

The Transformed Heart Romans 12:9

We have been going through this chapter for quite a while, and we have noted that verses 1-2 are thematic. They speak of the life that is worthy of the gospel and that are lives are to be a constant sacrifice to our God, and that we are to know by the renewal of our mind, and not be conditioned or transformed by the world around us. And what Paul details after that is what that life looks like. And the first thing he deals with is life in the body of Christ or the church of Jesus Christ. We are to be marked by humility knowing our need of one another and that God truly has given us as a gift to the church for the proper functioning of the church. And the church with its many parts is to operate and function in such a way that all parts are active seeking to glorify the head which is Christ.

Now we come to a new section beginning in verse 9 and stretching down to the end of the chapter where Paul is still dealing with what the transformed Christian life looks like that seeks to glorify God. There are twenty five various attributes or commands that are discussed in this passage, and they deal with our relations one with another, but also with those who are outside of Jesus Christ, and even those who we would call our enemies. And we need to think through this section as we are reading it. Think if you read a number of chapters of your Bible every day. That is a very great devotional plan. But like all plans it does have its limitations. Certainly we are seeing the broad scope of Biblical truth, but we do miss many of the trees in the forest. Let me explain. Paul gives 13 exhortations in verses 9-13 alone. Now you read this whole chapter and then go on with your day. What value and really how many of these exhortations do we remember? It will take the average reader less than thirty seconds to read through those few verses.

My point is that we have to notice the text and many times slow down especially in texts like this to see what it is saying; to see what Paul, more importantly what God is commanding. And remember why he is writing these things: it is so that as he writes them we will not only know what a renewed mind and heart look like but by meditating on these commands we will be changed through them. And that is the goal.

Many ask: how do I know whether I am a Christian? How do I know whether I truly have believed the gospel? And the answer is by examining both what is going on inside of us and also what it is producing externally. And I do not think there is any of us who can here these twenty five exhortations from Paul and recognize how short we have fallen, and not be convicted of the lack of transformation in our lives. Isn't it true? We so often do not live lives that are worthy of our calling. But the glory in this text is that when we examine our lives and these exhortations, we should see them as growing in our lives through the power of the Spirit of God who resides in us as we open ourselves to the Scriptures. And certainly we are not all that we were meant to be but when we see that change it encourages us to be that much more diligent to hear these exhortations and follow them.

And it is incredible to meditated just on verse 9 of our text this morning because we see in this text that God is not just interested in us just doing the right thing, but he is after our hearts. He wants us to love him and be devoted to him so much so that it really affects how we interact with any and all. And you see this with three quick

commands or exhortations in how we are to living the life with a renewed mind and heart. And as we look at what God commands here, let us ask ourselves: are we growing in these areas? Are we loving God so much so that it causes what comes out of us to be pleasing to Him and beneficial to others? Let us look at each of these heart exhortations in this verse.

1. Love without hypocrisy. V.9a.

What Paul commands here as far as the transformed heart and mind is more difficult than we think. We seldom take time and really ask the question: is biblical love for God and others really growing in my life? What does it look like? What is love? We certainly find it easy to love some people but more easy to hate others. And the reason why we love some is because of them, and the reason why we hate others is because of them. In other words, it has nothing to do with the transformed life and heart. It has to do with external factors. It has nothing even to do with what Paul commands believers even here in Romans 12:9, or what he has said about the sacrificial love of God in the opening 11 chapters.

The first thing we have to meditate on is what does Paul mean when he exhorts and commands, “**let love be genuine**”? It is certainly related to what he has just said about the body of Christ and our service in the body of Christ. We are to serve in love and that love is to be genuine. Love takes in both our actions and also our affections to one another. There is a certain way that we are to act and feel toward one another based on the ways that God has loved his enemies. In other words, God wants us to love the same way he does. We are so overwhelmed and taken up with his love that becomes the motivating factor in how we treat and even feel about others. Our mind is under and controlled and transformed by the gospel. God is not content with just saying the right thing or kind things to others, but he is also cares about the motivation of why we do what we do.

