

“Radical Life Part 2 – Being Marked”

Scripture: Romans 12:9-21

Graphic: sacrifices, bodies, gifts, marks of a christian

Key Verses: 12:9 Let love be genuine...

Theme: We follow Jesus inside the church and out in the world. The basis for our behavior is genuine love and a passion for serving the Lord. Does your behavior mark us as Christ's?

1) Introduction

- a) How do people know that you are a Christian? Seriously. How do the people in your life, those you know well and those you don't know yet, see in YOUR LIFE that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?
- b) Valid question, right?
- c) We might be tempted to bag the normal wardrobe and simply wear shirts like this one...people would get it right? (Jesus is my Homeboy t-shirt)
- d) Or you could isolate yourself from society and close-out the outside world and not ever be accused of anything “NON-CHRISTIAN”...of course, that would effectively make it impossible for anyone to ever SEE you do ANYTHING that Jesus did...
- e) This is a valid question for anyone who claims to be a Christian...a follower of Jesus.
- f) The Apostle Paul, writing to the Christian in Rome gives us a list of behaviors that would mark us as followers of Jesus...as true Christians.
- g) Now, we don't like anyone to dictate to us how we should behave, do we? Let's be honest. I don't! “Don't tell me what to do!”
- h) We need to get over that in a hurry this morning because Paul is going to buckshot us with more than a 15 behaviors that we need to have. And those behaviors are what mark YOU as a radical follower of Jesus.
- i) Forget the t-shirt, because when we get into this list, people both inside the church and outside the church are going to see Jesus all over the place when you're around.
- j) And I think, more than anything else, we want people to see Jesus when we are around. They don't see US as Jesus, however, we not only point to Him,

but we beat a well-worn path to the cross to show them that He's the reason for the love, hope, joy, and behavior we have.

- k) Now, this happens both inside the church, with other believers, and outside the church with those who don't yet know Jesus as Savior. And I'm using the term "church" to mean the set of people who are professing Christians in the world, focusing on those who are here.
- l) Paul gives us one list, today, of ways we are to behave IN the church – with Christian sisters and brothers, and another list of behaviors for when we are engaging those who don't know Christ.
- m) We are called to interact with people inside the church differently than we are called to engage people outside the church. With other believers, we are to nurture, challenge, teach, encourage, support...all for the sake of edifying – building up – the body of Christ.
- n) Outside the church, it's all about following the lead of the Holy Spirit to show us how to be in the world and not OF it...to work the fields that God has prepared. And Paul has certain things he tells us to DO in each realm...
- o) This is radical stuff! Are you ready?
- p) Open your Bibles with me to Romans chapter 12...
- q) Last week, talked about living the radical life of a disciple by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices to God for the sake of Jesus. And when we show up and pay attention and participate in what the Holy Spirit is doing in our midst...and when we figure out what our spiritual gifts are and how to use them...and then work together in the church for the glory of God...God is pleased...and the kingdom of heaven grows with people being saved by the grace of God.
- r) But all that stuff is about me and you as individuals and as a church. It doesn't specifically tell us what to DO. And so, for all those who are like me, who like a checklist of do's and don'ts, this is YOUR day!
- s) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

