

Romans 12:14-17

PREVIOUS

NEXT

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans — 3:21-5:21	Romans — 6:1-8:39	Romans — 9:1-11:36	Romans — 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	Gods Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

RELATED RESOURCES

Romans 12:14-17

[Romans 12:14-17](#)

Our Responsibilities Under Grace - Part 7

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

I love the chorus, "The Family of God."

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.

I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood.

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod.

I'm glad I'm a part of the family of God."

Something happens when you are surrendered. Your whole life changes. If I am not surrendered, if I am not being transformed willingly by the renewing of my mind, then the fog is still sitting on me. It has not lifted. I see the church as an organization. I see it differently than God sees it. But, oh, when I become surrendered, God begins to lift that fog and I begin to see the congregation, the church, differently than I have ever seen it before.

As a matter of fact, when I am surrendered we know from studying chapters 1 through 11, the Holy Spirit of God produces a love in me. It is qualified in verse 9. He says, "Let love be without hypocrisy." There is something in me and my relationships to others that is drastically different. It is God in me. It is God in you. God is manifesting a love that human ability could never attain. It is a divine love. It is a sensitive love. It is a caring love. It is a selfless love. It is God in us, living and manifesting His life and love through us.

Now, to show you that Paul is talking about the body of Christ, look again at verse 10. I want you to see this. He says in verse 10 of

chapter 12,

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."

The word "another" is very significant in the Greek language. In the English language we say another, another, another, and that is all we know. But in their language they had two words. One Greek word is the word heteros. That means another of a totally different kind. You need to know that when you are studying 1 Corinthians 12 in dealing with the gifts because he groups them in different, totally different groups. To one is given, to another is given. You need to know that word heteros and how it fits in that context.

Heterosexual means a different kind. A man would look over and see a woman, and a woman would see a man and they would realize they are different, I guarantee you. So we have heteros. It means another of a different kind.

Then there is the word **allos**, which is the word we get "ally" from. It means another of the exact or the very same kind. Jesus, when He was going back to the Father, said,

"I will send another Comforter—another exactly like Me. I will send My Spirit to live in you."

So Jesus is in me today in the person of His Holy Spirit, another exactly like Him.

Paul says, "Be devoted to one another."

Which word does he use? Does he use **heteros**? Is he talking about the world and the Christians because they are different? No, he uses the word **allos**, another of the very same kind. He is talking about Christian brothers and sisters. As far as I know, he doesn't change that context in chapter 12. That will be significantly important as we begin to work our way down through here. There are some who say that he has been talking about relationships within the church in chapters 9-13. Then in chapter 14 and down he goes into relationships outside the church. I beg to disagree. I believe he stays inside the church, so remember that is the direction I am going to take it as we walk through this today.

Let's look at verses 9-13 and see how this love is qualified. It is very important that we see this. See if you can follow along with me by what the verse says. We know that love is without hypocrisy in verse 9. It does two things. This love that the Holy Spirit of God produces in us as we are surrendered to Him will cause us to choose never to intentionally do anything that would bring harm to our brother. That didn't say that out of love for him we may not hurt him, but we do not hurt him except down the road to heal him or her, whoever we are talking about. When the Holy Spirit is filling you with this kind of love, you cannot, regardless of whatever anyone says, do anything that would be intentionally injurious to another brother or sister in Christ.

We will, because of it, be glued. Cling means to be glued. We will be glued to that which only does spiritual good. This is the good that is eternal and righteous and the kind that God does in our life. It is God working through us. We will see the body of Christ as our family.

The word "**devoted**" there has the meaning of family. We will be devoted to them regardless of their maturity. There are going to be some who just aren't very mature. There are going to be some who are very mature. But we will be glued to doing whatever we do with the intention that it will be beneficial, spiritually benevolent, to them. We will take the lead in loving them, not waiting on them to love us. Now that is important to remember. Some people always want somebody to love them. No, sir. This love is operative. We take the lead in loving others. We will be quick to respond. In fact, our attitude will be like a pot of water, fervent it says, a pot of water boiling over, ever ready to show love to others in the body. We will take great pleasure in the expectation of the good we believe will come from showing this act of love, whatever it is.

