

Monday, March 25, 2024 • Read Romans 12:9–16

Questions from the Scripture text: With what sort of love should they love (v9)? What should they do with evil? And with good? How should their manner be toward one another (v10a)? What must they do with one another (v10b)? What must not lag (v11)? How must their spirits be? Whom must they serve? How should they act in hope (v12)? In troubles? In prayer? What must they do with the saints' needs (v13)? What must they do with strangers? What must they do with their persecutors (v14)? What mustn't they do? What must they do with those who rejoice (v15)? With those who weep? What mindset should they have (v16)? What mindset not to have? Associating with whom? In what way must they not "be wise"?

How should we approach relationships in the church? Romans 12:9–16 prepares us for the sermon in the midweek prayer meeting. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we should consider our relationship with each other member of the church to be a Christ-given relationship.**

The apostle has just taught them that their Christ-given roles are given not for themselves as individuals but for Christ's church, as members of His body (v3–8). Now, he teaches them to view their relationships in the church as Christ-given relationships. v9–11 deal with all our relationships in the church. Then, v12–16 deal with special cases.

With all church members, v9–11. The first commandment here, and the one that governs the rest of them, is that we love un hypocritically, which is to say that our love must not be pretended. If we do not have affection for the brethren from the heart, then we can be sure that we do not have a renewed mind (v2) from Christ (cf. 1Jn 2:3–11). Our first duty of love for other believers, if we have true affection for them from Christ, is our own personal godliness of heart. We mustn't just refrain from evil; we must hate what is evil. We mustn't just do what is good; we must cling to what is good. Love that is produced by Christ is also defined by Christ—not by our brother, not from our flesh, and certainly not by the world.

And it should be multifaceted love. v10 commands a second sort of love (where NKJ says "be kindly affectionate") and then a third sort of love ("brotherly love"). Like the man who wanted to justify himself by asking, "who is my neighbor?" (cf. Lk 9:27–29) we probably need to work on whatever part of love we are most tempted to remove from its definition (affection, attitude, interaction, action, etc.). Rather than being envious of one another, the one thing that we should seek to "outdo" one another in is in showing one another honor!

How, then, does this work out in all of our relationships in the church? Diligence, zeal, and humility. Creatures grow physically weary of serving others. Sinners grow spiritually weary of serving others. So, the apostle commands us not to lag in diligence. How can we do this? By the Lord's gracious work upon our spirits, which should be "bubbling over" to serve others. It's like a chemical reaction, where the opportunity to serve causes the love to overflow from us.

Special cases, v12–16. v12 is true for how we should respond to each of these circumstances for ourselves. If God has brought us into the realization of something that we had hoped for, we should rejoice. If He is bringing us through trouble, we must patiently endure. If we have a matter of prayer before Him, we must persist devotedly in it. But in the context of the broader section, we see that this is not just in our own hope, trouble, or prayer. In the shared life of the body, we come alongside one another in these things. But how are we going to know about them, if we do not have a shared life together, in which we learn of one another's hopes, troubles, and prayers? When our brother comes into one of these circumstances, it is a special assignment from Christ—a "gift of His grace," to use the language of v3–8.

v13 presents two more special cases: the needy and the stranger. Whenever we have the goods of this world, and the Lord crosses our path with a saint in need, we get a share in their need, and they get a share in our provisions (v13a). The hospitality in v13b is literally "love of strangers." In the context, it is especially believers who are these "strangers." When they come to a new place, where they do not have home or family or friends or work or other connections, they should find a congregation full of other believers who recognize that God's bringing them a believer who is a stranger is a divine assignment. Love the stranger! In fact, NKJ's "given" is literally "persecuting": we should be hot on the trail of an opportunity to show hospitality. What a fountain of fellowship and blessing is the Christian home, heart, and congregation where these commands are obeyed!

