

Love In Action – Part 1
Romans 12:9-13
Pastor John Miller

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Romans 12:9-13

I want to read this text, and I want you to follow with me beginning in verse 9. Paul says, “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality,” and then in verse 14, where we’ll pick it up next week, “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” I want to read the same text, and I want you to listen very carefully. Maybe some of you have the New Living Translation. I was struck today as I looked at this text in the New Living Translation. Listen carefully. It says, “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. 13 When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.”

Now, obviously the New Living Translation makes it a lot more easy to grab a hold of than my King James translation. You know, Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you...by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” When He said, “...a new commandment,” He actually said “renewed” commandment because all the way back in the Old Testament the Bible tells us to love others. Love thy neighbor as thyself, right? You know the verse. When Jesus said to love one another, it wasn’t new in the sense of its time, it was new in quality. It was new in depth. It was new in dimension. He qualified it. He said, “...as I have loved you.” So, we are to love one another with the same kind of love that Jesus Christ had when He gave Himself to die on the cross for our sins. We are to have a sacrificial, self-denying, and giving love. Way back in Romans 5, we learned that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The moment you are born again you receive the Holy Spirit as an abiding possession. With that, I believe you have now a new capacity to love. Before you were born again you didn’t have the Holy Spirit. You just had your sinful, selfish, carnal, evil nature, and the capacity to love like that was not there. Through regeneration, or the rebirth, we have been born of the Spirit. Now we have the Holy Spirit, and He is that source of love. That love that’s shed abroad in our hearts can now flow forth from our lives.

Paul starts where it should start, that is, our love for other Christian brethren. The sequence is interesting. At this point in the book of Romans, Paul has told us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. "...be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove," or discover "...what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Then, immediately after that consecration of our lives, he goes into the gifts of the Holy Spirit—that God has given each one of us a gift and we're to use that gift for the good of others and the glory of God.

The third topic we begin tonight and next Wednesday is that of love, and we should use those gifts and operate in those gifts that God has given to us in love. So, in love, I should use my gift for the good of others and for the glory of God. This is the exact same sequence that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 12. It is all about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Then, you all know that sequentially, chapter 13 is the great chapter on love. It's all about love, and the gifts are to be used in love. Again, we see that he has just talked about the gifts of the Spirit, and then he goes into the subject of using them in love. I'm going to try to get into this because we have a lot to cover, and a lot of what I cover tonight I've said before, we've studied before, so it's not necessarily new, but I want you to see it in this text. Follow with me, and if you're taking notes, the points will appear on the screen.

I'm going to give you five categories of our love for other Christians. The first is love's quality. It is seen in the first part of verse 9. It says, "Let love be without..." here's my King James "...dissimulation." The word there is the word hypocrisy. What Paul is saying is let your love be real. Let your love be genuine. Let your love be sincere. I can pretty much say that most of us disdain phony love. Right? When you know somebody doesn't really love you, and they're just trying to butter you up and get something from you, and they're smiling and acting all lovey dovey...I was going to say you feel like slapping them, but I guess that wouldn't be very lovely. It's just that you know they're not real, sincere, or genuine. Nothing worse than a phony made up, put on, hypocritical love. So, the New Living Translation has, "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them." William Barclay translates this, "Your love must be completely sincere."

The word in the Greek, translated in my King James translation "dissimulation," is from the Greek word into latin, sincerus, where we get our word "sincere." Do you know what the word "sincere" means? I've shared this before, but the word sincere means, this will freak you out, "without wax." You say, "What's with without wax?" In those days everything was pottery. They didn't have Tupperware, plastic, or glass. They did have some brass and metals, but the common everyday people just had earthen pots, pottery, and vases. Whenever a pot would get a crack, a chip, or a flaw, they would take wax, mix it with some of the dust from the pottery which would color the wax, and they would fill it in. It was kind of like putty or Spackle. They would fill it in and mix it with some color of the piece of pot. It would look like a great pot; it would look brand new. Sometimes they would have brand new pottery they would sell in the market that would have a crack, a fissure, or a flaw, and they would fill it in with wax. You couldn't tell unless you took the piece of pottery outside and held it up to the sunlight. If you saw wax in it then it wasn't "sincere." It wasn't without phoniness. It has come down to us today

as the word “hypocrite.” The word that is translated “hypocrite” is the word hupokrites which means to act or to speak from under, literally, and the reason is because Greek actors wore masks. They would play roles and parts by wearing a mask and would speak from under the mask. It meant to speak from under a mask, and they were known as hupokrites. We call them actors, and they would act out on the stage. The Bible is telling us here, “Don’t be a hupokrites —don’t be an actor. Don’t have wax. Be sincere. Be genuine. Be real in your demonstration of the quality of your love that you are to have one for another.

