

# The Gospel Applied: A Church shaped by Gospel Love

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[ 0 : 00 ] Romans chapter 12 verse 9 to 21 and it's page 1139 in the Church Bible. Romans chapter 12 verse 9 to 21 and page 1139.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse.

Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.

Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

[ 1 : 16 ] Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written, It is mine to avenge. I will repay, says the Lord.

On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Well, please keep your Bibles open there at Romans 12. we're looking at a new section a new series which we're calling the gospel applied which simply means that the good news of Jesus is not just for people who are not yet Christians but it's for the church and it shapes us and it transforms us as we saw last week into people who serve and who sacrifice and this week we'll see how it shapes us to be a people of love so let's ask for God's help as we look at His word together Father would you by your Holy Spirit please teach us teach us what love is all about correct our misunderstandings of what love is and please show us what it is to be a community of love that reflects the love of God to us to one another to the world and to the community around us Father would you please change us through what we look at today and that we will be different people as a result that we would be more Christ-like we cannot do this ourselves and so we come humbly asking that you would change us we pray this in Jesus name Amen so where would we go to if we want to find true love well it might seem strange but the answer is this we need look no further than the church and I'm not talking about the physical or sexual relationships that our culture defines as love I'm talking about genuine and sincere love where people are look at verse 10 of chapter 12 where people are devoted to one another in brotherly love and look at verse 15 where people rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn this is the kind of love that the world is looking for it's a love that's faithful and loyal it's a love that's giving and is not demanding it's a love that is caring and not self-seeking it's the kind of love that never gives up on people whenever we fail and the place that we find this true love is in the church after all the church is to be a community of love the church that this letter was written to the book of Romans was written to a people who were from all kinds of backgrounds there were very religious people like the Jews there were people who were non-religious like the Gentiles some were of a very high position who were very wealthy there were others of a low position who didn't have much they were a mixed bunch racially culturally and socially and the potential within that community for division and disagreement was huge and so he's writing to encourage them to show them what it is to be a loving community that is committed to each other and there are two things that make a loving community possible first they are a people who have come to experience God's mercy go back to chapter 12 verse 1 because

this is where this whole passage flows out of it all flows from verse 1 of chapter 12 therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy he's reminding the people to look back at the mercy they have received from God so why don't we do that let's look back to

[ 7 : 04 ] Romans chapter 5 verse 8 as just one example of where we see God's mercy to us as people Romans chapter 5 and verse 6 so we're looking back and wanting to see what God has done for us and this is what it says verse 6 you see at just the right time when we were still powerless Christ died for the ungodly very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die but God demonstrates his own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us when we were still in active rebellion against God when we had no time for God when we didn't want him

God reached out in love to us and died for us go back to chapter 12 he's saying view God's mercy see how much God has loved you see how he has forgiven you how he has accepted you and welcomed you into his family and when we see that it has this knock on effect so second we now belong to each other so look at chapter 12 verse 5 in view of God's mercy verse 1 this is the knock on effect this is the working out of it verse 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others so this church that has come to experience

God's mercy and God's love is not a collection of individuals all doing their own thing no they are now a community of God's people who are committed to each other so look at some of the words that we have here in this section chapter 12 verse 10 it says be devoted to one another verse 13 share with God's people verse 16 live in harmony with one another verse 17 be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody verse 18 the end of verse 18 live at peace with everyone you see when we come to know the mercy of God when we experience God's love love in our own life it begins to shape us and transform us and it creates us and builds us and forms us into a community of people that are committed to one another no longer individuals but now

God's people together and all of this leads to thirdly a community of love love so verse 9 he says to them love must be sincere so the church is not a theatre where everybody comes in different kinds of costumes and their mask and they're all acting out a particular role there's no hypocrisy there's no pretense in this community no this is real verse 9 and this is sincere these are a people who have come to experience the deep love of Christ and now they live out that love in commitment to one another so we want to ask what does this community of love look like in practice when the gospel has come into our lives and when it has changed us and brought us together what does it actually look like in practice well three things first it shapes us into being a community where love has no limits it shapes us into a community where love has no limits look at verse 10 be devoted to one another in brotherly or family love because of our faith in Christ because we've been welcomed into the family of God we are now he's saying brothers and sisters together we're like a big family so how do we show our devotion to one another within this family within this gathering well read on in verse 10 it says honour one another above yourselves honour one another above yourselves so we look at each other as more important the person beside me is more important than me and that person is more in need of love than what

I am that's how we view each other so on a Sunday morning when we come in together or when it comes to tea and coffee time we don't sit and wait for somebody to come to me and ask me how am I doing rather we take the initiative and we go to the other person and we ask them how are you doing and how can I serve you because we're always viewing the other person as in need of love now that's not easy to do is it so look at verse 11 he says never be lacking in zeal never be lacking in your enthusiasm to love one another never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervour serving the Lord so if ever you feel like your heart is empty and there's no love in there and you've just got nothing to give he's saying remind yourself of God's faithful and loyal love to you keep your spiritual fervour go back again to the mercy of God look at the way in which