And that is where the word “genuine” comes in. Genuine speaks of without pretence of hypocrisy or something that is the real thing. It is authentic. So these are not just acts of love but this is real; Christ-centred authentic love. Now think how this so different from the natural person because love that is not genuine has self first and foremost, and even might do the right thing, but the reason why is because the person asks, “how can I make a good impression of me?” And a person like this, and we can all be guilty of this is more concerned with what people see on the outside than what is going in in the inside. That is what hypocrisy is. It is an external display. It is false love. We really care very little for the person in front of us. What will people say if I do not reach out? What will others think if I do not get involved? And the reason why we do what we do has little to do with the love that God has for us that is transforming our lives and heart. This is what Jesus condemned in Matthew 15:8, “**This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.**” They might be saying the right thing but their heart is far from God.

And think how that plays out: I want to be known as a lover of God and a lover of others rather than being one. I care more about what others think rather than what is going on in my own heart and really loving God. I care more about what others says about me than truly loving others and seeking to meet their need that they might honour, not me but God. I care more about my reputation than I do about God’s

reputation. And so as we look at this first exhortation let me ask: do you see that you are growing in this area of your life? Are you loving without hypocrisy? The first step is really seeing false love and hypocrisy in your life and repenting of it. It is asking God to not only forgive you but help you change from the inside out, that you might be changed by dwelling on the love of Christ for a sinner like you. Asking God to help you love the unloveable, which is basically people like you. We think in our false love that we are so different than others, but this book indicates that we are for more like than our worst opponent. Christ died and loves sinners like us. We need to be growing in loving others with Christ-like, genuine love.

2. Hate what is evil. 9.b.

We are not only known by whatever we love but also we are know by what we hate. And we have pointed this out before is that both love and hate are attributes of God. We think that hatred is always sinful but it is not. If I love God then I will hate idolatry and any false representations of him. If I love my wife then I will hate anything that will bring her harm or anyone who would harm her. To just shrug my shoulders at her hurt or pain would be unloving and uncaring. Godly people do hate and are known by what they hate.

And it should be so clear in this verse that there are objective categories of good and evil. We have drunk in the culture that tells us to question everything, and that there is no objective truth. So we look at clear commands of Scripture and if it does not go along with what I think is right or what I desire, than I do what I want to do. We question God's clear teaching about what is right and what is evil. We think that sometimes and in some occasions it is right not to obey God's word or commands. It is all dependent on the circumstances and what I think is best. Obedience becomes completely subjective. And there are some hard commands in Scripture. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Slaves obey your masters. And as we will see in chapter 13 we are to obey the governing authorities. And it should be so clear in this verse that there is objective good and evil. Liking something does not make it good. Hating something does not make it evil. And it should be also clear in this verse that good and evil do not change. It is evil not to love your wife. It is evil not to respect your husband. It is evil to not pay your taxes. It is not that we are living in different times and different historical situations and some commands do not apply to us. And it should also be clear that the one who defines good and evil is none other than God.

And look at the language that is used here because it is very emotive. Paul says, "Abhor what is evil." And when you hear that you have to realize that it is not enough just to do the right thing or in this case not do the wrong thing. I did not watch that movie that I know would be dishonouring to God but I really wanted to. It is not enough. The word "abhor" carries the meaning of disgust or loathing, something that makes us turn away or be repulsed by. No matter how one tries to dress up evil it is against God and his holiness. It is amazing that many believers do not have even a category of evil anymore. Paul here does not want us to just to avoid evil but to hate evil. It must leave a bitter taste in our mouths so much so that we run from it.

