

Romans 12:9-21

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[0 : 0 0] scripture. So Romans chapter 12, starting in verse 9 and going through verse 21. If you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm asking if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God found in the book of Romans, the 12th chapter, starting in verse 9.

Paul here is beginning to make his transition from the theological to the practical. He has spent chapters 1 through 8 speaking of the doctrine of salvation. He has spent chapters 9, 10, and 11 giving an illustration of the doctrine of salvation. And now he's going to spend chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, and really 16 giving the application of that doctrine of salvation. And as we just continue to make our way through the book of Romans, we see here it says in Romans 12, starting in verse 9, let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. 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. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we are so thankful for the opportunity we have had to come and to worship you in song. Lord, to worship you in fellowship. Lord, I pray now we would come and stand before you and hear your word. I pray that your word will move beyond just the reading of it, Lord, just a physical hearing of it, but God, that it would have an application in our lives for your glory and honor. Lord, draw us closer to you. Lord, may we ever walk faithfully before you for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen. You may be seated. We have been wading our way through the book of Romans for the last several months, well over a year, and we have been looking at the foundational doctrines of our faith, the main big issues in all of Christianity, the thing which Paul was encouraged in the church at Rome, which did not know him personally, which had never seen his face, that he had no part in planning or starting. Really, as you know, that we have no idea who started the church at Rome. It was not just one congregation. Rather, it was a multitude of congregations meeting around the city of Rome. It was a number of people gathering together to worship and serve Jesus

Christ, whom they have recently come to know. And Paul is writing a letter to be circulated among those churches to encourage them to walk faithfully, to encourage them to have the main things, the main things. And he writes with really complete regard to the issue of salvation. And he took the majority of the letter talking of how a man is not saved by works. He is not saved because of what he has done.

He is not saved because of what he can do, but rather he is saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. He is not saved because he has been good enough. He is not saved because he's cleaned his life up enough. He is not saved because he made good decisions. He is saved because he casts his all upon the Savior who loves him. That song which was sung so rightly speaks to the fact that all of our days we just need to be loving our Jesus. Why? Because a right understanding of salvation leads to a proper response of love and application. When we understand that it was in spite of us, that it has nothing to do with us. Rather it was his love and his mercy and his grace which gloriously redeemed us.

And it leads us to live out a life of sacrificial devotion to him. Someone once said that we do not serve Jesus to attain our salvation. We do not even serve Jesus to maintain our salvation. We serve him obediently because of our salvation. If it is true that we are justified by faith and faith