But the word for persecuting instantly appears a second time in v14. We haven't really come into the section of v17–21 yet, so it may surprise us at first. But we must remember that like ourselves, other believers in the church are in the same spiritual condition as the apostle described even of himself in 7:15–23. And those who have been church members for long enough are not at all surprised at this command, for they have experienced persecution at the hands of another member. What should we do in that situation? Well, our own flesh would resort to bitterness, gossip, social withdrawing, or some other sort of disobedience to Christ's commands for us in His church. So, Christ gives us a plain command: bless those who persecute you. This certainly isn't easy; the entire Christian life is impossible, after all. But it is simple! As soon as we are persecuted, we know what we must do (bless) and what we mustn't do (curse). Suddenly, instead of trying to figure out how to respond (we already know that), we are thrown upon Christ's grace, asking for His life and power by His Spirit in us, so that we can respond in the way that we know that He has commanded.

Whether it is this persecuting one (cf. Ps 35:11–16, esp. v14), or others in general, v15 gives us two more special cases: the rejoicing or weeping of a brother. His rejoicing is a providential assignment to rejoice. His weeping is a providential assignment to weep.

Finally, v16 gives us a general rule for these special cases: adopt the frame of mind of the brother in question. NKJ's "be of the same mind" is translating a word for "mindset." With our brother who has been brought low, we need to not have our "head in the clouds" (our own idiom is a good rendering of what v16b says) but rather be willing to "be led out with" the humble. The end of v16 likely warns against the consequences of lacking empathy: we will end up like Job's friends. Not only did they end up getting Job's condition wrongly, their self-wisdom caused them to speak incorrectly of God Himself (cf. Job 42:7). What a dangerous thing it is to rush to self-wisdom about others' low circumstances! We mustn't forget that being wise in our own eyes is an especially severe case of being a fool (cf. Pr 26:12).

So, just as we have learned to see our roles in the church as Christ-given roles, let us also receive our relationships in the church as Christ-given relationships. And let us receive each providence in each of those relationships also as an assignment from Christ, to be completed by His grace!

To whom else is your own personal godliness very important, under Christ's design? What aspects of loving others do you find more difficult? Whom do you know, in the church, who has come into something hoped for? Who is in trouble? Who is praying? Who is needy? Who is a stranger? Who is persecuting you? Who is rejoicing? Who is weeping? Who is lowly?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You that by bringing us into membership in Your body, You have made each of us an assignment to the others. Give us grace that we might fulfill our duties to one another in unpretended love. In Your mercy, make each of us to walk faithfully with You, so that we may walk lovingly with each other, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP197 "Christian Unity" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Romans 12 verses 9 through 16. These are God's words. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor. What is evil? Cling to what is good? Be kindly affectionate to one

another with Brotherly Love. In honor giving preference to one another. Not lagging. In diligence fervent and spirit serving the lord. Rejoicing in.

Patient in Tribulation continuing steadfastly in prayer. Distributing to the needs of the Saints given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you bless them. Do not curse. Rejoice, with those who Rejoice weep with those who weep. 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. So for the reading of gods, inspired and inerrant word. You remember last week that in the first date versus of this chapter it taught us that as our minds are renewed to be like Christ's mind which is what transforms our whole life. Then we like, Christ offer ourselves.

A sacrifice Christ. Did everything for the sake of his And so he offered himself up once for all for an atoning sacrifice, but we too offer ourselves up our whole life up. As a sacrifice unto God for the good of his church, recognizing then that whatever role the Lord has given us in his church.

And that includes, of course, the role that we have. In the household that that role has been assigned to us by God as a gift to the church, not just for ourselves, but because the members of the church are each different, all that God gives to each of the members is not found in anyone of those individual members.

But he gives that which is from Christ in different portions and different assignments to each believer. And so we with the mind of Christ, fulfill, whatever our calling is, so as a brother or sister or a child in our house as a worshiper in the congregation as brothers and sisters to others in the congregation, And now that mindset that we have towards one, another becomes, especially the subject of Verses 9-16.

and The mindset with which we are always to treat all believers in verses 9 through 11. And then special cases particular cases that occur with particular people and particular situations in their lives. That when something happens in the life of one of the members of the congregation, it is actually an assignment to all to each of the members of the congregation.

