

The Only Logical Response to Grace **Romans 12:9-13**

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 4:9-11

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Intro:

Pastor Brad has been taking time to do a series on Grace. Hasn't this been a great series!? I have enjoyed the opportunity to be reminded about the source, magnitude, and greatness of the grace of our Lord! It is truly a subject that we cannot cover enough. A few weeks ago we heard a passage from Pastor about how grace has gifted us to do function well as a body. That passage was Romans 12:3-8. I would like to take some time today and look at the next passage in that chapter. However, before we jump into it let's take a minute to look at the context.

The first 2 verses of the chapter marks a transition in the book of Romans. These are two of my favorite verses in all of scripture. Chapters 1-11 are packed full of teaching from Paul. Paul was not able to make it to Rome, so many think that the truth in those first 11 chapters are a summary of the teaching he would do to the churches he visited during his missionary journeys. However, starting in chapter 12, Paul starts to explain the practical side of the gospel. He wants to make sure the Roman church know that this doctrine shows up in real life.

There are 2 phrases I would like to point out during this section. The first one is in verse one after calling the us to be a living sacrifice he says, "this is your spiritual act of worship". This is an interesting phrase. I remember back at Cedarville Bethany and I had to take a class called Drug Education. It was a class for healthcare majors that discussed the classifications, types, and how some medications are administered. The class was helpful; however, the part that stuck out the most was the first 10 mins of every class. During this time Mr. Reep would take time to do some sort of Bible Study. I remember he talked about the parenting philosophy he and his wife used in raising their boys, how to be a Godly employee in an ungodly world, and he also walked through Romans 12. (side note: that is one of the benefits of going to a Christian University, is that this is a common thing in each class, and Cedarville makes it a point of emphasis for professors to not just teach but also disciple) Anyway, I remember he said that in today's language this would read "the only logical response" to the saving grace of Christ. Being a

living sacrifice is not just for the super spiritual, but it is the how all believers should respond once they are gripped by grace. What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? That's what the rest of the chapter, really the rest of the book, goes on to explain. The second phrase is in verse 2, "may discern what is the will of God." Many people often get stuck trying to find the "will of God" and the great thing is that he tells up what that should look like. We will begin to look at that today.

God in his goodness, does not just send us out to do this on our own strength. First, he has given us the church! What a blessing it is to be part of a local body of believers. It is something that many believers keep at an arm's distance, and they are missing out on the joy and fullness that comes with fully embracing a local body. While we are on the topic of the church, I want you to ask a question that I have been asking lately, "What does this mean for us, Wheelersburg Baptist Church?". The Lord has been impressing on my heart that I/we often miss a step in the application process of Bible Study. As individualistic Americans we tend to think of ourselves first. As baptist we struggle to think in terms of the community, my tribe, the local body. We often look at Scripture or hear a sermon, and ask the question of "how does this apply to me?". This is not bad! We should be asking this question! However, we must remember that the Scriptures, and specifically many of the epistles, were written to a body of believers. Lately, in the application portion time of Bible Study, I have been asking the question, "what does this mean for the church?". Then, in light of the application for my church, its strengths, weaknesses, needs, etc; I start asking myself what needs to change in me. What is the Lord calling me to do within the Body, to see his Glory magnified, the gospel going forth, and people being disciplined. I would like to call us to think in these terms as we look at the passage before us today.

The second thing the Lord has done for us is gifted us to do the ministry before us. It is always amazing to see how people change after accepting Christ as their saviour. People who would not even think about teaching, encouraging, serving, etc before salvation all of a sudden they love doing that aspect of the ministry. It can only be explained by the Lord working in their lives. The Lord has gifted us to do the work of the ministry, what is the work of the ministry? Many people would start thinking about programs, ministries, and other things that happen in the machinery of the church. Those are good, but I think it is much more than that. Programs are established as a means to an end. They are there to give a structure so that the work the Lord has for us is accomplished.

What does the Lord want to accomplish? What has he called us to do as a church? That's what we want to look at today. So, let's read the passage before us today...

Romans 12:9-13 - 9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

This could be part 1 of this message because the rest of the chapter is a continuation of the same passage; maybe one day I will be able to do part 2. However, for today we can see here that the Paul is calling us to Love (vs 9-10)! Not only in our attitude(vs 11-12) but also in actions and deeds (vs 13).

