

Unhypocritical Love

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to open up your Bibles to Romans chapter 12.

! We're in the middle of Romans chapter 12 this morning. And we've spent a few weeks here in chapter 12, so that if you're just now joining us, we are sort of jumping into the middle of chapter 12. We've been slowly walking through the book of Romans for a little over two years now, although we have taken some breaks here and there. We've been making our way through for a little over two years. And here we are in chapter 12, thinking about and meditating on and reflecting upon the kind of life that ought to be lived by a person who believes the gospel that the Apostle Paul has spent 11 chapters up to chapter 12, defining and defending, so that now we're in the middle of considering what is the life of a person who has been fundamentally changed by trusting in the gospel that Paul preaches and the Christ that Paul preaches.

What does their life or what ought their life to look like? And so this morning we're going to focus our attention on verses 9 through 13. I want to ask you guys to stand in honor of the Word of God as we read together.

The Apostle Paul writes, Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good.

[1 : 32] Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope.

Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. Care. Contribute to the needs of the saints. And seek to show hospitality. Father, we thank you that the Apostle Paul was inspired by your spirit to write these words for our benefit.

We thank you that he doesn't just tell us what to believe, but he also shows us what we should do in light of the truth of the gospel. So help us this morning. Help us to move beyond a surface level understanding and agreement with the truths of the gospel to lives that are in process of being changed and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Amen. I was reading in a book this week, and the author recounted the story of a couple that he had counseled in the midst of pastoral counseling.

He tells the story of this couple named... He names them Phil and Ellie for the purposes of recounting the story. But he says that Phil was somewhat of a leader in the church, was very theologically educated.

[2 : 52] In fact, he was impressed by the personal theological library that Phil had accumulated for himself, that he often would teach Bible studies and lead different classes at the church, and that outwardly and on the surface, everything seemed to be good.

They seemed like a model Christian family, a model Christian couple, but behind the scenes, they were miserable, both of them. They didn't get along. They didn't speak to one another very often in their own homes.

They just were not living in a way that reflected the way they appeared to be on Sundays. And so there came a point in time after years of marriage where she had finally had enough, and she said, I can't take this anymore.

And he was a bit surprised by it and caught off guard by it, and so they sought out counseling, and the counselor asked them to recount, just tell me about your story.

Tell me the story of your life together and your marriage and all those things. And he said that as he sat and listened to them tell their story of their marriage and of their life, he was stricken by the reality that though they claimed to believe in the gospel, and then they often at church talked about the gospel, or when Phil taught Bible studies frequently, in the story of their marriage, he says there was really no mention of God at all.

[4 : 14] There was really no mention of the power of the gospel, or how Jesus Christ had impacted their marriage, or their personal lives at all, so that their real lives looked entirely different from the lives that they were putting on before others, when they were before the church, or before their friends, or leading a Bible study, or doing those sorts of things.

There were really two couples that were present there. The one that was the public facade, and then the real couple. The one that outwardly could say all the right things, and make all the right arguments, and in fact, in light of what they believed, often be very critical of others, was in fact in their own lives, not living out all of the practical implications of the gospel that they claimed to believe.

And we see that sort of thing happening all the time in churches. We see that sort of thing happening very frequently. We refer to it by a very simple phrase. We call it hypocrisy. And really, the verses that we're looking at this morning have everything to do with avoiding hypocrisy. In fact, if you look at the text itself, it looks like just sort of a series of commands. It looks like just sort of these loosely connected, almost disjointed commands that were given here, that we just sort of need to take them one by one, and read through them, and okay, we'll consider each by itself.

[5 : 34] But in reality, that's not what we have here. In fact, what appears in all of our English translations to be a command is in fact not a straightforward command at all.

There's no verb present in what is in our English translations the initial sentence here in verse 13. It says in the ESV, Let love be genuine. Now that word genuine is related to the word for hypocrisy. In fact, it is the Greek word from which we get our English word hypocrisy. It's the same word with two letters appended on the front of it that in English we would render as unhypocritical or not hypocritical.

