

# Romans 12:9-16—What Real Or Unhypocritical Love Looks Like In The Church—How Believers Should Relate To Each Other

## Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## Revision for Romans 12:9

Love is so much more than being nice or doing what is considered nice. Love is not just “keeping the peace”. Love is not a feeling, rather it’s a decision of the will. The Bible commands us to speak the truth in love (see Ephesians 4:15). Love considers both what is true *and* what is best for the other person, regardless of how it will make them feel, and then asks God to give wisdom as to how to best communicate that to the other person. Anything less than this is manipulation or brutality. We must both speak what is true, and also be honest about our motive for sharing something.

*“Whether or not we intend to, when we aren’t loving sincerely, we are actually lying and manipulating the other person so we can get what we want.”*

## Outline and introduction for Romans 12:9-16

Paul says in Galatians 5:22 that the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is love. But what does love look like? “Joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV). The man through whom the Holy Spirit is producing the fruit of love will naturally be joyful, will naturally experience peace (the absence of anxiety and fear), will naturally be patient or longsuffering towards others, and will naturally be kind towards others etc. All these are attributes of genuine or real love.

Similarly Paul gives a command in Romans 9:1 to “**Let love be without hypocrisy**”, but again, what does this look like? Today we will learn what real or unhypocritical love looks like in the church—how believers should relate to each other:

1. Hate what is evil and cling to what is good (v 9)
2. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another (v 10)
3. Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (v 11)
4. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer (v 12)
5. Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality (v 13)
6. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (v 14)
7. Enter into the feelings of others and help share their burdens (vs 15-16)

## **Romans 12:9-16 NKJV**

**<sup>9</sup> Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; <sup>11</sup> not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; <sup>12</sup> rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; <sup>13</sup> distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**

## 1. Hate what is evil and cling to what is good (v 9)

v 9 **Abhor what is evil:** The ancient Greek word translated as **abhor** means “to hate strongly, to despise, to hate violently, to loathe, to be disgusted, and to detest”. It is a very strong word. It’s the feeling and response that we would get if someone pushed some fresh dog poo into our mouths and asked us to swallow it—we would be so disgusted by the very thought of it that we would do anything to get that disgusting thing out of our mouths. We would be absolutely revolted by it. We would probably vomit. God is asking us to choose to have the same response to evil or worldly things.

v 9 **Cling to what is good:** The ancient Greek word translated as **cling** means to “bind closely, unite, attach to, glue, cement, attach firmly, to join oneself to, to become part of, to join to oneself to, to become a part of, fasten to, soldering, join together, to cause to cleave to, to make to cling to, is indissolubly bound, to put together, and keep company”.

When it comes to dog poo, the choice is easy, God made us to physically dislike eating faeces. However, when it comes to morality, how we feel about it and how we respond to it comes down to our choice. Believers are commanded to not just abstain from evil, but to have an attitude towards it of utter disgust, just like God does.

Why does God want us to be completely revolted by sinful things, and instead be joined or united to those things which are good?

James 4:4 NLT

You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.

You see, because agape love is a choice, when we choose to accept what the world offers, we are making the choice to love the things of the world, and therefore, by default, we are making the choice to hate God. This is spiritual adultery—by loving the things of the world I am being unfaithful to God, just like I would be unfaithful to my wife if I cheated on her. It really is that black and white; by choosing and/or accepting and/or approving of worldly things, by choosing to enjoy fellowship with the world, I am making, at that moment, the deliberate choice to hate God and cease my wonderful and joyful fellowship with Him—I have set myself against God and am therefore out of fellowship with God, because loving worldly things is rebellion against God. *It doesn’t matter if it doesn’t feel wrong, it just matters that it is wrong. Remember that agape love is not an emotion, it’s a decision.*

It’s not until I repent of both my sinful actions *and* attitude, that I will be back in fellowship with God. Genuine repentance is marked by two things. Firstly, I will choose to stop doing those wrong things. Secondly, I must also choose to hate those things (meaning that I don’t continue to pine or long after them even though I am not doing them anymore). Only then will I be back in fellowship with God. The apostle John explains how this works.

1 John 1:5-2:6 NLT

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. <sup>6</sup> So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on [consistently] living in spiritual darkness; we are not [consistently] practicing the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we are [consistently] living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, [consistently] cleanses us from all sin.