And let me say that this also is a very hard command, because our emotions are involved. God wants our heart and not just our external actions as we just saw in the

last point. Our problem is that sin and evil seem so delightful. You think of certain things and it is not that you do not know that they are wrong. You know it. If that is the case why are you drawn toward them? And the answer is because your inner person finds some sort of joy and delight in them or you would not be drawn to it. So if our hearts crave and our emotions that seem to be independent all on their own, how can Paul command that I abhor these things. Isn't it enough that I do not do them? And the answer is no. We need to train our minds - our inner man. And how we do that is through exposure to God. Look back at verse 2, **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”**

We constantly drink in through video and other means the culture around us. We see violent death and unfaithfulness blared before our eyes and minds that we train ourselves that this is beautiful and desirable. How do we change our emotions? Through the renewal of the mind. It is amazing how much time we have for entertainment and other things but how little time we have to renew our minds.

Think of Jesus when he is in the wilderness and Satan comes to him and tempts him to act independently of God and change the stones into bread if he is the Son of God. And Jesus' response is in Matthew 4:4, **“But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”** He used scripture to fortify his soul. But we do not talk about the emotion of Jesus here. He knew the beauty and worth of the Father. And I can imagine that the thought of acting contrary to the will of God must have been so repulsive. Yes, I am hungry. Yes this is tough. But look at the Father! Jesus abhorred evil. God at salvation has given us a new taste for him, and a new repulsiveness against sin and evil. We are to cultivate that hatred through the renewal of our mind in the Scripture. What evil do you abhor because it is against God? What evil do you love? As we live out our salvation we are to abhor evil.

3. We are too cling to what is right. 9c.

The meaning of “hold fast” is to cling or be cemented to. It is the same term that speaks of the marriage relationship and the man is to leave his father and mother and cling or cleave to his wife. And we are to hold fast to what is good. Again, there is a category as we look at what we do and what we say that is objectively good, just like objective evil. And so often we do not even ask is what I am doing or saying not only not evil but it is good. So it is not enough not to do evil but we must seek to replace those desires and actions with an obsession of doing the will of God - doing what is right in his sight as he has revealed that right in his word. We should cling to what is right and do what is right and love what is right.

And there are a couple of things that we need to say here. One is that we often are content by just doing good. But this is more than that because God's glory is always in view. Being a living sacrifice is always in view, so God is always central in our thoughts. The good here is seeking the highest good. It is seeking what will please God the most and truly minister to others. One example is that there is nothing wrong with having a family day or watching good clean videos with your family. You could find so much enjoyment in doing something like that. But if the church is meeting together and

you have an opportunity as a family to worship Jesus Christ you have to ask what is best? What is the good in this situation that God really wants me to cleave and cling to?

The other thing is to realize that God is not a killjoy. I think many people think that. Many young people think if I live a pure life I will miss out on life, or some person might think if I look at something on the internet and no one knows it really will not hurt anyone. Who really cares? Why would God even care? We think so often that God is trying to ruin our lives or take joy or happiness away, as if God needed our permission to wreck our lives. The commands to abhor evil and to cleave to the good are commands for our welfare and our good and, at I say even for our joy. God is up to good in our life, and the highest good and the most meaningful good and that is to be changed into the image of Jesus Christ. Think of it, we would all agree that God is love. We would all agree that he wants the best for his children. So what is best for his children is to live and function in this way. He has all wisdom so he knows what is best for you and me. And it is not to cling to evil but to cleave to what is good. He can tell us what is good for people and what is bad for people.

And think of how this verse is constructed. We are to be love with genuine love. We are to love God and love others. But how do we do that? And the next two clauses indicate how that is accomplished. We are to abhor evil and to cleave to that which is good. So how do we love others with a godly love? Abhor evil and cling to the good. Listen to what 1 John 5:2, “**By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.**” So when we objectively love God by keeping his commandments, in other words, abhor evil and hold tight to the good we actually are loving others.

The greatest expression of abhorring evil and cleaving to the good was the Lord Jesus Christ who loved the Father God, and sought perfect obedience, which led him to love us in the most extraordinary manner in giving his life as that perfect offering for sin. He is our great example. Do you want God to use your life in the lives of others? Do you want to make an impact for all of eternity? This verse is so profound in how the believer is to live and grow in loving. Listen to these three exhortations once again, and seek to put it into action and apply it to your own life, “**Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.**”