You see, when you are in the power of the Holy Spirit, you intentionally do good and take great pleasure in knowing that perhaps that good somewhere down the road will bring a great result, an eternal result in that person's life. It will be so much so that we are willing to bear up under whatever grief is caused by immature family members, not understanding this kind of love. We are never ceasing to pray for those we serve, always wanting to participate, verse 13 says, in the needs of the saints. We will pursue this even with those in the body we do not know. Now that is amazing.

It starts in verse 9. All those are participles all the way down to verse 13. It is a beautiful picture of what love without hypocrisy is all about. I want to say it again. It is not something I can work up, it is something God the Holy Spirit produces when I am living a surrendered life. I take this sinful body and present it to Him because I don't want to present it to sin and to bondage. God takes it and, like a vessel, flows His life through it. The mark on that life being ushered through my life is that word love, and it is without hypocrisy.

Now you come into verse 14. There are a lot of hard times that you have to endure in the family of God. Yes, there are some in the world, certainly. But I am talking about in the family of God. You could have called this, "How to Love Each Other in the Hard Times," the hard time meaning persecution. I hate to tell you, but it is in the Word of God—and God has already told us in 2

Timothy 3:12—Paul says that if you seek to live a godly life, he didn't say you might be, he said you will be persecuted. That word is going to surface in the first verse we are going to look at.

Now again, I am going to take it from within the body of Christ. Some people take it without. That certainly is true and I do not denounce that. I don't think the context has changed, though. I think he is still in the body, still in the family, to one another as we walk through this.

Alright, let's read verse 14:

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not."

Now the first thing I want you to see is that Paul tells us this love without hypocrisy, when it is active in us, tells us what response to make to those who give us great pain and great grief as we seek to live godly lives and show this love one to another. Again, it is cloudy. Does he mean without or within the church? I am going to stay here because I have found out, folks, flesh is flesh, whether it is in a lost person or in a saved person. There is as much persecution inside the church as there is outside the church and it would be healthy for you to understand that. When a person refuses to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, then the kind of activity that comes out of them is not at all the kind of love the Holy Spirit produces. That flesh part of him will do things that will hurt you and bring great pain into your Christian walk. You have got to know how to respond.

Since you have been a Christian have you been a member of at least two different churches? Most of us have. Now, I want to ask you a question. Didn't you think that if you left some of the churches that you were in that were painful and bad and moved to another church it would get better? Didn't you think that? As a pastor, I did. Do you know what I found out? They fooled me, they moved with me! Now, they disguised themselves. They have different faces and they changed their names. Boy, they were hard to recognize. But they are the same people. You can just back off and look at them. They are the same. They are wherever you go.

The word "**persecution**," **dioko**, is something that you need to realize. It is the word that means to follow after, to pursue after. Many times over the years that I have been here, I have talked about a coon hunt. The raccoon, you know, just doesn't bother anybody. He sleeps all day long. He gets up in the evening when everybody else goes home and goes about his business. Then one night, he hears the sound of dogs baying out there in the dark. He says to himself, "Oh, no. I haven't bothered anybody and here we go again." Then that sound gets on his trail! You know what they are like when they are treed. They get that high-pitched sound. That poor little raccoon wasn't bothering anybody.

That is the word for persecuted. That is the word right there. Do you mean they follow you everywhere you go? Yes, and especially when you seek to live a godly life. Number one, they don't understand this kind of love and they don't understand the God we serve. It is going to follow you and it is going to be within the church walls as much as it is going to be without it. I wish it were not that way. Flesh is inside the church and outside the church.

How should we respond when people treat us in such ways that bring great pain and great grief into our life? Well, he says,

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not."

Now the word "bless" is the qualifier. It is the word **eulogeo**. It comes from two Greek words. Eu means good, and logeo means to speak. So it means to speak good things about this person. Now careful, don't jump ahead with surface interpretation. You may be thinking, "Now wait a minute! Do you mean when somebody, even in the body of Christ, treats me like dirt, I am supposed to say something good about them? That is a lie." Yeah, it sure is. And God is not telling you to lie about them. What does it mean to bless somebody, to speak well of somebody?