<sup>8</sup> If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not [consistently] living in the truth. <sup>9</sup> But if we [consistently] confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

2:1 My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin [occasionally]. But if anyone does sin [occasionally], we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. <sup>2</sup> He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

<sup>3</sup> And we can be sure that we know him if we [consistently] obey his commandments. <sup>4</sup> If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t [consistently] obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. <sup>5</sup> But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. <sup>6</sup> Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Notice how it says in 1 John 1:9 that Jesus’ sacrifice in our place is not only for the forgiveness of sin (declaring us to be positionally “not guilty”), but also **to cleanse us from all wickedness** (to make us practically clean as well—to cleanse our thoughts and our conscience). Similarly, 1 John 1:7 tells us that **“the blood of Jesus, his Son, [consistently] cleanses us from all sin.”** You see, God saved us by once and for all removing the sin that separated us from Him, so that we can enjoy fellowship with Him once again (see Hebrews 7:27, 9:12). However, when we are not putting God first, we are out of fellowship with God. Therefore, we are missing the point of why God saved us in the first place—to enjoy fellowship with Him. It’s like driving hours to get to the beach on a hot day, but then never actually getting into the water to cool off.

The problem is not that all our sin is not forgiven and we no longer have right standing with God when we commit sin—our positional standing of being “not guilty” before God is permanent and secure, which is why Paul can confidently proclaim in Romans 8:1, *“Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*. The issue rather is one of the heart; is my heart “cleansed” or soft towards God—am I yielded to Him and fully trusting and obeying Him? Or is my heart “dirty” or hard towards God; am I seeking my own way instead of living God’s way. You see, a clean or soft heart will be sensitive to God’s voice and will, we will be able to discern or “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2b). On the other hand a hard or dirty heart will be deaf to God’s word and will, and so will pursue the path of self-gratification. David prayed that God would create in him a clean heart.

Psalm 51:10 NKJV

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Here is another picture that helps us to understand the difference between being forgiven and declared “not guilty” before God, but still not in fellowship with God when our hearts are not soft. Jesus, when He washed the disciples feet, said that they were all clean (positionally righteous), but that their feet were dirty and so must be washed if they were going to enjoy fellowship with Him. Our regular confession of sin and repentance, is like the regular washing of our feet to get the moral filth of the world off us, so we can then experience the fellowship with God that Jesus’ substitutionary death for our sin on the cross made possible. We must maintain the unity and fellowship with God that He has already given us.

John 13:3-11 NKJV

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. <sup>5</sup> After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. <sup>6</sup> Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

<sup>8</sup> Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "**If I do not wash you, you have no part [companionship or fellowship] with Me.**"

<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "**He who is bathed [already saved and forgiven] needs only to wash his feet [wash away the influence of the world], but is completely clean [positionally declared not guilty]; and you are clean, but not all of you.**" <sup>11</sup> For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

Paul used the illustration of slavery to show how a believer chooses to be in or out of fellowship with God. Simply put, we can't be serving God and so walking in fellowship with God unless have submitted ourselves to Him as His slave (Greek *doulos*, a bondservant, a slave for love for life, see Exodus 21:1-6 and Deuteronomy 15:12-17).

Romans 6:16 NLT

Don't you realize that you become the slave [Greek *doulos*, a bondservant, a slave for love for life] of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin [choose to love sin], which leads to death, or you can choose to [love and] obey God, which leads to righteous living.

<sup>19</sup> Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves [bondservants] to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves [bondservants] to righteous living so that you will become holy.

Why is it so important to **abhor what is evil** and **cling to what is good**?

Without following this first basic instruction of what it means to *agape love God without hypocrisy* (see Romans 12:9), without choosing to love what is good and hate what is evil, we will never be able to know or prove God's perfect will for our lives (see Romans 12:2), because we won't be walking in fellowship with God. There are two stages to this.

1. Study the word of God to know what God loves and what He hates. Then do those things which He loves, those things which are "true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8). Learning what is right, and then *clinging to what is good* and right is literally what it means to lay our lives down as a living sacrifice on God's altar (see Romans 12:2). However, we can't just live as a "tick box" Christian, thinking that as long as we are keeping God's moral law that we can then just do what we want.
2. We also need to be open and sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit to do whatever He leads us to do at that moment or for that day (remember that this can't happen until we are first doing the things that we know we should be doing, until we are living a morally righteous life). It's not just us doing what is right, but our will must be submitted God's will for our lives.

## How do I learn to **abhor what is evil** and **cling to what is good**?

*This is where faith comes into play.* Why faith? Because not everything that is bad for us *feels* or appears bad, and not everything that is good for us *feels* or appears good. Why is this? Because our sinful nature is corrupted and naturally loves what is bad and hates what is good. Thus we must submit to the authority of God's word and also trust God's heart for us—what the Bible says is true must override our feelings and desires.

