



5/7/26

Wow... the passages this week have been so challenging and convicting... and they've also stirred my worship. I KNOW that I have miserably failed to love as God calls me to love, but this stirs my worship because I see God's mercy and patience with me as He faithfully teaches me and grows me. He is so good! Nothing we do is too great that His cross and love don't cover it. I hope you're finding like me that, yes, your sin is great, but praise God, His mercy is greater still (as Brandon Lake likes to sing).

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 12:9-21

I don't think I fully grasp the importance of genuine love. None of the commands given in this passage can happen without genuine love. God's two greatest commandments are to love Him with every part of me and to love my neighbor as myself. He says EVERY other commandment stems from these. Again, I don't think I fully grasp what that means!!! 1 John 2:5 says, "Whoever keeps His word (from which all commands stem from love), in him truly the love of God is perfected." What makes me perfect and complete? Obedience to love! Do I value God's love so much that I WANT His love perfected in me? O Lord, please make it so!!!

1 John 2:10 says, "Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling." What keeps me from stumbling???. Loving my brothers and sisters in Christ. LOVING them with the love I've received from the Lord. He is the source of that kind of love! How do I get that goodness in me??

Romans 12:9-21 is going to tell me what it looks like, but to know HOW I have it perfected in me starts in Romans 12:1, that by the mercies of God... because I have NO power to do this without Him, I "present myself to the Lord as a LIVING sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him, which is my spiritual worship, my reasonable service." It means that I surrender SELF to Him and climb upon the altar of His mercy with my faith, and ask Him to help me do this again and again... because LIVING sacrifices have a tendency to step down from the altar.

What does it look like if I'm letting God's love perfect me as I surrender to Him???

Vs. 9 ~ My love will be genuine, without hypocrisy. I will love others without the expectation of them loving me first... without withholding love when they don't treat me as I think I should be treated. Why? Because my security of love comes from the Lord and not others.

Genuine love will not only hate what God hates, but it will cling to what's good. I can sin and hate that I'm sinning, but if I'm truly loving God first and then others, I will run from what doesn't align with God's word. I won't justify sin. I won't rationalize sin. I won't say, "This is just my personality." I will cling to the Lord who holds me close... because He loves me.

Vs. 10 ~ I will be devoted to my brothers and sisters in Christ with a tender affection for them. I KNOW I cannot do this with ALL my brothers and sisters in Christ UNLESS God's love is working powerfully within me. With this kind of love, there is no saying, "I love you, but I just don't like you." It might be saying, "Lord, please help me to see my brother or sister through YOUR eyes! Help me to spend more time focusing on where we agree rather than where we disagree. Help me to pray for them rather than judge them!"

I don't like the ESV translation which says, "Outdo one another in showing honor." That sounds like a competition to me. I'm a competitive person. This is not a place to compete. The actual meaning is "esteem one another in honor... give preference to one another." That's way different than how my mind interprets the ESV, "Prove you're better than them by showing them more honor than they show you." Maybe that's just exposing the yuckiness of my heart. 🙄

Vs. 11 ~ My love for the Lord and others will prove to be real when I don't give up... when I'm diligent to love regardless of the circumstances. I will know I'm truly loving the Lord when I don't get my way and I still stay diligently faithful to Him.

My love for the Lord and others will prove to be genuine when I'm fervent in spirit, passionate in my commitment to the Lord, serving Him as my Master... and not serving SELF. The Greek word for serving is "doulos", which means "bondservant, willingly giving over the prerogative to be self governing." That ONLY comes if I'm letting His sacrificial love compel my love for Him.

Vs. 12 ~ Continuing with a heart of genuine love, I will rejoice in hope, celebrating that whatever happens, nothing is ever hopeless with God.

I will be patient in tribulation. When I'm distressed by my circumstances, I will remain steadfast with the Lord because I trust Him. "The Lord's will is what we would want if we had all the facts" (William Thrasher). I trust that THE LORD has all the facts... and He is good and will work everything for my good.

I will be constant in prayer... I will tell God EVERYTHING ALL THE TIME! I will LISTEN for

His leading so that I can go where He wants me to go.

