

Men's Bible Study

January 31, 2024

Romans: A study for understanding God.

Romans 12:9-21

The following table tries to understand this section of our scripture given to us through the Roman church.

- Column one: is the verse as found in the New American Standard Bible
- Column two: is the text divided into separate phrases or ideas. There have been many attempts to do this and the count has been variously numbered from 12-31 items. My criteria for this division is if there is a change in the object, qualifier and or the context.
- Column three: is the object of the phrase usually a noun, or pronoun.
- Column four: is the qualifier of the object or the action associated with the object.
- Column five: is the context of the phrase. It looks into the passage as a whole and determines the actor or group which is most likely being called into action.
- Column six: is the number used for reference within this study.
 - Self is used to associate the individual Christian into an attitude, a thought pattern, a defined character, or a place of personal improvement. It can be seen as a personal and internal target.
 - The Church while made of Christians is noted as the receiver of the action from the population of the Church. It can be seen as a congregational target.
 - The world is the connection point between the saved in the Church and the unsaved outside of the church. It can be seen as a universal target.

VS	Text	Object	Qualifier	Context	#
	Give preference to one another in honor.	One another	Preference	Church	5
	Practicing hospitality.	Hospitality	Practicing	Church	13
	Weep with those who weep	Those who weep	Weep	Church	17
	Associate with the lowly.	Lowly	Associate	Church	20
10	Be devoted to one another in brotherly love,	One another	Devoted	Church	4
13	Contributing to the needs of the saints.	Needs	Contributing	Church	12
15	Rejoice with those who rejoice,	Those who rejoice	Rejoice	Church	16
16	Be of the same mind toward one another	One another	Be of the same mind	Church	18
	Serving the Lord,	Lord	Serve	God	8
	Abhor what is evil,	Evil	Abhor	Self	2
	Cling to what is good,	Good	Cling	Self	3

	Fervent in spirit,	Spirit	Fervent	Self	7
	Persevering in tribulation,	Tribulation	Persevere	Self	10
	Devoted in prayer.	Prayer	Devoted	Self	11
	Do not be haughty in mind	In mind	Not haughty	Self	19
	Do not be wise in your own estimation.	Your estimation	Not wise	Self	21
	But overcome evil with good.	Good	Be overcome	Self	31
9	Let your love be without hypocrisy,	Love	Without Hypocrisy	Self	1
11	Not lagging behind in diligence,	Diligence	Not lagging	Self	6
12	Rejoicing in hope,	Hope	Rejoice	Self	9
21	Do not be overcome by evil,	Evil	Do not be overcome	Self	30
	Bless and curse not	Bless and curse	Not	World	15
	Respect what is right in the sight of all men	What is right	Respect	World	23
	Leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, <i>“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”</i>	Wrath of God	Leave room	World	26
	<i>If he is thirsty, give him drink</i>	He	Give Drink	World	28
	<i>For in doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.”</i>	His head	Heap coals	World	29
14	Bless those who persecute you	Those who persecute you	Bless	World	14
17	Never pay back evil for evil to anyone	Anyone	Never pay back	World	22
18	If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men	Peace	Possible, dependance	World	24
19	Never take your own revenge	Your own	Never revenge	World	25
20	<i>“But if your enemy is hungry, feed him.</i>	Your hungry enemy	Feed	World	27

Thirty attributes of Christian character. It is all good stuff. It is all hard stuff. Taken one by one they are a measurement beyond our own nature. How do we, as twenty-first century men, measure up?

Nothing shows character more than hard stuff.