Psalm 84:11-12 NKJV

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; **no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**

**<sup>12</sup> O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!**

Psalm 84:11-12 AMP

For the Lord God is a Sun and Shield; the Lord bestows [present] grace and favour and [future] glory (honour, splendor, and heavenly bliss)! **No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**

**<sup>12</sup> O Lord of hosts, blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man who trusts in You [leaning and believing on You, committing all and confidently looking to You, and that without fear or misgiving]!**

By faith I must believe that the only reason that God will keep something from me is because it is not good for me eternally (it won't benefit me in the long run). Thus, if the Bible says that something is wrong, and is therefore something I must not have, do, say, think, watch, listen to, read, or wear, I need to believe that God's motive for doing so is in my own best interests, that He really does want what is best for me. I must believe that my loving Heavenly Father is protecting me from anything which will hurt me, both now and later.

Similarly, I must believe that the only reason that God will give me something, allow me to experience something, or ask me to do something, is because it *will* benefit me in the long run (it has eternal benefit). To summarise, anything that will benefit me eternally God will give me, and anything that will hurt me eternally God will keep from me. Thus my understanding of right and wrong are founded on the biblical understanding that God withholds no good thing from those who love Him; so the logical conclusion is that if God says that I can't have or do something, then it must be bad for me, and therefore I won't want or desire it—a person in their right mind doesn't try to self harm. Similarly, if God asks me to do something or go somewhere, then I must trust that what He wants for me is best for me, and therefore choose to desire it.

Why is it so hard to walk by faith and trust that what God wants for us is actually best for us?

Our feelings may be very different from reality. Take the Christian girl who has fallen in love with a non-Christian guy and wants to marry him. God says no being unequally yoked (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). However, the girl doesn't feel like it's a bad thing, she can't see how it could end badly, and her heart is desperate to be close to him. However, any person who has been down that road knows that it ends in disaster—any Christian lady married to a non-christian man will let you know just how difficult it is, and how they wished that they had made a different choice all those years ago. This Christian girl is living by feelings, and not by faith—she is living in a false reality, even though it seems so real, good, and right to her at the present time. If she does not repent and choose to live by faith over feelings (instead of feelings over faith), and again experience fellowship with God, she will experience the brutal truth of the following verse—she will get burned.

Proverbs 6:27 NLT

Can a man scoop a flame into his lap and not have his clothes catch on fire?

## **2. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another (v 10)**

v 10 **Kindly affectionate** (Greek *philostorgos*) means: loving dearly, being devoted, loving tenderly, warmly devoted to, family affection, authentically loving, yearning, cherishing, fond of.

v 10 **Brotherly love** (Greek *philadelphia*) means: Love of brother or sister, and love and affection for a fellow believer.

v 10 **Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love:** As Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> **By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another**” (NKJV).

Christians should treat each other like family, because we are family. At the minimum we should treat each other with warm courtesy and genuine respect. We learned in verses 4 and 5 that we are all different parts of the same body, and so we belong to each other and need each other. The world we live in is cruel and cold, so we need honest relationships which are also warm and family-like. These family-like relationships help us to cope with the persecution and temptation that we face as we live in this sin cursed world which is dominated by evil.

v 10 **In honour giving preference to one another:** How do I know that the other person’s display of affection towards me is genuine or not? If they treat me as more important than themselves. They must be acting in a way that shows that they are thinking about my needs and interests, and not only their own—otherwise it is hypocritical love and they are only trying to manipulate me—it is fake affection and it means nothing. True affection is measured by how servant-like we are, by how much we are willing to give up and sacrifice for other people.

Philippians 2:1-7 NKJV

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

## **3. Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (v 11)**

v 11 **Lagging:** The ancient Greek word translated **lagging** means to be: idle, lazy, hold back, sluggard, indolent, reluctant, lacking ambition, to hesitate, negligent, unready, timid, tardy, slothful, bothersome and irksome.

v 11 **Diligence:** The ancient Greek word translated as **diligence** means: eagerness, haste, zeal, earnestness, willingness, do quickly, do one’s best, to hasten, apply oneself, and devote oneself, exertion, and with great attention to.

v 11 **Not lagging in diligence:** In other words, don’t be lazy. Being diligent means being on time, working hard, going the extra mile, and giving our best all the time.

v 11 **Fervent in spirit:** The ancient Greek word translated as **fervent** means: be enthusiastic, be excited, boil, to be fiery hot, and to commit oneself completely to something. This is the opposite of what it is to be reluctant and half-hearted, just doing the bare minimum, and dragging our feet.

v 11 **Serving the Lord:** This means to be a slave of the Lord. We are not serving others first and foremost, rather the Lord. Serving the Lord must be our true motivation, otherwise we can fall into the trap of being man-pleasers and not God-pleasers.

