

## Romans 12: 9-21

Last time we looked at the gifts of the Holy Spirit which God has given individual believers for the edification of the church.

Yes, each of us has a gift, or gifts, and a responsibility to use them.

However, Romans 12:3 cautions us **"to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."**

No, there's no substitute for realistic thinking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Certainly, we should not be lifted up by pride, but neither should false

humility cause us to neglect God's gift.

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The next section, Romans 12 and verses 9 to 16, could be called "The Christian and those within God's family."

V 9-V 16 **"Let love be without dissimulation.**

(or hypocrisy) **Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.**

<sup>10</sup> **Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;**

<sup>11</sup> **Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;**

<sup>12</sup> **Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;**

<sup>13</sup> **Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**

14 Bless them which persecute you:  
bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice,  
and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward  
another. Mind not high things, but  
condescend to men of low estate. Be not  
wise in your own conceits."

This whole section could be summed up by the  
word love.

And yet, quite ironically, V 9 begins with a  
warning against false love, or  
hypocrisy.

Now, we all know we should love each other.

In John 13:35, Jesus said "**By this shall all  
men know that ye are my disciples, if  
ye have love one to another.**"

However, because of our old nature, and  
perhaps because of the actions and

reactions of others, we can develop a rather cold and unloving heart.

Of course, we know this isn't appropriate for a Christian, so we pretend.

We use Christian clichés, such as "Have a good day," or "I'll be praying for you," without really meaning it.

That's why V 9 says, "**Let love be without dissimulation**" or hypocrisy.

No, real love produces real care, and that's what's expected of us.

1 John 3:17-18 "**But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?**

<sup>18</sup> **My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."**

And Romans 12:10 admonishes us, **"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."**

Kindly affectioned ---That's a parental kind of love, isn't it?

The next word is brotherly, which is a family kind of love also.

And, **"in honour preferring one another."**

That's a love that puts the needs of others ahead of our own.

Or as Philippians 2:3 puts it, **"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."**

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And then Romans 12:11 goes on to say, **"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."**

So, we're talking about serving the Lord  
here, aren't we?

And whether it be in the local church,  
ministering our gifts, or in the  
workplace, serving our employer, we  
must apply ourselves in the knowledge  
that we are **"serving the Lord."**

So then, in view of that fact, how should it  
be done?

Well, we should be **"fervent in spirit."**

Or, as Colossians 3:23 says, **"And whatsoever  
ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord,  
and not unto men."**

And how *shouldn't* it be done?

It shouldn't be done in a **"slothful"** or lazy  
manner.

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V 12 **"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."**

**---"Rejoicing in hope."**

That's happiness in anticipation of a future event, isn't it?

And what is the Christian's hope?

Why, it's is the coming of our Lord Jesus!

And 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 assures us "---

**the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;**

**<sup>17</sup> then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

18      **Therefore comfort one another with  
these words."**

So why don't we talk about the Lord's  
return?

Why don't we "**comfort one another with these  
words**"?

Why don't we say to a dear brother who might  
be suffering with arthritis, *'I know  
it's tough, but someday you'll have a  
new body, and there will be no more  
pain'*?

Yes, "**comfort one another with these words."**

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And Romans 12:12 also says we are to be  
**"patient in tribulation."**

Maybe somebody else should teach this part  
of the lesson.

No, I'm not very good at being "**patient in  
tribulation."**



But, by God's grace, we can be.

And it would be a lot better for our blood pressure if we were.

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Finally, V 12 says, "**continuing instant in prayer.**"

The word "**instant**" could be translated diligently.

So then, we should continue diligently in prayer.

Have you ever observed a stone cutter splitting a rock?

First he makes a line on the stone where he wants to cut it.

And then he pounds and pounds along that line with seemingly no results.

However, as he continues to persevere diligently, suddenly the stone splits.

Sometimes prayer is like that, so we must be persistent.

In fact, Jesus tells us we have a responsibility to be persistent.

Luke 11:5-10 **"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;**

**6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?**

**7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.**

**8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he**

needeth.

<sup>9</sup> And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

<sup>10</sup> For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Yes, it was "**importunity**" that did the trick.

To importune means to beset with repeated and instant requests.

Initially, the householder said, *I can't help you*, but he did.

Why? Because of the persistence of the man at the door.

No, he wasn't going to get a wink of sleep if he didn't give in.

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So what was Jesus' point?

After all, God doesn't sleep.

We can't keep God up all night.

He was using a common day situation to  
illustrate the need for persistent  
prayer.

We must ask, and seek, and knock.

We must be **"instant in prayer"**.

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V 13 **"Distributing to the necessity of  
saints; given to hospitality."**

That simply means helping a brother or  
sister for the love of Christ.

