

Romans 12:9-21 Robust Love

Intro: The Christian life is meant to be a Robust Faith – that affects our lives on every level.

A) Genuine Christian Faith is to be lived out – it is to affect every area of our lives

B) One of the biggest areas it will be seen is in our relationships with other people – **in the church and outside of the church**

1) In the family of God as well as in the world

C) Start with what love is supposed to look like in the family of God

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality

Paul is going to give us 7 traits that are to characterize our love within the body of Christ.

A) Before we begin to consider those traits – let me first say a word about the quality of Love – Paul is advocating - Agape.

B) **Love on the highest level**

- 1) 4 Greek words: Phileo – Brotherly love –
- 2) Eros – Erotic or sexual love
- 3) Storge -family love

C) Agape – God’s love – unconditional love – Sacrificial love – the Love that puts others first.

Now right off the bat that can be intimidating to us!

A) How am I supposed to consistently love others with that Love?

B) Good news we have already been told in Romans 5:5 that the Love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

1) The Presence of the HS in our hearts is evidence of that Love

C) We have that love inside of us – Poured in – in order to be poured out

D) Not a love that we are to produce – or drum up!

1) The harder we try the more we will Fail - { Mark Ayres

E) This love is a love that originates from the HS – and is worked out of us as we yield ourselves to Him.

The Scripture repeatedly sets this requirement before us.

“Above all, love each other deeply” (1 Peter 4:8).

“The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).

“All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:35).

So when Paul describes how we are to love he is in reality describing what Agape looks like in our daily lives #1 Let love be without Hypocrisy

A) Hypocrisy – genuine – no counterfeit – The Hypocrite – the world of the play – **the wearer of masks**

B) Love without Masks – not having to put on a show – not fake – not acting! – THE REAL DEAL!

C) Love that is going to be honest – not run from problems or confrontation –

#2 A love that hates sin, but loves the sinner! – Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good!

A) Love that is not going to tolerate wrong behavior – not overlook it

B) Paul rebuked Corinth for exercising that kind of love.

C) Don’t want to offend – overlook wrong – NO – SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

D) A love that calls sin – sin but at the same time loves the fallen!

I received an email today from a guy who is part of one of the ministries that WE are involved with in Africa.

A) A couple of weeks ago – I was informed that this guy had been cheating on his wife for a number of years.

B) And we were going to have to pay to send someone over with another Pastor we know to confront this guy.

- 1) Too be honest – I was mad – Mad at the sin – I was mad at the Hypocrisy
- 2) Mad he had betrayed and hurt his wife

C) I was mad that a poor sheep – someone in the body of Christ had been taken advantage of by this guy.

- 1) I was mad that church funds were being used to confront his Sin! – **Had to be done – Victim**

D) My anger – was Righteous indignation – Abhor the sin!

But I received an email from this guy today – confessing his sin and asking for forgiveness -

A) My heart was filled with love for him!

Aa) Doesn't mean – No Consequences- there are – Marriage is going need a lot of work – to make it

B) He has probably forfeited his ability to ever be able to minister to people again –

C) But I am pulling for him and his family – praying – hoping the repentance is genuine –

- 1) Abhor the Sin – REPUSED – ANGRY – Love the SINNER!

#3 A Love that is others focused: ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

A) Jonathan the son of King Saul is a classic example His love for the Lord & David so great - forsook right next king -honor David

B) In a small town an obscure nurseryman died.

His name was Hubert Bales, and he was a shy man. When he talked, he squirmed, blinked his eyes rapidly, and smiled nervously.

Hubert never ran in influential circles. He grew shrubs and trees, working with his hands the plot of land left by his father.

C) Yet when Hubert died, his funeral was the largest in the history of our little town.

- 1) There were so many people that they filled even the balcony of the church.

Why did such a shy man win the hearts of so many people?

A) Simply because, for all his shyness, Hubert knew how to make friends.

B) He had mastered the principles of caring, and for more than 60 years he had put other people first.

C) Because they recognized that his generosity of spirit was an extra effort for someone so shy, loved in return

- 1) **So true Agape Love puts others first**

#4 A Love that is energetic and enthusiastic - ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

A) Fervent = burning – idea of hearts ablaze! Hot, zealous, enthusiastic kind of love!

B) Our love is to be dispensed with burning energy toward those who are around us.

C) Young lovers – Zeal this passion – overboard – Social media

- 1) Older and mature – wiser yes – but our passion should grow spouse

D) Even more so toward the Lord

Jesus rebuked the Church in Laodicea for becoming Lukewarm

A) Vomit you out of my mouth – Not a good thing

B) Stoke the fires of faith –

- 1) Stir up one another in love and good works

C) Do others fall more in love with Jesus from being around you?

