

Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Love...Without Hypocrisy Romans 12:9-13

We are looking at Romans 12:9-13 this morning. So if you will, take your Bible and turn there...Romans 12:9-13.

^{NIV} **Romans 12:9**...Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Now we have been plodding along the last four weeks, trying to get our footing in the ethical part of Paul's great letter to the Romans. I am reminding you of these things because a few of you are new and a few of you were involved in other teaching ministries that prevented you from being here when we went through the first eleven chapters together.

Now, what we learned in the first eleven chapters was something of the height and depth and breath of Christ's great justifying work on behalf of sinners. Now I don't know if you are all familiar with the theological term "**justification**" or not, so let me take just a moment and remind you about what it means.

To be **“justified”** means to be declared righteous before the face of God by grace alone through faith alone in the work of Christ alone. **“Justification”** then is a legal term used to describe God’s legal act of declaring a sinner righteous on the basis of his relationship to Christ through faith.

Now all of that is very important. But I want you to focus especially on the first part... to be **“justified”** means to be declared righteous before the face of God by grace alone through faith alone in the work of Christ alone.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism makes that even clearer by putting it like this. I think you’ll find this very helpful.

Q. 33 What is justification?

A. Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

Now I want you to pay special attention to the word **“imputed”**. I think it is the most important word in the definition. The operative word there in the Shorter Catechism is the word **“imputed”** which is another way of saying **“declared righteous”** or that **“righteousness has been put on someone’s account”**. You see this issue of **“imputed righteousness”**...this issue of the doctrine of justification is the central issue over which the Reformation was fought. The Roman Catholics of the day argued that **“justification”** was not a legal declaration but an actual material reality. Now listen carefully...this is what Catholics argued. They argued that at baptism a sinner was filled up with a mystical material called grace, like a bathtub is with water. And they argued that when a man sinned he lost some of the grace he possessed. They thought of grace almost as if it were a material substance and they believed that grace could be lost on account of sin.

They believed a justified person might lose their justification based upon the kind of sin they committed. Obviously, they believed a person lost more of their grace whenever they committed more serious sins. Mortal sins caused a person to lose their all their grace and their justification. Lost grace had to be refilled through the sacrament of penance and allowed a person to regain their justification.

Protestants such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox argued that men were justified by grace through faith on account of Christ and that nothing could or ought be added. They argued that Christ's righteousness is like a beautiful seamless garment covering over a person's sin and sinfulness of a sinner and that it is His righteousness that saves a sinner. They argued that the righteousness that saves is a borrowed righteousness.

The Reformers believed that no man is ever perfectly righteous in this life and Christians struggle to grow in their righteousness until they die and stand fully glorified in the presence of God. That is what the Reformers fought and died for. That was the basis of the Protestant Reformation. They strove to get the issue and doctrine of justification right. That is what they believed and they gleaned their ideas from Galatians and Philippians and Ephesians and especially from Romans.

Now we talked about these things at length in our study of Romans 1-11 and if you should ever want to go back and review any of these things the lessons are out there on the APC webpage and can be read online or printed out and read at you convenience. There are 26 lessons on the first eleven chapters of Romans.

That's why this morning I want to teach you a little Latin phrase to help you keep in mind how it is that we are actually saved. We're actually saved *gratiae per fidem propter Christum*.¹ Now I am not anxious to teach you Latin for the sake of Latin but rather because learning the Latin will help you to keep the sequence straight and because it will help you to articulate the nature of your faith more clearly. We are saved *gratiae* "by grace" *per fidem* "through faith" *propter Christum* "on account of Christ". We are saved by God's graciousness. We attach to that graciousness by faith and the whole of God's justifying work is made possible by Christ's atoning work on the cross. We believed we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone. That is the doctrine of justification.

Now that is what the first part of Romans is about. It is about this marvelous **"justifying work of God in Christ"**.

Paul explains why we need to be justified, how we are justified, and what some of the implications of our justification mean in terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in terms of God's relationship to the nation of Israel and so on.

Now in the second part of Romans, Paul starts describing our obligation to live a certain way in light of all that God has accomplished for us in Christ.

In other words, chapters 1-11 describe, **"What God has done"** and chapters 12-16 describe, **"What we ought to do in return"**. Another way to say that is the chapters 1-11 contain the **"indicative"**, the what is, and chapters 12-16 contain the **"imperative"**, the what ought to be.