This list, this counting of Christian Character based actions is more than enough to be divided into thirty-one lessons. Or for that matter thirty-one books. This Men's group has tolerated the last thirty-six weeks just to get to this point. In the next several weeks we will look at all of them. I am planning to break them up by context:

1. Attitudes that are a pointed outward to believers first in the local church in particular and toward the Body of Christ in general. No man is an island. Every action, reaction, proactive action for the Kingdom spirit must first be to fellow believers. Paul wrote this inspired section with a vision of a unified, saved, justified, sanctified, gifted, living group of men and women in need of a new concept of living. A view into the mind of God to understand how we are to live together, *We are on body and individual members of it.*
2. Attitudes that are universal and pointed outside of the church. The individual and the corporate body have a responsibility to rub shoulders with the world. The world that would quickly sour to the new cult called Christians. There would be bodies burned as torches for Ceasar. There would be lions eating the flesh of saints. Paul would face the cross. If we take to heart this section as a whole as a new striving character we can face a little criticism. We can stand firm in the assurance that like Dave a fellow learner in Christ said, "In the end, we win."
3. Attitudes that are a pointed inwardly, to the motives, attitudes, thought processes of the individual Christian. These focus on what you see in ourselves. It does not account for others to change us. It does not account for your particular situation in life. While they may well have actionable results, the emphasis here is the internalization of the image of Jesus in your life.

As an example of understanding our obligation to God in any situation we encounter we often used three letter acronyms. As stated previously there are ways to regulate outward behavior:

- a. **WWJD**: What would Jesus do?
 - i. this idea presupposes the knowledge of the psychology of Jesus. In terms of the Gospel narrative, Jesus did a narrow range of things. He taught, healed, performed miracles and fulfilled the purpose of His very special life. To put ourselves in the sandals of Jesus is an admirable trait. Nevertheless, in my limited knowledge and understanding of how to be God: **WWJD** does not work for me.
 - ii. It assumes you know what Jesus would do in situations that He never exposed to in His life on earth. Should I take an aspirin for a headache? **WWJD**? Aspirin was not even invented until 1899. There are principles and guesses but to know **WWJD** in this current time is a great deal of guess work. Taking Jesus entirely out of the context of the 1st century AD and dropping him in 2014 is liable to lead to problems.

- b. **WDJS**: What did Jesus say? When asking a fellow believer what the guiding principle of their life, they responded, “The red letters”. If Jesus did not say it then I can do whatever I want. Of course, that leaves a great amount of scripture out. We would have to discount the Old Testament and all the teachings of Paul.
- c. **WDJD**: What did Jesus do? This is closer to the mark of the three previous statements because we can see the context of the teachings and exhortations given by Jesus. We can begin to see the inner workings of God in our society. An example of this philosophy of **WDJD** is the encounter with Woman at the well. The what did Jesus do is pretty obvious: 1) Meets a woman. 2) Convinces her that He is a prophet. 3) Convinces her that He is the Messiah. 4) She goes off to tell people to spread the Gospel. The **WDJD** of that story doesn’t really help us, beyond the fact that we meet Jesus, we get the everlasting water, we go tell people.
- d. **HDJD**: How did Jesus do? Same example of the woman at the well to understand the mind of Jesus. 1) Jesus confronted a foreign woman with a simple request. 2) When she was alone. 3) He ignored social convention. 4) He created a situation which was unacceptable to polite society. 5) He met a woman where she was. 6)The use of water is a wonderful analogy, but also used imagery the woman would understand. 7) the illustration spoke her language. 8) Jesus pointed out that she had a checkered past with multiple husbands was proof of his prophetic gifting, 9) but also cast her as a sinner. 10) And what did the Messiah do with this sinner? Nothing. 11)He allowed her to go spread the good news. A sinner spread the good news? Well, yes, of course. Remember, only one non-sinner ever spread the Gospel.
- e. **WWJW**: What would Jesus want? Did Jesus simply condemn the woman at the well? Nope. Would Jesus distance himself from the woman at the well? Nope. Did Jesus ask her to follow him? Nope. What did Jesus **want** the woman at the well to do. 1) Give me a drink, 2) tried to understand the situation presented by a Jew talking to a Samaritan women. 3) revealed to the woman her most innermost need, “If you knew”. 4) in response to the impossibility to draw the water by Jesus, the told her he was the water. 5) he was the water that would never run dry. **WWJW?** To gently bring her to a conclusion of her own need. Hence the corollary scripture: *Seek first the kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added to you.*

So the proverbs of Paul to the Romans is not about another list to follow. It is a guide, a picture of what Jesus WANTS for us to be. **WWJW**.