D) Do you friends motivate you toward – more passionate love for Jesus

1) We should – true fellowship

E) This kind of love rejoices in hope – (believes the best) Hopeful – absolute expectation of coming good

1) Patient in tribulation - Midst of tribulation – hangs in there

F) Reason: Steadfast in prayer ¹² **rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;**

Years ago, a missionary candidate was summoned to appear before a certain examiner. A veteran missionary himself, the examiner instructed the young man to come to his house at 5:00 A.M. the next Monday morning. So the young man got up at 4:00 and was at the examiner's house by 4:55. "Wait for me," the examiner said as he ushered the candidate into his study. Three hours later, the examiner returned and said, "How do you spell baker?"

"B-a-k-e-r," answered the young man.

"How's your math?" asked the examiner.

"What's two plus two?"

"**Four,**" answered the young man.

Satisfied, the examiner said, "I'm going to recommend you for service in our mission."

A) And the young candidate left the interview perplexed.

That evening, the examiner met with his mission board and said, "**I highly recommend this young man for ministry. I tested him on self-denial. He rolled out of bed and showed up at 4:55 A.M.**"

Patience? I made him wait three hours in my study, and he didn't say a word.

Temper? I asked him to spell baker, and he didn't become agitated.

Humility? I asked him what two plus two was and he answered readily.

A) This man will make a great missionary."

B) Honestly I like that! -Good test – clean the bathrooms

C) Folks, you never know what tests the Master Examiner is putting before you.

D) We're interested in credentials, but the Lord is interested in character. "Whatever you do, be fervent,"

E) Be fervent for the Lord however simple your service might be or how insignificant it might seem—

1) for in so doing, you just may be qualifying yourself for even greater service.

#5 A love that is hospitable ¹³ **distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality**

A) What does Hospitality mean? It sounds like hospital - which I think is an accurate description-

B) One thing the church is to be a place where those who are bleeding can come & be healed & bandaged up .

C) Came across an interesting - contrast between the words Hospitality & Entertaining ! Share w/ you

- Entertaining says. 'I want to impress you with my home, my decorating, my cooking.
- Hospitality says, This house is simply a gift from my Master. I use it however and whenever He desires.
- 'Entertaining needs to impress.
- Hospitality aims to serve.
- Entertaining puts things before people, saying, 'As soon as I get the house clean. I'll start inviting people over.
- 'Hospitality puts people first, saying, 'No furniture? No problem. We will eat on the floor.
- 'Entertaining subtly declares. This house is mine—an expression of my personality and my ingenuity.
- 'Hospitality whispers, What is mine is yours, Enjoy it anytime.'

C) Truly, hospitality is practical Christianity.

D) So there we are given a look at what true Love is to look like in the Church.

Then Paul shifts gears to discuss what our love is to look like in the world

A) With people who don't love Jesus – who don't share the same moral convictions that we do

B) With people who might actually be Hostile toward the gospel and the Christian faith

C) How do we love them?

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I think we could sum up what Paul is saying here about our conduct in the world with this statement: **Be a blessing, rather than being vengeful**

A) We live in this dog eat dog world – we are to be different

B) We realize this world is not my home – I don't need to be overly concerned with getting ahead here.

1) Not slothful – but realize – I exist for another world

C) I exist to be an influence for Jesus on others – help others – become a part of His Kingdom.

1) So in order to do that – I want to be

#1 A blessing - ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

A) The Bible tells us **that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

B) Maybe in the form of loss of Job / or not getting a deserved promotion - because not "one of the guys or gals"

1) Perhaps ridiculed at school - or in your family - many forms of persecution - living for the Lord - what do you do.

C) Paul says Bless them - speak well of them - in other words don't fall into that trap of bad mouthing those people.

D) Jesus told us to pray for those who persecuted us! Pray for them / bless them! Speak well of them.

1) Not natural - need to call upon the supernatural power of the Lord - through the Holy Spirit.

A kind answer turns away wrath! Proverbs 15:1

#1 Be a Blessing

#2 Be Real ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

A) True love identifies w/ the ups & downs of human life !

B) Promotion instead of you – Rejoice

1) Hurting – weep

C) I think one of the things that hurts our ability to be useful – we are afraid to be real

1) Cloak everything in Christianese – All things work together

D) Really – **Just weep with those who are weeping**

E) Our world of social media – makes relationships hard – more connected – fewer real relationships

1) Best way: be real – be interested in others

How is your day going?

A) Genuine – Pray for you – sorry to hear that

B) Be surprised at how people will soften up to that

#1 Be a Blessing

#2 Be Real

#3 Be a Peacemaker

¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Again this is not natural –

A) The natural tendency of ours is to hit back when we are to hit .

B) Jesus said to turn the other cheek –

C) Heard one Pastor tell story of his son who was in high school grew up hearing principle

1) Scrap one day - hit in face turned cheek - beat the heck out of other kid

Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

D) Blessed are the peacemakers for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven

1) Kingdom like – promoting the kingdom by seeking to be peacemakers

E) Exemplify Jesus the prince of peace when we live in that way!

