



Today we are in our Sermon Series entitled “**Love Rules**” where we are examining the nature of Christian love from the perspective of Romans chapter 12 and 13.

Today we will be in Romans chapter 12 verses 9-13 but before we get into our sermon text today let me say a word of prayer.

**Pray:**



Today's sermon is entitled, ***"Let's Be Friends."***

Now Lord willing over the course of your life you've had people in your life that you consider friends.

I have been blessed with many good friendships over the course of my life, but the first authentic friendship I ever had was with Billy Mulligan.



This is me and Billy a few months ago, when our family drove up to Scranton Pa to surprise him for his 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday. He was so excited/surprised to see me, he cried, and then he made me cry.

The tears were because our bond runs deep, Billy Mulligan is embedded in my childhood. He was the first deep Christian friendship I'd ever had. *[Pause]*

Now, friendship is defined as, one attached to another by affection or esteem. And we human beings are drawn toward friendship because we need the attachment, affection and esteem that healthy friendships bring us.





And you know as I studied our scripture passage this week I was convicted again and again about how **VITALLY IMPORTANT THIS MESSAGE “*Let’s Be Friends,*” IS FOR US TODAY!**

Because when you turn on the TV or or scroll through the news online...it seems like everywhere you turn the message is more like “***Let’s Be Enemies.***”

There is so much division in our country right now *[you know this, you see it]*. But friends, we who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be rooted in LOVE...and as LOVE RULES our hearts...the power of Christ in us can heal division, it can mend fences, it can restore.



## Romans 12:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good.

And so what we are going to look at this morning is an exhortation concerning HOW LOVE SHOULD RULE AMONG US, the Church.

We are going to explore 4 Characteristics of Christian Love.

And then we will also look at how the LOVE that grows among us can spill over into our communities/connections as we carry the LOVE OF JESUS WITH US.

Alright picking back up in Romans chapter 12 verse 9 it reads...

**Read:**



## Romans 12:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good.

Let's stop there for a moment...what does it mean for love to be sincere?

*Gk. Anypokritos, "without hypocrisy"*

Therefore our love should be without hypocrisy.

A hypocrite in classical Greek described someone who wore a mask in a play. The people of Paul's time would have understood he was saying that we are not to wear a mask when we love others – pretending to love but inwardly thinking something else.

What Paul is trying to express here is that, Christians are not called to fake an attitude of love for each other, but rather to find ways to express God's love meaningfully.





## Romans 12:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good.

*Illus:*

*Have you ever had the experience where someone was trying to do something for you, but you knew their heart wasn't really in it? It doesn't feel good!*

*Years ago when we were moving houses in Colorado we had a moving party. This is where you buy a bunch of pizzas and invite all your friends over to help you move...it's also when you find out who your true friends are. Well one of our friends showed up to help, but he also made it very clear by his demeanor that he didn't really want to be there.*

*And so we had a bunch of people there who really wanted to love on and serve our family, and then one **Eeyore** who tried to show us love but in an insincere way.*



## Romans 12:9 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good.

Paul anchors this statement about sincere love, with the reminders to HATE WHAT IS EVIL, and to instead CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD.

And at first glance it might seem like these are unrelated statements within the context of sincere love...but consider this.

God's love towards us is fully sincere, it is completely without hypocrisy...because God is the epitome of good...and the absence of evil.

And as we express sincere love in our lives to the people God has placed on our path, we demonstrate that we too HATE WHAT IS EVIL and CLING TO WHAT IS GOOD.





*Illus:*

*What's interesting is that our English word "sincere" comes from two Latin words meaning, "without wax." Back in ancient times dishonest merchants would fill a crack in a pot with wax and glaze over it, selling the defective pot as if it were just fine.*

*Only later [upon using the pot] would the buyer discover that the pot was broken and worthless. So honest dealers would stamp sine cera on their pots, verifying that it was without wax, the real deal.*



I think that everyone of us can grow in the sincerity of our love.

I will just speak for myself that the love I offer up often does have cracks in it, cracks that I try to wax over, I try to pass it off.

But God knows the truth, he knows every crack and he challenges us to love like Him.



# Characteristic of Christian Love #1

Our Love should not wear a  
mask

And that brings us to Characteristic of Christian Love #1. ***Our Love shouldn't wear a mask.***

Nowadays if you talk about wearing a mask it brings up a whole new connotation since 2020.

No matter how you feel about physical masks, I think we can all agree that masking our heart isn't a good idea.

Friends if you struggle with sincerity of heart you need to ask for God's help. King David did just that in Psalm 51:10 where he wrote, ***"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."***





## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Moving on in our text Romans 12:10 continues to expound upon the Characteristics of Christian Love...**Read:**

The word devotion here in the original language suggest ***family affection***.

Meaning that Christians are to be devoted to one another just like flesh and blood family.