So you might translate this as, Let love not be hypocritical or let love be unhypocritical. But even that is not quite accurate because there's no verb present. It's simply a straightforward statement. It almost reads like a title for what follows in the next few verses. It's just unhypocritical love. And you stop and you pause. It almost stands like a heading over everything that is to follow.

[6 : 39] And in fact, I'm convinced that everything else in verses 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, everything else here is a description of this unhypocritical kind of love.

Real love. Genuine love. Authentic love. The kind of love that we expect to be produced by the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people who have believed all the things that Paul has been teaching and preaching throughout this book.

It's the kind of character, it's the kind of person that we expect to be produced. An unhypocritical, real, authentic love.

And if you want to know what Paul means by the word unhypocritical or genuine, you just need to look at the opposite. We all sort of instinctively know what a hypocrite is.

A person who's not genuine, a person who's not real, a person who has an outward appearance that doesn't correspond to who they are inwardly or privately. But there's probably no better description of the opposite of what Paul is talking about here than in Matthew chapter 23.

[7 : 45] I want you guys to hold your place in Romans 12 and flip back in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 23. And in Matthew chapter 23, we will find the word hypocrites six different times throughout this chapter as Jesus chides the Pharisees and the scribes, the religious leaders of his day, for being those who are hypocritical.

The outside appearance that they present to others is different than what's really happening on the inside. Or the public persona does not match up with the private person that actually exists.

You can see as Jesus begins to chide them and to lay out the grounds for his charge of hypocrisy, you can see it all the way in verse 2 where Jesus says, the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do, for they preach but do not practice.

I can't think of a more dreaded criticism for any preacher than to be said, he's good at preaching it, but he can't practice it. He doesn't live it in his lives. I can't think of a worse thing that could be said about any preacher of the gospel.

But Jesus doesn't stop there. If you move down in the text, you'll see he labels them hypocrites over and over. Verse 13, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

[9 : 06] That's dangerous. That's the danger of living a hypocritical life. That if you present one thing with your words, and yet you live another thing, you are shutting the kingdom in people's faces.

Verse 15, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, a convert, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

It's dangerous. He says that they are blind guides in verse 16. In verse 17, he calls them blind fools. And then we're back again to the hypocrite label in verse 23.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. Verse 25, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Verse 27 is probably the clearest. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

[10 : 18] That's hypocrisy. Outwardly beautiful, outwardly polished, outwardly looking the way that we expect a good Christian to look, but inwardly in their own private lives, not reflecting the things that they say at all.

Like a whitewashed tomb, beautiful on the outside and dead on the inside. And Paul begins what appears to be a string of commands here in Romans chapter 12 by first giving us the heading, unhypocritical love.

Here's what real and authentic and genuine love looks like, the Apostle Paul is telling us. And if you work your way through the rest of these verses, we're going to be seeing descriptions of that kind of unhypocritical love, that real, genuine, authentic kind of love.

What does it look like? So I want you to glance down at your Bibles. And here's what I'm going to do. Something I don't usually do is I'm going to give you my own translation of the text here. I'm just going to run through it. All right. But look at your Bibles and I'm going to run through it with you so that you can see this is really one long string of descriptions.

And you can begin to see the patterns emerge if you look at it a little bit more literally. So take a look. Here's how I translate these verses. Here it is. Unhypocritical love, abhorring what is evil, holding fast to what is good.

[11 : 42] In brotherly love, preferring one another. In showing honor, outdoing one another. In zeal, not being slothful.

In spirit, being fervent. In the Lord, serving. In hope, rejoicing. In tribulation, being patient. In prayer, being constant. In the needs of the saints, contributing.

And in hospitality, seeking to show it. You can see that there's a kind of pattern that we follow here. Here's what unhypocritical love looks like. All of these things. All of these things done in a particular way. You notice he says over and over, in this, doing this.

So that in prayer, being constant. Or in the Lord, serving. Or in the spirit, being fervent. All of these things, he's showing us, not just what to do outwardly, but he's showing us inwardly, what should be our mindset, and what should be our attitude.