#4 Be gracious

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; odd verse

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God NLT

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. ESV

for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

There has been much scholarly speculation as to what the final phrase regarding “burning coals” means,

A) But I am confident that the oldest and simplest explanation is the best

B) When we are kind to those who are unkind to us we heap burning pangs of shame and contrition on their heads

C) which hopefully lead them to repentance and experiencing God grace.

Two examples in the life of David

A) Saul wrongly accused – lied about David – Jealous

B) David a life of living as a fugitive and living in Caves

1) Saul’s Bathroom cave – David cut robe – feels bad

C) Saul is so sorry and quits chasing David

1) At least for a time

Another time – another cave

A) Saul camping – David sneaks down and steals Saul’s spear and water bottle while he is sleeping

B) Saul – where is your spear – Abner – great job of protecting the king

C) Both occasions – like heaping coals on the head of Saul

D) David you are better man than I am!

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

A) Overcome = conquered – don’t be conquered by evil

B) But conquer evil with Good!

Close with this story

John Perkins, a black man who dropped out of school in the third grade but who became a pastor and founder of the Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mendenhall, Mississippi.

He has received national recognition for his leadership in race relations, has an honorary doctorate from Wheaton College, and even served on a presidential commission for inner-city problems under President Ronald Reagan.

John Perkins was born in Mississippi. He left the south for California when he was still a teenager, became a Christian in California,

He later returned to Mississippi because he believed God was calling him to preach the gospel to the poor black people he had been raised with **and help them by developing and supporting black leadership.**

On February 7, 1970, a Saturday night, a van of black college students who had been taking part in a civil rights march was pulled over by highway patrolmen from Brandon, Mississippi, and the students were arrested.

Perkins and two of his associates went to the jail to post bail, but when they arrived they were surrounded by five deputy sheriffs and several highway patrolmen who arrested the students and began to beat Perkins

Now Perkins had not been speeding, taking drugs, or resisting arrest.
He didn't even have a police record.

All he had done was go to the jail to post bail for the students. But he was a black leader, and he was hated.

Perkins was beaten most of that night, along with some of the others.

A)They stomped on him and kicked him in the head, ribs, and groin.

B) One officer brought a fork over to him and said, "Do you see this?" Then he jammed it up his nose.

1)And After that he shoved it down his throat.

C)For part of that terrible evening Perkins was unconscious and so mutilated that the students who were watching over him in his cell thought that he was either dead or about to die.

It was a case of evil in a particularly vicious, violent, racist form.

Yet it did something good for Perkins.

A)Up to this point he had been in Mississippi to preach to black people only.

B)It was all he was allowed to do, of course.

1)The doors of virtually all white churches were closed to him.

C)But the beating changed him and gave him a new vision. He wrote:

I remembered their faces—so twisted with hate. It was like looking at white-faced demons. For the first time I saw what hate had done to those people. These policemen were poor. They saw themselves as failures. The only way they knew how to find a sense of worth was by beating us. Their racism made them feel like "somebody."

When I saw that, I just couldn't hate back. I could only pity them. I said to God that night, "God, if you will get me out of this jail alive"—and I really didn't think I would, maybe I was trying to bargain with him—"I really want to preach a gospel that will heal these people, too."

Perkins's recovery took some time, since he needed to heal both physically and emotionally.

A)The physical recovery was assisted by a pair of compassionate doctors, one white and one black.

B)The emotional healing was accomplished by God, 1)who taught him that the same gospel that frees blacks also frees whites

C)and that real justice, if it was to come, would come "only as people's hearts were made right with God

1)and God's love motivated them to be reconciled to each other."

Perkins said this

"Now that God had enabled me to forgive the many whites who had wronged me, I found myself able to truly love them," "I wanted to return good for evil."

D)And Perkins did! His ministry is the proof of that desire, and it is continuing.

E)It is a striking case of a believer refusing to be overcome by evil but instead overcoming evil with good.

1)Continues to this day

Since 1975 we have:

Served more than 3,000 youth from ages 3-21 in our youth programs.

- Rehabilitated more than 250 houses for home ownership primarily for persons of low to moderate income.
- Recruited over 30,000 volunteers from diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds to live among, serve and worship with the residents in west Jackson.
- Built a 16-unit new housing development Victory Park in McComb, Miss., for victims of Hurricane Katrina.
- Established Claiborne Park, a 16-acre park in our inner city target area in west Jackson.
- Rehabbed 37 houses in south Jackson with funding from HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds through the City of Jackson and the Mississippi Development Authority.
- Established the Voice of Calvary Family Health Center to provide quality, affordable health care to those without access to adequate health care.
- Organized 22 local churches into the Fellowship of Hope, a group which was instrumental in developing the Hope Community Credit Union.
- Assisted in the establishment of nine local faith and community-based organizations.