***Illus:***  
***Have you ever had someone explain the difference between friends and family by stating that, “The difference between friends and family is that your family can’t say no.”***



## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

And I don't think they mean "can't say no" in an unhealthy way. But what I think what they mean is that your family are the people who ***can't say no, when you need to get picked up from the airport at midnight.***

Your family ***can't say no when you've lost your job and you need help to buy groceries.***

Your family ***can't say no when you've got a sick kid at home and zero sick days left at work.***

Now friends hopefully you have family that is devoted like that, it is a blessing for sure, but you know what?



## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Paul is saying that our devotion to one another as Christians should be like that of a family...devoted in LOVE.

Some of you can testify that your most devoted relationships are with Christians, perhaps even more so than your flesh and blood and the reason why this can happen is because our union with Christ is also a blood bond, his blood shed for us, uniting us into one family.

I wish you could all physically be here this morning because what I would have you do is look around at all the people gathered together as the church and for you to marvel at the power of God's command for us to be devoted to one another in LOVE.





## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

This is an incredibly powerful concept that has shaped our world as Christians who have gone before us have lived out this virtue, and have then reaped the blessings of devoted community.

Friends Brandywine Valley Baptist Church is a devoted community, we are a great body to be a part of, however if you have not leaned in yet to taste the blessings of being connected to a group of Christians that is devoted to one another....NOW IS THE TIME.

Next week we will be hosting our membership class, check our website, sign up, get more deeply involved in what God is doing here. *[commercial over 😊]*.



## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

In the second half of this verse Paul exhorts us to do one of the ***most loving*** and ***most difficult*** things we can attempt to do.

***To honor others above ourselves.***

We see this concept come up many times in scripture, most notably *Philippians 2:3* "*consider others better than yourselves.*"

This is hard to do because our selfish hearts wants what it wants...and often what our heart desires is ***self gratification*** not ***self sacrifice***.



## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

If I examine my heart, I find that it is much easier to HONOR THE SMALL # of people I AM VERY DEVOTED TO ABOVE MYSELF.

But what Paul does here is he takes this idea of DEVOTION and he challenges us to VASTLY BROADEN the scope of our DEVOTION.

You see many of us only want to be devoted to a small # of people, that way we can't get hurt by those we don't care about.

But what we are challenged with here isn't what we think our needs are, but rather responding first to the needs of those around us.





## Romans 12:10 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

And Church family, as we honor others above ourselves we create an environment where the Gospel can flourish.

Because in that environment Christ will not only live in our words but in our actions too.



# Characteristic of Christian Love #2

Our Love should be  
sacrificial

And that brings us to ***Characteristic of Christian Love #2. Our love should be sacrificial.***



### ***Illus:***

I don't know if you were aware of this or not but ...certain ants especially in South and Central American rainforests will form a makeshift bridge, allowing other ants—sometimes numbering over 200,000—to make better time by climbing over them to get to their source of nourishment.

In addition to this, researchers at the University of Bristol took a wooden plank and drilled different sized holes in it, simulating a narrow trail. Ants in this research study would find holes equal to their size and lay down inside, letting others walk safely over them. When the raiding party accomplished its mission and was returning to its nest, the faithful few climbed out of their holes and followed the raiders back home.





Friends consider, who in your life needs to be carried for a bit so they can receive nourishment?

No doubt each of us has someone in our lives that need us to sacrifice so that they can be whole/fed.

And no doubt each of us can point to someone [*or a group of people*] in our past who sacrificed to create a bridge that carried us/fed us.

Friends the nature of Christian love is that it is sacrificial, and by nature of that it is hard. But God doesn't command you and I to do things he hasn't done himself, and in Christ Jesus we have the purest manifestation of sacrifice.

## Romans 12:11,12 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.<sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

He [*Christ*] carried us over the chasm of death, and now invites us to turn to a world in need fueled with His sacrificial love.

And as we move on in verse 11 Paul moves on to describe the attitudes that should shape our Love.

### Read:

Verse 11 challenges us to keep our zeal up. zeal speaks to our excitement, our eagerness.

Many people have had the experience that when they first came to know Christ they possessed endless zeal.



## Romans 12:11,12 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.<sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

They were active for Christ...seeking every opportunity, to connect, serve, etc.

But then as time passes so does their zeal/eagerness to be active for Christ.

Here Paul acknowledges this truth by challenging us to ***keep*** our spiritual fervor.

But how do we ***maintain*** our spiritual fervor?

He tells us in verse 12.

**Remain Joyful in Hope:** You see we can maintain our spiritual fervor if our hope is in Christ.



## Romans 12:11,12 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.<sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

You see apart of the reason new Christians are often not lacking in zeal is because the Hope and Joy of Christ is **fresh**. Friends, may we never lose sight of the JOY of our salvation and the HOPE that remains in each new day.

