

Honoring Others Above Yourself
Romans 12:9-10

This past Wednesday, for only the sixth time since the terrorist attack on September 11. The CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL of HONOR was awarded for a soldier who died in Afghanistan. His name was Sgt. Jared Monti. He died trying to rescue another soldier. Under terrible fire, Sgt. Monti left his secure position to reach 22 year old Pvt Brian Bradbury. He couldn't reach him and returned to the safety of his position. After catching his breath he tied a second time, under even more intense fire. Still, he couldn't reach the wounded soldier. Undeterred, Monti tried again a third time. He was mortally wounded. Sgt. Jared Monti died trying to help a wounded soldier. He valued the life of his fellow soldier above his own.

Romans 12:9-21 gives us 29 separate commands. Mounce writes, "*nowhere else in Paul's writing do we find a more concise collection of ethical injunctions*" (Mounce, New American Commentary, 236)

Just in 12:9-13 there are 13 separate commands! Each one worthy of an individual sermon! Because we do not want to spend the next eight months on these verses, we will group them by paragraph and study them in their themes. Today's theme is all about our relationships with others. This fits with the previous we studied dealing with spiritual gifts and the body of Christ. These 29 injunctions primarily deal with our relationships with one another. There are many "one another" exhortations in Paul's writings. Three of them are found in these verses.

I. The Supremacy of Love. 12:9 a

This list begins with LOVE. It must be "Sincere." The NAS reads, "Let love be without hypocrisy." The Greek word here means "genuine, sincere, without hypocrisy" (Dictionary of Biblical Languages). The idea is expressed in one word used in this way. A "hypocrite" was a stage actor. One who wore a mask. Our love for others is not to be staged, or masked. Since brotherly love is specifically mentioned in verse 10, the love here includes both Christians and non Christians.

Notice how sincerity and Love are linked together in other passages:

(2 Corinthians 6:6-7) "*in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in **sincere love**; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;*"

(1 Peter 1:22) "*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have **sincere love for your brothers**, love one another deeply, from the heart.*"

(1 Timothy 1:5) "*The goal of this command is **love**, which **comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.***"

Let's consider several factors about Christian Love.

- A. Love is **superior to KNOWLEDGE**. (1 Corinthians 8:1) *"Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.**"*
- B. Love **superior to PROPHECY and FAITH**. (1 Corinthians 13:2) *"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but **have not love, I am nothing.**"*
- C. Love is the **FIRST** in the **fruit of the Spirit**. (Galatians 5:22) *"But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**"*
- D. Love is the **LAST** in the **Virtuous Characteristics**. (2 Peter 1:5-7) *"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your **faith** goodness; and to **goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.**"*
- E. Love is the **Communicable Attribute** that **best demonstrates** our relationship with God. (1 John 4:7-8) *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for **love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.**"*
- F. Here, **ALL PEOPLE** are included. Saved and Unsaved. **Rom 12:10** addresses "brotherly love."
- G. In terms of our relationship with other believers, LOVE is the characteristic that must prevail! 1 Corinthians 13 makes this abundantly clear!

II. The Description of Love. 12:9b

"Hate what is evil." This was the character of Job. (Job 1:1) *"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."* Notice Psalm 36:1-4. In this text, it is clear that the WICKED do not hate what is evil! (Psalm 36:1-4) *"For the director of music. Of David the servant of the Lord. An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin. The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good. Even on his bed he plots evil; he commits himself to a sinful course and **does not reject what is wrong.**"*

It seems strange to see HATE following LOVE! Christian love is more than FEELINGS. It is righteous love. It is love based in TRUTH. (1 Timothy 1:5) *"The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere*

faith."

True love will never take pride in sin. The condemnable sin of the Corinthians was in that they were proud of the sinful man! 1 Cor 5:2 "*and you are proud!*"

Love will never say, "*if you love me, you'll let me*"

Love will never say, "*you can do whatever you want*"

Love will never say, "*the truth doesn't matter*"

Notice, it says hate **WHAT** is evil. It doesn't say hate **THOSE WHO ARE EVIL**.