You have to read the whole verse. He says, "bless and curse not." The word "curse" means to wish evil upon someone. That is what it means to curse them. It means to say, "Oh, I hope he gets his. I hope this happens in his life," wishing evil upon them. Instead, wish that good things could come upon them. Speak that which is good. Don't lie about them because they are mean people, but speak good. Wish that which is good to come upon them. Now that is the way you treat those in the body of Christ who bring great grief and pain in your Christian walk. You are seeking to walk surrendered to Christ and they treat you as if you are dirt. You don't wish evil upon them.

Now you know, if you didn't understand chapters 1-11, you can't understand this. In chapter 8 we know why we can do this. Do you know why? Because God is causing all things, even those people who bring us grief, to work together for good to those that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. You see, you have got to have the first 11 chapters of Romans to even begin to understand chapters 12 through 16. Everything in chapters 12 through 16 hinges off of what we have already seen as we have studied Romans. God is in charge. He even uses the persecution. To do what? To drive us to the end of ourselves. Why? Because Romans 8:29 says that we might be conformed into the image of Christ Jesus. So the pain and all the things that we go through in this quarry, in this school, in this workshop down here on this earth are all tools that God is using to chip off and to hone

and to make us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. It drives us to the end of ourselves where we learn to decrease and then He is able to be increased in our life. That is what life is all about.

So as a believer, when it comes, back off and say,

"God, I don't know what you are doing in this, but thank you that you are in control of it and I am not about to wish evil upon this person. I want them to know the same God I know and trust and walk with day by day."

You don't wish evil upon them. As a matter of fact, it is by the grace of God that you are not like they are. So speak well of them. Speak good of them. That is the response of a person whose love is without hypocrisy. Because you have got the bigger picture, you can see far beyond the pain and what the individual is doing to you in your life.

It is the saddest thing in the world when people live with bitterness inside them. Hebrews says,

"Don't let a root of bitterness grow up thereby defiling many."

Do you know where it comes from? It comes from not being surrendered. It comes from not understanding that only when you are surrendered, this is your logical, reasonable spiritual service of worship. When you make this offering of yourself to God, God can transform you, renew your mind and you are going to think differently from that point on. But a person not willing to live that way is a person who has put himself, his sinful body, right back up under bondage, the same bondage that God has freed him from. He lives in misery, bound to something that he should never be bound to. So, the response.

But secondly, there is an attitude that we have to those in the body around us as we all go through this suffering. I want to qualify something. We don't all go through it at the same time. You may be going through it at work, but maybe I am going through a reprieve. I am in a season where there is no persecution right now. Don't you love those times! But get ready, it is coming. So we are not going through it at the same time. Sometimes we are going through it at the same time, like the early church did. They were all being persecuted from without. Keep that in mind as we walk through this. There is an attitude that the Spirit of God will give us, an unselfish attitude, a very caring attitude, for the people who are around us.

Look at verse 15. He says,

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

Now be careful, don't jump too quickly. There is a truth in this, but I don't think that is the one he is bringing out. It is true that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. As a matter of fact, that is one of the greatest qualifiers if your love is truly what God wants it to be. Any of us can weep with those who weep. When somebody dies we can always go and weep and take flowers and candy. Why? Because they are worse off than we are. But not all of us can rejoice when others rejoice. Oh, no, no, no. It doesn't work that way, does it?

Could we all be honest? If you would just get flat out honest, that is the way it is. Flesh doesn't rejoice. If somebody in your church whom you know real well inherited a million dollars, could you say, "I am so happy for you"? No, you walk away saying, "God, how come it is him? How come it couldn't be me?" You see, we can't rejoice. Only when God the Holy Spirit is in charge of us can we rejoice when they rejoice. That is the key, not the weeping, but the rejoicing.

But that is not what he is talking about here. I don't believe that has a thing to do with it. I think it is certainly involved in the truth, but he has not left the theme of persecution. He says, "Weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice." Now there is a rejoicing and there is a weeping when people go through persecution. We have to understand that.

Look over in Acts 5:41 at people together rejoicing because of persecution. You begin to understand the honor of being persecuted. We dread it. Oh, no. We need to look forward to the fact that God exalts us in persecution. He is exalted in persecution, but He is honoring us because He is trusting us by our walk.