- a) **Read verse 9**

- i) First thing, right off the bat, setting the stage for everything else Paul will write to us today is LOVE...let LOVE be genuine.
- ii) Love stands at the head of this list because love is the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- iii) In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this (listen)...By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- iv) Everyone will know that you are a radical disciple of Jesus Christ if they see love IN you for others!
- v) Now, remember, this first section, from verse 9 to verse 13 is about our interactions with other believers. This is what our behavior is supposed to be like with those in the church.
- vi) And we all know that sometimes, love is the hardest thing to feel for other believers. I’ve only had one previous appointment, but in one of my previous appointments, there were 1-2 people that I used to get so frustrated with that I really had to check my attitude...
- vii) The only thing I felt was frustration and anger...there was no FEELING of love at those moments.
- viii) The Youth here today will tell us parents and older people that sometimes, even though they love us at some level, there are moments when they don’t feel love toward us, or feel loved BY us.
- ix) Paul makes it clear that LOVE is not JUST a feeling – it’s not just being twitterpated when we meet someone to whom we feel an attraction.
- x) Love, according to Paul, is also practical care for others. It’s not only a motivating FEELING but it’s also a set of ACTIONS and BEHAVIORS we engage in FOR the sake of others FOR Jesus. In fact, it just might be, more importantly, the actions even when the FEELING is not there. The motivation isn’t a fleeting feeling, but obedience to Christ...no excuses.
- xi) That’s the genuine LOVE offered by a radical Christian.
- xii) And that genuine love in the life of a Spirit-filled believer can be dangerous. Because it hates what is evil and clings to what is good in the

church and in the lives of other believers – even when we don't feel like loving them or dealing with it. That outta' ruffle a few feathers.

- xiii) And speaking of good and evil. You know, I'm convinced that we, church people, know the difference between right and wrong way more often than we think we do. Part of that confusion comes because we sometime justify our sin and call it "care for others" or "not stepping on toes" or "removing myself so I don't make people upset".
- xiv) If we would give up thinking that the line between good and evil was so thin then we'd able to just "reject anything that works AGAINST God's plan and latch onto the things that work FOR God's plan." And all those things in the middle, things that are a little gray...seek the Lord...ask Him...pray about it...and if it doesn't glorify God, don't do it.
- xv) If it does, then do it for His glory and no other reason (that goes back to presenting our bodies as living sacrifices...it's not about me.)
- xvi) The point is, LOVE must be genuine or it's not love...and it's more than a feeling, it's actions that others will recognize, wholesomely, as genuine, practical care for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- xvii) What else is it? (go right on to b.i.)

b) (DON'T READ) Verses 10-13

- i) Paul writes in verses 10-13, "Here are 10 things, in the church, that embody the genuine LOVE that Christ lives through us" (underline these in your Bible...)...we're all about application today...
- ii) #1 (verse 10) – Love among Christians is real, mutual affection – my brother and I go every year on a motorcycle trip to someplace. It doesn't matter where we go...it just matters that we go. We have a great time. We love each other. Yet, my brother is not a believer and that breaks my heart. There are Christian men in my life that I love at a deeper level than my biological brother because I can love them with a real, mutual affection that I cannot share with my brother, yet. In the church, the potential for the level of love is profound! Paul says, "love each other like THAT!" Behave with deep, Spirit-binding love.

- iii) #2 – Outdo each other in showing honor – look up to one another, not down AT each other. Lead the way in showing respect. Make it a competition if you must to see who can respect who more...that'd be fun
- iv) #3 (verse 11) – Don't lag in zeal – OK... What? Don't be lazy in your effort to love others. It's like saying, "Don't be slow when you are being swift." Don't allow yourself to be lazy in your eagerness and passion to see others uplifted. For some of us today, this is the only thing God wanted us to hear. Maybe we've slacked off a little...maybe we've lost the passion...maybe we've allowed LIFE to wear us down so that when it comes to loving on the people next to us in the pew, we just don't have the strength. Don't be lazy, Paul says. This is too important to the work of the kingdom.
- v) #4 – Be ardent in Spirit – be enthusiastic in your spirit. I like the NIV translation which says, "keep your spiritual fever". Basically, be ON FIRE for the Lord and for the people in the church.
- (1) Think of an old-fashioned wood stove in a house on the frontier of America. That stove had to have its fire burning 24/7 inside it to heat the house, be ready for cooking, whatever. Burn like that so you can be ready to love other people.
- (2) We should be running around this place on Sunday mornings outdoing each other with passion and fervor, loving people with our words and actions. Can we do that? Coffee helps with the running part...the Holy Spirit in you takes care of the love part...
- vi) #5 – Serve the Lord – this should go without saying, right? What and who are we serving in our lives? And which of them are we doing for the glory of God and building up our fellow believers?
- vii) #6 (verse 12) – Rejoice in hope – our lives should be a steady stream of rejoicing in the hope given to us because of our salvation in Jesus Christ! A Christian who is always acting mad, sad, or bad is not building up the body of Christ...when you come to serve and love others, come bringing JOY. It's hard sometimes, I know it, but ask God to PLANT that joy in your heart...He is faithful...He will do it, if you let Him.
- viii) #7 – Be patient in suffering – We hate this one! So many of you are so much better than some of the rest of us with this one. And I'm really leery about praying for more patience in suffering because that's usually

