

February 10, 2014

## The Love of Christ

Romans 12:15-16 (NASB), ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”***

Yesterday afternoon in between watching the Olympics and golf I saw a post on Facebook that I found very interesting. The person who posted asked a very enlightening question: “Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual?” One of the answers to this question was, “I don’t really see any need in my life for religion. I see (and am saddened by) how much hatred there is in the world (much of it justified by religion, including, and, because I’m in the U.S. especially so-called ‘Christians’) and, as a result, I don’t want any part of it...”

How one defines hate has a lot to do with how one reflects on this answer. The word “hate” is so over used in our culture today that it is to the point where it is hard to know what the real definition is. To say someone is a “hater” because they hold to the Biblical definition of marriage is quite an intellectual stretch but one that many make anyway.

Despite this issue though the question remains in my mind: Why do so many non-believers view Christians as haters? I believe that one of the reasons is because we so often fail to live our lives in a way that is marked by the Christian necessity for love. In Romans 12:15-16 we see the apostle Paul giving us some very practical ways that we are to love one another. I believe that if the Body of Christ, His church would exhibit these lifestyle traits we would be beacons in a very dark world.

The first way that we can demonstrate love is through the simple act of rejoicing. Verse 16 says, ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice...”*** As Christ followers we are to be glad in the blessings honor, and welfare of others, no matter what their situation is. In 1 Corinthians 12:26 it says, ***“if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”*** As Christ followers we are to joyous in the success, health, and welfare of not only other believers but also those who are outside of the family of faith. Far too often we allow jealousy and envy to creep in to our lives and the result is not one of love but rather one of strife and animosity.

The second way that we can demonstrate this is by being sensitive and compassionate to the hardships and sorrows of other. Romans 12:15 says, that we are to ***“weep with those who weep.”*** Colossians 3:12 says that ***“those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...”*** Hebrews 13:3 says, ***“Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.”***

Verse 16 then reminds us that as Christ followers one of the ways we demonstrate love is by being ***“of the same mind toward one another.”*** This means that we are to be intent on the same things, we are to have the same attitude towards things and we are to impartial towards each other. Romans 15:5 says, ***“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.”*** 1 Timothy 5:21 says, ***“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.”*** In

other words we are to love each other all the same and not to treat one person one way and another person another way.

This means that we are to be bereft of pride and arrogance. In verse 16 Paul continues with ***“do not be haughty in mind...”*** This means that we are not to be prideful towards or with each other and we not to think that we know better than our brothers and sisters in Christ and to those outside the church.

Paul concludes these two verses by reminding us that when we have the love of Christ we will ***“associate with the lowly”*** and we won't think more of our wisdom than we should. The Christ follower will and does associate with those that are downcast in the world. The word “hate” is thrown around in reference to Christians yet in the name of Christ more hospitals, orphanages, soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters have been built than in any other name.

We are told ***“Do not be wise in your own estimation.”*** As Christ followers we are not to have conceit or feelings of superiority. Proverbs 3:7 says, ***“Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.”*** A Christ follower has humbled themselves and they understand that all true wisdom is from God and most definitely not from us.

As Christ followers let us live lives that are uncompromising when it comes to truth but lives that speak the truth in love and live the love of Christ out each day in our lives.