

Good and Evil

Romans 12:9-13

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Last week we spoke about genuine Christian love.

Christians are the most loving people on the planet.

They give more to help others and do more to help others than any other group.

Sometimes they love with such fervency that they overlook some things that they should not.

Liberal Christianity has deceived us into thinking that love is all that there is.

But Paul sets us on the right track.

If we love people we would not be in favor of them hurting themselves or others.

If we really love people we would tell them the truth even if it upset them.

Paul goes on to tell us more about love in this single verse and we need to hear it.

And we need to follow what Paul says.

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

First he wants us to have sincere love. But then he uses two participles to follow that through.

The love without masks abhorring the evil clinging to the good.

I. Abhorring the evil.

A. Meaning of abhor

1. apostugeo (ἀποστυγέω, 655) denotes “to shudder” (apo, “from,” here used intensively, stugeo, “to hate”) hence, “to abhor,” Rom. 12:9. *W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 299.*
2. The word αποστυγουντες, here used, designs the greatest aversation imaginable, a turning away from it, as what is the most loathsome, detestable, and abominable; and such an hatred of it with horror, as of Stygian lake hell itself: *John Gill*
3. στυγεω signifies to hate or detest with horror; the preposition απο greatly strengthens the meaning. στυξ, Styx, was a feigned river in hell by which

the gods were wont to swear, and if any of them falsified this oath he was deprived of his nectar and ambrosia for a hundred years; hence the river was reputed to be hateful, and στρυγέω signified to be as hateful as hell.

Adam Clarke

4. So if I understand it, it means to hate as you hate hell its self.

B. But does that seem proper, to hate that is?

1. Perhaps it seems odd to find hatred listed among the virtues, but it is put here of necessity by the apostle. Nobody doubts that the soul has feelings of hatred in it; however, it is praiseworthy to hate evil and to hate sin. For unless a person hates evil he cannot love, nor can he retain the virtues. For example, if someone intends to preserve chastity, he cannot keep it safe unless he hates and despises immodesty. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.*[2] **Origin;** *Gerald L. Bray, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – New Testament VI: Romans, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2005), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 303.*

2. True virtue is not passive about evil but has an intense revulsion of it. Evil is not tolerated but despised as that which is injurious and wicked. “Where there is love, evil is abhorred, not merely lamented, much less covered up, but hated” (Schlatter 1995: 235) *Thomas R. Schreiner, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament – Romans, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 663.*

C. What are we to hate? EVIL.

1. But how can we be like God if we hate?

2. Proverbs 6:16-19 (NKJV) 16 **These six things the LORD hates**, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

3. Most Christians do not abhor evil. We dislike it, we do not condone it—but hate it? We don't often find what turns God's stomach turning ours. The kinds of first-century sins enumerated in Romans 1 are present in the twenty-first century too, but we tolerate them; we don't abhor them. There is no horror at sin anymore. We should not expect God to remove sin from us until we actually hate it and have rooted out of our lives of service any secret love we still hold for that which is evil. **Woodrow Kroll,** *Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series – The Book of Romans: Righteousness in Christ, ed. Mal Couch and Ed Hindson, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 198.*

4. But we must hate it for our own good.

- a. Doctors and nurses are dedicated to helping those who are ill, even from the deadliest diseases, but they take every precaution to protect themselves from those diseases, lest they, too, become infected. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Romans 9-16, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 186.*
- b. If we do not hate evil it will have an affect on us and bring us to ruin.
- c. Genuine hatred of evil engenders avoidance of evil. In his Essay on Man, Alexander Pope wisely observed that,

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Romans 9-16, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 186.

D. The Bible tells us to hate evil all the way through the book.

1. Psalms 45:7 You love righteousness and **hate wickedness**; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.
2. Psalms 97:10 **You who love the LORD, hate evil!** He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.
3. Psalms 101:3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; **I hate the work of those who fall away**; It shall not cling to me.
4. Psalms 119:104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; **Therefore I hate every false way.**
5. Psalms 119:163 ¶ **I hate and abhor lying**, But I love Your law.
6. Proverbs 8:13 **The fear of the LORD is to hate evil**; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And **the perverse mouth I hate.**
7. Amos 5:15 **Hate evil, love good**; Establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.
8. Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and **hated lawlessness**; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”
9. Psalms 36:4 He devises wickedness on his bed; He sets himself in a way