Now that is easy enough to see, I think, if you look back to Romans 12:1. Paul says there:

^{NIV} **Romans 12:1** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

You see Paul's point is that since God has justified us in Christ, we ought to live a certain way and the command Paul uses to get us to do that is this, **"to present our bodies as living sacrifices"**.

Now what we have been doing the last few weeks is discussing what that means and how we might accomplish it. In other words, we have been getting down to the **"nuts and bolts"** of what it means to present our bodies a living sacrifice on account of our gratitude for having been justified before God in the work of Christ. Of course, in thinking through how we ought to live we have not been making up stuff on our own. We have not been sitting around together trying to ruminate on our own how we might do what Paul has commanded. No, we have been following his line of thinking in the text and here it is.

So Paul arranges his argument this way. He reminds us that...

- **God has mercifully justified us in Christ.**

And after he does that he admonished us, as a result...

- **To present our bodies a living sacrifice in light of God's mercy.**

Then he goes on to tell us how to do. As far as Paul is concerned the way to...

- **Present our bodies a living sacrifice is to stop being conformed to this present evil age but to be transformed by the renewing our minds.**

And of course that raises the question, “**How do we do that?**” So Paul tells us that the way we stop being conformed to this present evil age and start having our lives transformed by the renewing of our minds is to...

- **Stop thinking of ourselves in a puffed up way but sober-mindedly.**

Now that is where we are. That is what we have covered. That is what we have seen and we have only looked at a few verses. Still, I think it is important for you to keep these things in mind. Because what we are going to see the rest of the way in Romans is Paul’s explanation of just how we might begin to stop being conformed and start being transformed. You see, in order for us to stop being conformed to this present evil age and to start being transformed by the renewing of our minds means that we need to:

Now last week, we looked at Paul’s command to think rightly about ourselves and you’ll remember that Paul’s concern was not just that we stop thinking too highly of ourselves but rather that we think of ourselves soberly with sound and rational judgment. And you will remember that the reason we are to do that is because we are members of the body of Christ and as such have an important role to play in the building up of that body unto maturity. You will remember Paul’s point was that we will not be able to think rightly about our role and our responsibility unless we stop thinking of ourselves in a puffed up manner and start thinking of ourselves sober-mindedly. Paul insisted that the Romans do that and that they do what were gifted to do and that they do so cheerfully and with enthusiasm,

Now what we are going to see this week is Paul's instruction regarding how the Romans ought to view other believers.

- **Think rightly about other believers**

Next week, we'll look at his instruction regarding unbelievers.

- **Think rightly about unbelievers**

Now do you get a sense of the flow of his argument? Do you follow his logic? He wants us to stop being conformed and to be transformed and he is going to give a several things to help us begin to do just that. Now through the rest of chapters 12-16, he going to expand his argument and tell to think rightly about our enemies, about the coming day of reckoning, about subjection to governmental authorities and so on.

Now as I said earlier, the section before us this morning concerns how we ought to view other believers. Paul starts with...

^{NIV} **Romans 12:9**...Love must be sincere.

Now this particular command is probably an overarching command that probably stands as a heading for both sections. What I mean by that is that the command to keep love sincere probably extends to both believers and unbelievers alike.² And if that is true, the point is really quite simple. The love that we show to believers and unbelievers alike must be genuine and not artificial.

Now having said that I have to tell you the construction here in Greek is fairly dramatic. You see in Greek there is no verb in the sentence. There is no **“must be”** or even an **“ought to be.”** In Greek it is just two nouns and the word **“love”** has a definite article. That is, the word **“love”** has a **“the”** in front of it and the reason Paul did that was to express the quality of the virtue of love.³ His point is **“love...quality love...real love”** must occur in a certain way. Now the word he uses is ἀγάπη and up until now he has only used it to describe the love of God. You can see that in the previous four uses of ἀγάπη.

