

June 9, 2019 19043-A #37

Romans 12:14-21

The Genuine Love, part 2

I. **John 13:34-35.** The New Commandment in Christ is not just an exhortation toward sentimentality.

A. *It is a challenging command to think like Jesus. Gal.4:19*

II. **A life given to Christ takes on some very counter-intuitive characteristics.**

A. Our life becomes a transforming deed of worship. 1-2

1. Not about “going to church” but living in Christ.

B. Our connection to each other is the source of our growth. 3-8

1. The Holy Spirit uses the body of Christ, with all its problems, faults and gifts, to help us become more like Him.

2. Theoretical love for others is nothing until we are immersed in a real and difficult matrix of relationships –

C. Love becomes more than something soft to fall into. 9-13

1. Genuine but discerning – not gullible, knowing right from wrong.

2. Devoted to others – compassionate, brotherly, honoring

3. Hard working – diligent, fervent, serving the Lord

4. Positive – rejoicing, persevering, praying

5. Generous – giving, hospitality, blessing

D. Which means that The Love is not just a feeling, but a skill...

1. We learn it and practice it until it becomes routine to think like Jesus. But we fail often until we learn...

E. *It is more important to be true to God and to each other than to ourselves.*

1. *There is a huge emphasis on being true to ourselves in our culture. This is conspicuous by its absence in Christ and in the Bible.*

F. *So, the Skill of Supernatural love has...*

III. **Two Unusual Characteristics. Romans 12:14-21.**

A. It values Empathy and Harmony over Expertise and Achievement. 15-16

1. **Empathy** = the ability to enter another person’s emotional world.

a) Emotional Intelligence is a high predictor of success and general happiness in life.

b) *Dictionary on EI: The capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.*

c) But that means putting our own emotions on hold while we seek to understand and sense another person’s life.

2. **Harmony** = “same mind”

a) Common, well-understood feeling of mutual allowance and kindness (Trench)

3. **Humility**: no arrogance and no conceit. 16

4. Seek first to understand, then seek to be understood.

a) (Habit #5 of 7 *Highly Successful People*, Stephen Covey, 1994)

5. But our culture rewards Expertise and Achievement = competition

a) A person who understands how to contribute meaningfully to others produces harmony. A person who just insists on “being the best” often produces carnal competition, pride and conceit.

6. *It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit. Harry Truman*

B. It Pursues Interpersonal Integrity over Personal Vindication. 17-20

1. **Interpersonal Integrity** = finding what is the right thing to do for others, what is morally admirable in the sight of all.
  - a) *A common denominator of civility in relationships.*
2. **Personal Vindication** = Winning! Vengeance is the desire to even the score. Winning, being shown to be right.
  - a) *Not about self-defense, but attack to even the score.*
3. **A Peace Maker:** As far as it depends on *you* be at peace with all ...
  - a) *Be hard to offend and easy to appease*
  - b) *Be slow to anger and quick to apologize.*
  - c) **Jas.1:19-20.** *Quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger...human anger usually undermines God's work.*
4. *I will be kind and do right by you whether you are kind to me or not. That is supernatural love as a skill—covenant love.*

**IV. Three Counterintuitive Instructions. These are supernatural, Spirit inspired, loving actions.**

A. Bless your enemies instead of blasting them. 14; Matt.5:43-47

1. Bless: eulageo = speak well of, cause to prosper.
  - a) *Say nice things about the people who don't like you.*
  - b) *Pray for people who treat you badly.*
  - c) It is hard to stay angry at a person you are praying for...
2. *This is almost impossible without a clear view of God's wrath...*

B. Remember God's wrath instead of venting yours. 17a, 19-20

1. **Prov. 20:22.** Leave room for the wrath of God.
2. **Deut. 32:35.** God will actually bring vengeance. He knows how and when and why. We don't.
3. The best way to restrain our (legitimate) anger is to consider God's wrath.

C. Treat the infection of animosity, with the antibiotic of kindness. 20-21

1. If your enemy is hungry, feed him ... **Prov. 25:21-22**
2. Burning Coals? Some think it represents increased judgment, but probably means some sort of conviction in the perp's soul about how he's treated you.
3. What have you got to lose? If you are kind to a person who is mean to you only one of two things can happen and both are OK.
  - a) They will repent and be forgiven like you have been. Would you stand in the way of that?
  - b) They will not repent and die in their sins, in which case God's judgment on them will be worse than yours.

**V. Good can and does overcome evil—That is the Message of the Gospel. Rom.5:6, 10**

- A. *This is precisely what Jesus has done for us.*