This raises an age old question: How do we hate sin but love the sinner?

Do not establish ourselves as the standard by which others are judged.

Someone takes pride in the fact that he does not drink alcohol, but they go to movies.

Another takes pride in not going to the movies, but gossips. Few of us see the evil in ourselves! We only see the evil in others!

We disguise gossip as prayer requests.

We disguise slander as showing concern

We disguise lust as building a friendship

We disguise greed as working harder

We disguise self righteousness as piety

We disguise slothfulness as relaxation

The next phrase says "Cling to what is good."

The word means "to glue or join together" It is used of husband/ wife union (1 Cor 6:16).

Love based on morality and TRUTH. (1 John 3:18) "*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*"

III. **The Evidence of Love. 12:10**

"Be Devoted to one another in brotherly love"

This is one of three "one another" phrases contained in Romans 12:9-21. There are many others in Paul's writings, but the placement of three within these verses indicates the emphasis of Christian relationships in these 29 exhortations. The emphasis here is that the relationships within the family of believers is a close, emotional, committed relationship.

The definition of brotherly love comes from the Greek word *philadelphia*. *Philia* is the noun form for the love, specifically a tender, endearing love or affection between kin. *Aldephia* is the word for brothers. It is defined as "Tenderly affectionate toward one another." The Lexicon adds the emphasis here that the expression means that we should "try to outdo one another in showing respect" (BAGD). Hodge adds that it means we should "Set an example in love" (Hodge, 624).

But this kind of close family relationship doesn't always exist within families. The church is not exempt from the same kind of family quarreling that takes place within some homes.

A third-grade Sunday School teacher taught her students the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother." She asked, "We've been talking about our mommies and daddies, but does anyone know a commandment about brothers and sisters?" One little girl's hand shot into the air, and she said, "You shall not kill."

Paul elsewhere emphasizes this type of brotherly love.

(Galatians 5:13) *"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love.**"*

(Ephesians 4:2) *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."*

Our love for others demonstrates our love for God. It has been said that **"You love God as much as the man or woman you love the least"** Matthew 25:40 bears this out, (Matthew 25:40) *"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"*

"Honor One another above yourselves"

The exhortation within Philippians expresses the same concern as Paul has here. True Christian concern pays greater attention to the need of others.

(Philippians 2:3) *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."*

Read on in Philippians chapter two, and you will find the example of Jesus who loved others and surrendered to the point of his own death. A human example is also given, that of Epaphroditus.

(Philippians 2:25-30) *"But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me."*

The story is told of two goats that met each other on a narrow ledge just wide enough for one goat to pass. The two goats faced each other and wondered, What shall we do? They could not back up that would be too dangerous. They could not go around because the ledge was too narrow. **Now, if the goats had no more sense than humans they would have began butting each other until one fell over the ledge.** However, goats have a lot of sense, more than some people. What they did: one goat laid down and let the other

walk over him. Are you willing to let someone walk all over you? (David Owens, Sermoncentral.com)

Brotherly love gives preference to others. (1 John 3:16) *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."*

We began with an illustration of a soldier who loved the life of his fellow soldier above his own. This kind of sacrifice is exemplified in the Soldier's Creed, required to be memorized by every United States soldier.

The Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

How I wish this attitude were true within the church!

Our fellow soldiers are fallen:

- fallen by illness
- Fallen by financial need
- Fallen by temptation
- Fallen by weakness
- Fallen defeat
- Fallen by trials
- Fallen by the attack of the enemy
- Fallen by the difficulties of battle

There are too many examples of shooting our wounded

There are too many examples of leaving them behind

We need more examples of **being devoted to one another**

We need more examples like Sgt. Jared Monti who went back in the face of danger to rescue a fallen soldier.

We need to heed the exhortation to "be devoted to one another in brotherly love."