"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

Rejoicing!

Now look at Romans 5:3. We have looked at this before, but I want you to see it now. Romans 5:3 says the same thing. There is a rejoicing in this. Yes, there is a weeping. It is a two-sided coin. On one side we are weeping because it is painful and it is difficult. On the other side there is a reason that we can rejoice with one another.

"And not only this," it says, "but we also exult in our tribulations," we rejoice in our tribulations, "knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance.... hope does not disappoint."

We know those verses.

Paul is saying when you go through a trial, God the Holy Spirit begins to show you the honor of going through it. But you also begin to experience and feel the pain of having to go through it. Do you realize when somebody persecutes you, they have honored you and deemed you worthy to be dishonored and shamed for the cause of Christ? We look at it exactly the opposite, but God looks at it this way. Whenever I am being persecuted, I ought to back off and say, "Thank you, God. Thank you, God. Something is going right in my life. And the Christ in me, being manifested in His love through me, is drawing persecution from the world. They can't stand it. They fight against it. Somehow our walk has been deemed worthy so that we might be disapproved and put to shame for the cause of Christ."

But there is also that weeping with others as they weep. There is a weeping and there is a rejoicing that the family of God shares together as they live godly lives, surrendered to the Holy Spirit of God, letting God be who He is in their life.

It is a beautiful picture here, an attitude of understanding each other, an attitude of joining hands and saying, "Okay, man, I am praying for you. You pray for me. I weep with you and you weep with me." But we will all rejoice together when our walk is such that persecution is what is effected and caused because of it. That is the key.

Now, in order for that to happen there is something that God the Holy Spirit does in me and in you. It takes me off the pedestal and puts me down where I belong. All of a sudden down here, I begin to see people who are hurting everywhere. Remember this, I am not always being persecuted, but somebody is. It makes me aware of it because I may be next. There is no time out when I can start thinking about Wayne. We are always considering those who are going through it because, as I said, we may be next.

Look at the next verse as we walk our way through. Three things in this verse form a trio. Verse 16 reads, "Be of the same mind toward one another." That's number one. "Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly." That is the second thing. Then thirdly, "Do not be wise in your own estimation." Some people take one piece of this and make a sermon out of it. Oh, no. That is a completed thought right there. You need three pieces to complete this puzzle. It is saying basically essentially the same thing that it says in Romans 12:3:

"For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think."

Let's look at this little trio here. First of all, he says to be of the same mind toward one another. Now he is not talking about a harmonious, mutual relationship here. No, not at all. What he is saying is, the first step is, always want for your brother who is going through this what you would want for yourself if you were in his place. That is the key. It starts right there. When you see a brother being persecuted, immediately it ought to prick your heart even though you may not be going through it at that time. You may be next and you want to do whatever it is to help him now so that when you go through it, somebody will certainly want to come and help you. You have that attitude, "I want for you what I would want for myself if I were wearing the shoes you are wearing, if I was going through what you are going through." The second thing even qualifies it more.

Do not be haughty in mind. Isn't it amazing how, when you are not going through a trial, how you tend to think? "Whew, I must be doing pretty good right now. There is no persecution in my life. Things are sweet. Everything is going great. Wow! The church is doing good." You have a tendency to get a little haughty and you don't seem to understand that if you are not in a storm of persecution, then you are about to go into one. You are just in between. Because that is what life is until Jesus comes back. You begin to start seeking those things for yourself, forgetting your brother who is going through that season of persecution.

Let me show you the word "haughty." Paul only uses it three different times. It is the word *hupselos*. It is found here and also in Romans 11. Turn to Romans 11:20. I just want you to see how it is translated and get a feel of the word. Paul means don't be haughty in mind. The word mind, of course, is attitude: in the attitude you have, don't be haughty. Verse 20 of Romans 11 says, "Quite right, they were broken off [talking about Israel, the unbelieving Israel that rejected faith, righteousness by faith] for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith." Now watch. "Do not be conceited, but fear." That word "conceited" is haughty, the same word, *hupselos*. In other words, Paul is saying, "Understand, Gentiles, that there are others out here that God is concerned with. Don't just draw the attention to yourself. Don't put yourself up here to where you can't see anybody else."