^{NIV} **Romans 5:5**...And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

^{NIV} **Romans 5:8**...But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

^{NIV} **Romans 8:35**...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

^{NIV} **Romans 8:39**...neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But here he applies ἀγάπη to Christians and follows it by the Greek word ἀνυπόκριτος. His point is simple enough...our love must be sincere. Now the word ἀνυπόκριτος⁴ is the negation of the word ὑποκριτής, which was often used to describe actors in Greek drama. You see in the ancient world, actors often wore masks. They wore them both because they contained a sort of built in megaphone to amplify their voices toward the audience and because the face of the mask helped the audience understand something of the kind of character they were playing. So the term ὑποκριτής came to mean an actor, a person playing a role, a person making believe that they thought or felt a certain way

when in fact they felt just the opposite. We picked up the word in English, transliterated it and incorporated it into English. The word ὑποκριτής...became the word **“hypocrite”**.

And here’s Paul’s point and it is so simple, **“Love, real genuine Christian love...must be sincere, must be real, must be without any deceit or trickery. Don’t let your love be playlike.”**

I think J.B. Phillips gets exactly right when he paraphrases this command,

“Let us have no imitation Christian love”.⁵

Now I hope you can see why hypocrisy or play-acting affection is not acceptable in light of Christ’s justifying work. If we have been saved by grace, through faith on account of Christ, we are under obligation to avoid hypocrisy like the plague. I hope you can see that, but if you can’t listen to what Donald Gray Barnhouse says in his Commentary on Romans regarding it.

Our word is a transliteration of the ancient Greek word used for the acting of a stage player. From that meaning it easily came to mean acting in real life, and thus hypocrisy — **“the assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation the real character or inclinations, especially in respect of religious life or beliefs...and from thence, pretense and sham.”** True love can have no part of this. Some poisons are so powerful that one or two drops are sufficient to make fatal all of the wine in a large decanter. Hypocrisy is such a poison. Love must be without it.⁶

You know, I think we all know that and yet here’s the thing. I think we all do it. We all share a measure of pretense. Oh, we are not like a Scott Peterson or a

Mark Hacking but we practice artifice and deception and we even do it toward other brothers. Listen to what Calvin writes:

It is difficult to express how ingenious almost all men are in counterfeiting love, a love, which they do not really possess. They deceive not only others, but also themselves while they persuade themselves that they have a true love for those whom they not only treat with neglect but also in fact reject.⁷

And you know the truth is, we ought not to do such things. We ought not to be people of pretence. I think John Murray is exactly right when he concludes:

If love is the sum of virtue, and hypocrisy the epitome of vice, it is an awful contradiction to bring these two things together!⁸

You see that is Paul's point. You cannot be hypocritical in love and ever hope to stop being conformed to this present evil age and to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You see there are some words that do not go with particular words. There are some words that ought never be attached to certain actions. A person ought never be...

...a brutal lover
...an abusive parent
...a neglectful child.

Some words just do not belong together and when they are put together they send chills up our spine. Of course, it is even worse when a person says one thing and yet really feels something else. That is why Judas' betrayal of Jesus is so terrible. It was one thing to betray Jesus. It was something else altogether to betray Jesus with a kiss. It was the ultimate expression of hypocrisy. To come up and touch his vile lips to the sinless face of the Lord Jesus was a horrendous

thing to do. To gesture love and mean betrayal was horrific. His action spoke affectionately and yet it meant murder.

^{NIV} **Luke 22:48...but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"**

You see some words do not go together.

Paul's thought here in Romans 12:9 is that the two words that ought never describe a Christian are **"love"** and **"insincere"** or **"love"** and **"feigned"** or **"love"** and **"pretend"**.

You see Christians are not supposed to let their love be tainted by hypocrisy. They are not supposed to say they love or pretend to love when they don't love. But that does not excuse bad manners or hatefulness either. You see it is not an option for us to choose between **"no love"** and **"fake love"**. No we do not get to choose between these two things. Both things are diabolical. What we are to do...is to keep it real and the reason for that is because, **"Love, real genuine Christian love...must be sincere, must be real, must be without any deceit or trickery."**

Now let me ask you this morning, **"How do we do that? Or perhaps even better, "Are you doing that?"**

Or perhaps I should put it like this, **"How are you going to make sure that your love for the saints is real and not feigned, is genuine and not hypocritical, is actual and not play like?"**

Now I bring that up, assuming that that is what you want to do, assuming that that is what we all want to do. So how are you going to pull that off? And I am serious about needing your help to think through these issues. So how are you going to do that?

I mean do you know any Christians that get on your nerves? No hands please.