[ 13 : 35 ] God has loved you let that change you and refresh you and fill you so that love overflows from your life to other people keep your spiritual fervour and one of the practical ways in which we can begin to show this love to one another is to get alongside people and to walk with them through their ups and downs in life because that is the experience of life it is full of ups and downs and so we get alongside each other and we support each other verse 12 be joyful in hope patient in affliction and faithful in prayer so let's work this through if a member of the church family that you know is facing into a tough situation where you need to get alongside them and remind them of the hope we have in Christ that he is the one who is in control of our life situation he is the one who is

with us and will never abandon us he is the one who will bring us safely to his eternal kingdom that is the hope that we can share with each other or what if somebody within your home group is experiencing some kind of trouble at home or at work well the encouragement here is to be patient with them hang in there with them don't give up on them don't bail out on them like everybody else gives up on other people you hang in there you stick with them you are patient in affliction and if somebody comes along with you and shares a difficulty with you even today somebody has said this is going on in my life be faithful in prayer take that responsibility on and pray for them why wait till you get home pray for them in the here and now and be faithful to remember them in prayer now of course that might all happen just on a

Sunday morning but we know that church isn't just about a couple of hours like today church happens 24-7 throughout the week so look at verse 13 share with God's people who are in need practice hospitality mercy now I think it's great that this is a community of people where people share with those who are in need that's why we have the ministries of mercy that's why we have the fellowship fund that's why people give practically by giving finances to share with those who are in need in all kinds of situations and I think it's great the way people invite each other into their homes for dinner and for lunch and arrange to meet up with people that's what it's all about but let me challenge us a little bit here let me push it out a bit more who are the kinds of people we invite to our homes do we just invite the people like like me as in the kind of people that

I get on with and I kind of feel comfortable with and and we we have the same kind of interests why not ask yourself who have I never invited to my home who within the church family has never stepped across the doorway of my house and why don't I invite them and get to know them and share life with them you see there are no limits to how we might show our love for each other and isn't that how the Lord Jesus showed his love towards us he never put a limit on his love for us he never said to us well I've got this amount of love and I'll give you that amount but it's going to be no more he continues to pour out his love upon us to awkward difficult sinners like you and me so that we might show limitless love to one another within the community of the church so first love has no limits second when the love of God begins to take a hold of our hearts and begins to shape us and transform us second we become a community where love crosses all barriers look at verse 14 here's where it really starts to get down deep bless those who persecute you bless and do not curse have you ever been wronged or hurt by somebody within the church family what do you want to do when that happens well if you're like me you might want to get your own back on them you wish bad things will happen to them that they'll suffer something difficult in their life maybe that they'll trap their fingers in the car door ha ha ha you want something bad to happen but look what it says bless and do not curse in fact it goes much further than that look at verse 15 rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn now it's easy isn't it to rejoice with people who we get on with people who we love to be around we can rejoice with them no problem and it's easy to mourn with those who have shown comfort and kindness to us in our trouble but this is telling us to get alongside those who have wronged us and offended us other people might put up barriers but as people of love we're going to cross those barriers we're going to break down walls of hostility and we're going to share in their happiness and we're going to grieve with them in their sadness bless and do not curse and instead of hostility look at verse 16 live in harmony with one another don't let the past and don't let what has happened before control how you live today and how you view each other today live in harmony with one another how do we do that well look at the rest of verse 16 do not be proud but be willing to associate people

of low position or be willing to serve people in all kinds of ways do not be conceited now this is very similar to what he's been saying to us back in verse 3 look in verse 3 again chapter 12 verse 3 he says for by the grace given me I say to every one of you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought but rather think of yourself with sober judgment so don't see yourself as inferior to anybody else don't see yourself as superior rather he says look at yourself with verse 3 with sober judgment in accordance with the measure of faith that God has given to you see yourself look at yourself through the eyes of the gospel see yourself as somebody who has received the rich mercy of God the one who has come to die for you who loves you and has welcomed you into his family and when we begin to see ourselves through that light that means we will begin to view each other correctly we won't start looking at each other according to what has happened in the past we'll no longer look at that person who has offended us and who spoke unkindly to us and think don't want anything to do with you we'll no longer look at people who've caused us hurt and pain and go wish

you weren't here instead we will see people will see one another as those who've received mercy just as I have received mercy mercy you see if we are Christians who bring brought into the community we don't build up barriers we build bridges we no longer view people as being on the other side and and to be ignored no we cross every barrier possible and we reach out in love to one another and that's what Christ has done for us he has crossed over the barriers that we have built up with our sin he has built a bridge by his death on the cross and in love he came to reach out to us to save us and to treat us as one of the family so that we will reach out across the barriers and build bridges into people's lives love crosses all barriers others and third and third once the gospel gets a hold of our heart and changes us and we we get to understand what

