

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor  
[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
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Romans 12:9-10a, 13, 15 “Love and Hate in the Christian Life”

Intro. This morning I have what may seem to some an odd title for a message, “Love and Hate in the Christian Life.” We all know that love is an essential aspect of the Christian life. But do you realize that there is a place for hatred in the Christian life as well? Indeed there is. Though we are to love people, we are to hate sin. Non-Christians may love sin and hate people, but we should love people and hate sin.

In v.2 of this chapter Paul says that our lives are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Beginning in v.9 Paul shares some specific commands for living a new kind of life. This will only come from a new way of thinking. Much of what I will share with you today and in the following messages is the opposite of how we think and act by nature. But just because our actions are natural, that does not make them right. After all, we are sinners by nature. So with the words of these verses, I hope to renew your thinking about the subject of love and hate in the Christian life.

So notice with me first of all the fact that:

## I. WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER IN THE RIGHT WAYS

In verses 9-21 Paul gives us some of the duties which all believers are to observe. We might expect that the catalogue of duties would begin with love. He says in v.9, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” God is love, and God dwells within if you are a Christian. Therefore the chief characteristic of God must become the chief characteristic of the believer. Jesus said in Jn. 13:35, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” If there is one thing above all that should characterize us as Christians, it is that we have love for one another.

What a contrast with the religions of that day. Paganism never felt such love and compassion. Christianity came into the pagan world as a breath of fresh air. Christians were immediately drawn to each other, shared each others woes, bore each other’s burdens, and comforted one another in times of sickness, trouble and sorrow.

It is well to note that no definition of love is given here. Instead of what Paul does in a number of these verses is to show the characteristics and actions of true love. He is not encouraging a mere sentimental love that you hear about in much of the world’s music. He is talking about real love. So what kind of love should we have for one another? First of all, we should have a:

A. Sincere Love – Paul says in v.9, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” What a contrast we have here. Love is the epitome of virtue and hypocrisy the epitome of vice. What a contradiction to bring these together! Our word is a transliteration of the ancient Greek word used for the acting of a stage player. The Greek actors would hold a mask in front of their faces. If the actor was playing a happy character, he would have a mask with a smile on his face, regardless of how he really felt. If he was playing a villain, he would wear a mask that clearly portrayed him as a villain. It easily came to mean acting in real life, and this hypocrisy is assuming a false

appearance of love. Our love for one another should be sincere and genuine. Our love to one another should not be just an act or a pretension. Some Christians have smiled to another Christian, and given some gesture of love, and then turned around and talked bad about them behind their backs. That is not true love. True love should come from the heart and produced by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 says, “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

So in the future, make sure your expressions of love are genuine. If you find yourself giving someone a fake smile, stop and ask the Lord to give you a genuine love for that person.

We have seen the kind of love we should *not* have. Now let’s see what kind of love we *should* have. In v.10 we see that we should have:

B. Family Love – There Paul says, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love....” Here and in the verses that follow Paul mentions various expressions of true, unhypocritical love. He uses two different words to emphasize the fact that our love for one another should be similar to that of a loving family. “Be kindly affectionate” (NKJV) is from *philostorgos*. *Storgos* refers to natural affection, like that of a mother for her child. The word “kindly” is a good translation if you understand its original meaning. You see, the word “kind” comes from “kinned,” another word for family, like kinfolk. So in the family of God, we are to express the kind of affection that family members have for one another. This concept is reinforced with the word translated, “brotherly love,” which is from *philadelphia* in Greek. There is clearly an emphasis on family love here.

In the life of a church, there needs to be the emphasis on a family-type of love as seen here. There needs to be a similar kind of affection which the members of a good family have for one another. We ought to be like one big, happy family. You are to love that other Christian just like you love other members of your family.

Now let’s get specific. Our greetings to one another should express a family-kind of affection, such as a warm handshake, an appropriate kind of hug, or even a holy kiss on the cheek can be appropriate between certain Christians. We also obey this scripture by referring to one another as brother or sister. There’s an old Gaither chorus that says, “You may notice that we say brother and sister ‘round here, well it’s because we’re a family, and each one’s so dear, When one has a heartache, we all share a tear....” Furthermore, family members usually say “I love you” to one another. We should tell each other verbally of our love for each other.

Next, we should have a:

C. Sharing Love – Paul says in v.13, “distributing to the needs of the saints....” “Distributing” means “to share in.” We should participate or share in meeting the needs of the saints. The corresponding noun means partaker. The meaning, therefore, would be that we are to identify ourselves with the needs of the saints and make them our own. We certainly do all we can to satisfy our own needs, and the exhortation is to satisfy those of our Christian brother as if they were our own. The same identifying of ourselves with the lot of others, commanded in v.15, is applied here to the needs of the saints. So we see that true love is a giving love. If you are not willing to give, you have a hypocritical love, rather than a true love.

One way we can obey this command is to give to the benevolence fund. There are other times when we should meet a need of a brother or sister in Christ directly, without going through the church. If you know of a need, and God has blessed you with the means to meet that need, then just take care of that need.

