

"Everyday Christianity" • Romans 12:9-21

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Hypocrisy

1. Two men met one morning at the mall
2. One of them said to the other, "Did you hear about Jim? He embezzled his company out of ½ million dollars."
3. The other man said, "That's terrible, but I never did trust Jim."
4. "Wait. There's more," the first man said. "When he left town he took Tom's wife with him."
5. The second man said, "Poor Tom, that's outrageous--I had my suspicions about Jim all along."
6. "That's not the half of it," the first man said. "Before he left town, Jim got drunk, stole a car and hit a pedestrian."
7. "I'm stunned," said man two. "But what really concerns me is; who's going to take his place on the elder board?"

B. The Complaint

1. We hear a story like that and don't know whether we should laugh or cry
2. Clearly it's meant to be a humorous tale, but we hesitate to laugh when we hear it because in fact, it strikes too near the truth
3. Elders, Pastors, and other church leaders have wiggled out and gone off in gross sin
4. Look at the black eye the Church was dealt just a few years ago when some of its more notable leaders fell into scandal
5. We often hear the complaint that Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites
6. Up until just recently, most depictions of Christians on TV were typecast as narrow-minded hate-filled bigots
7. It's interesting to see then that Paul spoke to this very issue of hypocrisy in Romans 12 . . .

II. TEXT

A. V. 9

{9} Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

1. Verses 9-21 contain nearly 2 dozen short exhortations to holiness
 - a. frankly, it would be easy for us to spend an entire week on each one of them
 - b. it was my original intention to cover all of them this morning
 - c. but as I got into study this week, I realized we will only be able to look at v. 9 today
2. The first thing we want to take careful notice of, is that what we find here flows out of what Paul wrote in verses 1 & 2

(Rom 12:1-2) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.* {2} And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3. What we find in verses 9 through the end of the chapter are practical examples of renewed thinking
4. And they are all applicable to our daily lives
5. What we find here is *Everyday Christianity*
6. First of all Paul says we are to **Let love be without hypocrisy.**
 - a. in 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul says that love is the sum and total of the law
 - b. in Gal. 5:22, it is the chief fruit of the Holy Spirit
 - c. in 1 Peter 4:8, love is the capstone of Christian virtues
 - d. the marks and measure of spiritual maturity is revealed by the presence or absence of love in our lives
 - e. But love can be feigned; it can be faked
 - 1) it's possible for a person to maintain a façade of love
 - 2) when in fact they are hateful
 - 3) we probably all know people like that
 - a) they keep up a front of sweetness
 - b) but underneath they are bitter and hateful
 - f. Paul says that our love is not to be just a show; it is to be genuine, the real thing
 - g. **Let love be without hypocrisy.**
 - 1) "hypocrisy" = to wear a mask
 - 2) from Greek drama; actors wore masks that portrayed an emotion
 - 3) so, actors were called "hypocrites"
 - 4) Paul is saying that we are not to "play-act" at love
 - 5) we are not to use love as a front
 - 6) it must not be a mask, rather, it must be from the heart
 - h. the word for love, as you would expect, is "agape"
 - 1) agape is love that is marked by a desire for the highest good of another with no thought of return
 - 2) if agape is unselfish love, then hypocritical love is the opposite, it's selfish
 - a) it's manipulative
 - b) always angling for what it can get in return
 - c) it wears the mask of kindness, but it has one thing in mind; "What am I going to get out of this?"
 - 3) one Saturday morning, 17 year old Jimmy asked if he could wash his mother's car
 - a) that was somewhat unusual for him to make such an offer
 - b) so she was thrilled and said "Sure. Thanks"
 - c) he washed and waxed, it; Armor All-ed the tires, vacuumed the carpet and polished the windows. He even scrubbed the stains off the floor mats
 - d) once it was done, he came in to the house and said, "I'm done. Oh, by the way, I meant to ask: Can I borrow your car tonight"

