

Pride The Enemy Of Love

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

We are still here in Romans chapter 12.! We'll spend this week in chapter 12 and then next week in chapter 12 before we then move on to Romans chapter 13! to deal with some very timely issues in Romans chapter 13.

That is, the role of the government and our relation as believers, as followers of Jesus to the government. But we are still here dealing with our relationships with other people around us, with individuals that surround us.

And we're dealing with that in the broader context of how can we live lives that reflect, that show forth the gospel that we claim to believe? Or to put it another way, how can we live lives that are shaped by the gospel, that are defined by the gospel, that are what we have called gospel-centered lives.

And so I want to ask you to let your eyes drift down through the middle of chapter 12, down to verse 14. And we're going to read again this morning to the end of this chapter so that we can keep in mind the context of the verses we're going to be focusing on this morning.

[1 : 19] So I'd like you to stand to your feet in honor of the Word of God as we read verses 14 through 21. Paul writes, We give you thanks for these words We give you thanks for these words that your Spirit inspired Paul to write for our benefit.

And I pray that they would indeed be of benefit to us this morning. We claim the promise that all Scripture is breathed out by God and all of it is profitable.

It's useful and good to teach us and instruct us and equip us for lives of godliness. So, Father, we ask that the power of your Spirit would take these words and use them to make us into godlier men and women, godlier servants of your Son, Jesus.

So do that great work we ask in Christ's name. Amen. You guys take a seat. We are really officially out of the summer months of the year.

And we're not out of the summer weather yet, but there is still hope. I keep hearing weathermen say that there is hope that fall weather might actually arrive here in this area, but I haven't seen it yet and I haven't felt it yet.

[3 : 21] Who knows? We may walk out of here in a little while and it may be 10 degrees cooler. I have no idea. All right. It's going to come at some point. But what I miss about the summer is not the heat, but I miss summer vacations whenever summer leaves us.

Fall is actually my favorite season of the year if it ever shows up. But I do enjoy the hope of summer that you might get to go somewhere and you don't necessarily have to go somewhere far, but summer vacations are fun.

They're even more fun when you're a kid, though. I mean, that's just true because when you're an adult, first of all, you've got to pay for it, but you've got to plan everything. You've got to pack everything. You've got to get everybody loaded up and get people to your destination.

You've got to referee fights in the back seat on your way there or in the airplane or whatever it happens to be. So there's a lot to do with an adult. But when you're a kid, vacations are really and truly just vacations away from your normal life.

And one of the great things about a vacation is just the trip there, just as you're on your way to the place because there's that sense of excitement because as a kid, you're not worried about the cost of it, whether or not you're going to have to pay more when you get there.

[4 : 27] You're not worried about that. As far as you're concerned, the trip is done. I mean, it is paid for and it is taken care of. You have no responsibility to actually make things happen. It's been done for you.

And then you have in front of you the hope of your destination, whatever it might be, if it's just a lake an hour away or if it's a campsite or if you're going somewhere big like Disney World, it doesn't really matter because there's a place that's up ahead down the road that's exciting.

Everything has already been done to get you there. And the trip there is just kind of, just kind of a bowl of excitement until you arrive at your destination. In a real sense, that's a reflection of something that we've talked about quite a bit that we especially talked about over the summer in our series on spiritual disciplines.

The idea that as followers of Christ, we do have a destination in front of us. We know where we are. We know where we're headed as followers of Jesus.

We know that He has secured for us a place in His presence for all of eternity where there is ever increasing joy before Him. That's the not yet of what we call the already and the not yet.

[5 : 34] It's out there. It's waiting for us. It's promised. We know it's there. But it's there for us because there's an already. Why? Because Jesus has already paid the price so that we might obtain that price.

Because Jesus has done already in His person and in His work all that is necessary to guarantee our final destination. As Paul says in Romans 5, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That's already happened. That is done. Or as he says in Romans 8 verse 1, therefore there is now no condemnation. Christ has secured the benefit of no condemnation for us.

There's no condemnation that hangs over those who belong to Jesus, who have trusted in Him and turned from their sins. So we have in front of us a great destiny and a great future that's not quite here yet.