alone, then life takes on a whole new meaning. And Paul begins to lay out these applications in Romans 12. We looked at it a couple of weeks ago and we're really kind of getting into a series of just very abrupt statements that he is writing to the believers. Because you are so gloriously saved. And my friend, listen, you may be here today and you may know nothing of that glory of salvation. Well, I've got good news for you. There's nothing you have to do to earn it. There's nothing you have to do to maintain it. There's nothing you have to do to get it. You just have to receive it. It's a gift. It is something that is offered to you free of charge. He'll take your debt and place it upon his back. He is your sin bearer. He takes that weight so that you can take his yoke, so that you can live your life for his glory. And Paul here writing in verses 9 through 21 gives really abrupt applications of what that looks like in the believer's life. I want you to see this morning the living testimonial life of the believer. There are really two great aspects in which a believer's life testifies to Jesus Christ. [5 : 58] Really just two. Now we'll break those two down, but I'll give you the two right now. The two areas of life in which your life, the way you live, the way you respond, the way you behave is a testimony to the salvation of Jesus Christ is in the two great arenas in which you live life. Friend, listen, I'm speaking to the believer here. It is the way we live within the church, and it is the way we live within the community. Martin Lloyd-Jones writing another great classic, which is often a required reading for preachers and pastors. It is called Preaching and Pastors. That's exactly what the book is called. It is called one of how to speak the gospel. He preached most of our great writers. I don't know if you've realized it or not. It came from the other side of the ocean. We have a few on this side, but not that many. But anyhow, Martin Lloyd-Jones serving in Europe at that time, early 1900 to 1940 to 1960 time, wrote this great book for preaching and pastors. And he spoke of the importance of the gathering of the saints. We call that of church. He spoke of the importance of not forsaking the assembling together of one another. And he encouraged pastors to continuously meet as a church, not to break apart. He was really trying to refute one of the great claims of his day that we don't have to meet as a corporate body, that we as individuals can go home and do church on our own. And we as individuals can meet in small groups and over here have a little private service and over here have a little private service. And Jones said, no, that's not the case. We need to maintain the corporate gathering of the saints. And one of the reasons for this, he said, there is a great mystery of the gathering together of the saints, really the presence of Jesus Christ. And it is how Christ shows up when his body is gathered together, that really the unbelievers in attendance are overtaken by the very presence and the reality of Jesus Christ. It is the testimony of the saints. Why is it that I think that it is so important that our children are present occasionally to worship with us? Why is it that I like to have our children with us when we are singing? Why is it on certain months when we have an extra day? We have family worship. Why? Because there is something that testifies to the children when they see the saints worshiping. One of the great things that has been shown throughout studies of why children stay in church, one of the main areas of that, friend, listen to me, they worshiped in big church with their parents because they saw the saints worshiping. They saw the saints growing and the very presence of Christ was in the room. It was the testimony of the church to those that are present. So we look first at the first arena of our life testimony, how we live life out within the church. Paul shows us here in a few verses, really verses nine through 13 of the testimonial life lived out inside of the church. He says, first of all, that life will be a life of sincerity. I would give you five words to write down this morning. If you are one of those who takes notes, I know this is a very difficult passage when you go to commentators and you try to read something because they just say, well, it's a bunch of quick statements. It's a bunch of application. If you do these things, you'll be okay. But I want you to see them really in five different groupings. One, it is a testimonial life of sincerity. You say, what do you mean pastor? Why is it a life of sincerity? He starts out and he says, let love be without hypocrisy. Friend, do you know that there is a such thing as a sincere love and an insincere love? There is a love that loves you because of what you can do for me.

There is a love that loves you as long as what you do to me is better than what I do for thee. There is a love that loves you because I benefit from my love for you. That is called phileo love. That is a brotherly love. There is the love that loves you, the euro love. It's easy to understand. We call that erotica because you please me. I love you. That is erotica, which by the way, is a love that is driving so much of our society today. It is this euro love. If I find pleasure in you, then I'm going to love you. When I stop finding pleasure in you, I'm going to quit loving you and I'm going to cast you aside. That is a dangerous place to be, by the way. There

is this love that is insincere. It is the love that says, as long as I benefit from you, I love you. Friend, listen to me. That is a hypocritical love. The Bible says, let love be without hypocrisy. What is that? That is the agapeo love, where the Bible says in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. That word love is agapeo in the original Greek. Now agapeo love is a love that finds its origin and even its permanence in the very presence of God. It is a sacrificial love that says, I'm going to love you even when you don't love me. The Bible says, while we were still sinners, God loved us. He agaped us and that he died for us. I'm going to love you even when you're unlovable. I'm going to love you even when it cost me to love you. It is a love of sacrifice. I'm going to love you and I'm going to do something because of that love. God so loved the world, he gave and he gave sincerity. Paul says within the church, the testimony of the saints is that they would live a life of sincerity. And the first way that the sincerity of the saints would be shown is in their love. Do they really love the church? I'm so excited. When we finish the book of Romans, not very often do I ever announce an upcoming series because usually I don't know an upcoming series. Okay. I usually I'll walk by faith. I'm not one of those. I know some dear friends. They have the whole year's worth of sermons planned out. They'll go away for a week and they come back and they have all of the year planned out. I know some others.

