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Walking in Love

12: 9-21

Walking in love DIG: How does this section disclose what Paul means in 12:1-2? How does your dedication to God show up in your relationships with others? How are love and peace the general principles out of which all the rest of these examples flow? When we are wronged, what is the proper response? Can you love your enemies? Why is this so difficult?

REFLECT: Of all the commands listed here in these verses, which one is easiest to keep? Which one is the most difficult? What principle or truth have you learned from this passage that you want to stop talking about and start living? Write out a verse from Chapter 12 that you will memorize and meditate upon this week to help you renew your mind.

God expects unity, not uniformity, and we can walk arm-in-arm without seeing eye-to-eye on every issue. But that doesn't mean we give up on finding a solution.



In connection with **the Sermon on the Mount** (**to see link click [The Life of Christ Da - The Sermon on the Mount](#)**) I pointed out that there is no reason to expect B'rit Chadashah ethics to differ from ethics in the TaNaKh, since **YHVH** does not change. All the advice found in these verses is implicit in the Torah and the Prophets, and frequently explicit as well. Because Gentiles are not bound by Torah in the same way as Jews, and

because **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** does **His** work from within, **Paul** draws out for believers the core principles of right action, confident that people who are **conformed to the likeness of His Son (8:29b)**, will, by the power of **His Spirit**, be able to apply those principles in their daily lives.³³³

Within the Body of Messiah: **Paul** began these specific encouragements with the key ingredient for success: **Don't let love** (Greek: *agape*, which centers on the needs and welfare of the one loved) **be a mere outward show (12:9a)**. **Agape love** is more important to a believer than any spiritual gift he may have: **But for now, three things last - trust, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love (First Corinthians 13:13)**. The **love** which **Paul** speaks of is genuine **love**, the sincere and steadfast **love** that is completely without **hypocrisy**, not **merely an outward show**. **Hypocrisy** is the complete opposite of **agape love**. The two cannot coexist.

The second longing of the new nature is to **hate** (Greek: *apostuegeo*, from *apo* and *stuegeo*, to hate) **what is evil, and cling to what is good (12:9b)**. **Hatred of evil** is the other side of **love**, which, by its very nature, cannot approve of or **rejoice in unrighteousness (First Corinthians 13:6 NASB)**. **Evil** is the opposite of holiness and therefore the opposite of godliness. Just as **the fear of ADONAI is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10a)**, **the fear of ADONAI is also the hatred of evil (Proverbs 8:13a)**. The child of **God hates evil** because **God hates evil**. We are to **love what He loves and hate what He hates**.³³⁴

Dear Heavenly Father, How wonderful Your gracious and merciful love! Everyone loves that You are loving. Praise You for Your love that calls those who love and follow You, Your children. But whoever did receive Him, those trusting in His name, to these He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12). Your loving kindness gives eternal life in heaven with You to all who love You! So that whoever believes in Yeshua may have eternal life (John 3:15)! What a great gift of reconciliation that You gave thru Messiah. Be reconciled to God. He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:20c-21).

True **love** not only **loves**; but it also **hates** what is wrong. **You call Your children** to be like **You** and to **hate** wrong. **Loving** is so good to do; but when we try to follow **You** by **hating** wrong - the world rises up in great **anger** and condemns **Your children**. How sad that world likes their sin so much that they hold onto it with a tight unyielding grip. **Now this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved the darkness instead of the light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil**

hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed (John 3:19-20). They fail to receive the **love You** want to pour over them because **they** do not want any correction; but in so doing they miss the true and eternal joy you have for them in heaven. **God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not condemned; but whoever does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not put his trust in the name of the one and only Ben-Elohim (John 3: 17-18).**

Your holy love is wonderful and so is **Your** righteous refusal of entrance into heaven to all who do not **love You**. **He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).** I choose to **love You**, obey **You** and **hate** evil, even when the world laughs at me and puts me down - for I know that someday I will live with **You** forever in peace and joy. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

Love each other devotedly and with brotherly [and sisterly] love; and set examples for each other in showing respect (12:10). All of us are more consistent in our faith when others walk with us and encourage us. The Bible commands mutual accountability, mutual encouragement, mutual serving, and mutual honoring. Thirty-seven times in the B'rit Chadashah we are commanded to do different tasks to **one another** (see [Af - The List of "one another" Commands](#)). The Bible says: **So then, let us pursue the things that make for shalom and mutual upbuilding (14:19).** You are not responsible *for* everyone in the Body of Messiah, but you are responsible *to* them. **ADONAI** expects you to do whatever you can to help them.³³⁵

Don't be lazy when hard work is needed, but serve the Lord with spiritual fervor (12:11). The **Lord** rewards those who **serve Him** with **hard work**. The writer to the **Messianic Jews** reminds us that **God is not so unfair as to forget your hard work and the love you showed for Him in your past service to His people - and in your present service too (Hebrews 6:10).** But living the spiritual life inevitably brings opposition from the world, and sometimes even sparks resentment by fellow believers. Even after years, decades, of faithful service to **the Lord**, some see few, if any, apparent results from their labors. Without **hope**, we could never survive. Thus, **rejoice in your hope, be patient in your troubles, and continue steadfastly in prayer (12:12).** It is because we can **rejoice in hope** that we can **persevere** in our **troubles**.