And so how to conduct ourselves in this shared life. This Fellowship. That's what Fellowship is. It's the just the Greek word for sharing, and it's talking about a shared life. How to conduct ourselves in the shared life, into which the Lord has brought us? As those have been saved into his church and had our minds pressed into the shape being pressed into the shape of Jesus's mind, which transforms us into those who like, Jesus live.

his church, the other members. Of the And the very first thing then is unpretended love. the sort of love for one another where you just know what you're supposed to do or And say and act in such a way that looks that way to others, this pretended.

love that is not what comes from being. Transformed by the renewing of our mind into Christ's mind. No, it should be unpretended love. This of course, is something that only God is ultimately going to know about. Whether our love is pretended or not. And, therefore it is something that helps us immediately.

deal with God, genuinely So yes, we should show love. you don't get to say, well, It really wouldn't be sincere because it's not from my heart. So I'm not going to speak or act lovingly towards them because my love should be unpretended. Well, we are never going to be perfectly sincere.

This side of Glory. And so that is just satanic rationalization for a Disobedience that would never actually end. But it means that as we speak and act lovingly towards others, the extent to which we are still insincere should make us cry out to God for forgiveness and cleansing.

Cry out to God, to help us by his spirit, to make us more sincere, more unpretended or unhyppocritical to use the word with which the new King James has translated this. In our love. So we We must have unpretended love now. Unpreted love is also god-defined love Okay. So what another person says is loving and certainly what the culture says is loving, or even what we feel is loving is not the definition.

Of what is loving. And so often, if we are conflict diverse, or if we are ashamed of, what we are and want our sin, Not to feel. so gross to we might be tempted even by our own feeling about what is loving to mystifying love. So, he immediately follows Unpretended love with abhor.

What is evil cling to what is good? The first part of loving the rest of the body. As having the right moral standard, What God Says is evil. We should hate not just we agree that it is evil but we hate it. We abhor it. What God Says is good.

We should cling to Not just agree and Define that it is good. But actually value it as good from our own Hearts. So, unpretended love is immediately followed by unpretended. Theology and morality. Theology that is defined by God, therefore morality that is defined by God. But not just having those definitions but functioning according to those definitions.

so unpreted love abhor. What is evil cling to what is good? Being kindly affectionate to one another with Brotherly Love. Now, the word love in verse 9 is Agape. The word for kindly affectionate is storgay the word for brotherly love is. The word from which we get Philadelphia.

and these are three different words for love. In fact, they are the major words for love. In Greek, leaving out, only the Romantic word for love. But by bringing all of them together, he's saying Every aspect. Of loving someone. Must inform and be part of how you love the rest of the body, how you love the other members of Christ?

That God has made members, not only of his son, but by giving each one of us, Different gifts, so that each of us need all of us. It has made us also members of one another. As we heard back in verse 5, And so being kindly affectionate with one another.

With. To one another with Brotherly Love. now want one big part of what this means is to prefer one another to ourselves. literally the last part of verse 10 says to outdo one another in showing honor. So, there is only one way in which you should be trying to be ahead of the rest of the body, and that is inputting them ahead of yourself, right?

This is the ultimate, let this mind be in you. That was in Christ. Jesus, do nothing. Out of selfish ambition. Do nothing out of Envy. But put everyone ahead of yourself outdo. One, another in showing honor. You want to outdo one another in something? Outdo them in showing honor.

Put them ahead of yourself and of course, That. That idea. Makes your Envy commit harikari. because as you show others, honor you consider them to be ahead of you. Even in the showing of Honor. So verse 10 is not licensed to be proud of or feel self-satisfied by how well you are honoring, everyone else, that of course is irrational and self-contradicting so The, the sort of love and honoring others.

And everything that we we do is going to have these three aspects in verse 11. First, it won't be lagging in diligence. this is not something that we're going to find easy. And here, the Spirit, by the hand of the Apostle, make sure that we know that it's going to take diligence.