Also, the word is in 1 Timothy 6:17. It is so important to see what this word "haughty" means: "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." Now the idea again, not the same verse, not the context, but the idea here is of a man going through a good season in his life. The stock market went up and he is just doing super! Look out, look out, look out. If you start patting yourself on the back because you are doing so well, you may have a fall. It is uncertain tomorrow and you have put your trust in the wrong thing. So again, the idea is don't be haughty in your own mind.

But in the context here, when I am not going through something that is difficult, God says, "Now, you are not going through it, but your brother is." He will put the ones on your heart. You don't orchestrate this yourself. You begin to become concerned for them

and He will lead you in how you are to serve them. This is so very important.

Look at the second part of the second one. He says, "Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly." The word "associate" is the word sunapago. It comes from two words. Remember the biscuit word of Romans 6? There are two words for "with," meta and sun. Sun is the biscuit word—together with, intimately together with. Then there is the word apago. Do you know what that word means? It is the word for "rapture", for those of you who don't believe in the rapture of the church. It is found over in 1 Thessalonians 4 and it means to be caught up, carried away with. So the idea of sunapago is very interesting, to be caught up or to be carried away with something. What is it that is going to obsess your mind? Not you. Oh, no, don't be haughty. Don't forget that there are other people around you. Be caught up, be obsessed, be carried away with the lowly.

The word "lowly" there is tapeinos, which means something that has been flattened. I mean it is absolutely flat. The brother you have around you who is going through a trial has just been flattened out because of that trial. You be caught up with that brother. Don't be caught up with the fact that you are not going through something. You are next.

Then Paul goes on and adds the third one. "Don't be wise in your own estimation." Paul is saying, "Don't think you have it all put together here. Don't think you understand what that person is going through. You don't know until you get down in the trenches with him. Now roll your sleeves up, go get down in the trenches with your brother. Don't be so wise in your own estimation." It is amazing to me how quick we are to do that when we are not going through persecution and everything is calm for a while. We forget that. We tend to draw in rather than look out. All of a sudden the eye of the storm is gone and boom, we catch those winds that are swirling behind it and it knocks us flat. Then we say, "Oh, help me." Then we begin to understand. We were wise in our own estimation. We really didn't know what was going on until that storm flattened us and we realized that everybody goes through persecution.

So the idea in the thought here is that if we are going to have this attitude towards one another, caring for one another, this has got to be our focus. We have to focus upon not thinking of ourselves, but letting the Holy Spirit of God open our eyes to the needs and the hurts of others that are around us.

Well, okay. So what happens when people hurt us and cause us great grief in the family of God? Well, our response is, we bless them. We do not curse them. What is the attitude that we have towards others in the body that are going through it? We rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. What is our focus to do that? Our focus is we don't consider ourselves to be haughty, we don't have this haughty mind-set. But we are very consciously aware of others. And we want for them what we would want for ourselves if we were in the same situation.

Let's move on. In verse 17 there is a caution that Paul gives to us. As we are going through difficult times how do we live? Verse 17 says,

"Never pay back evil for evil to anyone."

Now watch: "Respect what is right in the sight of all men." That means lost and saved. Now folks, what you have got to see here and I will work my way through the verse in a moment, but what you have to see here is we are being watched. Do you know that? We are being watched? The way you and I respond to persecution is being watched by others. In the sight of all men there is a certain responsibility that we have in our character that is very important to understand.

Persecution is going to come. "Well, I am not in it right now." Well, one of two things is true. One could be you are not surrendered so your life is not yet worthy to be tested like that. Be careful. But the other could be that you just came out of one trial and you are getting a breather. Hang on, there is another one coming. People are watching how we treat one another and how we respond in the midst of persecution, in times of difficulty and pain.

With that in mind, let's look at the verse. Paul says in verse 17, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone." Now the word "evil" there is the word for inherent evil. What he is saying is, that inherent evil comes from flesh. Flesh can be on both sides of the cross and you have to see that. Romans 7 talks about the inherent evil that is in my flesh today. Paul says, "I am sold into the bondage of sin." The word "bondage" is not there. There is something that happened in the past that causes my flesh to be lured and devoted to sin. I have a sinful body. And because of that, I have the potential of doing great harm. But others who are that way have the potential of doing great harm to me within the walls of the church.