[11:58] They have two years of sermon series planned out. I'm not that guy. I literally, uh, I'm just trusting that the Lord leads me. And then if he tells me to stop in the book of Romans, I'll stop in the book of Romans, wherever he tells me to stop. Uh, so I never really know, but he has really put one on my heart now that I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we're going to go to when we finish the book of Romans. And it's a whole series. It's really just a four part series of the foundational, what I believe are the foundational important elements of the church. We will see the weekly corporate worship of the saints. I already know them. Why? Uh, because I'm going to tell you a little secret right here. I've had them written in the front of my Bible for years right here. This is what I believe. I always say, know what you believe and believe what you know. This is how I make decisions.

And it's all about your church. And it's, it's all about what I believe the church is supposed to be the visible, properly functioning, uh, fellowship of believers reaching into the community that they have been placed and planted in. That's what I really believe. That is my vision. There are four foundational elements that go along with that. And I am so excited to get to that. And I hope that in that you see the sincerity of my love for the church. I love the church. I do. It is the bride of Christ. He is preparing a wedding supper for the, for the bride. It is the church for you. Listen to me. It is the church. I love it with all of my being. Before I came to Jesus Christ. Sometimes I liked church. I liked it when we were having fellowship meals and we had fried chicken and those homemade pies. Sometimes I liked church when we did those fun things and those activities, but I really didn't love church. I liked what church could provide for me. I liked what church could do for me. I liked it when the music was good. I didn't like it so much when the music was bad. I liked it when the preaching was okay. I really didn't like it when the preaching got a little too close to the corn row, but I liked church at times. And at times I really disliked church, but I went begrudgingly. But friend, listen to me. When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, one of the very first things, and by the way, I didn't immediately become a pastor. Okay. You say, well, you say this because you're a pastor. I'm talking about pre pastor days. Okay. I really began to have this over abiding love for the church because I came to this understanding and I share this with individuals all the time. If you tell me that you and I are okay, but you don't like my bride, we're not okay. If you say, Billy Joe, we can hang out. We can have a good time. I don't like Carrie that much. I really don't want Carrie around. I mean, man, she's just so quiet. She makes me awkward.

I don't know about Carrie. I'd rather just like to hang out with you. You know, you who's always offending people and always stepping on my toes. I want to hang out with you. Then listen, friend, we have a problem because that's my bride. And the Bible says the two have become one. Guess what? Jesus has a bride too. And the Bible says that the first sincere testimony of the believer's life is a love without hypocrisy. He says, still living in sincerity, by the way, let love be without hypocrisy. Here it is. We are also sincere in this. Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. It is a sincere hatred for evil. I'm just going to ask you this real quick question and we'll move on from this one because this one has a tendency to make us uncomfortable, but that's okay. Do you really hate

evil? I mean, just ask yourself. Here's even a more probing question. Do you hate evil or do you just hate the consequences of evil? I mean, if you could sin and get away with it and never be uncomfortable, if you could sin and the wages of sin was not death, if you could go do whatever it is you wanted to do and there were no consequences to it, would you be okay with that? Or would you say, I hate it because it's an offense to a holy God? That's probing, right? That's something I've had to ask myself. Really, what is my disliking for evil? Is it because it is an offense to a holy God or is it because it is an annoyance to my life? Is it because it goes contrary to the teaching of scripture in the perfection and the holiness of God's creation? Or is it because it messes up my plans and makes me uncomfortable? He says, abhor what is evil. Be sincere in your devotion. Cling to what is good.