[12 : 52] But there's a further pattern, if you pay really close attention to the text, there's an even further pattern, that we can see, and that we're going to try to track through, and follow this morning. Because we can't dig into every single statement, but we can break them into blocks, and try to really get at what Paul is saying, and what he's describing as this genuine, real, authentic, unhypocritical love.

And so first of all, what we have in verse 9, after the first, after the heading statement is, we have two general statements. We ought to abhor what is evil, and cling to what is good. Then you have, following that, you have two more statements, that have to do with our relationships, within the body of Christ.

How we treat one another. He tells us, first of all, that we ought to love one another, with brotherly affection, and secondly, that we ought to outdo one another, in showing honor. So you see the one another, in both of those statements.

So the heading, two general statements, describing genuine love. Then two statements, describing how that works itself out, in our relationships with one another.

And then in verse 11, three statements in a row, that I believe are describing, the kind of attitude, that we should carry with us, as we do the things, that Paul mentions.

[14:08] So that he says that, in zeal, we shouldn't be slothful. In the spirit, we should be fervent. And then quite literally, in the Lord, we serve. These are sort of like, the spheres, in which we do all these things.

We serve in the Lord. We are fervent, in the spirit. We are in our zeal. We are not slothful. And then, and then you find, three more strung together, that describe how we respond, to outside pressure. Now Paul's going to come back to that, and we're going to see that, in the next couple of weeks, as Paul deals with, how do we relate, what do we do, when we're being persecuted. But he gives us, three quick descriptions, of what we do, when there's sort of, outside pressure upon us.

And first he says, we are in hope rejoicing, in tribulation being patient, and then in prayer, we are constant. And then finally, he comes back, to our treatment, of others.

And he says, we ought to be contributing, to the needs of the saints, that's within the body. And then, seeking to show hospitality, or showing kindness, to strangers, those outside the body.

[15:20] So everything, that we're seeing here, can be grouped, in these categories, but taken all together, it's a description, of real, genuine, authentic, unhypocritical, love.

I began to think, this week, and I pondered a lot, how is it that, how is it that, a genuine follower of Christ, how is it that, a real believer, can find themselves, in a position, where they need to hear, all of these things.

Because I can promise you, that there are days, when I need to really, be reminded, and told of these things. There are days, when I am just, not loving, to others around me, and I need to be reminded, by the scriptures, in passages like this.

You ought to love, one another, show brotherly love, that's what we ought, to be about, that's what we ought, to be doing. Or there are days, when I'm not rejoicing, in hope. There are days, when tribulation comes, and rather than be patient, I want it to be over with.

I want God, to move me on from this, and get this, this is lasting too long. So there are many, many times, when we have to be reminded, of these things. And I ask myself, why? Why do we, why do we often end up, with those in the church, and why are sometimes, we ourselves, someone differently, on the inside, or privately, than we present, publicly to the world?

[16:34] And if you're thinking, well that's not me, I've never been that way, then here's a quick test, especially for parents, alright? If you've ever, if you've ever been, on your way to church, and on your way there, kids are going crazy, in the back seat, you're yelling at kids, in the back seat, sit down, be quiet, quit, don't hit your brother, stop throwing things, at each other, stop, that's sort of the conversation, I have from the front seat, of my car, all the time.

But if you can move, from yelling at your kids, just 30 yards away, in the parking lot, to walking through the door, and everything's good, and calm, and put together, then you know what it is, to have a public face, that looks very different, from what's happening, privately.

All of us, at times, can fall into the trap, of presenting to those, around us, something that doesn't really match, the reality, of who we are. But how does, how does that happen?

Does not, does not the scripture, do not the scriptures promise us, that, that we will receive, a new heart, when we're in Christ? Aren't all the promises, of the new covenant, about us, having the heart of stone, removed, and the heart of flesh, put in its place, so that now, we can be, molded, and shaped, and shaped by God, whereas before, we were just these, hard, immovable, solid objects, at the core of our being, but now, we're moldable?