It's going to take diligence of body, diligence of spirit. We are physically weak and finite. and so, one of the things we should be physically training for is to be able as well as possible to serve the Lord bodily by serving the other members of his body. Bodily.

but even more than that, perhaps, we're also the, we're also sinful and therefore, we grow weary in and of well, doing it. Can wear on our souls. And so, there is diligence, that is necessary. One of the ways that this diligence is produced is in verse 11. Fervent in spirit, literally bubbling over fizzing up in our souls.

So our souls. would respond like Alka-Seltzer pills in water or fizzy pills in water in the way we respond to God? And the way we respond to our brother and the way that we respond to particular situations and our brother or sister's life like we're about to. In verses 12 through 16.

So, fervent in spirit. There is there is a Readiness. Of response and intensity of response to the Lord. And it is, especially the Lord. And that's the third part of verse 11. There's a Readiness and intensity of our response to the Lord in how we interact with each other.

That we don't serve one another as serving one another. We serve one another as serving the Lord. And that's why we so readily respond and the Readiness of response from our soul. Is what the Lord uses to keep us diligent. So those three things come together. And that is the recipe.

Outdoing one, another and showing honor. Then there are the special cases. Rejoicing in Hope when someone comes into something, that is hoped for or That which is hoped for is made certain that we would Rejoice. This, of course applies to ourself. but it applies to them in the context, this is especially in how we treat our brother patient.

In Tribulation not only patient with our own tribulation. But enduring. Persevering along with our brother. It is much easier for them to persevere. If someone is with them in it helping them persevere. Perseverance is one of those things that is much more difficult if you are alone. and the Lord has given us to one another.

Not only to make our rejoicing stronger, but our persevering stronger. and when God gives our our brother or sister a trouble, it's an assignment to us. So God gives our brother or sister a hope. That's assignment to us to Rejoice with them. God gives our brother her sister a trouble.

It's an assignment to us to persevere with him. God brings our brother or sister to into a matter of prayer. And they are asking, of course, we are taught to pray together even by what is commonly called. The Lord's Prayer. We are taught to pray with one another God brings such some matter of prayer and to our brothers such as life as an assignment to us, of course to them too.

But to us also to continue steadfastly to endure. Persist And praying. God gives another Saint a need. It's an assignment to us to be generous verse 13, Distributing to the needs of the Saints. That is important that Or helpful at least that we translate a little bit more. Literally at the end of verse 13, persecuting Hospitality.

Because he's going to use the exact same word in the first line of verse 14. Bless those who persecute you. So Christians have an assignment of Whom to persecute and it's not a huge. It's a whom question with a, what? Answer? Instead of persecuting a person you persecute Hospitality, you are aggressively hunting down opportunities to love strangers.

Hospitality of course. Here translating a word that means to love a stranger and it's Christians who are strangers in particular? Those who those Believers whom the Lord brings, into your area. And they don't have a home, but you have a home and they don't have family there, but you will be their family there, they don't have connections.

Maybe for for getting work or Or something like that. And you are the one who is loving The Stranger. And so, Believers as they come near places where there are other believers should find the, the locals, the local Christians are hospitably aggressive or rather aggressively hospitable? Like, man, these these people are, insistent to open their home to me, insistent to help me.

Insistent, to, Resolved for me. Address for me, mitigates for me, the difficulties of being a stranger. in this place. That if wherever a Christian goes that there are other Christians, they do not find themselves to be a stranger because the Christians there are persecuting Hospitality. Those, you know believers who come to Hopewell, should find us aggressively hospitable and the best meaning of the word aggressive.

Sometimes there's actual aggression. That's not what? Talking about. Yes, Sophia Loving strangers. I just spent several minutes explaining what it means. Most people when they use the word Hospitality, they mean opening their home for a meal. In this case, it would really be opening their home for the person to be a temporary resident.

There were not. Hotels and motels. like like we would have and the places that were most, like hotels or motels, or actually places of sin and danger. And so, a Christian wouldn't want to stay there. So this meant in, in this context, it really meant, Being willing to take someone into your household for a brief amount of time, not just having them over for supper which is what we usually mean, when we talk about Hospitality.

