

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 12, Verses 9-13
Notes from Tuesday March 29, 2011
Last Revised on April 5, 2011

Songs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we read and discussed through **Verse 8, of Chapter 12.**

Tonight we will begin reading at **Verse 9.**

I expect to **finish** Chapter 12 this evening. *(n.b. we only got to Verse 13)*

But first lets **review** a little.

Review

As we have repeatedly reminded ourselves,

the **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the **gospel**,

which he sets forth in the **first four (4) chapters** of this letter.

In Chapters 5 - 8, Paul looks at the happy **implications** of the gospel,

for those who are being **saved** by it.

In the next section of this letter, consisting of **Chapters 9 through 11,**

Paul looks at the **sad** situation of the Jews who have **rejected** the gospel.

The sum and substance of the first 11 chapters of Romans is, I think, that God is **fundamentally** gracious,

however **difficult** this may sometimes be for us to fathom.

Paul ends Chapter 11 with an outpouring of **praise** and **worship**,

 which serves as the basis for what follows in the next section of this letter,

 which begins with Chapter 12 and continues through the beginning of Chapter 15.

 This section has to do primarily with Christian behavior,

 which we understand is God's work in us.

 Please follow with me as I reread Verses 1-8 from last week.

(Chapter 12, Verses 1-8; Review - emphasis added)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

This is God's word.

 From this we understand that it is because God is good and merciful,

 that we should be moved to give ourselves to God.

 Instead of continuing to let this world shape us,

 we should allow God to change us,

 which he does by renewing our mind,

 so that through our experiences (by testing) we may begin to understand God's way.

 As we do, we will not each think of ourselves as being something important,

 except insofar as we are part of the community of Christ,

 realizing that **each one** of us is exactly as God made us to be.

 We should simply take the **gifts** God has given us and **use them**,

 as God would **have** us use them.

 So ends our review.

 Were there any questions or comments from last week?

 Let's read on.

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 12, Verses 9-13

Would someone please read Romans, Chapter 12, verses 9-13, in Japanese.

 Thank you. Would someone please read those some verses in English.

9. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

10. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

11. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

12. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

13. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Thank you.

 In this letter generally we know that Paul is speaking to **Christians**.

 From what has gone immediately before (i.e. verses 1-8) we have the sense that Paul is speaking primarily of behavior **within** the church and relationships **among** Christians.

 However I think that much of what Paul says **also** applies to the behavior of Christians within the world outside the church and their relationships with **non**-Christians.

 The first part of Verse 9 reads:

(Verse 9a)**Let love be genuine.**

Here the word translated love is *agape*

which is the divine form of love which, heretofore in this letter, has been used only to describe relationships between God and man,

is now being used to describe relationships **between** men (Christians).

Paul tells his readers that such love should not be **pretended**.

It should be **real**.

It should be **genuine**.

Q. And **why** does Paul need to say this?

A. Because when it comes to the love shown by men, such love rarely **is** very genuine.

Our love, perhaps particularly love which **appears** to be unselfish and self-sacrificial,

is almost never **really** unselfish and self-sacrificial.

It is almost always something which we **pretend**.

Christians are **good** at pretending to others that they are loving.

We are even good at pretending this to **ourselves**.

We often believe ourselves to be **actually** loving.

But really we are **not**. Mostly this is **pretense**.

So, Paul is right to **admonish** us.

Some would say the remainder of this chapter is a commentary on this first part of Verse 9,

where we are admonished to *“let our love be genuine.”*

For example, when we are **genuinely**, **divinely** loving,

we will, as stated in the latter part of Verse 9...

(Verse 9b)

Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Divine love **cannot** love what is evil.

Divine love **automatically** and by **definition** does hold fast to what is good.

We are, in some very real sense, **evil** to the extent that we are **not** genuinely loving.

Verse 10 begins...

(Verse 10a)

Love one another with brotherly affection.

This means that among **men**,

and especially among **Christians**

such genuine, divine love will resemble the sort of love seen among **family** members.