Isn't that true of us? So, so how is it, that we can find ourselves, in a position, where we are sometimes, living the life, of a hypocrite, and the apostle Paul, has to come and tell us, these kinds of things?

[18:07] Why does he see that, as, as necessary? I think, that it's because, oftentimes, those who have, been given a new heart, those who have, a heart of flesh, a softened heart, a heart capable, of being molded, sometimes, we return back, to our old ways, of pretending, that we have, a heart of stone.

You see, if you have a heart of stone, if you're not, if you're not capable, of being shaped, and molded, but you want to appear, to be a good religious person, then the only thing, that you can do, is decorate the stone.

That's all you can do. You can't, you can't mold it, it's not clay, you can't do that, so you decorate it. You put things around it, you paint it, you make it look, as good as you can, but at the end of the day, it's still just a stone, the shape of it, hasn't changed, nothing has fundamentally changed, about the rock, that is your heart.

And oftentimes, we will find lost people, in the church, doing just that. So that outwardly, we think we see, a lot of the signs, of Christianity, but behind all of those facades, is a heart of stone. But the irony is, that sometimes, those who have been given, a new heart, those who are capable, of being shaped, and molded, and changed, and transformed, by God himself, we begin to act, as if we need to decorate it.

[19 : 32] We begin to act, as if it's, it's that stone again, and it can't be changed, and so we begin, to put facades around it, we begin to decorate it, it's not necessary, it can be shaped, and fashioned by God, through the spirit, working through the word, he can shape, and fashion, and mold our hearts, but, but we act, as if that can't be done.

So we build up, the facades, we put the decorations, around our hearts, and we live the life, of a hypocrite, when in reality, we don't have to.

We are capable now, through the power, of the spirit, spirit who dwells, within us, we are capable, of real, authentic, genuine, love, but sometimes, we don't pursue it, and so we need, to be shown, we need to be reminded, of what this, unhypocritical love, looks like, when it's actually, being worked out, in our lives, and that's what Paul, is doing for us here, he's helping us to see, helping us to understand, what it looks like, when you're actually, being changed, and transformed, by the spirit of God, he says elsewhere, he says in Galatians, that the only thing, that counts, is faith, working itself, in love, faith working in love, that's what matters, that's what counts, he's going to go on, to say in chapter 13, that love is the fulfillment, of all of the law, we know, we've said over and over, when we were in chapter 6, and 7 of this book, wrestling with the law, we have said over and over, that the key, to the Christian life, the key to actually, ultimately fulfilling the law, is to become loving people, we know that, but sometimes, we have to be reminded, of what it actually looks like, to have real love, rather than a counterfeit love, for people around us, so let's briefly glance, at these things, these descriptions,

I'm calling them descriptions, and not definitions, on purpose, because I don't think, Paul is defining love, for us here, so much as he's showing us, this is what it ought to look like, in your life, if it is real, and genuine, so take the first two, for instance, we ought to be abhorring, that which is evil, and holding fast, to that which is, that which is good, it's strange to think, of love being coupled, with hatred, which is really, what the word abhor means, in fact, it's a, it's an intensified, form of the word, for hate, and we often times, want to separate, in our minds, love and hate, as if they are, polar opposites, in fact, you'll hear that often times, you'll hear people say, what's the opposite of love, well it must be hate, and yet that's not the case, real love, is not the absence of hate, love, is loving those things, that we ought to love, and hating those things, that we ought not, to love, real love, is defined, by the pursuit, of the glory, of God, and all those things, that would seek to, rob God of his glory, all of those things, that would try to, steal from God, what rightly belongs to him, we should, hate those things, we should despise, those things, we shouldn't just say, well all we need to do, is love a little bit more, that's not authentic love, authentic love, sees genuine, real evil, and hates it, in fact,