But it really does mean like I explained for several minutes mitigating, all of the disadvantages of being a stranger because they're a member of the body of Christ. And here, they have come for a season to be a member of this, new particular Congregation of the body of Christ.

And they should find that, that body is aggressively. including them. As their own. Well, sadly. hospitality and Christian love are not the only things that Christians are aggressive with. Because they also have remaining sin. And so God gives us a though difficult. simple instruction when we are persecuted within the church.

And it's still within the church verses 15 and 16 are clearly still within the the church even within the congregation. And we should not be surprised that the Lord gives us instruction for what to do when you're sinned against by other believers because other believers are still sinners. So let's not be surprised when it happens and let us not be so foolish.

As to think that there is a difficult question of what we should do. There's a difficult action of what we should do but it is not a difficult question. And you are persecuted within the church bless. It's commanded twice. Bless And also cursing is forbidden. Bless and do not curse.

And so immediately recognize that gossip and resentment and bitterness. Acting against or speaking against someone is going to be a Temptation even within the church because they are not the only sinner in this equation. You are And so if the if the Holy Spirit by the Apostles pen has said, when you are sinned against in the church, make sure that you don't curse in response that you are not bitter.

In response that you are not gossiping in response or acting against in response. you should take that as a warning that your remaining fleshliness is going to want to respond that way. And so we have the positive command blasts, which actually helps us. Rather than gritting our teeth and trying not to be bitter, which sounds as impossible as it is.

We replace it by Grace sustained obedience. To bless instead of cursing, and the blessing is what displaces, the cursing. And he's and we say, but that's impossible and the Book of Romans has already answered. Yep. And that's Christianity. It was done only by Grace only by the life.

Of Christ in us. And he is the one who saves us. From the body of this death. A couple more. A specific situations in verse 15. Someone else in the body rejoices. It's an assignment for all of us to Rejoice with them. Someone else on the body weeps, it's an assignment for For us to weep with them.

somebody else in the body verse 16 is lowly. it's an assignment to us to be lonely and humiliated and humble to be brought low with. And so, in order to be with one another, Whatever mindset. The Lord has brought us into be of the same mind to one another.

We do not set our mind on high things, but we remember that we are going to have we are going to be brought low at times. The scripture. Ample prepares us for that and teaches us that it will happen. But also, when our brother or sister is brought low, we Are to be willing to be brought low with them.

So do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble And the command, at the end of verse 16 is actually, An important part of that. because the person who was wise in their own opinion, Not only is in great danger because Proverbs after 26 chapters worth of warning against the being of the fool.

says in chapter 26, do you see someone who's wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for the fool than there is for him. And so being wise in our own eyes and unteachable uninstrutable, is extremely dangerous but the other thing it can do is it short circuits sympathy.

If somebody has been brought low, The wise in their own eyes person, almost immediately starts offering Solutions. They do not take the time to obey the command and it's a command here in verse 16. To be brought low with Their brother. Their sister. Who has been brought low? And so, not only.

being wise in your own opinion, dangerous for yourself. There's more hope for a fool than there is for you. That makes you unable to be into a brother or sister who has been brought low. The Comfort. That God commands us, that Christ commands us to be Of that indeed.

When we are conformed to the mind of Christ, we will be So, Much practical instruction, in addition to fulfilling, whatever our role is in, in our home and in the church, With zeal and cheerfulness and diligence like we heard in verses one through eight. This instruction for receiving all of our relationships, not just our role as a gift from Christ, but our relationship, each of our relationships with each of the members of the body.

Also, As a gift from Christ and therefore to be conducted. In this manner. That we have been instructed. The Lord help us to do so. Let's pray. Father, thank you. For this instruction at several points. Each of us have Heard something that was immediately. convicting. And We know that you have given us now.

Many particular assignments. The season or Providence, your season, your Providence. Their lives. And so we pray that you would help us. To respond. Well, keep granting by your spirit. That he would apply. The mind of Christ to us and work out. The life and the character, the righteousness and goodness of your son, our Lord.

in That we might be. Useful to his body in the way that you have designed. So glorify Christ in his church, we ask And glorify yourself. In Christ, we ask in his name, amen.