that is not good; **He does not abhor evil.**

- E. But our problem today is what is evil and what is good?
1. Almost every moral deviance and sinful action today has its defenders.
 2. Almost every sexual sin has now become accepted.
 3. Drag queens read stories for story hour for preschool children but never would a pastor be asked to read for them.
 4. When I was born it took the Dr about half a second to determine a boy or girl but now we would not dare make a decision like that.
 5. I read an article where a hospital in Canada will start a euthanasia program for minors who are terminal and want to die without the parents consent.
 6. What does the word for evil here mean?
 - a. Sense of Bad, Harmful, Unserviceable, Useless. *TDNT abridged*
- F. We are to hate evil but not people.
1. Jude 1:20-23 (NKJV) 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, **hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.**
 2. Ezekiel 33:11 (NKJV) 11 Say to them: **'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.** Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'
 3. Luke 13: 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 "See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "
 - a. He beheld the city, gleaming in the morning sunshine across the valley, and forgetting His own sorrow, shed tears over its approaching desolation, which yet He steadfastly pronounced. His loathing of evil was whole-souled and absolute, and equally intense and complete was His cleaving to that which is good. In both, and in the harmony between them, He makes God known, and prescribes and holds forth the ideal of perfect humanity to men.

4. You must learn to be good haters—but not of men. Ah! there are hundreds of men that know how to hate men, where there is one that knows how to love a man and hate evil. True, evil may in extreme cases become so wrought into individual persons that we scarcely can distinguish the one from the other; but ordinarily it is not so. *Biblical Illustrator – Romans, (Rio,WI: AGES, 2005), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 12"*.

II. Cleaving to the good

- A. “Cleave to that which is good.” Cleave means to stick like adhesive tape, to be welded or cemented together with the good things. The believer should always be identified with good things rather than shady or questionable practices. *J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Commentary: The Epistles (Romans 9-16), electronic ed., vol. 43 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 76.*
- B. Cleave to that which is good--Here is not only the negative, the abhorrence of evil; but the positive, the discerning and holding fast that which is good. As Paul says in Philippians 4:8 (NKJV) 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.
- C. The words rendered to abhor (αποστύγειν) and to cleave to (καλλαομαι) are peculiarly forcible, and express the highest degree of hatred on the one hand, and of persevering devotion on the other. The latter word, in the active form, properly means, to glue, and in the middle, to attach one’s self to any person or thing. The words evil and good, in this passage, may be understood of moral good and evil; and the exhortation be considered as a general direction to hate the one and love the other. But the great majority of commentators, out of regard to the context, take the terms in a restricted sense, making the former mean injurious, and the latter kind. The sense of the whole verse would then be, ‘Let love be sincere; strive to avoid what is injurious to others, and earnestly endeavour to do whatever is kind and useful.’ As the words themselves admit of either of these interpretations, the choice between them depends upon the context. The latter is, on this ground, perhaps to be preferred. *Charles Hodge*

Let me illustrate this very simply. Here is a knife with a richly-carved ivory handle, a knife of excellent workmanship. Yonder woman, we will suppose, has had a dear child murdered by a cruel enemy. This knife is hers, she is pleased with it, and prizes it much. How can I make her throw that knife away? I can do it easily, for that is the knife with which her child was killed. Look at it; there is blood still upon the handle. She drops it as though it were a scorpion; she cannot bear it. "Put it away," saith she, "it killed my child! Oh, hateful thing!" (C. H. Spurgeon.), *Biblical Illustrator – Romans, (Rio,WI: AGES, 2005), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 12"*.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NKJV) 18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Timothy 6:10-11 (NKJV) 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:22 (NKJV) 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (NKJV) 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

1 Corinthians 2:16 (NKJV) 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Peter 3:11 (NKJV) 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV) 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (NKJV) 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Romans 12:2 (NKJV) 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.

Psalms 34:14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.

John 3:20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to

Proverbs 28:13 ¶ He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

Ephesians 4:22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows

corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

Hebrews 12:1 ¶ 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,

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,

Ver. 9. Abhor that which is evil] Hate it as hell itself, *αποστουγουντες*, so the word signifies;
Trapp

Abhor that which is evil-- This is impossible to the unregenerate, and only intermittently possible for the carnal Christian; but to one who has obeyed the first two verses of this chapter and surrendered to God, it is a holy instinct! "Ye that love Jehovah, hate evil" (# Ps 97:10). To be a good Christian, a man must be a good hater! *Newell*

What a lofty tone of moral principle and feeling is here inculcated! It is not, Abstain from the one, and do the other; nor, Turn away from the one, and draw to the other; but, Abhor the one, and cling, with deepest sympathy, to the other. *JFB*

Paul means that love is not pure except when it is the declared enemy of evil, even in the person of those whom we love, and that it applies all its energy to labor for their progress in goodness. Destitute of this moral rectitude, which is the spirit of holiness, love is only a form of selfishness.
Godet

"Genuine" Christian love, Paul is suggesting, is not a directionless emotion or something that can be only felt and not expressed. Love is not genuine when it leads a person to do something evil or to avoid doing what is right—as defined by God in his Word. Genuine love, "the real thing," will lead the Christian to that "good" which is the result of the transformed heart and mind. *Douglas J. Moo, The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The Epistle to the Romans, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 775.*

2 Peter 2:6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)