We have already behind us and secured for us righteousness in the sight of God, forgiveness of all of our sins, and salvation. But we live in between those, don't we?

[6 : 38] We're sort of, we're on the road trip. We're headed there. And sometimes we forget, like kids, we forget that the trip there is important as well.

I mean, when you're a kid, you don't really pay attention to everything around you. You just want to get there. And so you try to take as many naps in the car as you can if it's a long trip because you don't really care about the trip there. You just want to be there.

As an adult, you start to learn to look around and see because you might see things along the way that are more spectacular than the thing to where you're headed. And the Christian life is like the trip there.

It's important. It matters. We're not just leapfrogging from the moment of our justification to our glorification. We actually have to walk in this life for however long it might be.

For five years or 20 years or 50 years, we walk in this life with Christ between the already of the accomplishment of our redemption and the not yet of our glorification and resurrection and eternity in the presence of God Himself.

[7 : 38] We are in the in-between. And as we have seen, Romans chapter 12 addresses the in-between. It addresses us and shows us and points us the way to how do we live the Christian life?

How can we do that? And most of what the Apostle Paul says in this chapter has to do with how we relate to other people around us because we're surrounded by other believers.

We're surrounded by non-believers. We're surrounded by a lot of people and the way that we live out our Christian lives is largely reflected in how we relate to the other people around us.

But of course, Paul began all the way back in chapter 12 by verse 1 by telling us that the gospel-centered life, a life lived in response to the gospel in the in-between is a life that must be lived as a continual sacrifice.

He says, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. And then in verse 2 he says something that has had ramifications for us throughout this chapter so far. He says, we're not to be conformed to this world but we are to be transformed by having our minds renewed.

[8 : 53] Our thinking is to be changed. Our way of viewing the world and ourselves and others around us ought to be fundamentally changed by the truths of the gospel and all that Christ has done for us and continues to do in us.

We need to have our hearts and minds changed radically from who we once were before Christ to who we are now that we are in Christ.

And that is an ongoing process of transformation that will take us all the way up to eternity. And so what we are considering as we walk through this chapter is what are the ways in which God is working to transform our minds?

That's central. That's essential. It's not just that he says have your minds transformed. It's that so much of what Paul has to say in this chapter is about the way that we think and the way that we view ourselves and everything else around us.

In fact, take a look up just a few verses. I want you to see this. I want to remind you of how central this language of the mind is in what Paul has to say here.

[10:02] So for instance in verse 3 he says, For the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think with sober judgment.

It's the same root word that's occurring over and over. You've got to think a certain way in order to live the Christian life. That's what we've got to be and then he applies that to the ways in which we use our gifts and how we think about the giftedness that God has given to us.

But then in verse 9 as we saw he turns his attention to the issue of love. And we might say in sort of our modern parlance oh well Paul has turned his attention from our minds to our hearts.

But I'm not sure that that's a good accurate nor biblical way to think about what's happening here. I don't think Paul is shifting his attention at all when he begins to talk about genuine or unhypocritical love.

I don't think he's shifting from the mind to the heart. In fact if you'll survey the Bible you will find the Bible uses terms like mind heart soul. It uses those terms interchangeably as different ways of describing the same reality that is our inward person who we are truly and inwardly.

[11:14] The center of our thoughts and of our emotions and of our acts of volition our acts of will all of that is conceived under these various terms so we're not to divide it up and say well this person might have their minds transformed by Christ but their heart hasn't quite been transformed by him.

That's not how Paul is thinking. That's not how the writers of scripture address things. In fact if you look in the Hebrew the same word is sometimes translated mind and sometimes translated heart because these aren't different aspects of who we are.

They're just different words that describe and express the one reality of who we are on the inside who we truly are mind emotion will all of that rolled up and packaged in one.

In fact many times in the scriptures they don't use focus on the brain they don't focus on the heart in fact many times it's not usually reflected in some of our English translations because it sounds gross to us today but many times the language is of the bowels right?