The attitudes pointed inward of the individual Christian. These attitudes are numbered in our table are: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 21, 30. This is a third of our attributes and actions.

We will examine to prove God’s will for our lives in this group. It is about our internal spirit that causes us to be more Christlike.

The first: ***Let your love be without hypocrisy.*** Six words in the New American Standard Bible, and yet only three in the Greek and one of the three is not usually translated but assumed. The order of the words is an article: The love, or that love may be, or let as to allow, The

Greek	English	Morphology	As translated by NASB
'H	That or Let	Article: An article is a word that comes before a noun to show whether it's specific or general.	about (2), all (5), case* (3), cause* (1), circumstances* (3), companions* (8), condition* (1), experiences (2), far (1), followers* (1), former* (1), meat (1), one (6), one who (1), one* (1), others (4), others* (1), outsiders* (3), people (1), sight (1), some (7), some* (5), suitable (1), these (4), things (1), this (31), those (406), those who (17), together* (8), under* (1), welfare (1), what (47), what had happened (1), what* (1), which (14), who (52), whoever (8), whom (4).
agapē	love	A noun. Love, in the NT usually the active love of God for his Son and his people, and the active love his people are to have for God, each other, and even enemies; love feast, the common meal shared by Christians in connection with church meetings	Used 117 times in the New Testament. 9 times in Romans. In Romans it refers to the Love of God by a believer (5:5, 5:8, 8:35, 8:39, 15:30). In Romans as it refers to the expression of Love to others (13:10,14:15) In Romans as it refers to the law (13:10) In Romans as it refers to an inner attitude resulting in action. (12:9)
ἀνυπόκριτος	unfeigned, undisguised, sincere	Adjective. A word which modifies a noun.	

If you want to hurt the feelings of a Christian tell them they are a **HYPOCRITE**. That word seems to insult the core of every Christian. We respond quickly and without much thought. It cuts us to the quick. Just as bad is to have someone tell you after inviting them to church, “I don’t go to church, it is full of hypocrites.”

We are all a little hypocritical at times. As an example, if someone asks you, “How are you doing?” and in reply saying you are “fine” when you are not. that is hypocrisy. The first hypocrites in the church were Annanias and Saphira. They sold a piece of land and when they gave it to the Apostles it was a good thing. The hypocrisy was they said it was the whole and they held back some. And they died. If God smote everyone in the church for hypocrisy there would be many less in the pews on Sunday. Probably just you guys.

- ✓ Is love only an action?
 - ✓ Can we love without doing anything about it?
 - ✓ Why love at all, if you are lying to yourself about the reason?
-
- I love because you need it in return.
 - If you love because God told you to as an act of subservience as a response to a bolt of lightning. There is a problem.
 - If you love to pay back God. Not acceptable.
 - If you love to earn God’s love. It won’t work.
 - If you love to just get along. Nope
 - If I love to cover up my own flaws. Still no joy.
 - If you love because it is expected by the teacher, or the pastor. Still a little short.
 - If you love because of feelings of guilt. Still hypocrisy
 - If you love out of guilt. Still falling short.
 - If you exhibit a gift of God in the church only because you want to be recognized as a person of importance. Hipocrisy
 - If you love to get love. Still hypocrisy!

Noone likes hypocrites. When we get a glimpse of the real person behind the mask, when it slips a little, we are overcome with shock. “I would have never thought that of you?”