By the way, all these things are steps we take after salvation, but they are steps we take. Still looking at sincerity. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give in preference to one another in honor. Not lagging behind in diligence. We'll get to that in just a minute. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Give preference to one another in honor. We are living a life of sincerity towards one another. Wow. Friend, I want to tell you something. One of the greatest testimonies in the life of the believer lived out inside of the church is when an unbeliever walks in the doors of a place and sees how we treat one another. It really is. I listened to Max Lucado one time in Nashville. Carrie and I had the opportunity to go listen to Max Lucado and Chris Tomlin. It was a pastor's only type of thing. It was really cool. It was real kind of an intimate setting. It wasn't probably about 30 people there. For one, I got to see how short Chris Tomlin really was. And then I got to hear how cool Max Lucado could preach. And Max Lucado said, you know, so many people are lost and drowning at sea, but they're looking up at the boat called the church and they see us fighting one another and they say, I don't want them to rescue me.

[17:37] Why do I want to get on that gospel ship when all they're doing is stabbing one another? I think I'll take my chances out here in the ocean. And I went, whoa, whoa is me. Be devoted to one another.

Doesn't mean we're always going to get along. It doesn't mean we're always going to be happy. Friend, listen, we all live in families. You know, every family is messed up. You know why every family is messed up? Because you're a part of it. You know why my family is messed up? It's because I belong to my family. Because we're a bunch of messed up people living in a messed up world.

And we have a tendency to mess up everything we touch. But man, I'm devoted to it. It's okay, right? And when we understand that, we live in sincerity. Number two, the testimony inside of the church is not only a life of sincerity, and I'm trying to make my way quickly. It is also a life of service. Look at this. It is a life of service. It says, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. What does it mean? You are excited to do the things of the Lord.

You know, one thing that I've noticed, excitement always breeds excitement. Excitement always leads to excitement. You want someone else to be excited about serving the Lord, then you be excited about serving the Lord. People want to know why I get so worked up when I'm preaching, because this is good stuff. I mean, this is the gospel. This is amazing. This blows my mind every time I open it. And my hope and my desire is that sometimes maybe my fervency and my excitement may spill over to you like the sweat off my brow does. And that's why I'm amazed that y'all sit right here. But you may get just so carried away for the first time in nine years. I'm coaching little guys in sports again. I've had five and six year olds. Man, things have changed in nine years, right? We were there. Braden started playing baseball again. And, you know, I'm realizing again, this, this new thing afresh. I've coached all of our kids when they were young. And I remember it then, but I'm beginning to see it now. When they get older, you can coach them out of ought to, like you ought to do that. You should do that. And you can really push them, especially in football. It's one of those great things my wife used to always say. I have a hard time being a pastor's wife in the stands going, knock them out, you know, knock their head off. But she did a great job, right? That's how we coach our kids. You know, you should run through them, you know, I mean, just annihilate the other team. It's great, by the way. I mean, that's like, oh man, you got killed. But anyway, so we coached with that. But I, now I realize again, these little guys, you know, the only way they get excited about a sport is if you're excited about a sport.

I mean, when I get out there and if I'm having a bad day and I'm kind of down, they begin to be a reflection of my attitude, right? And sometimes people look at me like I'm crazy because I'm running

around acting crazy, but that's okay because then the kids begin to run around and act crazy. [20 : 31] And the kids begin to have fun. And let's, let's not forget, sometimes sports are about fun, right? Sometimes. And then they begin to build character and all these things. But listen, it's the same way inside of the church. I want to ask you something. Do you want to have anything to do with the Jesus that when you walk into the place, everybody's sitting on their lip and everybody looks like you just stole their dog or cat, depending on which one you are. I don't want that Jesus, right? I want the Jesus that gives the joy that nobody can explain. I want the Jesus that makes me excited. I want the Jesus that pushes me to serve him. And man, I'm glad I get to serve him.