Isn't that strange that they would not always locate the center of our thoughts and our emotions in our hearts but in our bowels but that's often times the New Testament talks about bowels of compassion and that sounds strange to us but it makes sense when you begin to think about how we experience our emotions people say we get butterflies in our stomach and those sorts of things and we use the language of the heart because we talk about our hearts being a flutterer or whatever sorts of things so we use these various parts of the body to express one holistic concept and that is who we really are our true person so Paul is not switching from the mind to the heart when he begins to talk about love he's on the same track he's talking about the same thing throughout this chapter he wants us to be transformed from the inside out that's what he's after and so now as we've come to this list of commands in verses 14 15 and 16 what we're seeing now is is further application of how we ought to live as those whose minds hearts wills are being fundamentally changed and transformed by Christ himself and what we see here again in these verses is the primacy of the language of the mind we see this thinking language over again you can't see it as well in the ESV as you can in some other translations but look closely at the passage here verse 15 for instance says rejoice with those who rejoice weep with those who weep now that sounds like emotive language to us so we would be tempted to say that's all about the heart but what he says next is directly tied to what we would call the mind he says in the ESV it says live in harmony with one another but literally what the text says is think the same things toward one another and then he goes on to say the ESV says do not be haughty but what it actually says literally is do not think upon do not think of the exalted things the high things or the prideful things so this language of thinking is coming to the fore again here now in verse 16 right after following some emotive language and it's not two separate things again it's all one thing and so

[14:27] Paul is trying to show us throughout this chapter that if we are going to live lives that reflect the work of Christ that reflect the good news of Jesus Christ then we need to be changed inwardly yes our thinking needs to change our feelings that flow from that thinking they need to change which in turn changes the way that we make decisions changes the kinds of decisions that we make so heart mind will all of that rolled up into one Paul says it's got to be changed it's got to be restructured the lines have to be redrawn for us and specifically what Paul tells us here has to do in verses 15 and 16 that I want to focus on this morning has to do with how we treat one another how we react to the events that happen in other people's lives notice his language here he says that we should rejoice with those who rejoice and we should weep with those who weep now if you thought that last week's commandment can be somewhat difficult to bless those who curse you in many ways these commandments are even more difficult because these commandments really drive at our inward response to other people because sure we can all put on a fake smile in front of others when we know that we're supposed to we can put on a sad face when we know that we're supposed to but to actually genuinely rejoice when others in the body of Christ rejoice and to actually genuinely inwardly experience sadness when others are going through painful circumstances that's not quite so easy in fact that requires something to change within us he's not merely talking about what we sometimes call empathy empathy is merely sort of the experiencing of emotions along with others

I don't I don't think that's what Paul is addressing here I think he's addressing a greater reality I think he's talking about a real caring a real looking at and being concerned about and being happy about if necessary if that's if that's appropriate the events that are happening in other people's lives not just to be carried along in your emotions that can happen even with strangers I mean some of you cry when you watch a Hallmark commercial and you think I'm just very empathetic I mean that guy he got a card from his dad who had passed away two years ago and it just came in the mail and you start to feel for this guy and he's just some no name actor who couldn't even get a part in a movie so he's in a Hallmark commercial right he's faking the emotions and you're going right along with him that's not what we're talking about we're not talking about the emotional rollercoaster that you and wanting and desiring to rejoice when they rejoice to weep when they weep to actually really care when other people are experiencing the highs and lows of life and that's not always simple that's not always an easy thing to do in fact when we look at these two commands rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep we think why does one come before the other and it may be for no reason at all but I'm inclined to agree with Matthew Henry who says that perhaps Paul tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice first because that's actually more difficult for us sometimes it's more difficult for us because sometimes we look and we see good things happening in other people's lives and we're unable to rejoice with them because we think that those good things should have been happening to us and not to them sometimes the rejoicing with others is more difficult than the weeping with others because even when a stranger goes through a great tragedy we can relate to the loss and we can feel sad about that at times but when those that are close to us receive blessings from the Lord sometimes we genuinely really struggle to rejoice along with them this is not this is not easy this is not something that comes automatically to us and I think the reason that this response to other people's lives doesn't come easy for us is because we are a people who are constantly battling against various forms of pride in our lives