It takes a good deal of effort to be a successful hypocrite. No one is born with an ability to pull the wool over our own eyes. It takes a very crafty person to become one. Hypocrisy, is the most difficult vice to pursue. It needs unceasing vigilance. It requires a very hard and rare detachment of spirit. It is not like adultery or idolatry which can be done in your spare time, in your spare moments. Hypocrisy is a full-time job.

Hypocrisy has many forms of twisted logic. You can slice and dice and make Julian fries about what you are doing, all the while trying to convince others of what you are not. Gentlemen, PLEASE if you are struggling, don’t tell me you are fine. You are not fine. We all struggle. We all fall short of God’s ideal. Try as we might we miss the mark. And we need each other. Hypocrisy is walking out of a store with a big bulge under your coat. You can try to hide it, but it is still there.

Hypocrisy is simply evil because you are lying to yourself.

“Let your love be without hypocrisy,”

For most of us we all know that Jesus wants us to love each other. It is pounded into us from the pulpit, from the Bible studies, we see signs behind the plate at a baseball game saying John 3:16. Conversely, in experience some people in the church is easier to love than other. The problem about church is it is full of flawed people. As a Christian we all know how difficult loving people can be.

It was Jesus said to, **“Love the Lord with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind with all your strength”** and some people find that command much easier than the next part, **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** Jesus also said as written in John when Jesus gives the measure of our love that it in the same way as He loved you. Tough measuring rod for my character.

It is not always easy to love me. I know I am a bit brash, a bit overly bold, a bit annoying. Romans 12:9a does not employ you to love. It does not explain it. It does not even show you concrete examples of the behavior and character of love.

Love we are to express to our brothers is to be very personal and sacrificial. We lovingly participate in the lives of others and some for some of you this is really, really tough stuff. The bar is set so high we often find ourselves being guilty of “Hypocritical love”.

We say to ourselves, “he is not that loving to me” or “I feel uncomfortable when he comes up to me and wants to give me a hug.” We would much rather go it alone you realize that we're commanded by Christ to love each other you understand that it's the expectation that God has given. God never asks or commands things that are impossible to do. His GRACE and MERCY is communicated to us that we may understand and be empowered by God's Holy Spirit. We are mastered by Jesus remember the consecration the self-evaluation and the giftedness is all in the context so that you can fulfill the love and the law of Jesus which is to love each other and care about each other.

So we say simply “okay, okay, okay, I want to love.”

I promise to God I will love. But we can and do love but it is tough. I have heard from many godly men that at this point we should simply, “fake it until you make it.” Does Paul tell us that we should have fake love until it finally works? NOPE. Does Paul tell us that when we admit to ourselves that I am not so good at loving we can stop loving? NOPE. Does Paul tell us to love only when we feel like it? NOPE.

So, I am stuck between a rock and a hard place. I am commanded to love. And I am commanded to love without faking it. Bonnie is my wife of 55 years. There are times when I have pretended to love her, just to make her happy, to make me happy. Pretending works sometimes. But not very long because **Jesus knows all**. When you go through the motions without the heart, Jesus knows that you know, that He knows, that you know you are faking

it. If you're just going through the motions, if you're doing it in an insincere way then you're losing the whole point love must be without hypocrisy.

If we go out and ask the waiter if the restaurant serves crab and she responds with an affirmative there is first an expectation it will be expensive and second it would be real crab. When the dish comes out and it is not crab, it may look like crab, it may smell like crab, but you know it is not crab. It is an imitation crab. You know it, the server knows it, the chef knows it, your fellow guests know it. JB Phillips renders this verse “let us have no imitation love”. You may well accept imitation crab if it is cheap enough, but Paul says the quality of love is sincerity. Paul understood that it's impossible to really use spiritual gifts disconnected from God, and also possible to love in an unspiritual way.

The word for love here in Greek is AGAPE or selfless love. If you are trying to love with an attitude of what's in it for me, or what can I gain, or what can I get out of this we are hypocrites.