Love (vs. 9-10)

It is not wonder that the first thing to Paul brings up is Love. This virtue is mentioned throughout the whole New Testament. The word here for Love is Agape. Agape is the divine, unconditional love given to us from Christ. As explained in Romans 5:8 “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Now we are called to to Agape those around us; especially those in the body according to Galatians 6. It is amazing how we are commanded to do this and it is sometimes a struggle for us to Agape those around us. When we are filled with the love of Christ, that love should just overflow to those the Lord places in our lives. This love should look different from the love we see in the world.

The world around us has distorted love in many different ways. In God’s common grace and as image bares some may show some form of this love; however only those who have experienced the Agape of our great saviour and been transformed by it, can truly live this out to others. John 13:35 says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Our love is one tangible thing that separates the church from the world. If you struggle with loving others, you need to seek and ask the Lord to show you His love, and as you are reminded of His love, you will be able to allow that to impact the way you love others.

Paul calls the Roman church to let their love be genuine. What does it mean to be genuine? Paul is wanting them to have a sincere, non hypocritical love. He doesn’t want us to pretend. Have you ever pretended to love others? The Life Application Bible Commentary describes how we do this, “Most people know how to pretend to love others - how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings, and appear to take an interest in them. We many even to skilled in pretending to feel moved with compassion when we hear of others’ needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. But God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. In means helping other become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community, but the body of Christ...does. Look for people who need your love, and look for ways you and your fellow believers can show you Christian love to others”. How

many of us are guilty of pretending to love others. We show concern in the moment and then forget all about it once we leave the conversation. We look at others with pity, but do nothing. Brothers and sisters we need to continue to grow in our ability to love. This is an area in which the Lord has been growing us, and I think we are starting to get a taste of a community that loves. Many that taste give us the desire to love more and more.

Paul then give us some qualifying/defining statements about Love. The world around us lives out a pampering, selfish love. It says that we love as long as other will love back. It says that we cannot disagree or say anything negative. However, Agape love is a perfecting love that seeks to make much of Christ, and wants what's best for others. Paul continues "Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good." The Life Application Bible Commentary says that it could read, "Your love must be genuine, hating what is evil, clinging to what is good." True love does not ignore wickedness, but rather calls us to speak the truth in love according to Ephesians 4:15 and others. Yes, the nice thing would be to not call sin, sin, but the loving thing to do is to call it sin and then show them how to get to the narrow path. Too many times we error on the side of nice, but it has been said, "NICE means Nothing Inside Cares Enough."

Paul also tells us that true love involves devotion. "Love one another with brotherly affection." Paul uses a couple of other words for love in this phrase. They are both from the root word "Philao". Here Paul is telling us to be devoted, faithful in showing brotherly love, affection to one another. Devoted, loyalty, faithfulness these are characteristics that are in short supply these days. Unless we see the immediate benefit to us, we struggle to be there. This is the way many people are to the church. They look at the message title, the special events that happening, etc and then make a decision on whether or not it will benefit them or not. If it doesn't, they may or may not show up. They forget that sometimes the things happening in the service or the conversation had before and after are not for you, but you are to be there to minister to someone else. I know this may be difficult for some to think about, given their family situation, but think about family. What happens when they get together? They show each other love. The method may vary, but they give each other hugs, the conversations get deeper than small talk, or some cases there is some poking fun, but the moment one is in need they know who they can call. This is the way it should be in the church!

How do you know if a church is a family or just a social club they attend? Watch how they interact with each other. Do they smile, are genuinely happy to see each other, going beyond small talk. Are they there for each other when the trials hit. When life gets hard do people run to the church or does there attendance start to slip. Thinking they have to get it back together before they can be back. Does the church practice the command in vs 15, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" or do they practice 1 Thess 5:14 "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all".

Love involves meeting people where they are, and speaking the truth out of love. It does not look the same for all. Are we real with each other? Are we devoted to each other and let them know it?

One way we can let them know we are devoted to them is to show them honor. Do we respect them, value their opinions and viewpoints. That the next description of love Paul gives. “Outdo one another in showing honor”. We all have preferences in every area of life, are you willing to not just tolerate other preferences, but, rather, lay your preference aside and truly embrace and enjoy another brother/sister's preference? How do you speak to the public about the people in your church? Our conversations will lead to what we value, do you talk about the church? When you talk about the church is it negative or positive? I am not saying you can't be honest, but what's your tone and what information do you tend to dwell on? We are called to love others by showing them honor. Because they deserve it, no! We are all sinners. Because they are family, we love them, and we want to protect the family name.

We are called to Love. It is the only logical response to the love we have received. This love should be displayed in our attitude and in our actions.