I tell my kids, all the time, because kids, are prone, to throw around, exaggerations, and so they'll throw around, heavy, strong language, like hate, and whenever they say, they hate something, or they hate someone, I'll say, what are the two things, that you're allowed to hate, there's only two things, you can hate here, in our family, the answer is always, sin, and Satan, you can hate those things, you can hate sin, you can hate the effects of sin, in your life, and the lives of others, you can hate Satan, and all the temptation, that he tries to bring, into your life, but those are the only two things, that you're allowed to hate, but I assume, in teaching them that, that if they love Jesus, they must hate, those things, real, authentic, genuine love, whether for Christ, or for those made in his image, is a love, that absolutely, hates the influence, and defects of sin, and hates the work of Satan, upon others, but not just others, on ourselves as well, because, we very easily, can look at others, and see the sinful things, in their lives, and think,

[24 : 07] I hate the sin, in their lives, I don't want that sin, in their lives, and that's good, that's fine, but not if we don't, first turn, and look inwardly, to see the sin, in our own lives, to see the sin, that is still, affecting us, in fact, Jesus, you all, probably are very familiar, with Jesus, where he, he's

speaking of hypocrites, once again, but he says, the hypocrite, is the person, who is able to pick, the little speck, out of someone else's eye, all the while, there's a log, sticking out of their own eye, we have to first, look at the sin, that entangles us, and begin to hate, that sin, before we turn, to look for it in others, so that we can hate, the presence of sin, and the influence of Satan, in the lives of others, but make no mistake, real love, for Christ, and for others, requires, that we, hate that, which is evil, and then at the same time, we have to, cling to that, which is good, we have to, notice the work of God, in the lives of others, within the body of Christ, and we have to, love that, it's not the first time, that we, we see this word good, used in this kind of way, in this chapter, you remember, as Paul was, helping us to know, showing us, how to discern the will of God, in the opening verses, of this chapter, he says, that one of the things, that we need to do, in looking for, in discerning the will of God, is to look for, that which is good, take a look back, at verse 2, the end of verse 2 says, that we are to be transformed, by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern, what is the will of God, and here, here are some things, that fall within the will of God, what is good, and acceptable, and perfect, the good, when we see God's will, being worked out, not his sovereign will, but we see his will of command,

God's moral standards, taking root, in other people's lives, we should rejoice in that, and then when we see, the beginnings of it, in our own lives, we should cling to it, and hang on to it, and not let go, of the work of God, to transform us, and help us, to value that which is good, we hate sin, we hate evil, in our lives, and the lives of others, but we need to cling to, and love, the good work, that we see God doing, if you don't hate sin, and you don't love, the good work of God, then you don't have, genuine, authentic love, not for Christ, not for others, if, if all you, if all you do, is encourage people, in their sin, oh don't worry about that, you'll be okay, you just do, what's best for you, if all you do, is encourage people, in their sins, you're, you're not loving them, you're not, and if, if you can't recognize, the work of God, and people, and encourage them, to continue in that, you're not loving, them, real love, authentic love, requires, hatred of sin, and love for that, which is good, and then he begins, to break that down further, in the next, in the next couple of statements, that we said, were related to one another, not to be held together, it's translated in ESV, love one another, with brotherly affection, outdo one another, in showing honor, in other words, there's a kind of, other centeredness, to love, there's a, there's a kind of, there's a kind of focus, upon the good of others, that motivates, real and true love, real and authentic love, does not simply, center upon myself, but it works, its way out, and it rejoices, in the good of others, it seeks to do, kindness for others, that, that, that phrase, love one another, with brotherly affection, could very easily, be rendered, with brotherly love, be kind, be nice, show kindness, so that, the love that we have, for our brothers, and sisters in Christ, should, should explode, in kindness, toward them, now I know, that there are some people, who, who just, sort of are, just naturally kind, to others, do kind things, and others, have to work at it, and really fight, and struggle, to just be nice, to people, that may seem strange, but the first time, that you actually, enter into a real relationship, with somebody, who's just naturally grumpy, you'll get that, because there are some people, who are just grumpier, than other people, and they have to be told, and reminded, stop being grumpy, be nice, that seems so basic, and yet, I have to say that, to people all the time, be nice, that's what Paul, is saying here, you say you have love, for people, then with that love, be nice to them, be kind to them, and then he says, as it pertains, to honoring them, lifting them up, try to outdo them, literally, it's lead the way, lead them, you don't, you don't honor others, you don't lift others up, in response, to their having, lifted you up first, no, as the body of Christ, or in your family, and in your relationships, with others, you ought to be trying, your best, to lift them up, and to encourage them, and to respect them, and honor them, you ought to be trying, to outdo them, you shouldn't be waiting, for them, to finally, give you the respect, that you deserve, so that then, you'll in turn, respect them, no, your goal, is to outdo them, do a better job, than them, do a better job, at holding others up, at encouraging them, and comforting them, when they need to be, comforted, so often, our attitudes, are the exact opposite, of what Paul describes here, we're not encouraging, to others, we're not kind, to others, and our reason is, they're not nice to me, why should I be nice to them, they've never, they've never, shown any respect for me, why should I show, any respect for them, they've never, said anything, uplifting to me, why should I go, out of my way, to show anything, uplifting to them, because, Paul says to, because the apostle says, that's what, real love does, real love, seeks to, outdo others, in showing honor, and seeks, because of that love, to be kind, to them, at all times, to be kind, to them, and all that flows, from, changed attitudes, inwardly, all of this, all of this flows, from, a