Colossians 3:22-24 AMP

Servants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not only when their eyes are on you as pleasers of men, but in simplicity of purpose [with all your heart] because of your reverence for the Lord and as a sincere expression of your devotion to Him.

<sup>23</sup> Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily (from the soul), as [something done] for the Lord and not for men,

<sup>24</sup> Knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [and not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [real] reward. [The One Whom] you are actually serving [is] the Lord Christ (the Messiah).

v 11 **Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:** How much more effective would the church be if there were more Christians who were like this. Unfortunately, in many congregations, it is normal for a few people to be burdened with the majority of the work. How much more could God do through the church body if more believers were fervent and hard working slaves or bondservants of God.

Application: what it looks like to be “Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (by Jon Courson)

“Twenty years ago, a missionary candidate was summoned to appear before a certain examiner. A veteran missionary himself, the examiner instructed the young man to come to his house at 5:00 A.M. the next Monday morning. So the young man got up at 4:00 and was at the examiner’s house by 4:55. “Wait for me,” the examiner said as he ushered the candidate into his study. Three hours later, the examiner returned and said, “How do you spell baker?”

“B-a-k-e-r,” answered the young man.

“How’s your math?” asked the examiner. “What’s two plus two?”

“Four,” answered the young man.

Satisfied, the examiner said, “I’m going to recommend you for service in our mission.” And the young candidate left the interview perplexed.

That evening, the examiner met with his mission board and said, “I highly recommend this young man for ministry. I tested him on self-denial. He rolled out of bed and showed up at 4:55 A.M. Patience? I made him wait three hours in my study, and he didn’t say a word. Temper? I asked him to spell baker, and he didn’t become agitated. Humility? I asked him what two plus two was and he answered readily. This man will make a great missionary.”

Folks, you never know what tests the Master Examiner is putting before you. We’re interested in credentials, but the Lord is interested in character. “Whatever you do, be fervent,” said Paul. Be fervent for the Lord however simple your service might be or how insignificant it might seem—for in so doing, you just may be qualifying yourself for even greater service.”

## 4. Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer (v 12)

These three things go together, they are like a three legged stool. They are the evidence or outworking of a vibrant, strong, and healthy relationship with God.

v 12 **Rejoicing in hope**: “The call to **hope** usually has in mind our ultimate reward with Jesus. Paul says we serve God **rejoicing in hope**, not *rejoicing in results*. This shows how we are commanded to do all these things with an eye towards heaven. This is how we fulfill the command for **hope, patience** and **steadfast** character described here.” (David Guzik) We must always remember that in the kingdom of God, success is measured by faithfulness, and not success, recognition, numbers, or wealth.

v 12 **Patient**: The ancient Greek word translated as **patient** means to; endure, persevere, await, wait upon, remain, stand one’s ground, hold out, wait for, stay behind, to be permanent, to resist, to hold one’s ground, to not be moved, to bear up, to continue, stay under, to wait expectantly, and to have fortitude.

v 12 **Tribulation**: The ancient Greek word translated as **tribulation** refers to affliction, distress, oppression, tribulation, persecution, trouble and suffering, hardship, and anguish.

v 12 **Patient in tribulation**: **Patient** “denotes not a passive putting up with things, but an active, steadfast endurance.” (Leon Morris) **Tribulation** “denotes not some minor pinprick, but deep and serious trouble.” (Leon Morris)

“Difficult times do not excuse us when we abandon **hope** or **patience** or **continuing steadfastly in prayer**. Trials do not excuse a lack of love in the body of Christ or a lack of willingness to do His work.” (David Guzik)

In other words, no matter how hard things may get, no matter how strong the temptation may be, we simply must not give up or give in. Instead, we stand our ground and remain faithful to what God has called us to do and be.