And as we have already seen in 1 John 3:17,  
God expects genuine compassion **"---  
whoso hath this world's good, and seeth  
his brother have need, and shutteth up**

his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

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---"given to hospitality."

While living on the island of Bonaire during the years we served with Trans World Radio, my wife Eleanor developed a special ministry to singles.

From time to time, we would have one or two of them over for a visit and a good home-cooked meal.

Someho, Eleanor had figured out how to provide a Canadian meal, or in their opinion, an American meal, from the ingredients found on the island.

Actually, our family ate quite well, but some of the singles, and especially the bachelors, were quite Spartan in their diet.

I think Eleanor's hospitality filled a great need in their lives.

And if there's a lonely person, a person who usually eats by himself, you can have a ministry to him or her by providing Christian hospitality.

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V 14 **"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."**

Wait a minute. Didn't we title this section "The Christian and those within God's family"?

Now, we know some unbelievers persecute Christians, but do believers indulge in such practices?

I'm afraid some of them do.

*To dwell above with the saints in love,  
Oh that will be glory,*

*But to dwell below with some saints I  
know; now that's a different story.*

However, no matter where our persecution  
comes from, our reaction should be the  
same.

Yes, we are to return good for evil.

We'll talk a little more about that when we  
get to verses 20 and 21.

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V 15 **"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and  
weep with them that weep."**

Here we see an unselfish love, a love that  
enters into the joys and sorrows of  
fellow believers.

And Paul also mentions this need to get  
involved in his letter to the  
Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 **"That there should be  
no schism in the body; but that the**

**members should have the same care one for another.**

**<sup>26</sup> And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."**

Like the human body, the body of Christ should feel the pains and joys of the other members.

Yes, when a brother or sister is suffering, we should share the burden with them.

Of course, this will require the giving of ourselves, and no doubt an interruption in our busy schedule.

And we should be genuinely glad when others have success or comfort that we might not have.



Yes, we need to exhibit an unselfish love, a love that is not consumed by self interest or jealousy.

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V 16 **"Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."**

First of all, we should **"Be of the same mind one toward another."**

In fact, Paul felt it necessary to point out the need for harmony in several of his epistles.

Philippians 2:2 **"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."**

1 Cor. 1:10 **"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that**

**there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."**

Now I realize there are brothers and sisters that might hold to a particular doctrine we might not be able to agree with, but we should love them in the Lord.

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And then V 16 goes on to say, "**Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate."**

I don't believe Paul was cautioning Christians against culture when he said "**Mind not high things."**

We can enjoy great music and literature that expands the mind.

But we are to **"condescend to men of low estate."**

In other words, we are not to look down our noses at Christians who come from a more lowly background than we do.

When my wife and I were on deputation for Trans World Radio, we got quite a panoramic view of many evangelical churches.

In some, it was obvious that most of the congregation were well-to-do.

Their tastes were refined, and they were well educated, and they loved the Lord.

On other hand, there were congregations who had obviously come from more lowly circumstances.

Their humour, and the things that interested them, weren't particularly interesting to us.

But they loved the Lord, and they loved us,  
and we couldn't help but feel a real  
kinship with them.

Yes, we must "**condescend to men of low  
estate**" and not imagine ourselves to be  
better than they.

Also, Philippians 2:3 says, "**Let nothing be  
done through strife or vainglory; but  
in lowliness of mind let each esteem  
other better than themselves.**"

Are we too proud to do that?

Jesus wasn't too proud to take the lowly  
position.

Remember that night in the upper room when  
all of the disciples were too important  
to do the servant's job?

And as a result, the very Son of God took  
the job that no one else wanted.

John 13:12-17 "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?" (In other words, --- *Do you know what's just happened here?*)

13 "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." (No, Jesus wasn't relinquishing His position as their Master. And then He said ---

14 "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord ; neither he that is sent greater

than he that sent him.

<sup>17</sup> If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Or, as Romans 12:16 says, we should **"Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. (and) Be not wise in your own conceits."**

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And with this verse, we end the section that we have called --- "The Christian and those within God's family."

The next section, beginning at V 17, we will call "The Christian and those outside of God's family."

Now we are talking about our neighbours, and those we work with on a daily basis.

V 17-21 **"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth  
in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not  
yourselves, but rather give place unto  
wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is  
mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger,  
feed him; if he thirst, give him drink:  
for in so doing thou shalt heap coals  
of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but  
overcome evil with good."

I'm going to skip V 17 for the moment, and  
go to V18 --- "If it be possible, as  
much as lieth in you, live peaceably  
with all men."

Now, it might not be possible to "live  
peaceably with all men."

If agreement means offending God, or our own conscience, we must disagree.

I remember many years ago when Eleanor and I lived with our little family on an acre of land just outside of London, Ontario.