This is the thought behind the tendency among some Christians,

to refer to one another as “**brother**” or “**sister**” so-and-so

The human family is a **metaphor**, a **parable**, describing the eternal relationship which exists among believers in Christ.

We are “**like**” a **human** family, but so much more.

Tellingly human **family** relationships are more likely to be **genuine** than most other human relationships.

We may **hate** our biological parents, children, brothers, and sisters or we may **love** them, but it is finally difficult to **pretend** or to **hide** our true feelings within a family setting.

Thus **good** family relationships are a useful figure to help us understand **good** Christian relationships (and the converse).

It is a **characteristic** of loving, affectionate, **familial** relationships, that member of such

families do seek to **honor** one another.

Verse 10 continues

(Verse 10b)

Outdo one another in showing honor.

The whole Bible emphasizes the importance of **honor** shown to parents, spouses, children, fellow community members, and other human beings.

Where the Spirit of **Christ** is present,

the objective will be **not** to be the one who receives honor,

but to be the one who **confers** honor on others,

and this will be for two reasons,

first because this is the **example** and the **commandment** that Christ set for us,

and second because in honoring others we are giving honor **to** Christ.

In fact the **only** way we can honor God is to honor Christ,

and the only way we can honor **Christ** is by showing honor to other **men**.

Christians should not seek to **be** honored,

and yet, may God forgive us, that is **precisely** what many of us always do!!

To stop being conformed to this world and allow ourselves to be transformed by God,

is extraordinarily hard work.

In Verse 11, Paul admonishes:

(Verse 11)

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

As we have discussed in this class before now,

and as Paul has mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 10 of Romans,

there is a kind of zeal which can go astray, because it is not “*according to knowledge.*”

This errant zeal is one which seeks salvation as if by **works**.

But those who are redeemed by **grace** through faith are,

as Paul has been consistently and constantly reminding us,

not supposed to relax in our salvation.

It is because God is so **good** we are called to be active and enthusiastic in pursuing the things of God

Paul seeks to rouse us to such zeal, because most of us **are** slothful most of the time.

The **antidote** for sloth and the **recipe** for zeal is, Paul says,

being fervent in **spirit**,

which is, I think, most easily understood as being filled with and yielded to the **Holy Spirit**

who effectively **leads** us to serve the Lord.

Some manuscripts have “*serve the time*” which, then, may be taken as a reminder of how little time we have, in a human lifetime, to accomplish things for the Kingdom of God.

But probably “serve the Lord” is the better reading (as in ESV)

Verse 12 reads

(Verse 12)

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Those who are filled with and yielded to the **Spirit** and who zealously **serve** the Lord will suffer for it.

I read someplace (*Cranfield, I think, but he may be been quoting someone else*) that not everything which the world hates is good Christianity,

but all that is good Christianity is hated by the world, always has been, and always will be.”

Thus there **will** be tribulation for Christians who are truly and appropriately zealous.

Yet such Christians are **also** the ones most likely to be **patient** and **joyful** in their tribulation.

This is because they know that their **hope** is not at risk in this world, but eternally safe in heaven.

And as often as we forget this, we have recourse to **prayer**.

Constant **prayer** is the secret to patience in tribulation and hope and joy.

Another characteristic of genuine Christian love will be generosity to others

Verse 13 reads

(Verse 13)

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

The Bible does **not** teach us to minister to other Christians to the **exclusion** of the world,

but it does teach us to minister **also** to the needs of other Christians,

and perhaps even **especially** and **first** to them, as they are **close** at hand.

A large church with a few starving members, is probably a **faulty** church

But not only that, we are to welcome people into our **homes**,

and not only those who may **happen** to visit,

We are supposed to **seek out** those to whom we can show hospitality.

Examples might include Christians (and non-Christians) who were displaced by the recent earthquake and tsunami.

Paul would have us seek them out and bring them into our homes and church.

(n.b. This is where we ran out of time.)

Closing Prayer

