

Romans 12 v 9-13

Introduction

Fundamental concept in Romans 12 – consecration of the body and constant renewing of the mind by the Lord’s Holy Spirit. Result is sober estimate of selves. Not undervalue or overvalue selves. Belong to one body. Each to make contribution to whole, by conscientious exercise of gifts.

Now very practical ways in which to show our love. “Telegraphic rules” – brief sentences or phrases about Christian living. Twelve of these rules. Parallel here with Sermon on the Mount.

- (1) **Let love be without dissimulation** (12:9). No imitation love. Not to pretend love we have not got. Not to say one thing with tongue and think differently with the mind. Psalmist identifies it thus – **The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart** (Psalm 55:21). Beware of empty “nice” talk and pretence. No hypocrisy, play-acting, ulterior motives. Be genuine and sincere. Mean what you say. French writer once said “Hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue”. **Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth** (1 John 3:18). Be real and transparent in love.
- (2) **Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good** (12:9). Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of good. One security against sin is being shocked by it. Pity is we see and hear of it so often that we become shockproof. Sometimes, in our desire to be loving and sympathetic, we can condone sin. Indeed, in modern society there is more sympathy towards the criminal than his victim. In days of spurious charity and unprincipled toleration, we should cultivate a healthy hatred of evil. The Lord Jesus had the correct balance here. No one loved as He did, but He was not blind to sin, did not cloak it over, nor pretend it wasn’t there. We should love the sinner, but hate his sin and own sin. Then to be glued to the good. It has been said that no virtue is safe which is not passionate. Not just a case of avoiding evil and cultivating good for the sake of the consequences. But rather we must hate evil because of evil, and be glued to good with passionate love.
- (3) **Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love** (12:10). Real warm affection for one another as between brothers. Christian has love for all men, but he has special love for fellow Christians because part of same family, having same Father. The Christian Church is not a collection of acquaintances, or even a gathering of friends, but a family in God, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is one of the evidences that **we have passed from death unto life** (1 John 3:14). **Do good unto all men, especially unto them of the household of faith** (Galatians 6:10). Two men who share, however imperfectly, in Christ’s Spirit are more essentially akin though different on the surface, than either are to others who are not partakers of life in Christ.
- (4) **In honour preferring one another** (12:10). Take delight in honouring one another and giving others the credit. In some ways this is most difficult injunction of all. Easy to give lip service to it, but not so easy in actual

situation. How much trouble in Christian circles because of rights, privileges, place and prestige. Always a difficult job to have to give a vote of thanks, because someone is so easily missed out. Again, it is not easy to give each other priority in honour. Something in all of us which likes to get our own rights. Only one cure for petty jealousies – heart filled with love for brethren because of its love to Elder Brother of them all and to Father who is Father of all. Church has been described as “noblest school of courtesy”, and every Christian is to lead the way in honouring fellows.