new way, of thinking, and a new way, of, apprising, the people, and the things, that surround us, which is what, Paul addresses, in this next series, of, what look like commands, this next series, of descriptions, do not be slothful, and zeal, be fervent, in spirit, serve the Lord, I kind of laughed, at this first one, this week, as I was looking at it, because, because it's, it's, it's kind of an oxymoron, it says literally, in zeal, being not timid, what is timid zeal,

I can't, I mean, what is, what is timid zeal, that's, that's like, that's like bottled up passion, that's like, that's like, it's unexciting excitedness, it doesn't make any sense, it's an oxymoron, it doesn't, you can't really, have those things, and I think that's his point, his point is to say, don't just, appear to be zealous, in front of others, don't just appear to love, and care about others, don't be slothful, and don't be timid, let it be real, so that the love, that you have, the respect, that you show, the kindness, that you demonstrate, toward others, it ought to come out of, and flow out of, real, not fake, zeal, and passion, for others, and then not only that, but then he talks about, in the spirit, being fervent, it's just another word, for zeal, he's piling up, the phrases here, he wants us to have, a real passion, for one another, a real concern, and care, for the good, of one another, and then he says, in the Lord serving, most of our translations, most of our translations, just say, serving the Lord, which is a good translation, because that's normally, how you would translate this, but found in this context, in this string of phrases,

[32 : 37] I think the point, that Paul is saying, is that, in all of our service, to the Lord, in all of our service, of others, in all of our loving, of others, in all of our being kind, to others, of honoring others, and lifting them up, all of that, is happening, ultimately, as a kind of service, that we offer up, to the Lord, it is in the Lord, that we serve, everything that we do, for others, every act of kindness, every time, that you go out, of your way, everything that you do, for others, is ultimately, if it flows, from real Christian love, gospel centered love, it is ultimately, for the Lord, and for his glory, there are going to be, a lot of times, when the people around you, don't in and of themselves, inspire you, to real love, for them, that's just the case, that's just true, and yet, when we begin, to act, and to think, and to behave, as if, our treatment of others, is not merely, a treatment of them, but it reflects, our love, for Christ himself, then, we begin to have, flow out of us, real love, for others, it matters, where our kindness, comes from, it matters, where, our attempts, to honor others, comes from, and Paul says, it needs to come, from, fervency in the spirit, and a desire, to serve the Lord, it is spirit powered, and Christ centered, in all of its affections, genuine, authentic love, for people, and then notice, verse 12, another string, that goes together,

