This week, we’re going to continue our study by looking at verses 9-13 where Paul describes how the renewing of our mind is demonstrated in our love toward the brethren.

It reads:

Romans 12:9-13 (NASB)

09. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.
10. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
11. not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
12. rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
13. contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

I’ve entitled this week’s study, **What’s Love Got to Do with It?**

In 1984, Tina Turner released her most successful single titled, “What’s Love Got to do with it? Unfortunately, because of tragic events in her life, she summarized the significance of love with these words:

- What's love got to do, got to do with it?
- What's love but a secondhand emotion?
- What's love got to do, got to do with it?
- Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?

As you can see, she describes love as “just a secondhand emotion.” the definition of love according to that statement is something that is simply self-serving in nature. In the song, love is a fleeting emotion that comes and goes based on a particular circumstance. In her case, it was an abusive relationship. Though the song is catchy, it’s flawed explanation of love has not only saturated the minds of those outside the church, but also those who profess Jesus as Lord.
Romans chapter 12 introduces a noticeable shift in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Beginning with this chapter, Paul discusses both practical and ethical matters. Paul’s letters often follow this pattern of doctrinal teaching followed by ethical instruction intended to help believers live out their faith in Jesus Christ. This pattern highlights the strong relationship between sound doctrine and righteous living, emphasizing the fact our understanding of theology (who God is and what He does), shapes and supports our ethics (who we are in Christ and what we should do).

If you remember from last week, verses 4-8 were about the use of our spiritual gifts. Starting in verse 9, Paul turns from the focus on gifts to the focus on showing love in the church. This is exactly what he did in 1 Corinthians. Chapter 12 is all about gifts. But at the end of the chapter, Paul says, “But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way”. That more excellent way is love. Paul then continues in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, with a list of core attributes of love. Although we reserve this chapter for weddings, the reality is Paul wrote it to the church at Corinth after hearing of unrest, arguing, and conflict by the Corinthians. Paul wrote quite a scathing letter chastising the people for not truly showing love. Besides the 13 exhortations we’re about to cover, Paul tells us that in the body of Christ, all members must live love that is patient, kind, truthful, hopeful, enduring, and strong, and that rejects envy, arrogance, rudeness, irritability, wrongdoing, and resentment. (Love without hypocrisy, and hate evil)

So, in 1 Corinthians 12-13 and Romans 12, Paul is very specific that the use of gifts in the church is important, however, they are not more important than love.

Starting with verse 9, Paul begins with a general, two-part introductory statement calling the reader’s attention to genuine love. Part one states, Romans 12:9a Let love be without hypocrisy.

The word love in verse 9 comes from the Greek word agape, which means unconditional love that is active and shows love through actions. It’s the love that God shows us, and with the indwelling of His spirit, we show towards others. Until this point, Paul has not used the word agape to describe how we should love one
another. So far, in the book of Romans, he uses it only to describe God’s love toward man. Now he takes the term and suggests unconditional love is the love Christ followers should have for one another. Why? because it’s the single most distinguishing mark of a true believer. (John 13:35) says, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Romans 12:9b: Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

What Paul is making very clear is if we are truly followers of Jesus Christ, we are to love unconditionally without hypocrisy.

The word hypocrite comes from the Greek word hupokrites (Hoop-o-crete-tae), and was used to denote an actor, one who performed behind a mask. During a Greek play or drama, there would be a happy mask for some actors and a sad mask for others. They are the Comedy and Tragedy masks. While on stage, the actors would use the masks to pretend to be someone else. Then, when the play is over, they would take the mask off and go back to being who they really were in real life. So, the word hypocrite implies one who puts forward an outward appearance that does not truly represent one’s true self. Interestingly enough, the term hoop-o-crete-ta became so profound, it took on various meanings in Scripture. In James 3:17, hypocrites are people who show partiality; in Luke 12:56, they are people lacking in spiritual perception; and in Matt. 24:51, they simply seem to be people who are wicked. Jesus repeatedly applies the term to the scribes and Pharisees, suggesting they are like “whitewashed tombs,” which on the outside look beautiful but are actually full of filth on the inside.

So what Paul is suggesting is that as a body of Christ's followers, the love that God shows us is the same love we should show one another, and we better not be fake about it. If I cannot love you despite your shortcomings, your ethnicity, your economic status, your politics, or your origin of birth, then I must work on myself. I need to gain a better understanding of theology so I can better understand that, despite my shortcomings, God still loves and accepts me. And I am to do the same for you.
Well, that was part-one of the two-part introductory statement calling the reader’s attention to genuine love. Part-two is **Romans 12:9b: Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**

The term for “good” in the original language speaks of “moral excellence.” The verb translated “cling to” means “to stick or hold together and resist separation, to join, unite, or embrace.”

When Paul told the Roman Christians to “cling to what is good,” his desire was for them to embrace moral goodness with all their beings or, in other words, to love it.

As you can see, this command logically follows the first one: If you choose to show others the unconditional “agape” love, God shows you, you're going to hate what is evil. Why? Because evil divides fellowship. How can I say I love God and you and tolerate the sin that destroys those relationships? So, the more I grow in my love for God and others, the more I should hate evil. Since "abhor" is a present tense imperative, verse 9 can be paraphrased: "Be constantly hating that which is evil. " Evil isn’t something we can tolerate at any level. We must constantly hate everything that is evil – including hypocrisy.

