

Subject: *The Church that Pleases God – Part 1*

Scripture: *Romans 12:9-13*

Because of the power and influence of Rome it was said of that ancient city: “All roads lead to Rome.” The church at Rome also had a worldwide impact for Christ. Even though Paul had not been to the church in Rome he knew the potential of this church. Every church has potential and influence for Christ. The most important thing about a church is not the buildings, the size, the denomination, or the style of worship. A church has only one reason to exist...to please God and glorify Him. In Romans 12 Paul mentions the marks of a church that pleases God:

- A. A church with members who are truly saved by God’s grace (12:1)
- B. A church with members who sacrifice their lives for God (12:2)
- C. A church with members who are being transformed by God’s Word (12:2)
- D. A church with members who faithfully use their spiritual gifts (12:3-8)
- E. A church with members who love God and obey His commands (12:9-21)

The church that pleases God has members who are serious about God and serious about living for God. It is unbiblical and foolish to think that any person or any church can live to please God based on good intentions and warm feelings for the Lord. Pleasing God means knowing what God expects and doing our best to obey Him. It was said of preacher William Arnot: “His preaching is good. His writing is better. His living is best of all.” That should be the aim of every believer. It’s not an easy assignment. Someone said: “It doesn’t take much of a man to be a Christian, it just takes all there is of him.” It doesn’t cost anything to be a Christian, but it costs something to be the right kind of Christian. The Christian life has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried.

As we come to Romans 12:9-13, we see there are many commands, and these commands are for the most part given in the plural form. They are addressed to all members of the church.

John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

A church that pleases God is a church that loves God’s commands as much as His promises. We will look at the first twelve commands:

1. LOVE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY

Everything in the Christian life is based on love. There is nothing more important in the church than love. This is *agape* love, which has been called the love of choice. It is not an emotional, touch-feely kind of love, but the love that does what is best for someone. Love for other believers is the mark that we are real Christians.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

1 John 3:18-19 ¹⁸ *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* ¹⁹ *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

1 John 4:7-8⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* ⁸ *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

Our love for God and others must be real love, sincere love, and not hypocritical, fake love. A wealthy older man loved his beautiful young wife, but at times he wondered if she might have married him only for his money, so he asked her: “If I lost all my money, would you still love me?” She said: “Of course I’d still love you, don’t be silly, but I would miss you.”

There is nothing better than true love and nothing worse than fake love. Remember when Judas embraced Jesus with a traitor’s kiss.

Sincere love for other believers is how the world knows we are followers of Christ.

John 13:34-35³⁴ *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* ³⁵ *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

2. HATE WHAT IS EVIL

We are to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

Psalms 97:10 *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.*

3. HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOOD

To cleave (cling) means to stick like glue. To hate what is evil and hold on to what is good means we have to make judgments and exercise discernment. There are moral absolutes. Evil is evil and good is good, and God tells us the difference. The world has a mixed-up morality and tries to redefine good and evil.

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

4. BE DEVOTED IN BROTHERLY LOVE

This is the word *phile*, the love of true friendship and commitment. It means to be devoted as members of the same family. Brotherly love is being loyal to each other in spite of our differences. Brotherly love makes room for weaknesses and shortcomings. Brotherly love means that we actually know about one another. If you only ate Sunday dinner with your family and then didn’t see each other for a whole week, would you really be part of the family?

5. PREFER ONE ANOTHER IN HONOR

When we honor someone we value and respect them. We are to think highly of other believers.

Philippians 2:3-4³ *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* ⁴ *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

6. DO NOT LAG IN DILIGENCE

Diligence is enthusiasm. We must not be lazy or indifferent. We can't have a take it or leave it attitude.

7. BE FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Fervent has the idea of boiling hot. We should be on fire for the Lord. We should be passionate about the things of God. I think we understand what it means to be enthusiastic and passionate...just think about football season.

8. SERVE THE LORD

In many of his letters Paul identified himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. If you asked Paul what makes you tick, he would answer "I serve my Lord Jesus Christ." If someone asked you about the greatest honor you've ever been given, would you say it is the honor to serve Christ?

9. REJOICE IN HOPE

It is easy to get discouraged in our Christian life. We all need hope to keep us going. We have the hope of Christ's return and the hope of heaven and our rewards. Our hope is wrapped up in Jesus Christ (His death, resurrection, and return for us).

10. PERSEVERE IN TRIBULATION

Patience (KJV) means endurance, to bear up under pressure, to stay with it, to keep on keeping on. We can't afford to quit and give up.

***John 16:33** These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

11. BE DEVOTED TO PRAYER

We need to pray that God will enable us to obey all these commands. What about prayer meeting?

***1 Thessalonians 5:17** Pray without ceasing.*

12. MEET THE NEEDS OF THE SAINTS

Christian people are to be generous. Comedian Jack Benny was known for being tight with his money. In a skit someone with a gun comes up to him and says, "Your money or your life." Jack Benny freezes. The man says it again, "Your money or your life." Benny says, "I'm thinking about it."

Two specific things are mentioned here: contributing to the needs of the saints and pursuing hospitality. Hospitality sounds like entertaining people, but actually it has to do with meeting people's needs. When you entertain people, the focus is on the host, but when you offer hospitality, the focus is on the guest. There was a real need for hospitality in the ancient world. Travelers often didn't have a place to stay. Inns weren't always available, so people would take strangers in their homes. The word "hospitality" actually means "love for strangers, people we don't know or who are different from us."

Matthew 25:34-36 ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan that describes three kinds of people: 1) the beater-uppers who say, "What's yours is mine and I'll take it"; 2) the passer-uppers who say, "What's mine is mine and I'll keep it"; and 3) the picker-uppers who say, "What's mine is yours and I'll share it."

John MacArthur said this about Grace Community Church in the early days of his ministry: "The distinguishing characteristic of the congregation became a fervent passion to understand and obey the Word of God. Do we have a passion to understand God's Word? Do we have a passion to obey it?"

Last Wednesday night in prayer meeting we sang a simple song with these words:

*Yes, Lord, yes, to your will and to your way
Yes, Lord, yes, I will trust you and obey
When your Spirit speaks to me
With my whole heart I'll agree
And my answer will be, yes, Lord, yes.*