He says, be fervent in spirit. Oh, there ought to be, there ought to be something against a believer who can serve the Lord and be depressed while he's doing it. I'll tell you then you're not serving the Lord. You're serving man. Even if you're doing it in Jesus's name, you're not serving the Lord. That can be done by the way Paul says the gospel has been preached. Some by men of good motives, some by men of bad motives. Either way, the gospel is still being preached. But friend, listen to me. If you're not excited and you're not fervent about your service, then check while you're serving. Check it out. Understand it. Look at yourself. It was Martin Luther who said, because Christ has saved us and loved us. Remember Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, coming to the salvation by faith and faith alone, right? A justification by faith, the book of Romans, all those great things. I know I'm speaking fast, but for the sake of time, I'm almost getting excited, but we need to get through this message. It was Martin Luther who said, since we are saved by faith and faith alone, because he loves us and loves us alone, then we serve him and we serve him alone, even if it costs us to serve him or if we're rewarded when we serve him. In spite of them, we serve them. Because of what he has done in our heart, we give our hearts to them, regardless of how they respond to us giving our hearts to them.

We are fervent to our neighbor because of what Christ has done in our heart. And this is the service of the believer. He says that we ought to be here, not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Look at this one. Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Here's your service. I want to tell you a secret about me, okay?

I'll tell you a secret about me to help you understand how I make decisions as a pastor, and to help you understand how I make decisions as a person. And this, I'm just going to be honest, this is one of the things about me that drives people crazy. I am just like 120% and optimistic.

I mean, I think one of my greatest spiritual gifts, the number one gift I have is the gift of faith. I mean, that's just, when you look through the spiritual gift inventory and you go through all these things, I believe my number one, every time I've taken a spiritual gift test, and I have some, if you ever want to take one, has always been the gift of faith. And then it's the gift of pastoring, and then it's the gift of evangelism. But the gift of faith always lands number one. And this is why this is so disturbing to so many people. I always think God's going to work it out. Even when it looks impossible, I know God's got it under control. And this is, look at what it says. In my service, he says, rejoicing in hope. I don't get downcast. I don't get upset. I don't worry about things.

[23 : 43] I always rejoice and hope. Whatever step of faith I'm taking at that time, as an individual or as a church family, I always know this great saying, God's got this, okay? I always believe beyond a shadow of a doubt. And some of you say, well, I wish I could do that. Well, sometimes you have to choose to do that, okay? You don't go by your emotions. Don't go by your feelings. Don't go by, well, that's not the way I feel right now. Sometimes my feelings tell me something's going to go bad.

But listen, the Bible always tells me God's got it under control. So I am always rejoicing and hope. When we make a decision and we look out there and we say, well, pastor, it looks impossible. I don't see how it would ever be provided for or sustained. Well, I don't think it'll ever work. And my tendency, my tendency is to go, it's got to work because this is what God's leading us to. You know, I've got to do that. You know, I understand those things for the decisions in my life. I make decisions in my life, my wife and I. Sometimes people scratch their head and they say, pastor, why are you doing that?

That doesn't seem to make sense. You know, why would you do this? And why would you do that? Why would you, why would you choose to do that? Because if I feel like the Lord's led me to it, listen, I am his slave. I'm the slave of my master. And if I feel like he's asking me to do it, guess what? That's his responsibility to bring it to pass. I have a hope that he will do it.

A hope that goes beyond all comprehension. A hope that goes beyond all understanding. Biblical faith, someone wants to explain to me, is this.

It's actually the gentleman who's pastoring down at Normandy right now, Billy Howe, explained to me one time when I was very young in the faith, said biblical faith is this. You step out onto the limb, you saw that limb off from the tree, and you have the faith that God's going to hold that limb in the air. Now, when he told me that, I was like 20 years old and just recently a new believer, and I thought, man, that's nuts. And now I'm like, I step on that limb and I find me a chainsaw and see if I can cut it. Because I want to see God's hand hold that limb up. Guess where your testimony comes out?

[25 : 39] The testimony is always where the fruit is, and the fruit's always on the end of the limb. Friend, listen, sometimes God, right now, God may be leading someone to take a step, a big step. And it's just me being honest with you. And in your flesh, you're going like, well, I don't think it'll work. Let me just give you some great pastoral advice. Quit thinking.