We are all familiar with the kiss of Judas. Do you know when the Bible says that Judas kissed Jesus, it’s the Greek word kataphileo which means to smother with kisses. He didn’t just give Jesus a little peck. He gave Him a passionate kiss. Today, it’s just an expression of hypocrisy, the Judas kiss. It wasn’t real. It wasn’t authentic. It wasn’t genuine. The word “love” is agape, so let your agape or God’s love be real, genuine, and sincere.

The second quality is in verse 9 as well, that is, love’s morality. I find this quite interesting. He says, “Abhor...” or hate, “...that which is evil.” Then, he exhorts us to “... cleave to that which is good.” Did you know that real love, God’s love, is not a sloppy agape? It’s not a sentimental kind of love but is discerning, and if you truly love God, the Bible says you will hate evil. There is a love that does hate, that is, God’s love hates evil because of what it does in people’s lives. So many people are surprised that love does hate evil. Now, you’ve heard the expression, “Love the sinner hate the sin,” and I think that is true. We don’t hate people but we do hate sin and what it does in people’s lives. Do you know the Bible says, “God is love.” Right? Did you know what that God actually hates certain things? Whenever I mention this, by the way, whenever I’m teaching, inevitably someone will ask or challenge, talk to me, disagree with, send an e-mail or letter challenging that. You know, there’s really no need to do that. I’m just telling you right now, you can disagree with me if you want, but the Bible actually says God hates. I’m going to give you the text, Proverbs 6:16-19. I’m going to give you the seven things that God hates:

- 1.A proud look
- 2.A lying tongue
- 3.Hands that shed innocent blood
- 4.A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations
- 5.Feet that be swift in running to mischief
- 6.A false witness that speaketh lies
- 7.He that soweth discord among brethren

There are seven things, based on that text in Proverbs right there, that the Bible says God actually hates. Scripture says that if you love the Lord, you are going to hate evil as well. So,

we need to hate sin and its effect that it has on people. We're not to just have this kind of an emotional kind of love that has no boundaries. It needs to be discerning.

Love is like a river, and a river needs banks. Right? For a river to be a river it has to have banks. We've seen when rivers overflow, the flooding and the desolation that they produce, so a river needs banks. Do you know what God's river of love has as banks? One side is truth and the other is discernment. It has truth and discernment. God's love is first pure and then peaceable. A lot of people sacrifice truth for peace. "I know it's wrong, but I don't want to fight." "I know it's wrong, but I don't want people to dislike me." "I know it's wrong, but I want to be loving." "I don't want to stand; I don't want to take a stance. I don't want to rebuke sin. I don't want to tell somebody that's sinful behavior or that's wrong because I want to be loving." We often hear that today in our culture. "I thought you Christians were supposed to be loving?" We do love. Because we love you, we're going to tell you that this is detrimental for you and dishonoring to God. Sin is damaging in your life. When you love somebody, you will speak the truth to them in love. Now, make sure that truth has love in it. Don't just have truth, that's brutality. Love without truth is hypocrisy. I think if you can ask the Lord to fill you with His love, and then you speak the truth in love, you'll be miles down the road in your relationships with other individuals. Again, I believe this is all in the context of the body of Christ.

Let me give you the third characteristic of love, that is, love's commitment, verse 10. It comes in several areas. First of all it comes in our affection. Notice it, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." Again, in the New Living Translation it has, "Love each other with genuine affection." It's interesting, this word "kindly affectioned" in the King James translation, we get our word "kin" or family from it. We don't use the word "kin" that much unless you're from the south or something, "My kinfolk," you know, "They all kinfolk." The word "kin" is the word family. He is actually telling us as Christians to have brotherly love or kindly affection, have a family love. The word brotherly love is the word philadelphia, which means brotherly love. So, be devoted with warm family affection one to another in brotherly love. As children of God we are to have affection for each other. Why? Because we're spiritual "kin." After church tonight find somebody and say, "You're kinfolk. We're all spiritual kinfolk here tonight." We are actually brothers and sisters in Christ! Isn't that awesome? We're going to spend eternity in heaven together. It's going to be awesome too, by the way. So, while we're here on earth we need to love each other as we would brothers and sisters and family members. Now, you say, "My family members don't love each other." I know sometimes it's hard. You don't get to pick who is in your family. We don't get to pick who is in the family of God, but we're to love one another. God has created variety in His family, and we need to love each other.

