

# Romans 12:9-21

1. Love must be sincere
2. Hate what is evil
3. Cling to what is good
4. Be devoted to one another
5. Honor one another above yourself
6. Never be lacking in zeal; keep spiritual fervor serving the Lord
7. Be joyful in hope
8. Be patient in affliction
9. Be faithful in prayer
10. Share with God's people in need
11. Practice hospitality
12. Bless those who persecute you
13. Bless and do not curse
14. Rejoice with those who rejoice
15. Mourn with those who mourn
16. Live in harmony with one another
17. Do not be proud
18. Be willing to associate with people of low position
19. Do not be conceited
20. Do not repay anyone evil for evil
21. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody
22. Live at peace with everyone
23. Do not take revenge
24. Leave room for God's wrath
25. Do not be overcome by evil; overcome evil with good.

- This is all part of being “transformed” so we “will be able to test and approve what God's will is” as in Romans 12:2.
- 12:9-13 address how to interact with other believers.
- 12:14-21 focuses on our attitude and behavior as demonstrated and perceived by unbelievers.
- This is a list of short commands with very little explanation or elaboration.
- There are missing verbs. The Greek has nine imperatives, yet English translations, such as NRSV, which try to capture Paul's Greek use 31 imperative verbs. So, many of these commands are verbless in the Greek.
- There have been several attempts to figure out how Paul was organizing his list or to present a sequential pattern of topics presented by Paul. None of the suggestions is overwhelming convincing. It seems to be a recitation of general Christian character.

## 12:9 - “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.”

3588 [e]	26 [e]	505 [e]	655 [e]	3588 [e]	4190 [e]	2853 [e]	3588 [e]	18 [e]
hē	agapē	anypokritos	apostygountes	to	ponēron	kollōmenoi	tō	agathō
9 ἡ	ἀγάπη	ἀνυπόκριτος	ἀποστυγοῦντες	τὸ	πονηρὸν	κολλώμενοι	τῷ	ἀγαθῷ ;
[Let]	love [be]	sincere	Abhorring	-	evil	cleaving to	-	good
Art-NFS	N-NFS	Adj-NFS	V-PPA-NMP	Art-ANS	Adj-ANS	V-PPMP-NMP	Art-DNS	Adj-DNS

- 12:9 clearly begins a new section after 12:3-8, but is part of the expansion of the introductory statements of renewing the mind and being transformed from 12:1-2.

- A point of clarification might be to realize that at this point in the letter Paul is exhorting, not providing descriptive, theological dialogue. Thus, he is speaking to motivate and direct the church, not to teach new material or concepts to the church. They should know these virtues already. Now, the church needs to be urged to do what they already know to be right.
- The literal Greek says “sincere love”.
- “Sincere” is from the Greek *anypokritos* which means “without hypocrisy”
  - Same word is used in 2 Cor. 6:6
  - And, for brotherly love in 1 Peter 1:22
  - For faith in 1 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Timothy 1:5;
  - For wisdom in James 3:17
- “Sincere Love” could be the heading and what follows a description of what sincere love would look like.
- Love that is not “sincere” is “fake” or a “pretense”.
- In Paul’s churches, as in churches today, there was a tendency for insincere or immature Christians to imitate the spiritual fruit of love.
- Today in the modern church this imitation love (or, love that is NOT sincere) has been replaced by the feminization of Christianity in the Western world.
- The imitation Christian love we see (and, are suppose to model) today is sentimental, emotional, soft, defenseless, vulnerable, non-judgmental, accepting, uncommitted. It is nomadic on a journey seeking truth and relationships.
- Love that is not sincere is powerless and a work of the flesh.
- Notice that in 1 Corinthians Paul’s chapter on love (ch. 13) follows his discussion of spiritual gifts as it does here in Romans 12 (12:9 follows 12:3-8 concerning spiritual gifts.)
- Love for others is the primary manifestation of the character of God. (1 John 4:19-21) But, because this is known as a basic Christian truth (or, measuring stick) many use a false show of love as a shortcut to apparent Christian character.
- The believer has already experienced “love” from God, now the believer is to live a life of love towards others as them imitate the Lord. (John 13:34; Colossians 3:12-14; Ephesians 5:1-2).

*“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

- Ephesians 4:30-5:1

The rest of 12:9 holds two exhortations from two participles which would seem to indicate that these two are necessary for “sincere love”:

“Hate what is evil”

- “Hate” means to “strongly abhor” and “hate exceedingly” from the Greek “apostugountes” (ΑΠΟΣΤΥΓΟΥΤΕΣ)
- The “apo” in “apostugountes” (or, ΑΠΟ in ΑΠΟΣΤΥΓΟΥΤΕΣ) makes the verb emphatic. This is the only place this word appears in the Greek NT. ΑΠΟΣΤΥΓΟΥΤΕΣ breakdown:
  - ΣΤΥΓΟΥΤΕΣ expresses a strong feeling of horror
  - ΑΠΟ- gives the word an intensive force
- Interestingly, hating evil or loving righteousness/purity, is compatible with sincere Christian love.
- In fact, if a believer’s love does not leave room (even demand) a hatred of evil then that love would NOT be sincere love.
- True love involves a deep rooted hatred of evil. (Think Ephesians 4:26, “in your anger do not sin”

“Cling to Good”

- Like the word “hate”, the verb “cling” (ΚΟΛΛΑΩ or, *kollao*) is very strong and refers to an intimate union that is expected to be found in marriage.
- The verb “cling” (ΚΟΛΛΑΩ or, *kollao*) can mean “to glue” which again reflects the closest possible connection.

- “Cling” means more than “approve of what is good”. It means your love and your character are good. (“Good” as defined by God’s definition of “good” as in the first days of creation, etc.)