Now, I know there's wisdom in a multitude of counselors. I'm not telling you to do that. I'm just saying that if you're certain God has told you to do it, if you see the testimony of scripture, if it's scriptural, if you can hear testimony from brothers and sisters in Christ, and by the way, make sure they're brothers and sisters in Christ. I mean, when I seek counsel, I seek people that I know that are in their scripture, okay, or that I know that are in prayer, be devoted to prayer. And if you seek that counsel, and you keep getting the same answer, then quit thinking about it. Quit having feelings about it. Just be hopeful that you're going to get to see God do something that you never would expect him to do. That's how you serve in hope.

And it is a testimony. Friend, listen to me. People want to see that. Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. You will not get to those things without prayer.

And let me give you the third one here. This is just a testimony within the church, and then I'm going to give you the two testimonies outside of the church really quick. Here's the third one. Not only do you have the testimony of your sincerity, not only do you have the testimony of your service, number three, you have the testimony of your sharing, of your sharing. This is all within the church, contributing to the needs of the saints. Contributing to the needs of the saints from the very beginning of the church, from its birth in the book of Acts, from the very inception of the church. We read this testimony. They had all things in common. Sharing their needs, and their goods, one with another. Now these are legitimate, necessary needs. And they were contributing one to another. They shared life together. The need is not always financial.

Sometimes people need your time. Sometimes they need your resources. Sometimes they need your physical possessions. Sometimes they need a bedroom. Sometimes they need an opportunity. But you should be living a life of testimony of contributing to those needs. Because here's the reality.

[27 : 52] Every need in this room, because God puts the body together, right? I believe God puts the body together. This is where it gets challenging for a church. I'm just going to be real with you. Every need in this room has the answer to that need in this room.

Every need that is present has the answer to someone else present. Because God put the body together perfectly. But the church doesn't have to look outside of itself to find its needs to be met. Because God has always put the body together to meet one another's needs. To contribute to the needs of the saints. And man, when the world walks in and sees people's needs being met by one another, what they're walking out of is a world that will not meet their needs. And they're walking into a kingdom that is meeting needs. And that is a testimony. Look at this. You're also sharing. Be hospitable one to another. You know, God has always called his people to hospitality. Always. Always. Always. Go all the way back to the Old Testament. You read the book of the Old Testament. You read throughout the Old Testament. You see God speaking to his nation. In his nation, he always makes an allowance for the stranger or the alien or the orphan or the widow. He always makes an allowance for the people who do not belong there to have a place there. I know that it is instructed to pastors. Pastors, one of the, when you read the book of Timothy and you read the book of Titus, one of the things of pastors is that they ought to be practicing hospitality.

[29 : 33] Friend, that's not limited to pastors or even deacons. That goes, Paul here extends it to all believers. Living a life of hospitality. Hospitality is being described as welcoming someone in who can never welcome you back into theirs. Living a life of hospitality. Living a life of open door.

That is the way we share. Now, I want you to see the testimony life that is lived outside the church in the community. And there are just two. And I know that I'm, the 12 o'clock train just went by. I understand that. And I'm trying to be quick. But I'm going to give them to you very quickly, okay? Because I think if I just limited to within the church, we would walk away with half a message. I want you to see this. How are you going to live a testimony life outside the church in the community, which is the second great sphere you live life in. You're about to walk into the community. Here it is. Number one, there is the testimony of the believers associations. That is the people they hang around with and how they hang around them. Look at what it says, the believers associations. It says to us here in verse 14, bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse, which means that the believer will ever always be a blessing. You know, everywhere there is a believer in the community, the community ought to be blessed. That's the reality. God has called his people to be a blessing to the community they've been put into. And if a church exists and the community is not blessed because of the existence of the church, then the church is not fulfilling one of its great purposes.

And if we are living our life in society and the society is not being blessed because of our presence there. Listen, if the kingdom of heaven, which is the church can be present in a location and that location not be changed, there's something wrong. There is something tragically wrong.