The **second** way we keep our zeal up is by being, **Patient In Affliction**: You see friends it is often affliction that zaps us of zeal. We might be flying high spiritually and then a series of trials lays our spiritual activity flat.

Paul's exhortation here is to not allow troubles to steal your spiritual fervor...instead be **patient** knowing that just as God has always caught you in the past...that He will not drop you now.



## Romans 12:11,12 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.<sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

The **third** way we are reminded to keep our zeal up in this passage is by being, **Faithful in Prayer**.

You see, it is prayer that brings power into our lives and peace into our hearts.

If you find yourself this morning feeling flat in your faith lacking the zeal you once had...I ask, when was the last time you faithfully prayed to God about it?

You see just like we need to be intentional about our human relationships in order for them to flourish...in order for our connection with God to grow we must remain faithful in prayer.



# Characteristic of Christian Love #3

## Our Love should be active

And that brings us to ***Characteristic of Christian Love #3. Our love should be active.***

*[Pause]*

Did you know that actively loving others can actually add years to your life?

I'm not making this up. Researchers at the University of Michigan recently did a study that discovered that the survival rate of seniors who **volunteered 40 or more hours a year** for a single cause was 40 percent greater than that of non-volunteers.



# Characteristic of Christian Love #3

## Our Love should be active

40% that's amazing. You see friends as we look for opportunities to love others well, it gives new purpose and meaning to our lives. No doubt that is a part of the reason why it adds years to our lives.

Now while that illustrations was targeted towards Seniors, in truth this applies to us all.

If you are already active in service to others, GREAT JOB! KEEP IT UP!

But if isn't you but you would like to find opportunities to connect and serve others, ***indicate that on your virtual connection card***. We will get you connected, so you can begin actively sharing the Love of Christ.





## Romans 12:13 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Let's move onto our final verse that we are going to examine this morning. Romans 12:13

**Read:**

The year 2020 has given us ample opportunity to respond to this text. The number of needy amongst us is staggering, those who have lost their jobs or are under employed, those who are sick in hospital, those who have lost family/friends during this pandemic, seniors who are lacking connection right now, students who are frustrated because of all they have missed out on.





## Romans 12:13 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

There are countless people with an empty tank right now...and the Christian response that we see here in our text is to SHARE.

Often times we sell ourselves short and think we do not have a lot to share...but that's not true we all have gifts [Pastor Nate touched on this last week].

Are you using the unique gifts that God has given you...and sharing with those in need.

Perhaps God has given you a great listening ear...or the ability to fix things...maybe God has given your financial resources or maybe you have nothing to your name but a smile. Friends use what have to share with those in need.



# Romans 12:13 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Our final exhortation here in our text [v.13] is to **Practice Hospitality**.

The transliterated meaning of this phrase is “*pursuing friendliness to strangers*”

**Practice Hospitality = Pursuing friendliness to strangers**

We often ignore strangers in our cultural context but the gospel challenges us to pursue them, to make friends with them.



This is the home of Leon and Nancy Finifrock. As foster parents, Leon and Nancy took in over one hundred teenage boys, boys that no one wanted—not even the state of Minnesota.

They were boys Nancy claimed had sadly become, “the rejects of our society’s dysfunction.” In their home, on forty acres of land, they had also created a zone of radical hospitality.

Leon and Nancy didn’t do this because they wanted a pat on the back, or because of pity. No, they believed that they were shown radical hospitality by Jesus Christ.



They believed they were given a new home and a new birth...and they wanted to pursue friendliness to strangers in Jesus name.

It's tempting to think that what Leon and Nancy did was something unusual or unique. But for Christians, it's not supposed to be unique. It's just what the church does.

**Pursuing friendliness to strangers**





# Characteristic of Christian Love #4

Our Love should be  
generous

And that brings to ***Characteristic of Christian Love #4.***  
***Our love should be generous.***

*[Pause]*

The takeaway from that last illustration isn't that you need to go out immediately and start fostering...perhaps for some of us that's the case...but for the majority of us the generosity of our love will take many different forms.

As you are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading you will know how to be generous with your love. Friends prayerfully consider this!



I want to leave you with this as we begin to close out time this morning.

There is a quote I recently read from a Pastor named Tyler Edwards that illustrates the impact our Christian communities should have through our love.

Tyler says, [quote]  
“Bombs have what's called a "blast-radius," defined as the distance from the source that will be affected when an explosion occurs. Churches should have love-radiuses—anyone within twenty miles of a church should know it and be positively affected by the church's love.”



How beautiful would it be if every Christian church impacted it's community in that way.

Why not us! Why not now! Our world needs it!

May we continue to build and grow our LOVE within this place Brandywine Valley Baptist Church, because we know that God first loved us and sent His Son to die that we might live.

Now might we live for the one who died for us, sharing His love, spreading His hope.