when God allows for more suffering to teach us more patience. But when we can DO THIS...man, what a testimony of love working in our lives. And this isn't just our own suffering. All you rescuers and fixers out there: be patient with OTHER PEOPLE'S suffering, too. Don't be messing with what God is doing in their lives...don't rescue unless you feel called to rescue. Don't jump in unless you're gifted to help. Be patient in your suffering and that of other believers...God's got it...

- ix) Three more...stay with me and then we get a short video break...
- x) #8 – Continue in prayer – this isn't “when I feel like it” or “when I get around to it”...this is eager and persevering devotion to prayer. Every morning, every afternoon, every night, all the time, in the car...cultivate a burning desire to be praying for each other. Be praying for God's vision for the church and for your life.
- xi) #9 (verse 13) – Contribute to the needs of the saints – share with Christians in need. These aren't needy people, but genuine, basic needs of people in the church. We have a White Gift Fund that gets used for just that...you have opportunities to support mission efforts, ministries in the church...Give, Paul says, to other believers as they have needs.
- xii) #10 – Extend hospitality – now, the NRSV translation adds “to strangers”, but that's not really in the Greek. I prefer the NIV translation which simply says, “Practice hospitality.” People in the church might be strangers to you, OR in many case, they might just be strange (I mean, we had the Osborne's over for pie the other night). Let me challenge you...Paul is talking about the body of Christ...what would it look like for all of us to start inviting people FROM THE CHURCH that we know well or don't know at all to dinner? Pick ONE FAMILY or ONE PERSON who you think God is leading you to and invite them. The church needs to be smaller in order to get larger...and I'm not saying take them out to dinner...I'm saying INVITE THEM INTO YOUR HOME, even if you think it's cruddy or messy or whatever. I want to hear some testimonies about this in the next few weeks.
- xiii) All of this (all 10) is nothing other than showing genuine love for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We can do this, right? No problem...

xiv) But what about the rest of this chapter...let's start with a video...because as much as we would like it to JUST be about the church and people we love in it...there's a bigger plan God has...

xv) PLAY VIDEO

c) Verses 14-21

i) The rest of this chapter lays out the Christian's responsibility to the outside world, as shown in the video. This is where the radical life of being part of a local church, being a growing, maturing disciple, meets the demands of your life to exhibit the MARKS of being a Christian...and this, in the most hostile environment imaginable...OUT THERE!

ii) Again, we're all about application today, and these can certainly apply to those within the church as well, but Paul is turning us outward, so let's go...

iii) #1 (read verse 14) – Bless those who persecute you – the nature and view of the Christian church in our culture has drastically changed over the last 50 years. Many people think the church is a joke. And they came to that conclusion, not because someone outside the church, but because of something that happened IN the church. I hear that testimony DAILY. And even though we don't know what persecution the Roman church was facing, it's safe to say that we will experience persecution because of Jesus. Blessing those who persecute the church and Christians is a behavior that goes against our nature...but we are called to live into it. Engaging our community, loving the sinners like us out there, showing them compassion when they are sick, building a ramp for no other motivation than to show someone Christ still at work...blessing those who persecute you...