I love being with my grandkids. I love talking with them about EVERYTHING they want to talk about. They tell me all the good stuff. They tell me when they get in trouble for something. They tell me what makes them happy and what makes them sad. They ask me questions. They ask me about my favorite color. What did I eat today? What makes me happy? All kinds of stuff. They are such a beautiful model for me of the kind of relationship God wants to have with me... to talk to Him about EVERYTHING... constantly. He never gets tired of my voice. That's love.

Vs. 13 ~ Genuine love cares about other people's needs and helps meet them. It not only cares and helps, but actually SEEKS for the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Vs. 14 ~ Genuine love means I'm so secure in the Lord that I not only don't retaliate when someone is harsh with me, but I actually bless them... by showing them grace. It doesn't mean that I ignore what they say or pretend they didn't say it, but my responses are gentle and kind. O Lord, please make this true in me!!!

Vs. 15 ~ If I truly care for someone, I will hurt with them when they're hurting, and I'll genuinely be excited for them when they have good news. Personally, I think it takes a ton of humility to do both. It means I have to look outside myself and not think, "How does this affect ME?" I have to step closer to someone when they're hurting. The sign of their hurt is often first shown in being harsh. Instead of lashing out at them, I need to ask, "What's hurting them?" And when they are excited about something, I want to be so secure in the Lord's love for me that I can be excited for them rather than be threatened by how God has blessed them.

Vs. 16 ~ I need to seek to live in harmony with others. Being a musician, I LOVE harmony. It's so cool, because everyone is singing something different, but it all comes together in such a beautiful sound. Being in harmony makes it more beautiful than what it would be without the harmony. In my everyday life, that means I need to listen and look for how I can work with another person's uniqueness so that we mutually build each other up in the Lord.

There is no room for arrogance or being wise in my own eyes when I'm motivated by love. I won't even see someone else as "lowly" or less than me. I will view MYSELF as lowly. Arrogance destroys relationships. O Lord, please remove it from my heart!!! Every tiny piece!!!

Vs. 17 ~ To truly love someone, I can't repay them with evil if they've done evil to me. Jesus is my perfect example of One who does NOT repay evil for evil. Jesus thought about what would honor someone, not tear them down. I need to do the same.

Vs. 18 ~ I can't control how others treat me or feel about me. But as far as it depends on me, I love by pursuing peace with all people. Sometimes that's not possible because their heart is too hard and unwilling to have unity with me. But I won't know that their heart is too hard if I don't

first... pray for them... and second... seek to restore relationship. If they're unwilling, I need to continue to pray and then be ready to restore if or when the time comes that they are.

Vs. 19-20 ~ I cannot possibly love someone while trying to make them pay. I don't take revenge. I surrender my struggle with them to the Lord. This is so important for me to see... In relationships, how often do we use little digs and complaints to and about someone to try to get them in line with what we want or to punish when they don't? What if the Lord wants to teach ME something, but I'm too focused on how the other person has wronged me to even open my heart to what the Lord's doing? Ultimately, when I do that, I am refusing to trust the LORD.

If I trust Him, if I love Him, I will feed my hungry enemy and give a drink to my thirst enemy. This is what "heaps burning coals" on my enemy's head. What does THAT mean? It means... Romans 2:4, it is God's KINDNESS that leads people to repentance. I need to follow HIS example and be kind... and leave the conviction to Him. Who knows what beautiful thing God will do to restore or reconcile someone's heart to His if I will just GET OUT OF THE WAY??? O Lord, please help me to get out of the way!!!

Vs. 21 ~ Finally, if I am truly surrendered to the Lord, loving Him and loving others, the evil I experience in this world will not take me out or derail my faith. I will be able, by God's strength and grace, to overcome the evil with good. Isn't that what Jesus did for me?

Father, I am 100% aware that I cannot even love You without Your help. And I certainly can't love others the way You want me to love unless I'm allowing Your Spirit to have control of my heart. Help me to see that it is SO worth it!!! I praise You for Jesus' example. He is the epitome of genuine love lived out on earth. Please help me to overcome the evil of SELF and not let SELF overcome me. Amen.