

2PC AMEN (3/19/26) – “A Love That Overcomes”

Scripture: Romans 12:9-21

Introduction

A. CONTEXT of this Passage

1. Rodney Stark: “Any accurate portrait of [the Greco-Roman city] in New Testament times must depict a city filled with misery, danger, fear, despair and hatred. A city where the average family lived a squalid life in filthy and cramped quarters, where at least half of the children died at birth or during infancy, and where most of the children who lived lost at least one parent before reaching maturity. A city filled with hatred and fear rooted in intense ethnic antagonisms.... And perhaps above all, a city repeatedly smashed by cataclysmic catastrophes.” (*Rise of Christianity*, ch.7)

B. TONE of Passage – Buckshot imperatives to provide a collective impression

1. The Call of our Passage: to A Kind of Love That Overcomes Evil with Good

I. Overcoming Love for the CHURCH FAMILY (v.9-16)

A. GENUINE Love – “Let love be genuine...” (v.9a)

1. In a world of “Posturing/Branding/Imaging,” We’re called to a “Non-Hypocritical” Love

B. RIGHTEOUS Love – “Abhor what is evil...” (v.9b)

1. In a world that sorta believes, “Love is love,” we’re called to a righteous love
2. Tim Keller: “Love without Truth is not Love; Truth without Love is not Truth”

C. FAMILY Love – “brotherly affection” (v.10a)

1. In a violent, tribal world, we’re called to an expansive “New Kind of Family Love”

D. HONORING Love – “Outdo one another...” (v.10b)

1. In a Status-Conscious World, Called to Compete to Out-Honoring One Another

E. GODWARD Love – “...serve the Lord” (v.11)

1. In a world that yells, “Follow YOUR Heart,” called to fervently follow GOD’S heart

F. HOPEFUL Love – “Rejoice in hope...” (v.12)

1. In a tragic, Despairing world, called to a Hopeful Love

G. GENEROUS Love – “Contribute to the needs (v.13a)

1. In a society focused on Self-reliance, called to an Interdependent, Generous Love

H. WELCOMING Love – “lit. pursuing hospitality to strangers” (v.13b)

I. BLESSING Love – “bless..., bless... not curse” (v.14)

1. In a world that “cancel’s” others, we are emphatically called to bless

J. Like-HEARTED Love – “Rejoice with...Weep with...” (v.15)

K. Like-MINDED Love – Ever Seeking a Humble Unity of Like-Mindedness

II. Overcoming Love for the OUTSIDE WORLD (v.17-21)

A. Inadequate Responses to Evil

1. Inadequate Response #1: “Repaying Evil for Evil” (v.17)
2. Inadequate Response #2: “Seeking Eye for an Eye” (v.19)
3. “‘Settling the Score’ never Settles the Score” (Philip Yancey)
 - a. Hannah Arendt – “**the only remedy for the inevitability of history is forgiveness**” (in Philip Yancey, *What’s So Amazing About Grace*, ch.8)
4. **Who Wins This Game of “One Upmanship”? The DEVIL!**

B. Overcoming Love Goes for EVIL’s JUGULAR:

1. **GRACE is the only force capable of breaking the Chain Reaction of Evil!!**
2. Seek SHALOM/PEACE in relationship, in so far as it is up to us (v.18)
3. Seeking HELP for our enemies in what they NEED (“*If hungry...if thirsty... [v.20]*”)
 - a. “Hot Coals”? A grace response to evil only “shames” the evilness of evil

C. Overarching Goal of Gospel Life – OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD (v. 21)

1. all of life is to be organized around the goal of overcoming evil with good
2. A Gospel Rule of Thumb: SAY whatever you must say, and DO whatever you must do, to LOVE a person FREELY and FULLY

III. What ENABLES/EMPOWERS a Love that Overcomes Evil? (v.19b; cf. v.1)

A. Confidence in the JUSTICE of God (v.19b) – “*Vengeance is MINE; I will Repay...*”

1. God SEES evil...God FEELS evil...God HATES evil infinitely more than we do
2. God PROMISES vengeance against Evil (cf. Rev. 18:20; 19:1-2; Isa. 25:4-12)
3. God is SO COMMITTED to Vengeance He says, “Don’t get in My way” (“*Leave room...*”)

B. When We KNOW that God JUDGES JUSTLY, We can LOVE FORGIVINGLY

1. If God will deal with the SIN absolutely, we are free to focus on the PERSON
 - a. Free to see their broken, enslaved humanity underneath their sin
 - b. free to imagine a person’s restoration under the hand of God
 - c. free to love redemptively, with their restoration and deepest needs in mind

C. Confidence in the MERCIES of GOD to US OURSELVES (cf. 12:1)

1. Does God render to us Evil for Evil?
2. Does God Give us only what we justly Deserve?
3. Miroslav Volf: “Forgiveness flounders because I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners (*Exclusion & Embrace*)
4. Our only chance to live this way – Abiding in the Love of Jesus (Jn. 15)

CONCLUSION – this kind of love changes CITIES & EMPIRES

Rodney Stark: “Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships.... To cities filled with the homeless, and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services. (*Rise of Christianity*, ch.7)

AMEN Action Steps

“A Love That Overcomes”

Romans 12:9-21

HEAR the Word

“Open my eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of your law.”

-Psalms 119:18

1. To what extent do my friends and family experience me as a man of this kind of love? Of all the glimpses of this kind of love in v.9-16, which aspects of this kind of love am I better at? Worse at?
2. What commands in v.17-21 feel unreasonable, or unrealistic? Why do they feel that way? Even if your “head” sees them as reasonable, to what extent does your “heart” feel unconvinced? Why do you think your heart is resistant?

PRACTICE the Word

“...Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock”

-Matthew 7:24

1. Think of someone who has hurt you, sinned against you, or flat-out betrayed you. What does it look like to forgive that person? Why is it hard to forgive them?
2. Can you think of a time when you’ve experienced the thickness of this kind of love, however imperfectly? Where was that? Who was that? Of if you haven’t, where have you maybe seen or heard of it elsewhere? If everybody wants to experience this kind of community, why is it so rare to find?

RETELL the Word

“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you...”

-Mark 5:19

1. How might the brothers at AMEN, even just at your table, (or your discussion partner with these “action steps”), take one step closer into this kind of brotherhood with each other?
2. Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:35). How might we better give a glimpse of Rom. 12 love to our neighbors, co-workers, unbelieving family members, etc.?