### Continuing steadfastly in prayer—the secret to perseverance and praise

v 12 **Continuing steadfastly**: The ancient Greek word translated **continuing steadfastly** means to; “be devoted to, persist obstinately in, persevere in, attach oneself to, wait on, be faithful to someone, stand ready, busy oneself with, be busily engaged in, serve personally, associate closely, hold fast to, endure in, stand perpetually ready, attend constantly, be firm, remain faithful to a person or a task, be faithful to, adhere, be earnest toward, and to spend much time in.

v 12 **Continuing steadfastly in prayer**: Why is this so important? Prayer is a direct indicator of how closely we are walking with and depending on God. The moment we cease to pray and seek God’s help, wisdom, strength, power, love, and ability, we are out of fellowship and communion with God—we are now operating on our own strength and doing things our own way. Obviously we can’t accomplish much on our own without God, therefore we will soon lose hope and give up on serving God and loving others. Jesus teaches us that our relationship with God should be as a little child relates to his Father—one of total childlike dependence and trust. Let us all consider how we pray and see if we come to God as little children seeking His help and guidance, or are we acting like an independent adult who just wants to get their own way?



Matthew 18:2-4 NKJV

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup> and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

## **5. Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality (v 13)**

v 13 **Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality:** Christians are called to look after and support each other. We can do this by going to them and giving them what they need (VOM, Voice of the Martyrs, is a good model of how to do this), or inviting them to our home so they can be refreshed and encouraged. This practical help is the evidence of genuine koinonia fellowship—remember that real agape love is more than just an emotion, it’s a decision to do something for someone else, even if we don’t know them.

3 John 5-8 NLT

Dear friend, you are being faithful to God when you care for the traveling teachers who pass through, even though they are strangers to you. <sup>6</sup> They have told the church here of your loving friendship. Please continue providing for such teachers in a manner that pleases God. <sup>7</sup> For they are traveling for the Lord, and they accept nothing from people who are not believers. <sup>8</sup> So we ourselves should support them so that we can be their partners as they teach the truth.

Matthew 25:34-40 NKJV

Then the King [Jesus] will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

“Our care and concern will demonstrate itself in practical deeds done for others, either going to them (**distributing to the needs of the saints**) or inviting them to come to us (**given to hospitality**)” (David Guzik)

“The ancient Greek word for **hospitality** is literally translated “love for strangers.” In addition, “**given**” is a strong word, sometimes translated “persecute” (as in Romans 12:14). The idea is to “pursue” people you don’t know with hospitality. This is love in *action*, not just feelings.” (David Guzik)

## **6. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (v 14)**

Sometimes believers can be out of fellowship with God and so will act like unbelievers, while some people in the Church are not actually saved—they are false converts. It is sad when persecution comes from within the church. We will talk about how to deal with this next time when we discuss how to deal with conflict.

## **7. Enter into the feelings of others and help share their burdens (vs 15-16)**

### **Romans 12:15-16 NKJV**

**Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**

v 15-16 **Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Be of the same mind toward one another:** This is showing empathy. How we act and talk around other believers will be directed by what is best for them—we are **of the same mind**, being considerate of and sensitive to their needs and feelings. If they are sad, then we cry with them, if they are rejoicing, then we rejoice with them. This is a practical example of verse 10, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another”. We look beyond how we feel and what we need and instead consider what the other person feels or needs.

v 16 **Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion:** This is very similar to verse 3, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” It is a warning to not be proud and conceited, to think that we are better than others. While we may not verbally articulate this thought, we can often act it out by not talking to or avoiding certain people. It takes effort to reach out to other believers who may like different things to us or at a different level of maturity to us. There is nothing worse than a “cliquey” church—it makes people feel very uncomfortable—Jesus wants everyone to feel welcome. When people are loving without hypocrisy there will be true community, harmony, and fellowship.

### **Summary and conclusion**

Warren W. Wiersbe summarises this section well. “Here the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise the spiritual gifts. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way. Paul makes this same point in 1 Corinthians 13, the great “love chapter” of the New Testament. Love is the circulatory system of the spiritual body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way. This must be an honest love, not a hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9); and it must be humble, not proud (Romans 12:10). “Preferring one another” means treating others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:1–4).

Serving Christ usually means satanic opposition and days of discouragement. Paul admonished his readers to maintain their spiritual zeal because they were serving the Lord and not men. When life becomes difficult, the Christian cannot permit his zeal to grow cold. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12, NIV). Finally, Paul reminded them that they must enter into the feelings of others. Christian fellowship is much more than a pat on the back and a handshake. It means sharing the burdens and the blessings of others so that we all grow together and glorify the Lord. If Christians cannot get along with one another, how can they ever face their enemies? A humble attitude and a willingness to share are the marks of a Christian who truly ministers to the body. Our Lord ministered to the common people, and they heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37). When a local church decides it wants only a certain “high class” of people, it departs from the Christian ideal for ministry.