I think, in hope, we are to rejoice, in tribulation, being patient, and prayer, being constant, I'm going to say, very little about this, this morning, because we're going to, come back to this, next week, in verse 14, but the reality, is that, we are not, going to live, lives of ease, and comfort, as followers of Jesus, now, relative to, our brothers, and sisters, around the world, many of whom, are under, intense persecution, we do live, lives of ease, and comfort, that's just reality, we do, relative to others, but if you want, a life of ease, and comfort, following Jesus, is not the way, to achieve that, not even in a society, like ours, where it is relatively, easy, and comfortable, because the truth, of the matter is, you will be ridiculed, the truth, of the matter is, the more our culture, spirals away, from any kind, of biblical foundation, the more we will stand out, the more we will be persecuted, the more we will be looked at, as the others, those who are strange, those who are different, those who are weird, we will face all of that, and it will increase,

I believe, for us, as our culture, continues to move, in the direction, that it's moving, and he says, that in the midst, of all of that, there need to be things, that characterize you, love must work itself out, in such a way, that in the midst, of your troubles, what he calls, tribulations here, afflictions, that in the midst, of those, certain attitudes, and behaviors, just naturally rise, to the surface, because real love, for Christ, doesn't complain, real love, for Christ, notice, real love, for Christ, rejoices, in the hope, that Jesus offers, doesn't complain, rejoices, in hope, real love, for Jesus, shows its way, shows itself, when we are, being afflicted, when we are, under tribulation, because it doesn't, look for a way out, it doesn't look, for an easy escape, rather, it's patient, it bears up, under the load, it endures it, and real love, for Christ, cries out, to Christ, in the midst of it, there's a kind, of constancy, in prayer, that ought to become, evident in our lives, every time, that the pressure is on, it's not new, it doesn't happen, at that moment, it's not like, all of a sudden, we start to pray, just because, we're under tribulation, but it will become, all the more evident, why?

Because when you have, real love for Christ, that no matter, what the circumstances, around you, no matter what's happening, around you, your normal, your normal way, of conducting your life, is a

way of constancy, in prayer, Paul says, that we ought to be, unceasingly, praying, I think that's, what he's describing here, no matter the circumstances, no matter the situation, that we face, we ought to be, a people of prayer, because, that connects us, to Christ, that generates, and helps us, in our communion, with him, so that real love, makes itself, self known, even in the midst, of tribulation, and affliction, and trouble, and then finally, at the end, verse 13, we ought to be, contributing to the needs, of the saints, seeking to show, hospitality, reality, real, authentic love, does not, look at the needs, of others, and begin, to criticize them, for what caused them, to have those needs, it's not, it's not how it reacts, to need, that's how, we're often encouraged, to act, I don't know, about you guys, I mean, I'm, I'm one of those kind, of people, that when I'm driving around, in my car, unless my kids, are with me, if I'm driving around, in the car by myself, nine times out of ten, there's no music on, in my car, I'm just not a music guy, alright, some of you guys, are music guys, anyone slap me in the face, right now, it's understandable, okay, there are better reasons, to slap me in the face, later, not for that, alright, but I don't, I usually have, like some kind, of talk radio on, and, one of the things, that seems to me, to be, out of step, between genuine, authentic, biblical Christianity, and what is often, described as, conservatism, political conservatism, because those are, two separate things, right, those are, two different things, biblical Christianity, is not equated, with any political viewpoint, it cannot be, it may, cause you, to lean towards, one particular viewpoint, or one particular candidate, in an election, because they align, a little bit more closely, but they cannot, ever be equated, and one of the things, that strikes me, about the state, of political conservatism, as opposed to, biblical Christianity, is there often, seems to not be, a great concern, for those who are suffering, and, and, and even a tendency, to blame them for it, without a work harder, well that may well, be true, and when we're dealing, with people, in the body of Christ, if we have someone, in the body, who refuses to work,

