

“Loving from the Inside Out”

Romans 12:9-21

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Romans 12:9-21 is one of the most relevant passages to dig into as it pertains to the culture war going on in today’s world between Judeo-Christian thinking and secular thinking.

There are strategies and priorities of our heavenly Father as to how He’s called us to fight this war and love is at the very heart of it!

I. It Matters How You Fight

Romans 12:21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

That’s radical. That’s the strategy God gives us because King Jesus is leading us into this battle and He’s the King of an upside down kingdom, so it’s an upside down fight!

II. It Matters What You Feel as You Fight

Once you’re convinced of what you know God’s Word says, ask God to light a passionate fire in you, because you actually do want to feel something about it!

Romans 12:9 “... Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”

That verse is loaded with some passionate, fierce verbs.

“Christianity is not merely choosing the right thing. It’s choosing with intensity.” – John Piper

Romans 12:11 “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

The Greek phrases in **v. 11** have the idea of boiling up and over passionately in the Spirit, which is the opposite of apathy or indifference we often see in our world today.

The Bible says intensity, zeal, and wholeheartedness all matter. Don’t settle for anything less or make excuses for yourself. Half-hearted and lukewarm is no good.

Revelation 3:15-16 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm I am about to spit you out of My mouth.”

III. It Matters Where You Start in this Fight

He points us back to our own pride as the starting point in this fight.

A. Start by Killing Your Own Pride

Romans 12:16 “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”

Pride will get in the way of just about everything He's asking you to do in this passage! If you're a proud person you can't do these things!

Romans 12:15 "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

Pride is almost always at the root of our inability to weep with others or rejoice with others, because it disables our emotions, and leaves us clueless to what anyone else is feeling.

Beg God to help you become aware of your pride, to start killing your pride, and to keep killing your pride until Jesus comes!

B. Start by Loving Your Own Kind – Other Christians

Romans 12:10 "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another."

That's challenging because we don't all think alike. Our chance for all of us getting along is real, fierce, furious love that boils up and bubbles over. We have to cry out to God to help us do that because we could never naturally do that in our own strength.

If we can't do it right here in our own church family, what are the chances we'll ever do it out in the world with people that mock us, attack us, and may even seek to harm us?

C. Start by Radically Re-Thinking the Place and Purpose of Your Home

Romans 12:13 "Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality."

The Greek word for 'hospitality' is 'philoxenia' – composed of two words: Philos –Love and Xenos – stranger or foreigner. Literally it means 'A love for outsiders.'

Open up your home to someone very different than you to show them love at close range. It could be risky and awkward, but it could also be the first time someone actually tastes the love of Jesus!

D. Then Push Outside the Church Family to Even Love Those Who Persecute You

You can't really love your enemies the way **v. 20** is talking about unless you're close enough to know what their needs are! To love them the way God calls us to love them we have to get CLOSE to them.

IV. It Matters Who You Focus On and Follow

The book of Hebrews says to fix your eyes on Jesus!

Hebrews 12:1-3 "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."