- for a date?"
- i. artisans of the ancient Middle East used to fashion highly expensive statuettes out of a very fine porcelain
 - 1) they were of such fragile nature that extreme care had to be taken when firing the figurines to keep them from cracking
 - 2) dishonest dealers would accept the cracked figurines at a much lower price and then fill the cracks with wax before offering them for sale
 - 3) honest merchants would display their uncracked porcelain wares with signs that read, "sine cera," which means "without wax"
 - 4) that is where our word "sincere" comes from
 - j. our love is to be sincere: not a merely a cover up for a cracked life
7. Then Paul says we are to **Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.**
- a. why does Paul follow up an exhortation to love with a call to holiness?
 - b. because He knows the tendency to confuse love with a soft position toward evil
 - c. the words he uses to describe our actions regarding evil and good are strong words
 - 1) abhor & cling
 - 2) to abhor means to have an attitude of horror toward something
 - 3) there are two Greek words for "hate"
 - a) one is passive and means to have a hidden dislike = like the person who dislikes vegetables and so just doesn't eat them
 - b) the other word for "hate" is an intensely active word and means to so dislike something that you do your best to get away
 - c) this kind of hatred you cannot hide for it will manifest itself in your actions
 - d) if you hate something in this way, you will do whatever you have to to get as far away as is safe from the detested thing
 - 4) guess which word Paul uses here regarding our attitude toward evil
 - 5) that's right - the second!
 - d. God hates that which harms those He loves - so He hates evil
 - e. loving as God loves, means learning to hate as He hates
 - f. do we hate evil?
 - 1) do we seek to put a distance between evil and ourselves?
 - 2) do we find evil repulsive?
 - 3) do we avoid it, shun it, depart from it?
 - 4) or have we become so desensitized to evil by close living with it that we not only tolerate it, but enjoy it?
 - 5) are we entertained by evil?
8. While we are to abhor evil, we are to **cling to what is good**
- a. "cling" means to glue to, to fasten firmly
 - b. in distancing ourselves from evil, we are to move in the direction of that which is approved by God

B. Joseph's Example

1. We have a graphic demonstration of this in the story of Joseph in Potiphar's

house in Genesis 39 [turn there]

2. Here was a young man, of between 17 & 20, whom the scriptures say in verse 6, was very handsome
3. He was far from home, having been sold by his brothers into slavery
4. Now in Egypt, he was living among people who had no idea of his religious convictions
5. And every day, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him by giving him a bold and open invitation to sleep with her
6. Now, researchers who study these kind of things tell us that a man's peak years of sexual appetite are between 17 and 20 years, so Joseph is naturally disposed to be lured by this appeal
7. As well, Mrs. Potiphar was probably a pretty attractive woman
 - a. you might wonder how I can say that since the text doesn't
 - b. well, two things:
 - c. first: Potiphar was a very highly placed official in the Egyptian court, and powerful men are almost always married to beautiful women
 - d. second: there would have been no temptation for Joseph if she had been unattractive
8. The whole point in all this is that Joseph *was* tempted - it was a genuine test
9. But notice how Joseph handled the situation

{7} And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

{8} But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

{9} "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

10. Joseph had considered the *consequences* of sin
 - a. this is precisely where so many people fail and yield to temptation;
 - b. they never stop to consider the consequences of their sin
 - c. in the musical *Hitops* the character who plays Lucifer persuades some teenagers to sin by singing a catchy little line that goes "Don't think about the consequences."
11. Joseph did think about them; and knowing what they were steeled him against giving in
 - a. he knew that to lie with her meant to betray a man who had shown him great kindness
 - b. he also knew that it would be a sin that grieved the heart of God
12. Notice what he called it; "great wickedness"
13. Let's face it, part of the problem we have with temptation is seeing it for what it is: GREAT WICKEDNESS
 - a. the devil or our flesh suggests some sin to us
 - b. but they never call it 'GREAT WICKEDNESS'
 - c. they call it "fulfilling - satisfying - harmless - merely a diversion - just a little bit of fun."
 - d. no - it's "great wickedness"

14. When was the last time you heard the word "wicked" any place other than church?
 - a. it's just not used in popular culture anymore
 - b. but when you get right down to it, you realize that really, hear about any of the terms for evil anymore
 - c. "sin, wickedness"
 - d. even the word "evil" is rarely used, and then only to describe something demonic or Satanic that the hero of the story is trying to conquer through violence or trickery
15. Why have these words been virtually erased from our vocabulary?
16. Probably because evil has been so well accommodated in our culture
17. The only evil people are willing to acknowledge is serial killers and child molesters
18. Otherwise people are just said to have some kind of a *functional disability*
19. Friends, this is why we cannot be content just to be somewhat separate from the culture
 - a. to maintain a "safe" distance from what the world says is wrong
 - b. if we set ourselves to be, say this far [hand from hand] from the world,
 - c. then when the world takes a turn toward greater evil, we will find ourselves pulled over into things that at one time we agreed were wrong
20. We need to see things from the perspective of eternity and define evil as God sees it
21. It is now and will always be, GREAT WICKEDNESS
22. And we need to remember the consequences of sin when we are tempted
23. How many men and women today are standing in the middle of a shattered life
 - a. they've lost their family, their job, their home, their health
 - b. they've lost everything that was dear to them
 - c. all because of some little liaison with a co-worker
 - d. they never thought they would have to endure the consequences of a month's or week's indiscretion
24. Though we still have more to see here with Joseph, consider another man who was faced with temptation in the OT = Samson
 - a. what do you supposed was going through his mind at the end of his life as he was brought out before the Philistine lords to put on a show for them
 - b. blind, bound and now the object of their sport
 - c. he had begun his career as the mighty deliverer of Israel
 - d. he knew what it was to have the Spirit of God come on him
 - e. he knew what it was to slay hundreds and thousands of the enemies of God
 - f. as he stood there in the temple of Dagon, listening to the jeers and taunts, surely he must have thought, "God, it wasn't supposed to be like this! It wasn't supposed to end this way."
 - g. how he likely ached to go back, but it was too late
 - h. he had made his choice, but he never considered the consequences
25. Friend, don't be deceived, sin always exacts a heavy toll