I think that's what Paul identifies here as the enemy of this entering into other people's lives and experiencing with them the highs and lows of their lives I think Paul identifies the enemy of that as being pride itself not pride in the simple only straightforward form of I think I'm better than everyone else but pride in all of its subtle forms comes in and spoils our efforts to really care about others to rejoice when they rejoice and weep when they weep notice the emphasis that he lays upon pride in these verses he says that we should not be haughty not be focused on prideful things or lofty things but rather we should associate with the humble with the lowly that's who we should be associating with we shouldn't merely try to attach ourselves to people of influence or things that are going to look good for us but we should be willing to associate ourselves with those who are humble and lowly and don't have influence and can't necessarily benefit us in any way that's what we should be willing to associate with and enter into fellowship with that should be the focus of our lives that should be the focus of our efforts don't be focused merely on these things up here they're important things lowly things humble things down here that we ought to focus upon and then he says

something that echoes what he has already said earlier in this chapter he says to us take a look down there at the end of verse 16 never be wise in your own sight that should sound familiar to us because he's already said in verse 3 that everyone among you ought not to think of himself more highly than he ought don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think now never be wise in your own sight pride is the enemy of genuine authentic love expressed in the ups and downs of the lives of the people that surround us and it comes in subtle deceptive forms

I think one of the ways in which pride can spoil our efforts to love others in this way one of the ways is that we have a tendency to turn commands that are directed toward us into entitlements that we place on the backs of others you want to know whether or not you're doing this right now here's a very simple question are you right now feeling convicted or sensing the Lord showing you ways in which you have not rejoiced with others who've rejoiced ways in which you failed to do that not weep with those who weep ways in which you have failed or have you been sitting thinking I hope so and so is paying attention because they did not do this for me when I was going through that when I was suffering through that nobody wepted with me we do that we take a command directed at us and we turn it into an entitlement to lay upon everyone else let the word of

[22 : 09] God do its work on them the command comes to all of us but it comes to you and in our pride and in our sense of the world and everyone else around us owing us something we miss we miss the fact that the command speaks to us and we want to lay it on others to control how they treat us and how they respond to us we turn commandments into entitlements and it's a subtle dangerous way in which pride can work its way in before we even get very far in understanding the command we fail to see that it's in fact a command for you for me and not an entitlement that we expect from everyone else but notice Paul's specific words here and how pride creeps in and ruins our efforts at this he starts by saying that we're to live in harmony with one another or as

I've already told you that that means literally to think the same things toward one another now that sounds a bit strange you can understand why many of the modern translators would want to try to try to smooth that out and make it easier to understand by saying something very simple like live in harmony with one another which I think is actually the result of thinking the same things toward one another and it's not a very good way necessarily to translate the phrase itself when I hear that phrase think the same things toward one another what I imagine is people who think about others the way they want others to think about them it's not having an attitude or a manner of thinking about others that you don't want them to have toward you if you would be offended if someone thought something that you think about them then you are not doing what Paul says to do here In fact I almost think of this phrase!

as the outward work of what we often call the golden rule you all know the golden rule from the gospel of Matthew Mark and Luke but Matthew chapter 7 most of us know it in the King James version do unto others as you would have them do unto you it's very simple straightforward command treat others the way you want them to treat you now though I think Paul is saying think! about others have thoughts and feelings directed toward others the way that you would expect them to have toward you think the same kinds of things toward one another which is really another way of saying love other people in fact Jesus says in Matthew 7 12 just after giving us the golden rule he says for this is the law and the prophets do unto others as you would have them do unto you this is the law and the prophets that should sound familiar because Jesus also tells us that loving your neighbor is the fulfillment of the law in fact Paul picks up on that glance down in chapter 13 if you want to glance down there where Paul picks up on that teaching of Jesus and Paul says in verse 8 of chapter 13 oh no one anything except to love each other for the one who loves has fulfilled it says think the same things toward one another is have the same kind of love directed at others that you want them to have directed back at you namely that they rejoice when you rejoice and they weep when you weep but in our pride in our pride we do not necessarily always think that we ought to think about others the way they ought to think!