[ 23 : 45 ] God has done for us it will change us into a community of love that does not seek revenge look at verse 17 do not repay anyone evil for evil now the most natural reaction when we experience evil against us whether it is somebody who slanders our character or causes us some kind of harm we just want to repay them we want to get back at them but rather than repay look at the rest of verse 17 be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody so when you experience evil against you so for example if your colleague at work turns against you and starts talking behind your back or if you become the victim of an injustice or if your family member causes you some kind of hurt or pain or your neighbours or somebody around you is being mean to you at that moment the next move is yours the ball is in your court how are you going to respond how am I going to respond to that person well we can continue the cycle of evil or look at verse 18 if it is possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone in other words you and I can't stop evil happening to us we can't stop the things that come to us in our lives but we can be responsible for how we are going to respond to what people do so look at verse 19 do not take revenge my friends but leave room for

God's wrath for it is written it is mine to avenge I will repay says the Lord you see if you and I try to be the ones who take revenge we are simply trying to do God's job if we act as if we are the judge then we are trying to do what God does and if we try to do what God does we will just get it wrong it won't be fair it won't be just it will be a mess all it will become will be our little selfish desires trying to hurt the other person and trying to get back at them now of course that doesn't mean we ignore injustice we will see this next week in chapter 13 where God has established authorities and governments to deal with injustice and that's important but the point remains here we are to people who do not seek revenge or repay evil for evil instead look at verse 20 do you see what it says on the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty give him something to drink you see it's not just enough to ignore the person who has been mean to us or who has hurt us we don't just ignore them and pretend they are not there it's saying we must respond in a particular way we step out in love and we seek their best so if your colleague at work is giving you a rough time the next time when you are out together as a group at lunch time why don't you offer to buy lunch for them or buy coffee for them treat them differently to how they have treated you or if your friends are posting horrible things about you on Facebook don't respond with a whole series of other notes about how horrible they are rather write good things and kind things about them or if somebody within your family is being nasty if something is going wrong respond by acts of kindness and service do not treat them the way they have treated you look at the end of verse 20 in doing this you will heap burning coals on their head now this isn't kind of a nice

Christian way to kind of get your own back on them no what it is saying here is that if you begin to love other people well they will then begin to see in their own lives how rotten their behaviour is they will become shamed at the way in which they are living and they will change your loving reaction your loving response to their behaviour will begin to melt their hearts so verse 21 do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good you see that's exactly how Christ has treated us he doesn't take revenge on us he doesn't have it in for us he doesn't seek to try and repay us for all the wrong things that we've ever done he doesn't keep a list of all the things we've said and tries to pay us back one by one no because

Christ has taken the payment for all that we deserve he settled the account for us on the cross he took the wrath that we deserve so that we might not seek revenge against the people around us instead we will overflow in love towards them love never seeks revenge so this is what a loving community looks like love knows no limits love crosses all barriers and love never seeks revenge now as I go through this and as I think through this and been thinking through it through the week

not only do I see that I fail at doing this but I just find at times there's just no love in here and there's no love to overflow from here to live this kind of way so how are we going to do it how are we going to live this community of love well let's go back to the beginning to where this whole section starts remind ourselves again chapter 12 verse 1 this is where it all flows out of chapter 12 verse 1 it's a big turning point in the book it's saying therefore

I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy 11 chapters have been written to explain to us the amazing love and mercy of God and out and out of that when we see what God has done for us then it will begin to change us so that we can love as he loves us he doesn't say you've got to do better you must try harder you're being very bad at this thing or you're not doing very well here come on let's be better people no he simply says remember God's mercy look back at God's love who knows no limits who continues to pour out his love on people like you and me who mess up and fail all the time let that change you he says look back at the love of God that has crossed the greatest barrier God who came down from heaven to earth to reach down to rebellious people like you and me even when we were sinners and didn't want him he died for us he lost his life so that we could have life and look back at his love for us that never seeks revenge he's never trying to pay us back because he looks at

[ 32 : 14 ] Christ that Christ has absorbed it all for us we do not get what we deserve instead he treats us with grace and compassion look back to the mercy of God look back to his amazing love read about it talk to each other about it sing about it pray it into your heart and when that gospel love reaches down into our lives it will shape you and transform you and it will mold you into being the kind of person God calls you to be and so as we get a grip of God's love or as God's love gets a grip of our hearts so it changes us to be the loving community he calls us to be and when we change and as we are being changed and as we live out this community of love people all around us will see people who live lives of love and will be attracted to the

God of mercy so that they too will come to know his love let's pray together father father thank you for loving us thank you for demonstrating your love for us through your son the lord jesus who died for us on the cross so that we might know his love and that we might be changed so that we might love one another thank you for loving us so much thank you for bringing us together as a community and a gathering of your people thank you for every person and every family represented here thank you for family represented here. Thank you for the kindness and the support and the care of one another.

Thank you for the gifts that you have given to each one of us so that we might serve one another. Thank you for changing us. Thank you for your love. And we pray that we would be shaped and molded every day by what you have done so that we may live lives of love to one another, to the workplaces we go to tomorrow, the colleges and schools that we are in within our neighborhoods and may love overflow so that people see the love of God. We pray for your help in doing this. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing about that amazing love of God and it's only by returning, if you like, to the well of God's love, the deep, deep love of Jesus, that that will motivate us and encourage us.

Thank you.