Let me say even plainer, **“Do you know any Christians here at APC that get on your nerves? Is there some person here whose voice and actions and facial expressions seem to you to be the equivalent of fingernails on a chalkboard?”**

Now I ask that not because I want to stir up old wounds but rather because I think it is about time we get on with not being conformed to this present evil age but rather get on to being transformed by the renewing of our minds and because this command is so clear, **“love must be sincere.”**

Do you see what I mean? It does not seem very likely to me that we will get much further along in our efforts to stop conforming and to begin to be transformed until we make some headway here. Of course, sometimes wounds occur and people leave. They leave simply because they cannot get over whatever wrong they felt they suffered. They leave because they do not feel loved. They leave because someone else won't. They leave because they cannot abide some other person's presence. But the command here is still here. We are to love and the love that we love with is to be sincere. We cannot avoid or ignore or silently tolerate. We are to love...and we are to love with a genuine, sincere sort of love.

So here's the question. How are we to do that, actually...practically? I mean this is such a basic command, **"Love must be sincere"** and yet it seems to me we struggle right here at the start. I mean all of you are polite. There's not a person here who is not polite. I have never had any person in this church ever be openly rude or unkind to me or anyone I know. The only problem is that is not what Paul's command addresses. He does not say, **"You must all be polite."** No what he says is, **"Love each other and make that love sincere."** So, how do we do that?

I think the only way we can do that. I think the only way we can love each other without hypocrisy is to see each other as beloved of God.

When I was in Africa, there was a wonderful little man there named Brother Malcolm Armour. I will never forget the brother. Brother Malcolm was very, very frail. He was probably just about my age and just about half my size, maybe a hundred and thirty pounds or so...maybe a little less.

He was about my height and he was so frail, so sickly and when he walked he sort of shuffled along, laboring with each step. He was so frail and so sickly. But you know the funny thing about Brother Malcolm, he was an Irish American with a wonderful Irish brogue, was that he always had a smile on his face.

And you know because I liked Brother Malcolm I asked the Director of the SIL mission to tell me about Brother Malcolm. He told me that Brother Malcolm had been a gifted translator and had worked for many years in the Philippines and that when he had finished the project he was working on, he was transferred to Niger. It is a long way from the Philippines to Niger. It is a long way from the

Spanish of the Philippines to the three or four languages spoken in Niger. But Brother Malcolm took the job.

Brother Malcolm's wife had been raised as a missionary's kid among the Eskimos. So imagine what a shock it was for her to wind up in Niamey, Niger in the sub-Sahara of northwest Africa. She was very quiet, very timid but Brother Malcolm doted on her and constantly encouraged her and loved her.

When he first arrived in Niger, he was quite healthy. He weighed about a hundred and eighty pounds and he threw himself into his new job. He was a gifted linguist and translator. He started right in on his new assignment and then almost as soon as he started he contracted malaria and after that a brain parasite and it wasn't long before his body began to debilitate. He lost a great deal of weight. For about a month, he drifted in and out of consciousness and the SIL nurse there tended him so tenderly and then one day he began to get better. When I saw him he had been on the mend for a couple of months, but still he was so thin and so frail. When I saw him, he was shuffling up the dirt road there in the compound up toward the conference center and he was singing to himself, not to put on a show but just out of happiness...and you know what, I loved him instantly. Do you know what I mean?

I loved him as I watched him shuffle along with that slow gait and that big straw hat because I could see that Christ had redeemed him from his sin and that he loved Christ and was willing to live for Christ. Christ had given him a love for the gospel and he was willing, perfectly willing, to go wherever he was sent. I loved him because I could see the work of Christ in his heart and in his life.

I think that is what it takes to love someone without hypocrisy. For us to love each other with sincerity, we have to see Christ at work in each other's lives. Even a person that makes you angry...even a person you don't like...can be lovely if you see Christ working in their lives.

The command is not to let your liking be sincere. The command is to let the love that a Christian is obligated to have be sincere and the way you do that is this... you look to see the love of Christ being revealed in that person's life.

Of course to see that, you have to talk to each other. You have to actually speak to each other. You can't just linger on the periphery and then run away when the doors open up. You have to stay and talk, you have to find out stuff about each other.