When they do it, I am never to pay back evil for evil. The word "pay back" is recompense. You owe me \$10 or I owe you \$10 so I pay you back \$10. Now we are going to get to a verse on down where it says, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." The word "vengeance" is not there. It is a translated word. The word means out of righteousness. Only God can pay back because only God knows how much to pay back. If I paid you back, first of all, it wouldn't be recompense. I would add a little bit on to it.

Now, I have wanted to do that. Have you ever wanted to do that? Come on, be honest. Has somebody ever hurt you in the body of Christ? I mean, you just started having your quiet time and somebody had the audacity to do this to you. You thought if you got right

with God everything would be sweet and rosy, but it wasn't. You lay in bed at night and thought about how you could get them back. It is amazing how it is just not worth it. Somebody said, "You can whip a skunk, but it is just not worth it."

When it says "Don't repay evil for evil," some people I am sure are saying, "Oh, shoot." No, no, no. That is a protection. Because what you are going to receive back for that is just not worth it. Don't repay evil for evil. When evil comes to you, there is a response you have and you are being watched in it.

He goes on to complete that. He says, "Respect what is right in the sight of all men." In 2 Corinthians 8:21 I want you to see this word "respect" and how it is translated: "for we have regard [that is the word translated "respect" in the other verse] for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

Now turn with me to 1 Timothy 5:8. We are only going to look at two now. I just want you to see how this word is used because it is something that you have that is more than just respect. It is something that motivates you to do the right thing. Hang on to that thought. Respect what is right in the sight of all men, he says in Romans. What does that mean? In 1 Timothy 5:8 he says,

"But if anyone does not provide for his own [The word "provide" is the same word] and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever."

That word "provide" has the idea that if he does not respect his family and his God anymore than not to provide for them, he is worse than an unbeliever.

So the word then has the idea that you have the attitude about you to respect what is right in the sight of all men, not in the fact that you just simply comprehend that, but that motivates you to do what is right in the sight of all men, you see. It is so important here to realize how we are being watched. All men means the world around you.

We have an obligation, and Paul gives a caution: As we walk through hard times, we are to say good things about them, not to ever wish evil upon them. We are to have the attitude to rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. We are in this thing together. We are a family.

But not only that, we are to have a focus, never to think of ourselves more highly. We are not to be haughty in our minds. We are to remember that if we are not being persecuted, somebody else is and we could be next. We always are considering how to get in the trenches with our brother and help him through it. But a caution: remember that we are being watched. Our testimony is being built by the way we behave towards one another.

I want you to understand something. When you hear a message like this, there are two parts to it. First of all, for me, I can preach it wrong. Do you know that? I can take a passage like this and make you feel like a dog if you ever treated me bad. Do you understand what I am saying? I can take it and twist it and just cut you to the quick. If you have ever done anything to persecute me or bring me harm, I can make you feel pretty bad. But that is flesh, isn't it? I have no right to do that. I am to look to God and to myself and realize what does God have for me in this.

But at the same time, you can hear it that way. "Well, it is about time you preached on this. As a matter of fact, I am hoping that so-and-so is listening to what you are saying." You have this tendency to judge everybody else instead of getting up under what God is saying and say, "God, what does this say to me?"

That is the key to this thing. It is going to be that way all the way through chapter 12 of Romans. We have a responsibility under grace, don't we? Loving in the body is so important. But will it happen? Not until you and I come to the end of ourselves, submit ourselves to Christ, let His Word renew our mind and let His Spirit manifest this love. Then, we are going to start becoming sensitive to one another and the body opens itself up to each other. Any time you isolate yourself in persecution or pain within the body of Christ, you have just fallen right into the trap of the devil. When you start zeroing in on yourself, you have missed it. But when you start looking at others, you have caught it. That is what is going to bring you the joy in your Christian walk. The kind of love God has is for others, and you are the vessel He wants to manifest it through.