iv) #2 (read verse 15-16) – Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep – Sounds easy right? Remember this, when non-believers rejoice, it's not because they are acknowledging something that God has done. When they weep, they weep because they have lost any sense of hope they had. How different do believers and non-believers rejoice and weep? And, in my experience for those time when there is rejoicing, there is also things like alcohol to numb the senses. When there is weeping, good chance there might be that too, in excess... Paul

- is trying to tell us that this is not a simple matter of just jumping up and down with someone, or putting an arm around them. This is putting on the full armor of God and boldly walking into situations that are motivated by a completely different world-view than you have, as a radical follower of Christ. Be ready to point people to Christ in the midst of it...the doors will be open, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- v) #3 – Live in harmony with each other – we got this one, right? We live in the Town of Harmony...☺ We should never not live in harmony with each other...sadly, it happens... What can you do to foster a sense of peace and harmony with your neighbors who don't like the church and don't understand the gospel?
- vi) #4 – Don't be haughty; associate with the lowly; don't claim to be wiser – humility and listening skills are the key to having your neighbors begin to trust you and want to be around you. If people perceive you as stuck up or always needing things to be YOUR way, it will turn them off to the whole gospel working through you. It happens every day in the church...humble yourselves before the Lord and before other people.
- vii) #5 (read verses 17-18) – Don't repay evil with evil. INSTEAD, Paul writes, think beforehand (basically, be prepared ahead of time when you find yourself being evil'd) to respond in a way that is best for everyone. We love to react, but Paul is telling us to respond in the way we have already chosen, in a calmer time, to respond to non-believers. There are times when the non-believing world will not understand the reason why we take a stand against the ways of the world...
- viii) #6 (read verses 19-20) – Heap burning coals – this is Paul's third appeal against retaliation when someone comes against you. "Vengeance is the Lord's" it says in Deuteronomy 32:35. Don't be consumed with retaliation and miss the opportunity to be an agent for God – from Proverbs 25:21-22: to feed someone who is hungry (and food comes in many forms, not just physical), give someone a drink (again, not just physical thirst)...because, and I love this phrase, in doing so, you will heap burning coals on the person's head.
- (1) Now, that sounds painful right? Sounds like vengeance to me... "I'll just pour these coals on your head and burn your scalp and melt your hair...treat me like that!" That's not what this means. In the Ancient Near East, there is some testimony that someone who carried coals on

their heads was repentant and remorseful...if you, who have been wronged, allowed a person to be remorseful, then healing and wholeness can occur. This is an act of mercy and love.

ix) #7 – (FINALLY, verse 21) – Do not be overcome by evil, overcome evil with good. There is plenty of opportunity in our lives to be utterly overwhelmed by the magnitude of evil in the world – by all that flies in the face of Jesus. Yet, we are to meet evil in the same way God did – not with more evil, but with love and generous goodness. The cross of Christ tells us clearly that God did not defeat evil with a greater evil, but with this loving weapon of goodness. Go and do likewise in your life...

3) Conclusion

- a) So how do people in your life, both inside the church and out there in the world know that you are a Christian?
- b) It'd be OK to wear a t-shirt that claims it...it will open up conversations that God might want you to have.
- c) You can get one of those shiny Jesus fish stickers and put it on your car.
- d) You can even get a Bible, come to church, and spin in all the right Christian circles.
- e) None of that makes you a Christian anymore than going to school makes you an A+ student or having a driver's license makes you a good driver.
- f) Offering our bodies as living sacrifices to God is the first step in this radical life of being a follower of Christ. Then, when we live that out in the church and in the world, our behavior become that which people around us see.
- g) Let your love be genuine for those here, and out there. There should be a distinct difference between a follower of Jesus and every non-believer.
- h) In that way, not only do we give glory to God, but we serve Him with passion using the gifts He has given to us for His kingdom.
- i) Go back this week and read over this list...as you do, ask yourself the question: Is this what I am all about? And if not, what would it take for me to get there? That's the radical life question...
- j) Let's pray...