By the way, the emphasis in giving is always on the saints. Paul said in Gal. 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” We probably will not be able to meet the needs of the whole world, but we had better make sure that there is not a single Christian among us who is lacking in the true necessities of life. We ought to take care of our own, just as members of a physical family should be the first to help another family member.

Next, we should have:

D. Hospitable Love – Paul also says in v.13 that we are to be “given to hospitality.” “Hospitality” is literally translated “love to stranger.” Even so, Heb. 13:2 says, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels,” a reference to Abraham & Sarah. The word “given” is literally translated “to follow after or pursue” and implies that we are to be active in the pursuit of hospitality. If a fellow Christian needs a place to stay, or a meal to eat, take the initiative to offer hospitality to that person. And don’t offer it grudgingly. Pursue the opportunity to be hospitable.

In apostolic times there was urgent need for the practice of this virtue. 1) There were practically no hotels as we know them today. 2) Because of persecution many Christians were compelled to migrate. As they moved into a new community, they needed the hospitality of other believers. 3) Then there were traveling evangelists and missionaries who needed a place to stay in each community. Therefore hospitality was a prime example of the way in which believers were to be partakers in the needs of the saints.

But even where economic and social conditions are more favorable, the practice of hospitality is not irrelevant. The occasions will present themselves if we are alert to the duty, privilege, and blessing. Have you ever invited church visitors into your home for lunch? Have you ever hosted an evangelist or missionary? Another way you can obey this command is to join the Hospitality Committee. That’s the new name for the Social Committee, which is more biblical. Also, the first Monday in February, we will host the ministers of the Petersburg Baptist Association. We need to feed them lunch. Let me or Suzanne know if you’re willing to head that up or help.

Finally, we should have a:

E. Sympathetic Love – Paul says in v.15, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” We are to share in the other person’s joy, and also share in their sorrow. Let’s look at each of these expressions of loving sympathy:

1. Rejoice With Those Who Rejoice - The point of the exhortation is that we are to enter into this rejoicing as if the occasion for it were our own. We might be ready to think that it is easy and natural to rejoice with those who rejoice. However, jealousy and envy tends to make us feel just the opposite (cf. Gal. 3:20, 21; Tit. 3:3). When your co-worker gets a good raise, and he is rejoicing over it, do you rejoice with him? Or do you have a self-centered focus and begin to say, “Why didn’t I get a raise?” When that boy or girl in school makes straight A’s and they are rejoicing, do you rejoice with them, or are you jealous because *you* didn’t make straight A’s?

Let us show love by rejoicing with those who rejoice. Brent & Dana just had the joy of receiving their first child from the Lord. We should rejoice with them. If you find out that someone has been honored or awarded, you should rejoice with them. Tell them with sincerity that you are happy for them.

Paul also covers the opposite side of Christian sympathy. He said:

2. Weep With Those Who Weep – Even though we are Christians, we will have hardships and heartbreaks in this life. That's because we still live in a sin-cursed world. We still have sin in our own lives. So there will be times when we will weep. And when you see a brother or sister weeping, you should weep with them. You should sympathize with them. In fact, the word "sympathize" originates from Greek, and it literally means "to suffer with," or even "share the same emotion." Jesus did that. One of the noblest statements of the Bible is its shortest verse, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). This is especially directed against a vice that is unspeakable in its meanness, to be glad at the calamities of others. You hear about someone who is suffering, and you smugly say, "He had it coming to him." Yet Prov. 17:5 says, "He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished."

God, through the prophet Obadiah, rebuked Israel's cousin nation Edom for rejoicing over the destruction of the Jewish nation (v.12).

This is one reason why we should visit a fellow believer who has lost a love one. At least send a sympathy card. These days, more and more people are loosing their jobs. If you hear that a brother or sister is weeping over a job loss, then go and visit them. Remind them that God is their provider. Say a prayer for them. Perhaps you know of someone who is lonely or in sorrow, and you have some time on your hands. Go and visit them, or call them, and share in their sorrow, and seek to lift their spirits. If you know of a parent who is weeping over a wayward or sick child, then go and weep with them. Pray with them. Let us show love by weeping with those who weep.

So as we present ourselves to God as living sacrifices (v.1), ready to do His will, let us begin by giving the right kind of love to fellow believers. And not only should we show love to one another, but we also see that:

## II. WE MUST ABHOR WHAT IS EVIL

What should be our attitude toward doing things that are wrong? Paul says in v.9 that we are to "Abhor what is evil." Paul uses a word (*apostugeo*) which refers to hatred that is emotional, and visibly or audibly expressed. It refers to regarding something as detestable and abhorrent. The preposition *apo* is added to the word, which means "away from," & intensifies the meaning. The Christian is to express his hatred & abhorrence of evil by a withdrawal from it and a loathing of it. People are frequently afraid to admit that hatred is a Christian virtue. True love abhors what is evil, for evil brings harm to the people we love.

Many people in this world love their sin, but we ought to hate sin. Why? If we hate and abhor sin, then we will certainly be less likely to commit those sins. If you have a sin that you have trouble with, then it is probably because you look upon it with favor rather than with abhorrence. It is your "pet" sin. But victory will come when you come to hate that sin. Jude 23 says we must hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh."