[39 : 30] Paul does in fact, say, they shouldn't eat, there is a reality, of holding people, accountable, within the body of Christ, trust, but sometimes, in order to, avoid doing, what Paul says, we ought to do here, contributing, to the needs, of those within the body, and then showing, kindness, or hospitality, to strangers, to the outsiders, sometimes, what we're encouraged, to do, by those, in the political realm, is to, push blame, on those, who suffer, because, that absolves you, from any need, to do anything, at all about it, and there may well, be blame, to pass around, but that's not, Paul's concern here, Paul simply says, if you see, real genuine needs, within the body of Christ, everyone ought to, contribute to that, everybody ought to, be a part of that, contribute to the needs, of the saints, and that was something, that Paul himself, practiced, he traveled around, to different churches, collecting, an offering, for the church, in Jerusalem, in the midst, of a famine,

Paul not only, collected the offering, but he himself, worked as he was traveling, he was a tent maker, so that he didn't have to, take anything, from these churches, so he goes to a church, he preaches there, for six months, or a year, sometimes two years, he takes up an offering, while he's there, and yet all, in all that time, he himself, never takes a salary, from them, he works, so that he can, so that he can both, operate freely, as an apostle, not under anyone's control, but also, so that he can freely say, contribute here, not merely to me, he has every right, he proclaims his right, as an apostle, to be supported, by the churches, and yet, Paul practices, what he preaches, and he wants them, to freely contribute, to the needs of the saints, and he does, what's necessary, to make that happen, and we ought to, we ought to be looking, around us, for needs, within the body, does somebody, need help, do they need, a meal cooked, or do they need, a light bill paid, or do they need, somebody to give them, a ride somewhere, there are always, needs within the body, and we have to look, for those, they may not be, all, they may not be, massive needs, all the time, after all, we're in a pretty, affluent culture, and country, and so that, even, even our, needs, don't appear, to be needs, to those, in other cultures, but nevertheless, we can find them, we can look around, and see people, that are hurting, we can see people, that have financial needs, and physical needs, and we can, we can try, as the body of Christ, to meet those, that's what real love, does, but it looks outwardly, as well, because he says, in terms of the stranger, we should show, hospitality, that is, when we see, even those outside the body, when we, when we see them hurting, and when we see them in need, we go to them, it's not merely, we hear hospitality, and we think, oh, that just means, that we need to be willing, to have people in our house, that's not really, what the word indicates, the word indicates, a kind of kindness, offered to strangers, that, Christ himself, compels, that real, authentic, unhypocritical love, begins, to produce, in our lives, we're going to see, as we walk through, the rest of chapter 12, and even as we get into, chapters

13, and 14, and 15, there are a lot of, very practical things, that Paul says, we should be doing, and pursuing, as genuine, followers, of Jesus, but we've got to, understand love, before we can do, any of these other things, before we can relate, rightly, to the government, that Paul talks about, in chapter 13, before we know, how to deal with people, in the body, who are those, and Paul describes, as weaker, in chapter 14, and chapter 15, before we can do, any of that, first we've got to, get a handle on, what does real love, look like, what does authentic, love, look like, and then, and then we need, to see our hearts, shaped, and molded, by the spirit of God, at work, through the word of God, to turn us, into the kinds of people, in whom, this love, is made manifest, if that seems, impossible to you, if you think,

I, I'm not the kind of person, that's going to do, that sort of stuff, that's just not me, I, I'm not full of zeal, I'm not all that fervent, I don't, I don't notice, the needs of others, and quite frankly, I really don't have the time, to do anything, about the needs of others, if you, if you think that way, about you, I can't be changed, I cannot be transformed, I can't be made, into that kind of person, it's just not me, then the fact of the matter is, maybe you're right, you might have a heart of stone, incapable of being molded, but the good news of the gospel, is that for all those, who trust in Christ, there is a new heart, the good news of the gospel, is that for all those, who put their faith in Christ, and what he has done for us, on the cross, there is the indwelling power, of the spirit of God, who takes the word of God, and uses it, to shape those, who formerly, were rigid, and incapable of being molded, let's pray, and voy, voy,