In Attitude

Verse 11 continues, “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.” Now there is a couple of words we don't always work into everyday speech: slothful and zeal. What do you mean? Slothful, in today's culture the sloth has taken on an adorable persona. Anyone seen Zootopia? In that movie the sloth is an endearing DMV worker who is slow at doing his job and telling jokes, while the people at the DMV are in a hurry. It makes for a funny scene; however, the sloth is slow. This word paints the picture of someone who is lagging, tardy, or lazy. The second word is zeal. This is a word we find in Scripture from time to time, but I had to look it up in preparation for this sermon to see what it truly means. Zeal, eagerness, diligence... is how we are to be described.

Paul starts by telling us what love should not look like. Slow, lacking in enthusiasm. If I am honest, as I look back at the last year this is how I could be described at times. There were times that I was just lazy in my responsibility to love others in the church. There were times I had good intentions, but I was slow to respond. Missing opportunities to love and minister. There were also times, that I served with a begrudging attitude. I did it out of responsibility, but my heart was not in it. May the Lord forgive me, and help me to serve the Lord fervently. This is what Paul is calling us to do, to be enthusiastic, excited, and eager to do the work of the ministry before us. John MacArthur makes this observation in his Study Bible, “Whatever is worth doing in the Christian life is valuable enough to be done with enthusiasm and care. Sloth and indifference not only prevent good, but allow evil to prosper.”

Not only is this a place I need to grow in as an individual. I think this is an area in which we need to continue to go as a body of believers. In general, our tendency, natural vain, is to be lethargic in doing the work of the ministry. This is not true of every individual or even every ministry, but as a collective group, I think this is a weakness of WBC. We have many mature believers who have been saved for years, and have been doing ministry for years. At times, it seems that we slip into the routine of doing ministries well, but we lose sight of the “why” which causes us to lose our excitement, our joy, and our ability to minister fully. I have even witnessed someone who is enthusiastic become discouraged after talking to someone else in the church. May we as a church grow in this area of grace. May we regain our enthusiasm and become excited to serving our amazing God!

What does this look like? Does this mean that we need to be constantly bubbly, refuse to look at the negative, going 100 miles per hour not caring about the consequences? Of course not! We just say that true love takes many forms and meets people where they are in that moment. It means that we plan, and work to do things with excellence. However, in the midst of the difficulties of ministry we still display a hope, joy, and eagerness to serve. It shows up much more in our demeanor, our tone, our attitude.

Now we need to just pull up our boat straps and get to work on putting on this joy, right? Wrong! Paul goes on to tell us exactly what we need to do to maintain or regain this enthusiasm for ministry. It’s the exact same type of instruction every coach and teacher has given at some point. We need to get back to the fundamentals. Vs 12 says, “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”. There is no ground breaking new formula, just the simple truths of the Christian life. “Rejoice in hope”. Do you remember back the days when you were first saved; that time you first experienced the hope of Christ. How did that changed your perspective? How did that affect your attitude? We would do well to remember that, and grow upon it. “Patient in tribulation”. In this life trials are promised. In the midst of those we need to continually cling to the promises of God. Continue to trust that He has our best interest in mind. “Constant in prayer”. It amazes me that for many of us, prayer is a last resort. By God’s grace we have the privilege to enter the throne room of Heaven with confidence to speak to the Lord of the Universe, and He wants us to come. Brothers and sisters we would do much better if we would spend more time in prayer. It’s also amazing to see the change in your heart when you pray for someone. Your love for them grows and a berdon to see people discipled grows as well. When we continue to practice the basics, fundamental disciplines in of the Christian life, it is amazing to see our attitude change. We love and serve more enthusiastically.

We are called to love others with the proper attitude, but it doesn’t stop there. We are also called meet the needs of around us.

In Action

The logical response to grace is to love each other, but to borrow a phrase from DC Talk, “love is a verb”. We live in a culture that views love as a feeling, but it is much more than that. Love is a response to the God’s love, an unconditional love, that we now have the opportunity to act upon and show others in real, practical, and meaningful ways. Not because they deserve it, we didn’t deserve God’s love, but because we want other to see the Love of Christ. Love like this will be costly, messy, and inconvenient; however, when we think of it in light of the what Christ suffered on the cross it’s really a small price to pay. Plus the rewards/blessings are worth it!

Paul gives two examples of how this love can show up practically. The first to those in the family of God and the other to those who are not yet in the family. Although they can both be applied to both categories. Vs. 13 says, “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” Let’s look at them individually.