Not only is love's commitment demonstrated in affection but in honor. Notice verse 10. He says, "In honour preferring one another." A literal rendering of that would be, in respect to honor lead the way for each other. What it means is be quick, be eager to honor each other, to honor others not seeking self glory but actually honoring other people. It means that I'm willing to give recognition and honor to others, not to seek my own honor. How necessary this is in the church. One of the reasons churches fight, split, and bicker is because they are wanting honor. In Philippians 2, when Paul exhorts us to have an attitude of Christ, he tells us not to look on

our own concerns or interests but every one of us should be concerned with the interests of others. He actually says this. He says, "Consider others to be more important than yourself." Take that home tonight. Consider others to be more important than you are. Husbands, your wife is more important than you are. Wives, your husband is more important than you are. Your children are more important than you are. Consider them, and be committed to them. Your other family members, your co-workers and the members of this family of God, they're more important than you are as far as your Christian love is concerned, and you should rejoice when one is honored. Remember, we're the body of Christ, and the hand cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you." I stand up here tonight and preach. I need my feet, my hands, my arm, my mouth, my eyes—which are getting bad, that's why I have spectacles on. I need everything to be able to serve the Lord, and I need everything to work together in unity and harmony. So, we as the body of Christ need to encourage one another.

I love the J.B. Phillips rendering, "Be willing to let other men have credit." We always want to take credit, "You know, I'm serving the Lord at the church. Pastor, can you put my picture in the foyer, Servant of the Month or we can maybe put Humble Servant of the Month?" or "...my picture in the bulletin," or "...my name on the pew," or "If I donate the drinking fountain, can you put my name on it?" We don't want to give honor to other people and die to ourselves. He says that we are to show affection in the church to one another. When we gather on Wednesday nights, on Sundays, and in our small group meetings, we need to love one another by honoring and preferring other people before ourselves. Real love doesn't care who gets the credit. Remember when Saul was jealous of David because they were singing the song, "Saul has slain thousands, but David his tens of thousands!" The green-eyed monster of envy took over, and he started throwing javelins at David. When you hear that somebody else is getting credit for maybe something you did, "Well, no, no, no, I did that! I want you to know, I did that!"

I'll never forget Chuck Smith telling the story about walking down the street years ago and seeing a car on a foggy day. The headlights were on, and he went out of his way to turn the headlights off so the person could come out and have the battery to start it when he left. He said, "You know, it was such a good deed, I just felt like I should leave my card to let him know who I was." Do you ever do that? You say, "This is really a shame! I hope there are some security cameras to see what a good deed I'd done. Maybe it'll be on the news tonight." "They're going to be able to start their car because of me, and nobody knows it, you know? What good is it to do?" Because we're doing it out of love, and it doesn't matter, and we bring that into the church. "Well, I want credit. I want credit. I want to be in the limelight," instead of dying to ourselves and making others more important. It's so very important.

Category four is love's expression. This is really amazing. There are going to be four ways love expressed itself under this category. Look at verses 11 and 12. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Let me unpack these two verses for you. First of all, love is expressive in our enthusiasm. Love is enthusiastic, or you might say love is practical. The New Living Translation renders this, "Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically." In the King James translation where it says, "Not slothful in business," that's an unfortunate translation. The

word "business" actually means in your zeal. He is not talking about running a business, he's talking about your zeal, your service, business in any area of your life. You're to do it enthusiastically. Again, he's talking about Christian love, business in regard to being a Christian. Be zealous, be eager. Business in regard to being married, being devoted and eager and raising children, church business, and in your everyday business, your work because the word "fervent in spirit" means boiling hot or a boiling pot. It means to be on fire for the Lord or be hot for the Lord. It's not just the business of going to work. It's the business of being excited about doing the best I can in my walk with God and my love for God. It's basically saying this: Be on fire for the Lord.