[31 : 18] It says, be a blessing. Don't be a curse. I know a lot of churches that are a curse to their society. I know a lot of believers that can be a curse because of their judgmentalism, because of their ridicule, because of their finger. He says, be a blessing to the community.

Be honest? Sure. But he says, bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Again, we're looking at the association. And weep with those who weep. That does not mean just inside the church. Listen, we live in a world full of hurting people.

And we need to be so in tune to hurting people that when someone in the world is rejoicing, we need to rejoice. When someone in the world is broken, we need to be broken.

We need to associate with them. We need to walk beside them. Be of the same mind towards one another. Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. What does this say? When you walk into a world full of hurting people and people who live messed up lives, understand that you too live a messed up life, but you're saved and redeemed by the grace of Jesus Christ. You're not to think more highly of yourself just because you're a son or a daughter of the King. Sure, there is a day we'll sit on the throne of Jesus and we'll reign with him on high and we'll walk those streets of gold and we'll drink of the crystal sea and eat of the tree of the knowledge, the tree of life, and we'll be gathered around his throne. But friend, listen to me. So what? That's glorious. There's a hurting world that needs us to walk in humility beside him.

[32 : 50] How do we know that? Because he who stepped away from the throne walked among them. We rejoice in our position in the future. We rejoice in our promise that's been extended to us, but it's been extended to everyone around us too.

And we don't walk with like, well, yeah, I'm better than them or I'm greater than them. No, that's not the case. We extend it to them. It is our associations. And number two on this testimony in the community, and this is my last one.

It is our actions, or we could call it our reactions. It is our actions. Look at what it says. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.

Anyone. That's a big word, right? Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

That's the community. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. God has put at least a code of morality in the heart of all men. If possible, I'm thankful those words are there because we know that this sometimes is an impossibility, but that's not for us.

[34 : 00] That's for us to carry our side of it. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. That is those in the church and those outside of the church.

Be at peace. You are to be an agent of peace in the community. It's your actions. Never take your own revenge, beloved. Friend, listen to me. I know in the community, I've had some terrible things spoken about me in the community over the years.

I have. I've had things that broke my heart. I've had things that rendered me. Not things that had to do with the church, just things that I did in the community.

I never sought to, not in my own because it's not my revenge. God took care of that. Look at what it says. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written,

vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

And you understand that if you take your own revenge, God will not avenge a sin twice. Either you can do it your own, or you can leave it in His hands for Him to do it.

[35 : 12] And I have found I'm very limited in my understanding, so I'm going to let God take care of all that. He says, don't look for your own revenge. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And if he is thirsty, give him a drink.

For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head. Now that's a twofold meaning. One, you will share with him the fire he needs, the burning coals as he walks by your window. Two, he will be hot with anger because he'll get upset because his conscience will start tormenting him because why can this person do good to me when I have done so bad to them?

Some people want to fight just to fight. They do. Some people want to argue just for the sake of arguing. But when we stop the argument, it usually stops.

Look at what it says. Here's my last one. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

You know what testimony we have in the world?

It is our action to the world we live in. Friend, listen to me. Like it or not, a lost world is always watching.

[36 : 19] Always. Always. Sometimes God delights to put you in the magnifying glass so that the world can see what a believer looks like. Sometimes Satan has put his magnifying glass over me so that the world can see what this believer looks like.

But the world is always watching. And we have a testimony inside the church and we have a testimony inside the community of the reality of the salvation we claim to believe.

If we really believe it, these things will follow. And we will testify by the life we live. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you so much again for this day.

God, I pause right now and I do pray for those that are hurting. Lord, there may be some in the room right now who are hurting, who are walking through difficult times. I pray your presence will be there. Pray for the Deeson family.

I pray for others, God, that I know in our own community. I pray right now your presence will be there. But Lord, I also pray that your presence will manifest itself here. Lord, that you would testify to your greatness.

[37 : 28] You would show us your glory. You would call us to live for your honor. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 17] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.