The house we bought had originally belonged to the son of a farmer on whose land it had been built.

By the time we bought the property, the land had been legally separated.

However, back when it was part of the farm, the city had put a water line across the farmer's property.

In compensation for this disruption, the farmer had been given free water, and his son had been given the privilege of using city water at normal city rates,



even though he lived outside of the city limits.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long after that the farmer's son died, and the property was sold to another man, who eventually sold it to me.

Along with the sale went the right to use city water and pay normal city rates. This wasn't the privilege of anyone else in the neighbourhood.

When the present owner sold the property to me, he casually mentioned that his neighbour had an arrangement with him that he would explain later.

However, I wasn't made aware of the true situation until I had bought the property.

The fact was, the neighbour, who had a business that used a lot of water, had

illegally connected himself to the former owner's water supply, which, of course, was now my water supply.

Actually, that neighbour had secretly hooked it up when the former owner was away on holiday, and then saddled him with this new arrangement.

Now he wasn't really stealing water because he had reimbursed the former owner for the extra expense.

Nevertheless, he was receiving a service under his name that didn't belong to him.

After we had lived in the house for a month or two, I noticed our water bills were unusually high.

It was then that my neighbour showed up at the door and explained the situation.

He offered to pay for the extra expense, and expected things to continue as they were.

Well, I refused to take his money, and for several months I paid the entire bill, rather than get involved in his illegal activity.

It was then that my neighbour got a bit nasty, and even sent a fictitious letter, supposedly from a lawyer, telling me I had to comply.

But I didn't comply, and he had to drill a well, just like everyone else in the neighbourhood.

I'm sure he still thinks I'm a rotten guy, but for conscience sake, I found it impossible to **"live peaceably with all men."**

But the story doesn't end there.

About 4-1/2 years later, the Lord called Eleanor and I into mission service with Trans World Radio.

As it turned out, we sold our house to a Christian.

Wouldn't it have been a terrible testimony if I had to whisper in his ear --- "*Now I have a special arrangement with my neighbour about water*"?

No, sometimes you can't make everyone happy.

James 3:17 says, "**But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.**"

I might be taking this verse a little out of context, but godly wisdom does put pure before peaceable, if the two cannot be had together.

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I'm sure we've all attended a funeral and  
heard someone say of the dearly  
departed, *He didn't have an enemy in  
the world.*

Now that's a lovely sentiment, but you  
couldn't have said that about the Lord  
Jesus Christ.

No, He had a lot of enemies because He spoke  
that which was pure.

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Returning to V 17, Paul says, "**Recompense to  
no man evil for evil.**"

And then V 19 says, "**Dearly beloved, avenge  
not yourselves, but rather give place  
unto wrath: for it is written,  
Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith  
the Lord.**"

So then, the reason we are to **"Recompense to no man evil for evil"** is because vengeance belongs to the Lord, not us. Yes, for the Christian, personal revenge is wrong.

But for God, vengeance is not wrong; in fact it is His responsibility.

And that point is made very clear in Deuteronomy 32:35: **"To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste."**

Yes, God keeps records, and in **"due time"** the wicked will be judged.

Indeed, He must take vengeance because He is the Judge of all the earth.

Also, judges must take vengeance on evil doers if they are to uphold the laws of our country.

In fact, Romans 13:4, speaking of rulers, and I think it would also apply to judges, says, **"For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."**

So then, vengeance is God's prerogative and the prerogative of those who represent Him.

On the other hand, we are not meant to take personal revenge, and we are not equipped to do so.

Because of our sinful nature, we would invariably be more severe than would be righteous, and in the process, our vengeful spirit would surely destroy our health.

And, in fact, we have been instructed to do the very opposite.

V 20-21 **"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**

<sup>21</sup> **Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."**

Hard to do, isn't it?

But **"in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head."**

Now what could that possibly mean?

Well, in olden days before the advent of modern technology, when people wanted



to melt down metal, not only would they put fire underneath it, but you would heap hot coals on top of it.

Perhaps our love, bestowed on the undeserving recipient, might be used to *melt down* his or her animosity.

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Before we go any further, I should return to V 17, where it says, --- **"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."**

No, it's not sufficient to simply be honest; we must provide **"things honest in the sight of all men."**

Or as 1 Thessalonians 5:22 puts it, we must **"Abstain from all appearance of evil."**

Not necessarily to protect our own reputation, although that's important, but to make sure we don't bring

reproach upon the name of our Lord  
Jesus.

And then, getting back to this issue of our  
reaction to persecution, V 21 says ---  
**"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome  
evil with good."**

Certainly our enemy can hurt us, but he can  
only beat us if we stoop to his level.

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In our next lesson, the subject will be the  
Christian's response to government.