Sincere Christian love can be identified as strongly abhorring evil while having a strong, intimate relationship with good.

## 12:10 - “Love one another with brotherly affection. Out do one another in showing honor.”

3588 [e]	5360 [e]	1519 [e]	240 [e]	5387 [e]	3588 [e]	5092 [e]	240 [e]	4285 [e]
tē	philadelphia	eis	allēlous	philostorgoi	tē	timē	allēlous	proēgoumenoi
10 τῇ	φιλαδελφία	εἰς	, ἀλλήλους	φιλόστοργοι	; τῇ	τιμῇ	, ἀλλήλους	προηγούμενοι ;
with the	brotherly love	toward	one another	devoted	-	in honor	one another	esteeming
Art-DFS	N-DFS	Prep	RecPro-AMP	Adj-NMP	Art-DFS	N-DFS	RecPro-AMP	V-PPM/P-NMP

1. A possible translation: “In brotherly love showing family affection to one another.”
2. Both words “love” from **philadelphia** (love for a brother or sister) and “devoted” from **philostorgia** (love of a parent for their child) begin with **phil-** which is used in words used to speak of family connect
3. A possible translation: “showing the way to one another in respect.”
4. “Esteeming” from **proegoumenoi** means “esteem more highly”
  - a. “give pride of place to one another in esteem.”
  - b. See Philippians 2:3 - “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”
  - c. Some interpret this to say “outdo” as in “outdo one another in showing honor.”
  - d. It can also be interpreted to say “go before” and “lead the way” as in “show the way to one another in respect”. Understood as saying “be the first in greeting every man.”
5. The honor is not in reference to a position or an earned place in society, but merely respect of other people.

## 12:11 - “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”

3588 [e]	4710 [e]	3361 [e]	3636 [e]	3588 [e]	4151 [e]	2204 [e]	3588 [e]	2962 [e]	1398 [e]
tē	spoudē	mē	oknēroi	tō	pneumatī	zeontes	tō	Kyriō	douleuontes
11 τῇ	σπουδῇ	, μὴ	ὀκνηροί	τῷ	πνεύματι	, ζέοντες ;	τῷ	Κυρίῳ	δουλεύοντες .
-	in diligence	not	lagging	-	in spirit	being fervent	the	Lord	serving
Art-DFS	N-DFS	Adv	Adj-NMP	Art-DNS	N-DNS	V-PPA-NMP	Art-DMS	N-DMS	V-PPA-NMP

1. Possible translation: “not negligent in eagerness” or “with unflagging energy”
2. “Lagging” from **okneros** describes a man who is hesitating because of:
  - a. Weariness
  - b. Sloth
  - c. Fear

- d. Bashfulness
- e. Reserved personality
- 3. The contrast is clear in Paul's brief words: "In diligence; Not lagging."
- 4. Possible translation: "aglow with the Spirit"
  - . "Aglow" or "Fervent" is from **zeontes** which is the word zew that is used to communicate:
    - i. Bubble, boiling of water in Ezekiel 24:5
    - ii. Fermentation in Job 32:19
    - iii. Glowing iron in Josephus
    - iv. Burning passion in Plato
    - v. Rage in Maccabees
  - a. The word translated "zeal" would seem to mean "be set on fire"
  - b. We are to allow the Spirit of God to set us on fire as we perform our "reasonable acts of worship" or our "rational worship" that the Lord has called us to.
  - c. **Pneuma** and **Zew** (Spirit and Fervor) are combined only here and in Acts 18:25 in the NT: "He (Apollos) had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John."
- 5. Point: The "bubbling of the Spirit" must be kept in check so that it is "serving the Lord"
  - . The contrast would be self-centered enthusiasm serving ourselves and our goals.

## 12:12 - "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

3588 [e]	1680 [e]	5463 [e]	3588 [e]	2347 [e]	5278 [e]	3588 [e]	4335 [e]
tē	elpidi	chairontes	tē	thlipsei	hypomenontes	tē	proseuchē
12 τῆ	ἐλπίδι	χαίροντες ;	τῆ	θλίψει	ὑπομένοντες ;	τῆ	προσευχῆ
-	In hope	rejoicing	-	in tribulation	being patient	-	in prayer
Art-DFS	N-DFS	V-PPA-NMP	Art-DFS	N-DFS	V-PPA-NMP	Art-DFS	N-DFS

4342 [e]

proskarterountes

προσκαρτεροῦντες .

being constant

V-PPA-NMP

1. Three admonitions aimed at hope, endurance and prayer.
  - a. All three work together to help strengthen and support the other.
  - b. All three are a necessary part of a fruitful Christian life.
2. Possible translations: "Rejoicing in Hope" and "Let hope keep you joyful"
  - . Focus here is our insight and understanding of God's plan and promise.
- a. We do not have it now, but we are the heirs of the kingdom.
3. Possible translation: "steadfast in affliction"
  - . "Steadfast" is **hupomeno** which means "endure, hold out, stand one's ground" in the midst of tribulation, trouble, affliction, persecution." But, hupomeno is NOT passive suffering, but is instead a positive approach that does not lose sight of hope, service and purpose because of the suffering.
    - a. **Hupomeno** in suffering is part of true salvation (Romans 5:3 and 8:17). Paul makes this point several times: 2 Corinthians 7:4; 8:2; 13:9; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:6)
4. "Possible translation: "persisting in prayer"
  - . "Persisting" from proskarterountes which is a stronger word that gives the believer an active way of participating in suffering means "to busy oneself with", be devoted to", "hold fast to" and "persevere in something."
    - a. Prayer is one of the eschatological connections we have to relieving the tension of the Now, but Not Yet life we live here in time waiting for the coming kingdom.