Now take for example these two sisters right here. I have sat in their houses. I know their kids names. I know what they like and what they dislike. I know about their love for Jesus and you know what, God has given me a genuine affection...a genuine love for each of them. I know them. I have talked with them and prayed with them. I know them. We are friends. Loving them sincerely is no problem at all because I love what Christ is doing in their lives. I love them through Christ and because of Christ and it is the same for so many of you.

To love people sincerely, you have to know them. You have to talk to them and I think you have to pray for them. I think that is how you have to do it. So if you have someone you have a problem with...if you have someone that just irritates the fire out of you...you have to step up to this command and embrace it. That's what Paul calls us to do...to love sincerely. Talk to them...get to know

them...pray for them...get to see the love of Christ working in their lives because when you do that it is so much easier.

That's the command. Love must be sincere.

Then he follows that up with a whole other list of commands that flow out of this one over-arching command and I thought I might just race through these quickly because they are fairly transparent, fairly clear. Look at the rest of verse nine.

^{NIV} **Romans 12:9**...Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Now, I think his point is that love has to be sincere. But you don't do immoral things in the pursuit of this kind of love. You ought to hate those things that are evil. Instead, we are to cling to those things that are good. Now this word "**cling**" here is such a wonderful word in Greek. It is used to describe the embrace of a man and a woman in love. It is actually used in Matthew where it says...

^{NIV} **Matthew 19:5**...and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?'

And that is Paul's point here, "**Cling to that thing that is good; embrace it; love it.**"

He does the same sort of thing in verse 10.

^{NIV} **Romans 12:10**...Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Now this doesn't come out very well in English. The Greek contains two different forms of the word "**love**". The first word is "**φιλόστοργοι**" and the second is "**φιλαδελφία**." It means something like, "**Love in a family way the brothers you love.**"

Do you see what he is saying? He is saying, **“I am to love you the same way I love my family. I am to love you the same way I love my family. I am to love you the same way I love my family.”**

He’s saying, **“Let your brotherly affection be familial. Let be from the gut.”**

Now what his point? His point is, **“Love has to be sincere so we hate that which is evil and cling to that which is good and we love the brothers and sisters in the faith in a familial sort of way.”**

That’s his point.

Then in verse 10, he says this:

^{NIV} **Romans 12:10**...Honor one another above yourselves.

Now doesn’t that make perfect sense? How can we promote ourselves? How can we push our agenda, if we have genuine, sincere Christian love for each other? How can we do that if we are thinking, **“I want you to go first. I want you to have the preeminence. I want you to have the position of respect and not me. Now why is that? It’s because I love you and see the work of Christ in your life.”**

That’s his point. I put you first because I value what Christ is doing in you. You know that is so simple and so beautiful.

Ummm...Look at verse 11.

^{NIV} **Romans 12:11**...Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Stay hot for God. That's his point. The word here for "**spiritual fervor**" is actually the word for "**boil**" in Greek. Stay "**red-hot**" for God. Now the way you do that I think is by contemplating this great issue of justification as it works itself out in this place.

Then finally, verse 12 and 13.

^{NIV} **Romans 12:12**...Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Now all of those things are extensions of that one simple command, "**Let your love be genuine, let it be sincere.**"

When we do that we stop looking like the world and start being transformed by the renewing of our minds. That's what we are called to and here's my question for you this morning and it's the simplest question in the world, "**Will you do it? Will you try to do it? Will you give your life over to the pursuit of that?**"

Brothers and sisters, the reason the church has become ineffectual in this age is because we don't love each other. That's the truth. We love the gospel as it applies to us. The church will return to being the great instrument of God it was intended to be when we start loving each other with sincere, genuine, non-hypocritical love and we do that on the basis of what God has done in us. Will you do it?

Let's pray.

¹ Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the Present Day* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986; reprinted 1996), 14.

² Charles Hodge, *Commentary on Romans* ed. by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer. (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1993), 353.

³ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 775.

⁴ Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker), “ἀνυπόκριτος” in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* Third Edition, Copyright © 2000 by The University of Chicago Press.

⁵ J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1972) , 333.

⁶ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 4: God’s Covenants 9:1-11:36 and God’s Discipline 12:1-14:12 and God’s Glory 14:13-16:27* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1963, 1964 and 1964, reprint 1994), 61 in the second section.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, 12:9.

⁸ John Murray, *Epistle to the Romans (NIC) Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 128.