The second idiom of Paul’s examples of introspection is a negative internal attitude **ABHOR EVIL** and it is paired the third and now positive internal attitude of **CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD**.

Greek	English	Morphology	As translated by NASB
apostygéō	to dislike, abhor, have a horror of, hate.	Verb. Action from a motivation usually a state of understanding, motive, realization, attitude, character trait, or situation,	Abhor. Only use once in the entire New Testament.
ponērós	bad, the negative quality of an object; evil, wicked, crime, the negative moral quality of a person or action opposed to God and his goodness; (n.) wicked deed, wicked thing; the Evil One, a title of Satan	Adjective. A descriptor of a noun.	Evil
kolláō	to glue, to glue together, cement, fasten together, join, associate with, to join or fasten firmly together to join one's self to, cleave to	Verb	Cling Used only once in Romans
agathós	good; good as a positive quality (vs. bad), good as a moral quality (vs. evil)	Adjective	Good

In the last part of Romans 12:9 there is a comparison. Good and Evil.

- ✓ How can we tell the difference?
- ✓ Is there some well-marked line that we may know what not to cross?
- ✓ Is there some justification I can make to evil that it may become good?
- ✓ Can we look at the world we live in and see the distinction between these two extremes?

Please note here again. These two are about our personal, intrinsic, internal understandings of God's proved will and in the context of your gifts. If your Anthropos is in order and you are gifted with mercy, can you see beyond the evil that is in others and see the good. YES. But for the most part the ideal, the outline for our personal attitudes are to be hater of evil and super glued to good. We are pressed on the far edge of the line of things that could be characterized as evil and good.

Paul was very specific in his wording. We are to hate evil, that is a specific and well outlined standard for God. It is found 89 times in the New Testament. Of the triad of admonishments of this verse starts with love, then hate, then cling. Of the it seems Paul is contrasting the first with the second: the **Positive** love and the **Negative** of hate. And the response to the first two is an intrinsic attitude of response. An encouragement to have a genuine love that is expressed by hate of one thing and the attachment to another.

Never become comfortable with evil. It is not a toleration, or being politically correct, or given safe space because someone wants to be wrong. In our culture it is OK to kill ZOMBIES because they are not real, it is OK to plan the latest first-person shooter game. It is OK to go to an R rated movie because I am an adult. It is not OK to support Planned Parenthood because they give so much good advice on woman's healthcare and sexual transmitted disease help.

It is not enough to avoid evil or to tolerate evil. This verse is saying there is a absolute personal decision to be made. To set an absolute attitude of rejection of any and all evil.

Coupled with this rejection of Evil our attitude of Jesus is to cling, to be adhered to, to be stuck, to be so closely there is no separation. It is not Velcro that we can rip off and re-apply in a new direction it is Super, strong gorilla, professional, well endorsed, magic, unbreakable adhesion. It is a decision of the soul that will not ever be taken back. It becomes so close it is bond to you.

What is being addressed here is not what is wrong with something in your life. It is not something that may have some worth in the right context. The Question that must be asked is, "**WHAT IS GOOD or RIGHT about it.**"

Our society seems to have a sliding scale of wrong. Shoplifting is OK as long as it is less than \$500. Sex outside of marriage is OK because we are consenting adults. Driving to fast is OK because every one else was flowing at that speed. It is not a choice between what

culture says and what you accept as reasonable. It is a tight unseperable far end of the spectrum and you will not be pried away.

Conclusion

If our love is without hypocrisy, true and genuine, it would be most like Jesus we can be. Love that does not pretend will cause a distain, a hatred of evil that would steal our love. A love that attracts us like a magnet and never be separated to the ultimate Good.

Appendix

Next Week:

- To better understand what love is in Verse 9 of our section read I Corinthians the 13th chapter.
- Read the remainder of Chapter 12.
- Write down any words that seem difficult.
- Pray for your resolve to “let Love be sincere”.