Do you know if you're in love with Jesus you're going to be on fire for the Lord, right? People are going to come just to watch you burn. It's going to be infectious. A lot of people say, "Oh, yeah, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I'm a Christian." There's no excitement, enthusiasm, or zeal. "Isn't God good?" "Yeah! What have you been reading in the Bible lately?" "Yeah! The Lord's been speaking to me!" "Oh! I got to go to church this Wednesday! Isn't God good?!" "Well...let's talk about the NFL. Let's talk about golf. Let's change the subject. I'm a Christian but let's not get fanatic here, you know. I mean, we're in the mall and it's broad daylight. I mean, for heaven's sake. Let's not talk about God." Or you're in a restaurant and people feel like, "You know, that's freaky." I was at a restaurant the other day with a couple of pastors. We were in an outside courtyard packed with all of these people. One of the pastors said, "Let's just pray right now before we go." We all sat down. This guy started praying, and he didn't stop for like thirty minutes! I'm starting to open one eye like, "Man! They're going to kick us out! People will think, 'What are those weird men doing over there?'" He was just praying, "Oh, Lord..." I thought he was going to jump up on the table speaking in tongues! I mean, this guy was just on fire for the Lord! It's like, "Wow! He's really praying! This is amazing!"

My wife is always telling me, when I pray for food, I pray too quickly. It's because I'm hungry! "Thank you for this food in Jesus' name, amen! Pass the mashed potatoes!" Then I take a bite and speak in tongues. When you pray, are you fervent? What about your marriage? You want a Christian marriage then get excited about that! Be committed to that. Read books. Come to marriage fellowship. Study the Word. Be devoted. Spend evenings together. Have date nights. Devote yourself to your wife. Say, "I want to have a good Christian marriage." What about your children? Do you take that seriously? Are you fervent in spirit serving the Lord? Do you read to your kids? Do you pray with your kids? Are you an example to your kids? Do you protect your kids from evil influences? Have you made your children a priority in the home? What about when you serve the Lord here? "I'm just an usher." Be on fire. Be an on-fire usher. "I just teach Sunday school." Be the best Sunday school teacher at Revival Christian Fellowship. Doesn't the Lord's work deserve our best? And, when we love the Lord shouldn't we give Him our best? Whatever it might be, "I just sweep," "I just dust." You know, people come every week and clean the church. They're going to have a huge reward in heaven if they do that as unto the Lord with the right heart. "I'm not a preacher, but I can dust. I can push a vacuum." Praise the Lord! Whatever you do, be fervent in spirit serving the Lord. That's what he's actually saying in this marvelous text. He's talking about all we do. Never be lazy but work hard serving the Lord enthusiastically.

The second category of love's expression is in hope. Love is joyful as well as practical. In verse 12 it says, "Rejoicing in hope." Love produces that hope. We fall in love with the Lord, He has promised to come again, and we're excited about those promises. For the Christian, it's a hope that is anchored in God's promises and our hope is as bright as the promises of God. Do you know there is one thing (and by the way we're studying hope in 1 Thessalonians on Sunday night, and I encourage you to join us) that sets apart a believer from a nonbeliever? It's hope. A believer has hope. I don't care how much money you have, you don't have hope beyond the grave. You don't have hope in Jesus Christ. You don't have a Friend that sticks closer to you than a brother. You don't have the presence of God in your heart and life. You don't have this peace and this joy in His love. Money can't even touch those things! As Christians, we have a hope of the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts, and we have the hope of salvation. Our hope, primarily as believers, is in the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again! Don't lose that. Amen? Never lose that expectant hope of the coming again of Jesus Christ. Be looking for it. Be anticipating it. Be hoping in it. Be hoping for it. It's not kind of a cross my fingers, hold my rabbit foot, I hope I get to go to heaven. It's a confident assurance. In the Bible it's called the blessed hope of the coming again of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The third characteristic of this love under love's expression is patient—love is patient. Verse 12, "...patient in tribulation." Not just patient, but true love is patient in tribulation. So, while rejoicing in our future hope, we are also patient in our affliction. Love keeps us going. Amen? God loves us, I love you, and we all together have that hope that Jesus Christ is coming again. What an awesome hope that is—in patience even in our suffering. You might be suffering here tonight. You might be suffering financially, emotionally, spiritually, or in some other financial physical kind of way. Maybe you're physically suffering in actual pain or a chronic sickness. You have a hope that cannot be dimmed. It actually grows brighter the more the world grows darker.

