead, we must hold fast to what is good.

Our attachment to the good is to be that of the devotion illustrated by the bond of marriage. After all, Genesis 2:24 says a man is to “hold fast¹¹ to his wife” (see also Mt. 19:5). Let me tell you one reason why you should hold fast to your wife. Proverbs 18:22 says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD” (NKJV). Many a man has been married to a good woman, and yet they have allowed a good woman to slip away from them, because they loved their alcohol or their job even more.

Conservatives understand this principle. We want to hold fast and conserve what is good. Liberals are always calling for change, and too often they are casting off the very principles that have made this nation great, like love of God; the priority of marriage and family; discipline; hard work, consequences for evil, and so forth. Liberals have cast out the Bible and prayer from our public school rather than clinging to what is good.

When an aroused citizenry obeys God’s command to abhor what is evil, and hold fast to what is good, crime will decrease and good order will be maintained. A Christian must stand up and be counted whenever there is a moral issue. But it seems that most in our society cling to what is evil and are careless to hold on to what is good. Today it seems the law breaker is treated better than the law enforcer. There should be justice against racism but also equal justice against criminal behavior.

⁸ Eph. 5:11 says, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”

⁹ Amos 5:15 says, “Hate evil, and love good....” Since he immediately goes on to say, “establish justice in the gate [seat of authority],” that means we are to love justice and hate injustice, for example.

¹⁰ Heb. 2:1 says, “Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”

¹¹ In the LXX the word προσκολληθησεται is used, the same word except it adds the preposition προς.

Donald Grey Barnhouse was visiting in California and he witnessed something tragic. A car wove crazily through traffic and collided head-on with another car. He watched the driver, obviously drunk, being pushed from his seat by his companion, who took the wheel and awaited the arrival of the policemen. The pseudo-driver complained bitterly to the policeman that the driver of the other car was at fault. Dr. Barnhouse spoke up as a witness, and identified the drunken man as the driver who was at fault. There was a growl from the crowd that had gathered, questioning his right to interfere. Dr. Barnhouse spoke loudly enough for everyone to hear, "There is a matter of right and wrong here. This good driver is being accused of bad driving while the fault actually belongs to this drunk." That did not satisfy most in the crowd. They were violating every principle of righteousness and failing to hold fast to what is good and truthful [Barnhouse, p.66; Illus.#C-1927]. When a society no longer abhors what is evil, and no longer clings to what is good, that society is heading down the path to destruction.

So dear Christian, hold fast to whatever is good in your life. The Word of God is good. Hold fast to it. Read it daily.¹² Obey its teachings. If you find a good church, cling to it. If someone is a good influence on you, cling to them. Look for opportunities to be with them. If you have found a good friend, don't take them for granted. Hold on to what is good. Cultivate that friendship, lest you lose a good friend.

Conclusion: Now it is decision time. I have called upon you to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. Some of you need to repent of your sin; abhor it; turn from it. And then you need to turn to Jesus. Receive Him as your Savior, and cling to Him by following Him the rest of your life.

Most of you are Christians. Are you giving the right kind of love to others? Is your love sincere, affectionate, generous, hospitable, and sympathetic? Are you lacking in any area? Then trust in the God of love and ask Him to help you be more loving.

Are you abhorring what is evil? Do you speak out against evil, and turn from it? Is there anything good in your life that you have allowed to slip away? Then do what is necessary to cling to what is good. Now is the time for commitment. Don't delay.

Sources: William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957); Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 4, "God's Discipline" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hgts, VA: Published by Author), 2022; John MacArthur, Jr., *Supernatural Living: Study Notes on Romans 12:9-21* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1985); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:30] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2017); Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right: Romans* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Crossway, Good News Publishers, 2001).

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¹² Psalm 1:2 says of the righteous man, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."