

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

Number: 607

Verses: Romans 12:9-13

Topic: Christian Actions In Community

Date: 16th January 2007

Romans 12:9-13 HCSB *Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. (10) Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor. (11) Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. (12) Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. (13) Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.*

Romans 12:9-13 ISV *Your love must be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. (10) Be devoted to each other with mutual affection. Excel in showing respect for each other. (11) Never be lazy in showing such devotion. Be on fire with the Spirit. Serve the Lord. (12) Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and persistent in prayer. (13) Supply the needs of the saints. Extend hospitality to strangers.*

(Paul's cascade of Greek participles and adjectives is a bit difficult to translate so I have put two slightly different translations above.)

The key concept here is community: "one another", "each other", "the saints" - all these commands are about how Christians are to treat each other with love, honor and hospitality.

Let's stand back and ask "what was Paul obviously assuming as he wrote this"? He is clearly assuming that the Romans will be like a loving family! He assumes that all Christians will love each other, share with each other, know each other, care for each other, and honor each other just as a loving family would.

The Holy Spirit in their midst would distribute gifts (see verses 3-8) that would produce a loving and caring community. Spiritual gifts are not just given so that individual Christians can "have a ministry" or "fulfill their destiny", rather they are given so that Christ may dwell among His people in community (Ephesians 4:11-16).

You CANNOT be an obedient holy biblical Christian on your own – living an isolated life, refusing Christian fellowship – because so MANY of the commands in the NT involve the word "one another"! The Great Command is "love your neighbor as yourself", and the New Commandment is "love one another as I have loved you" and both commandments assume that we get involved with other people!

There is an intense zeal in what Paul is asking here "be on fire with the Spirit" (literally be boiling over with Spirit) a literal translation of verse 11 would be "in speed, not tardy, boiling over with the Spirit to serve the Lord as a slave". Zoom, zoom, zoom into the things of God! Paul is asking for a high speed, high energy, high effort faith!

This sounds exhausting but it is not so hard because in community “what goes around comes around” and you receive back three times as much! As you give love, you receive love. It is not one spiritual expert burning out trying to serve everyone but a whole community encouraging each other onward.

But communities have their tough times and the Roman Christians were severely persecuted. In Romans 8 Paul even goes so far as to say “we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered all day long”.

Romans 8:35-39 HCSB *Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (36) As it is written: **Because of You we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.** (37) No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him who loved us. (38) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!*

So Paul issues the following commands for tough times: (12) *Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.* (13) *Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.*

We are to have an inner strength from the Holy Spirit that allows us to rejoice in hope knowing God will work things out – and to wait patiently and prayerfully for the outcome. Meanwhile we are to help our fellow sufferers by sharing our money and goods with those in need and by actively pursuing hospitality. Open wallets and open homes were to characterize the Roman Christians!

But why should we bother? Because we are part of a spiritual family: *Show family affection to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

And we are not to “fake it” like the insincere Christians who wear masks: *Love must be without hypocrisy.* (v9) (Hypocrite literally means “actor” or “mask wearer”). Love is not an “act” - it is a lifestyle! Christians were to be “real”, true to each other, solid supports in tough times and not flaky folk who are “all personality but have no character”.

The issue of character is reflected in Paul's desire for believers to have a clear moral stance: *Detest evil; cling to what is good.*(v.9) Paul tells them to “detest evil” - to hate and repudiate it. The Greek word here “apostugountes” means “to hate violently, abhor, loathe”. The spiritual person has moral clarity and utterly detests wickedness in all its forms.

The spiritual person also “clings to what is good” - there is a sticking with what is right and noble and good, even it hard or difficult. They take a high moral position and hold it. The Christian community is entirely dedicated to pursuing a high and holy Christian ideal!

Christian community is to be an energetic spiritual obeying of Christ in love, with great mutual care and concern and with very clear moral boundaries.

What if your church is not like this? What if it is cold, stingy and self-absorbed? What if it is utterly lonely or even worse has no clear moral boundaries? Then you need to pray for it, fervently pray for it to change! God loves those folk – but wants so much more for them! Christian obedience is much more than prayer, bible reading and tithing – it is Christian love lived out in real and practical ways in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Blessings,

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