26. Be sure your sin will find you out!
27. The devil will tempt you in private today but only so that he might shame you in public tomorrow!

{10} So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.

28. This was no passing temptation for Joseph
29. Mrs. Potiphar kept after him every day; she tried to wear him down
30. But notice carefully how he responded = He never gave in because he kept as much distance from her as he could
 - a. that's what it means when it says that he did not heed her
 - b. he didn't even allow himself to *fantasize* about what it would be like to lie with her
31. How pure is your thought life?
 - a. have you taken every thought captive to Christ?
 - b. or do you reserve some dark corner for evil?
32. Joseph had determined that he would not live close to the edge of sin
33. He had decided long before that he would stay as close to God as possible
34. There are those who try to walk a line that is close to sin
 - a. they ask questions like, "Can I do this and still be a Christian?"
 - b. or "If I do this, will I be able to come back?"
35. The problem with this mindset is that when the winds of temptation blow, and they always DO blow, by the way, because you have not room to give, you fall
36. But the one who is walking as far from the edge as possible because they are walking as close to God as they can, when temptation blows like a gale, they may stagger, but they don't fall
37. Friends, we will all be tempted - Every one of us
 - a. don't think that those who resist temptation do so simply because it is less strong for them
 - b. not at all; in fact, those who set themselves to abhor evil and cling to what is good will often face the strongest temptation because they pose the greatest threat to the devil
 - c. but the reason they resist when others fail is because they aren't living close to the edge of sin
38. Joseph remained faithful in the face of daily, strong temptation because he maintained a daily, strong relationship with God

{11} But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside,

{12} that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

39. Joseph did precisely what Paul said we must do
40. When temptation became so bold as to try to entrap him, he literally distanced himself
 - a. he *abhorred* the evil of sexual sin and made moves to stay out of it's clutches
 - b. he held fast to what was good by maintaining his purity at the expense

- of his reputation
- c. for what would the other servants think of a shirtless Joseph running out of the house?
 - d. certainly they knew about Mrs. Potiphar's amorous advances toward the young man
 - e. no doubt they would deride and chide him for his seemingly innocent and naïve response to this very desirable woman
 - f. but none of this concerned him for the care to maintain his integrity before the Lord
 - g. his good grasp on the good meant a willingness to let go of what was less than good

C. Samson

1. This is precisely where Samson erred in his life
2. Long before his fatal run in with Delilah and her barber scissors, Samson had been skirting the edge of sin
3. He had never abhorred sin; on the contrary, he seemed bent on flirting with it
4. Don't forget that long before he ever met Delilah, he fell for a Philistine girl from Timnah
5. And though his parents and friends all warned him about his first steps outside the bounds, he would not listen
 - a. he thought that he could come back any time he wanted to
 - b. but then his affection for this young gal trapped him in a dangerous game with the Philistines
 - c. and slowly but surely, they robbed him of every last bit of his strength
 - d. until he stood bound and blind in the middle of their temple, listening to their laughs
6. His last words are a solemn warning down the corridors of time and they ring loudly in our hearing this morning:
7. As he leaned in to the two pillars that supported the main beams of the temple, he prayed, "Let me die with the Philistines!"
8. Samson, the mighty judge - history's strongest man - the great warrior!
9. And his last prayer is that he might die with the enemies of God!
10. We read his story and we weep because of the incredible loss
11. What tremendous potential Samson had; but it was all squandered and lost
12. Why, because he did not abhor evil and cling to what is good.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Lost Potential

1. Think of the tremendous potential that lies within this room this morning
2. Not because we are mighty and strong within ourselves
3. But because God is still God
4. The same Spirit that came upon Samson is here today
5. And God is as ready to empower us to greatness as he was in the day of the

Judges

6. Because of Christ, even more so!
7. The question is not if we will be like Samson?
8. The question is, will we be like Joseph?
9. Will we walk so close to God that when temptation comes we will see it for what it is, a GREAT WICKEDNESS?
10. And cling to Him in steadfast love and loyalty!