But it’s important to know that if you constantly hate evil, and don’t cling to what is good, the only one being glorified is you.

Verses 10-13 are supporting descriptions of how agape love it manifested:

**PLEASE LEAVE THIS VERSE ON THE SCREEN UNTIL I FINISH EXPLAINING VERSE 13:**

**Romans 12:**
10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;
11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;
12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,
13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

- Verse 10 describes agape love being devoid of self-interest, giving preference to others.
• Verse 11 describes the exuberance and diligence agape love stimulates, to carry through with those tasks which build up others.
• Verse 12 points to the future hope which empowers agape love to endure present hardship and reminds us that prayer strengthens our faith and begets hope.
• Verse 13 highlights two particular needs which agape love should be eager to meet:
  1. the need for physical and financial help and
  2. showing kindness in welcoming guests or strangers.

Verses 9–13 are 5 verses pregnant with 13 exhortations of Christian ethical living flowing from agape love. And this love begins with an understanding of who God is, is received because of God’s mercy toward us, and is motivated by a changed mind. Most importantly, these 5 verses highlight the necessity to walk in agape love in our relationships within the body of Christ.

So, what does this mean for our daily walk as believers? It means that

Our behavior towards one another involves making decisions that seek to honor God as revealed in Scripture.

And the way Christ's followers are to treat one another is not based on feelings, nor on our individual definition of love. It’s not situational. It’s based solely on God’s definition of agape love. Let me explain....

Joseph Fletcher, an advocate of situational ethics, once told the story of a farmer whose daughter was sexually seduced by a traveling salesman. The girl’s brother was enraged and ready to shoot the salesman dead. Stepping in, the father rebuked his son with the words: “Son, you are so full of what’s right that you’ve lost sight of what’s good.”

One would argue that in that particular situation, the son was justified in his actions. But the problem is, situational ethics does not define morality and immorality in terms of biblical truth and discerning theology, but in terms of one’s individual definition of “love” and what they deem is right at that moment. Being right is not what Christian living is all about. God calls us to be righteous. Being righteous means willingly following God's commands, and He has instructed us to
love Him and to love one another. At what point do we, as a body of believers, realize there is a price to pay for always wanting to be right? Relationships are broken, families are torn apart, marriages fail, and churches split, because being right is more important than being righteous. Don’t get me wrong, righteousness still seeks the truth, but it does it honorably. And that’s what Paul highlighted in this chapter. He’s saying the love that God calls for is ...

- A holy love - a love which hates sin and loves righteousness.
- A sacrificial love - It requires us to deny our desires and interests, and sometimes our rights, so that we may serve others selflessly.
- An eternal love - It looks for long-term rewards rather than short-term pleasure. It endures hardship, suffering, and pain, for the benefit of others and for the service of the King and His pleasure.
- A love that takes risks and shines forth when others are shrinking back.
- A love that responds to and reflects the love of God in us

Biblical love cannot be separated from biblical righteousness. Paul is letting us know that agape love is attracted to and adheres to that which is “good,” (or, morally excellent), abhorring and withdrawing from “evil.” And both are determined by God’s sovereignty and not our selfish definitions of right and wrong.

As in the case with the father in the farmer’s story, our heavenly father is saying in these verses is, and to as a body of believers,

**Don’t become so full of what you think is right that you lose sight of God’s righteousness.**

No matter what the situation is, agape love must be the source, substance, standard, and goal of our Christian ethics. When that happens, love becomes the glue that holds our mosaic together.

While on vacation this year, Lisa and I took a stroll in Savannah, Georgia’s historical marketplace and stopped at A.T. Hun Art Gallery. <SHOW PICTURE OF MOSAIC> While there, a beautiful mosaic of a mother blowing bubbles with her daughter caught our eyes. As we spoke with the clerk about it, she told us the artist
designed it from thousands of broken pieces of glass. I’m sure when the glass was sitting on the table or in a bucket, it appeared to be worthless and even scary. However, someone with an artistic eye knew that beauty could come from brokenness. And with precision and purpose, she took each shard piece of glass and created a beautiful mosaic that’s worth $8K.

The reality is the church is full of broken people. We try to do a good job of hiding it, but we were all born into sin and are still battling with issues. But the master artist who designed the universe, the stars, and the earth, tells us that if we place our faith in Christ and Christ alone, he will not only put our pieces back together, but He will also use our brokenness to make a beautiful mosaic called the church. And in order to participate, you don’t have to hide your brokenness by pretending to be someone you’re not (that’s being a hypocrite), but by acknowledging it, repenting of it, and practicing the art of showing genuine love, hating what is evil, clinging to what is good, being devoted to one another in love, honoring one another above ourselves, by not lacking in zeal, keeping your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord and being joyful in hope.

May I suggest that a theological and ethical understanding of God’s word holds the answer to the question: “What’s love got to do with it?” And the simple answer is **Love has everything to do with it when it comes to our Christian faith.**