us they ought to good things about me because I've done X Y and Z for them or for others or I've accomplished this or I have this in my tool belt and so we we begin to set up hierarchies and we think this about this person and we address this person in this way and we want them to treat us like this even though we're treating them in this way down here and all the while Paul is saying no it's all fueled by arrogance and pride you think the same things toward one another you do unto them and think unto them the way that you want them to do unto you and think unto you pride is the enemy of genuine real Christian love worked out in all of the ups and downs of our lives but it

comes in other ways as well of course in perhaps more obvious ways as we see in the rest of our passage here the rest of verse 16 he says do not be haughty but associate with the lowly do not be haughty but associate with the lowly we have a tendency to attach our thoughts and our desires to those things that we deem to be desirable we have a tendency to want to focus on greater worth and in focusing upon those and seeking for those for ourselves we exalt ourselves we don't want to be associated with lowly people humble people we want to attach ourselves to people of influence we want to attach ourselves to people that we think are on our level and we avoid those that we look at as being beneath us it is a problem in the early!

[27 : 53] church church too it's not just a problem today it was a problem in the early church I don't know if you guys have read through the letter of James recently we won't turn there but I want to paraphrase for you a bit in the letter of James James addresses the issue of believers sitting at different tables or different spots at the table the wealthy have these places of honor and the poor we do those sorts of things we elevate certain people we demote other people based on our evaluation of who they are and even sometimes within the body of Christ there began to be these sort of hierarchies based upon those we deem to be of value and those that we don't and so we avoid certain people maybe because they frustrate us maybe because we just think!

at the end of the day we before you know it you don't even realize it but before you know it you have those that you prefer those that quite frankly you'd rather just avoid it's a form of pride that is a death blow to real genuine authentic love within the body of Christ but it's not the only form that Paul mentions here he has one more thing to say here and he says that we ought not to be wise in our own sight of course again echoing what he has said earlier for us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think do not be wise do not think great things about yourself not in your own sight it's perfectly fine and well if others in the body of

Christ have a high opinion of you this is not Paul is not saying that we have to run away from all compliments that we have to push away anything and anyone that would have something good to say about us that's not the point his point is what are your thoughts about yourself are you wise in your own sight do you think good things about yourself and ignore the sin that surrounds you or do you have a more realistic!

evaluation of who you are Jesus speaks about this we've had reason to return to this parable a few times where you have the individual who would like to look at others and take the speck out of their eye while the plank sticks out of their own I mean it's a ludicrous image right a plank can't stick out of your eye right if there's a plank sticking out of your eye you are dead it's ludicrous right but it drives the point home that we are so spiritually blind at times we have such a false estimate of ourselves that all the while that we're pointing out these little things in others there are these great sinful things about us looming large that everyone else around us can see but we can't see it ourselves Paul says don't be wise in your own sight don't think too highly of yourself have a realistic appraisal of who you are in the light of who Christ is and when you have done that you will have fought against the pride that so easily winds its way up into your life and into your thinking there will come a day of course when we no longer have to deal with this stuff!

I mean there is there will be a moment when pride will be finally and fully crucified and put to death within all of us there will be that moment you kind of get a glimpse for it when Isaiah is standing in the temple in Isaiah chapter 6 and the Lord reveals himself to Isaiah and Isaiah's response is is not to say it's so good that I'm here no his initial response is to say I'm a worm I can't stand in your presence I'm a man of sinful lips I live among a people of sinful lips I'm dying in your presence in other words the immediate effect of the glory of God is to destroy pride in Isaiah's life there will come a day when we stand bathed in the radiance of the glory of Jesus and all the remnants of pride will be shattered and washed away all of our sinful behaviors and tendencies gone forever and replaced with rejoicing in his presence there is that day it awaits us and we need to cling to that hope because we're going to fail sometimes at this we're going to fail to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and weep with those who are weeping weeping we're going to find ourselves at times wrapped up in pride and fighting to get it away from us and fighting to move away from it and then we will realize that there's another subtle form of pride that we didn't know was there just as but it's controlling influence over our lives it will be gone but that day has not yet arrived it's it's not yet here and in the here and now what we long for what we ought to chase after and pursue with all of our energies is to have our minds our hearts our wills so transformed by

[34 : 14] God through the power of the spirit and the word that pride would begin to crumble and fall apart and disintegrate and in its place would be real genuine authentic powerful love let's pray