- (5) **Not slothful in business** (12:11). Not to allow slackness to spoil our work. Intensity of Christian life. Christian is not to be easy-going. Christian may burn out, but he must not rust out. Luther said “Be not lazy as to what you ought to do”. This is equivalent of Old Testament Word **Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might** (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Earnestness and thoroughness in Christian duties. Never let zeal flag. Keep up temperature of spiritual life. Compare how we go about our daily job with our Christian service. Is there a wholeheartedness about one which we do not find in the other? Why cannot our Christian service have same concentration, eagerness, enthusiasm as we show in other spheres? Why all on fire in one case, and all ice in the other?
- (6) **Fervent in spirit** (12:11). “Fervent” ζεοντες means “to boil”. Keep spirit at boiling point. When our spirit is in touch with the Holy Spirit and with truth, the temperature should be raised. No one works well if heart is not in it. If we work only because of obligation, then work is mere slavery. Church of Laodicea, which the Risen Christ could not stand, because **thou art neither hot nor cold** (Revelation 3:15). Of the Church at Ephesus – **thou hast left thy first love** (Revelation 2:4). In coming days **the love of many shall wax cold** (Matthew 24:12). Live in a day when attitude is “I couldn’t care less”, “I don’t want to know”. Christian man could not care more. Desperately in earnest. Fire in his bones. Aflame for Christ. Not plea here for empty, effervescent emotional Christianity. But plea for enthusiasm, fervour, energy. We are allowed to be enthusiastic about anything in the world – making money, promotion, sport, politics - but not about the Gospel! If we believe the New Testament, how can we remain moderate or cool? Enthusiasm is the only reasonable attitude if we really believe claims of Gospel, and really serving Jesus Christ. **I have set the Lord always before me... I shall not be moved** (Psalm 16:8) – the secret of diligence and fervency.
- (7) **Serving the Lord** (12:11). In every aspect of life, one supreme end is serving the Lord. Whatever we do at home or daily work, it will always have Him and His glory for its supreme object. Supreme reason for earnestness and enthusiasm. Some manuscripts have “serving the time” – the reason being that the same abbreviation was used for “Lord” and “time”. When later scribes interpreted the abbreviation, some used “time”, meaning to seize opportunities. Life is full of opportunities – what a pity we so often miss them.
- (8) **Rejoicing in hope** (12:12). When days are dark and sorrow abounds, keep Christian hope in view. The Christian is essentially an optimist. Eye is fixed on return in glory of his Saviour. Because God is God, the Christian is certain that the best is yet to be. Therefore able to endure our circumstances. Christian duty to be joyful. Not just a matter of temperament and circumstances. Whether we fulfil duty depends on what we fill our minds with. If always thinking of troubles, losses, work which is depressing, sin and its effects,

sadness is the result. But if our minds are occupied with things which gladden, encourage, Christian hope, then rejoicing must follow. Choose what we think about and our feelings will follow our thoughts.

- (9) **Patient in tribulation** (12:12). Endure trials patiently when they come. Meet tribulation with courage. Someone once commented “Suffering colours all life, doesn’t it?” The reply came “Yes, it does, but I propose to choose the colour.” The same hope which causes joy also guarantees patience. But for our hope, it would not be possible to endure. When men emigrated to America and sailed there, they were not worried about narrow cabin and sea sickness. Their minds were filled with the prospect of being in New York within a week, and fame and fortune. They endured discomfort of present for sake of wonderful future. So our hope makes us bear trouble and not make much of it.
- (10) **Continuing instant in prayer** (12:12). Steadfastly maintain habit of prayer. Prayer keeps all other qualities in state of health. Puts sunlight of heaven behind darkest clouds. Best support in adversity. Best protection in prosperity. Firmness and adherence in prayer. Not always possible to be in prayer, i.e. always speaking to God. But Paul’s words suggest the subconscious reverence to God in all that we do. In midst of daily duty, to keep in contact with God. **They cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them** (1 Chronicles 5:20).
- (11) **Distributing to the necessity of saints** (12:13). Give freely to fellow Christians in want. The Living Bible translates this “When God’s children are in need, you should be the one to help them out.” In a world which is bent on getting, the Christian should be bent on giving. Practical help for all Christians. This marked the New Testament church, e.g. Paul organized Gentile collection for poor Christians in Jerusalem church. Devotion to God leads to helpfulness to men. The heart is touched, and then the purse. Pious verbiage can never compensate for practical sympathy. Said visitor to needy man “Never mind, you’ll get a crown one day”. “But I wouldn’t mind half a crown now, just to be going on with.”
- (12) **Given to hospitality** (12:13). J.B.Philips translates this “Never grudging a meal or a bed to those who need them”. Naturally follows on from last statement. Frequent exhortations along this line in the New Testament. There were a despised minority, under great pressure, who relied on Christian homes as they travelled. Do not wait to be asked, but rather keep an open house. Christian home cannot be selfish. The Gospel – religion of open hand, open heart and open door. It helps to break down divisions and barriers among Christians.

### Conclusion

How much in Christian living involves others in honouring and serving them. The more we live like this, the more we glorify God and recommend the Gospel. What a difference between these precepts and our practice. Room for shame and contrition here, when we consider what we ought to be and what we actually are. Cry for help, with forgiveness. Christ gives before He commands. Conforming to His will begins with yielding selves and receiving power of Holy Spirit. **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance** (Galatians 5:22-23).