In our society today we have lost this biblical virtue. Many have a very tolerate attitude toward sin. "Live and let live" is their slogan. Quite a few even celebrate doing wrong, or at least defend or excuse sinful actions. The ACLU and other liberals do not abhor abortion, but promote it, even though it is a form of murder.

We need to recognize that this abhorrence of evil is a characteristic of God. The Bible says, "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are

swift in running to evil,<sup>1</sup> A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19). Heb. 1:9 says of Jesus, “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.” He loathed sham, pretense, and hypocrisy. Furthermore, several passages speak of God’s hatred of false religion. “Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen” (Isa. 1:12-15). God loathes the religion that allows people to dress up in new clothes for Easter and think more of their appearances than of the condition of their souls, or the souls of others. He detests self-righteousness. We must be dressed in His righteousness. So as we learn to hate evil, we shall become more like God.

When you see evil, you should abhor it. You should speak out against it. You should turn away from it, lest you be tempted. Young people, if you go to a classmate’s house and discover that ungodly things are taking place there, don’t stay around and act like you approve of such things as underage drinking and drunkenness. Don’t act like you approve of the immorality that often takes place when the parents are away. Don’t act like you approve of the profanity that you hear. Abhor what is evil. Take a stand against evil. Turn from it.

Don’t take this to an extreme, so that you seem to hate the sinner as much as his sin. This hatred must be directed against what is evil, rather than against individuals. Remember, these words are in a context of love. If your abhorrence of evil makes you mean & unloving, or like a Muslim radical, then you are out of balance.

In contrast, Paul says in the last of v.9 that:

### III. WE SHOULD CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD

“Cling” comes from the Greek word for glue (*kola*). The verb is passive, and literally means, “Be glued to what is good.” There is a tendency in all of life to allow the good to slip away. We even tend to drift away from the Lord, our highest good. Instead, we must hold fast to what is good. Conservatives understand this principle. We want to hold fast and conserve what is good. Liberals are always calling for change, and too often they are casting off the very principles that have made this nation great, like love of God and country; the priority of marriage and family; discipline; hard work, consequences for evil, and so forth. Liberals have cast out the Bible & prayer from our public school rather than clinging to what is good, and somehow we let it happen.

Our attachment to the good is to be that of the devotion illustrated by the bond of marriage. Proverbs 18:22 says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD.” Many a man has been married to a good woman, and yet they have allowed a good woman to slip away from them, either because they loved their alcohol or their job even more.

When an aroused citizenry obeys God’s command to abhor what is evil, and hold fast to what is good, crime will decrease and good order will be maintained. A Christian must stand up and be counted whenever there is a moral issue. But it seems that most in our society cling to what is evil and are careless to hold on to what is good. We are more interested in protecting the criminal than in supporting the policeman who is working against evil. The sympathy of the crowd is too often with the arrested man rather than with the policeman.

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<sup>1</sup> Stand to the side of the pulpit & point to the face, mouth, uplifted hands, heart, & feet in a downward progression while quoting the Scripture, also as an aid to memory.

Donald Grey Barnhouse was visiting in California and he witnessed something tragic. A car wove crazily through traffic and collided head-on with another car. He watched the driver, obviously drunk, being pushed from his seat by his companion, who took the wheel and awaited the arrival of the policemen. The pseudo-driver complained bitterly to the policeman that the driver of the other car was at fault. Dr. Barnhouse spoke up as a witness, and identified the drunken man as the driver who was at fault. There was a growl from the crowd that had gathered, questioning his right to interfere. Dr. Barnhouse spoke loudly enough for everyone to hear, "There is a matter of right and wrong here. This good driver is being accused of bad driving while the fault actually belongs to this drunk." That did not satisfy most in the crowd. They were violating every principle of righteousness and failing to hold fast to what is good & truthful [Barnhouse, p.66]. When a society no longer abhors what is evil, and no longer clings to what is good, that society is heading down the path to destruction.

You ought to cling to what is good. The Word of God is good. Hold fast to it; adhere to the Word of God. If you find a good church, cling to it. If someone is a good influence on you, cling to them. Look for opportunities to be with them. If you have found a good friend, don't take them for granted. Hold on to what is good. Cultivate that friendship, lest you lose a good friend.

Conclusion: Now it is decision time. I have called upon you to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. Some of you need to repent of your sin; turn from it; abhor it. And then you need to turn to Jesus. Receive Him as your Savior, and cling to Him by following Him the rest of your life.

Most of you are Christians. Are you giving the right kind of love to others? Is your love sincere, generous, affectionate, hospitable, and sympathetic? Are you lacking in any area? Then trust in the God of love, and ask Him to help you be more loving.

Are you abhorring what is evil? Do you speak out against evil, and turn from it? Is there anything good in your life that you have allowed to slip away? Then do what is necessary to cling to what is good. Now is the time for commitment. Don't delay.

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 4, "God's Discipline" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right: Romans* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). F.F. Bruce & Corley/Vaughan read, but no additional material found useful.

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