Fourthly, in verse 12, prayer. Love's expression is that of prayer. Look at it in verse 12, and in regard to prayer, continuing in it. "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Now, why does Paul tell us to continue in prayer? Why doesn't he just tell us to pray? Because our problem isn't praying. We pray when the car blows up. We freak out, "Ah!" We pray when we're hungry and we're eating, "Oh, Lord, thank you for this food in Jesus name, amen," man of prayer that I am. We pray when we're in trouble. Remember before you even got saved and the cops are pulling you over, "Oh, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" I was 16 when I got into a horrible automobile accident. I wasn't walking with the Lord, but when I was rolling off the freeway, I was, "Jesus!" You know, prayer isn't the problem—it's continuing in prayer. We forget to keep praying. We get weary in well-doing. Of all the passages that Jesus gave us from His own lips about prayer, I would actually summarize and say the one dominant theme that Jesus gave when it came to prayer is just do it. That's what Jesus was actually saying, "Just pray." He said, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." What we do is faint and we do not pray. We need to be persistent in prayer. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall will be opened unto you." Prayer helps us to be patient in trouble and rejoice in our hope, and believers who genuinely love are devoted to prayer. Let me repeat that. Believers who genuinely, authentically, sincerely love others, guess what they do? They pray. Don't tell me that you love me if you don't pray for me. Don't tell me you love God's

church if you don't pray for the church. Don't tell me you love sinners if you don't pray for them. So, if you love, you're going to get on your knees and you're going to be in prayer. That's an expression of true love.

The fifth and last category of our love is in verse 13. In verse 13 he says, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." You might read this whole passage and not conclude that it's all about love, but I believe it's all about love. I believe everything he says here, and even beyond to the end of the chapter, is all about love. So, let me point out under love's care two characteristics. Love is generous, love's generosity, and love is hospitable. Under the two points, you might say love is helpful. Now, what does it say? "Distributing to the necessity of saints." The word "distributing" in my King James translation literally means fellowship. It is a Greek word that you are familiar with. It's the word *koinoneo* which means joint participation. We have the name Revival Christian Fellowship. Do you know what the word "fellowship" means? You say, "Yeah, it means get together and eat donuts and have coffee. That's fellowship. The Greek word *koinoneo* translates donut or cookie." No it doesn't. It literally means to share together. It is tied in with eating in the oriental mind because when you ate something with somebody the same food that's nourishing you is nourishing me. It meant joint participation. That's why a Jew would never eat with a Gentile. A Jew would never eat with a Gentile because he didn't want to become one with that Gentile. This is why, when we take communion, we pray and partake together because we are eating together, and it's nourishing us as one body in Christ. The outward sign of eating is an expression of unity, but the word *koinoneo* means joint participation. In what? In that we have the same Father, the same Savior, and the same Spirit. We have the same blessed hope. We're part of the same family, so we have so much that we share together—same Lord, same Spirit baptism, same Bible, same heavenly destination. We're joint participants in the things of God. That's why our fellowship is in Jesus Christ and in His Spirit.

Notice that love's care is also expressing hospitality. You say, "Oh, well, I don't have a house to be hospitable in." You don't have to have a house, and you don't have to have a big house, just reach out in love to people. Do you know what the word "hospitality" literally means? It means to love strangers. So, if you say, "I have the gift of hospitality," but you only invite people over that you know, like, and love, "No weird people can come to my house just people I like." That's not the Biblical gift of hospitality. Do you know what this is telling us here in the church at Revival Christian Fellowship Wednesday night, Sunday, whenever it might be? It means open your heart, open your hands, and open your home to one another. When was the last time you invited someone from church over to your house? "I can't cook." So get some Colonel Sanders Chicken or something. Who cares? I know the women are, "Well, I gotta cook something really good." Just get together. It's not the food or the quality of the food, it's the fellowship. When you're reaching out, find somebody that's new to the church, somebody you don't even know, and invite them over to your house. "Hey, you guys are new to Revival, do you want to come over? I want you to meet some other people." Just kind of play middleman. Introduce people and get to know them. Invite them to come to fellowships with you. "Go to the prayer meeting or the women's Bible study or women's retreat with me. Let's come together. Hey? Are you going to come to the retreat? Hey, you can ride along with me." It's just showing love toward

people that are strangers and reaching out to them.

It is a challenge in a church our size to connect with people. There's a lot of people come to Revival and a lot of people leave Revival, come to Revival and leave Revival. I think if you want to get connected, you can. We have all kinds of small groups for you to plug into. Even in the larger group settings on Sunday or Wednesday, I want to exhort you as the family, the kinfolk, at Revival Christian Fellowship to show Christian love. This isn't just a place for me to dispense theology and for us to get big heads. It's a place for us to get burning hearts, to love God and to love one another, and to reach out. Christians are to be believers, lovers and hopers. Christians are to be believers, faith in God, love toward the brethren, and hope for the coming again of Jesus Christ—faith, hope and love. Those things should mark us as the body of Christ, the family of God. Amen?