First, “contribute to the needs of the saints”. No, this is not saying that we should take part in seeing that our brother and sisters have more needs. The work contribute means to share, to do together, fellowship. If we are honest and looking at things with humility, we all have needs from time to time. Our minds tend to go to physical needs in this type of discussion, but it is not limited to that. This could include physical, emotional, spiritual, mental needs. We are all gifted in different ways, and we can all help each other in different ways. This is why the counseling and discipleship ministry exist. You don’t have to wait until you are in a desperate situation to call the counseling team. They are great at listening and then giving sound, Biblical advice. This is an underutilized minister by our church members. You may be someone who just needs someone to cry with you. You are mourning, grieving, or struggling, and you need friends like Job (before they started give advice). Whatever the situation, we have been uniquely gifted as a body to handle the needs of our church.

So, why aren’t some needs being meet? There are several reasons for this: 1) is the need being made known? We need to have a person or group of people whom we can be honest. Some needs don’t need to be made known to all, but can be handled in confidence. This type of thing happens all the time. 2) We are not making the needs known to the right people. We as leadership need to continue to grow in our ability of getting those with needs in contact with the right people to help meet those needs. 3) We have great intentions; however, we get distracted and lose the opportunity. Whatever the reason, we need to continue to grow in this area. We have come a long way! We have started to get a taste of what it means to live this life as a loving community; I pray that taste will drive us to do more!

Second, Paul commands us to show hospitality. Now we have talked about hospitality several times over the past 10 year, but I think this is a key practice to growing individually and as a church. By way of reminder, what is hospitality. Well let's start with what hospitality is not. Hospitality is not entertaining. When we entertaining guest the focus in on us and our ability to host. Hospitality is focused on the guest and meeting them where they are. Hospitality is not just socializing together. It will involve socializing, but it is much more than just having a good time. Biblical hospitality is not just to those in the church. That's a given. Paul is telling us to extend that same hospitality to strangers, unbelievers, and those who need to hear and see the gospel in real life.

What is the goal of hospitality? Over the past month or so, I have heard a couple of messages and a listened to a good podcast about hospitality, and here are some thoughts that the Lord has been pressing on me. The goal of Biblical hospitality is to give someone who in not a believer a safe space to work through the gospel. Now, I know that term carries some certain connotations, so let me explain. When we practice Biblical hospitality we create an atmosphere, a place in which someone knows they are loved. Then when they hit with the offensiveness of the gospel, they feel loved and fee enough to work through that offensiveness. Without hospitality, at worst we are offensive on top of the offensiveness of the gospel. At best, they unbeliever experiences the offensiveness of the gospel, and like they are not in a place where it is safe to wrestle with truth. The natural response would be to leave. Then, for those who are part of the family, it gives them as sense of belonging. A place they can call home. How are we doing at doing Biblical hospitality as a church? We are friendly, polite, and social, but are we love in a that once the gospel is shared they feel free to work through the implications. What do we need to do as a body of believers to do this better?

In order to create this atmosphere with someone it takes empathy. The ability to identify with where they are, and then loving them enough to meet them there to help. It also takes effort. Notice what Paul says again, "seek...hospitality". We are not to just stand by and be available if asked. We are to pursue the opportunity to show hospitality. We are to look diligently for the opportunities. One of the podcast I listened to said, "Radical ordinary hospitality anticipates". What needs to happen in order to anticipate? We need to have schedules that reserve spots for hospitality. We need to make sure our homes are ready for visitors. Now, we don't need to have it spotless (that what entertainment dictates), but men we know our wives. We need to help them keep the house in a state were they feel comfortable with guest. We need to organize our lives in a way that hospitality can happen, and then spend time praying for eyes to see those who the Lord wants us to go after.

Now, I know some of you are feeling uneasy about this. Remember, this is an area in which we need to use our giftedness and grow. Help each other, partner with those you know to show hospitality together. Maybe one has no problem opening up their home and they can partner with someone else who can help answer the tough question that will come from your unbelieving neighbor. Also, remember the main goal here is relationship. You can work on your ability to build relationships, love others.

The only logical response to grace is to use our gifts to love those around us in attitude and in action. Now let's look at some application questions as we wrap things up this morning.

Application:

- 1) Are you gripped by the grace of God?
 - Not intellectually, but experientially
- 2) How are you doing a loving others?
 - Is it Biblical love?
- 3) What is your attitude in love?
 - Have you lost your enthusiasm
- 4) Are you practicing Biblical hospitality?
 - Who are we doing as a church in this regard