Share (Greek: *koinoneo*, and the noun *koinonia* is often translated *fellowship*) **what you have with God's people**. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Gw - The Parable of the Good Samaritan](#)), Yeshua made it perfectly clear that we have a responsibility, to the best of our ability, to help anyone in need whom we encounter. But we have a still greater responsibility to serve fellow believers: **Therefore, as the opportunity arises, Paul says: let us do what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful (Galatians 6:10). And practice hospitality (12:13)**. The literal meaning of that phrase in the Greek is *pursuing the love of strangers*. In other words, we are not only to meet the needs of those people, believers and unbelievers, who we encounter in our daily lives, but we are to look for opportunities to help.

The next command is one that is completely contrary to unredeemed human nature: **Bless those who persecute you - bless them!** Wow! This is easier said than done! Nevertheless, the obedient believer must resist hating and retaliating against those who harm him, but is commanded to take the additional step of blessing them. As we would expect, the supreme example of blessing one's persecutors was given by our **Lord Himself**. As the sinless **Son of God** hung in on the cross, **He** prayed with unimaginable mercy: **Father, forgive them; they don't understand what they are doing (Luke 23:34)**. Not only are we to **bless them**, we are never to **curse them (12:14)**! Wow!

In a much more positive note, **Paul** next counsels us to **rejoice with those who rejoice**. At first thought, that principle would seem easy to follow. But when another person's blessing and happiness is at our expense, or when their favored circumstances, or noble accomplishments, make ours seem small, barren and dull, the flesh goes into overdrive and does not lead us to **rejoice**, but tempts us to resent. However, it is also important for believers to **weep with those who weep (12:15)**. This is the duty of sympathy, empathy, entering into the suffering of others. **ADONAI** is called **a compassionate God (Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2)**. Reminding us that we should reflect our **Lord's** character, **Paul** said: **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with feelings of compassion and with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12)**.³³⁶

Be sensitive to each other's needs - don't think yourselves better than others, but make humble people your friends. Don't be conceited (Romans 12:16; Proverbs 3:7). To the believers in Philippi, **Paul** wrote: **Do nothing out of rivalry or vanity; but, in humility, regard each other as better than yourselves - look out for each other's interests and not just for your own (Philippians 2:3-4)**. Humility is not thinking less of

yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. **Humility** is thinking more of others. Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don't dwell on themselves.³³⁷

Outside of the Body of Messiah: The believer who seeks to obey **God** is going to have enemies. However, we are not only to **bleed those who persecute** us and **not curse them**, but certainly never move beyond a verbal **curse** to an act of revenge (**Proverbs 20:22** and **24:29**). **Repay no one evil for evil (12:17a)**. The mitzvah in the TaNaKh, **tooth for tooth, hand for hand** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Do - Life for Life, Eye for Eye**) pertained to civil justice, not personal revenge. Not only that, but the main purpose was to prevent the severity of punishment from exceeding the severity of the offense. In other words, someone guilty of destroying another person's **eye** could not be punished with any greater penalty than that of forfeiting one of his own **eyes**. Not only that, it prevented continued bloodshed between families.

A right attitude toward enemies involves **respect** for **what is right in the sight of all people (12:17b NASB)**. If we genuinely **respect** others, including our enemies, we will have a "built-in" protection against angrily repaying them **evil for evil** and will be predisposed to doing **what is right** towards them. Such **respect** will help us develop the self-discipline necessary to prepare ourselves beforehand for responding to **evil** with what is **good** instead of what is bad. Believers should respond instinctively and spontaneously with what is pleasing to **God** and beneficial to others.³³⁸

If possible, and to the extent that it depends on you, live in peace with all people (12:18). **Peace** always has a price tag. Sometimes it costs us our pride; often, it costs us our self-centeredness. For the sake of fellowship, do your best to compromise, adjust to others, and show preference to what they need (**12:10**). To paraphrase **Yeshua: You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family (Matthew 5:9 The Message)**. **To the extent that it depends on you**, emphasize reconciliation, not resolution. It's unrealistic to expect people to agree about everything. Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem. When we focus on reconciliation, the problem loses its significance and often becomes irrelevant.³³⁹

Again, **Paul** denounces returning **evil for evil**, declaring: **Never seek revenge, my friends; instead, leave that to God's anger**. If a wrong has been done to us, no matter how serious and harmful it may have been, we never have the right to render punishment for the offense ourselves. We are to leave that to **God's anger**. Quoting from **Deuteronomy**

32:35, Paul reminds his readers that **in the Tanakh it is written, “ADONAI says: Vengeance is my responsibility . . . I will repay (Romans 12:19; Second Samuel 22:48; Nahum 1:2; Hebrews 10:30).** In **His** divine time, **God’s anger is coming on those who disobey Him (Colossians 3:6).**

But merely not returning **evil for evil** does not fulfill our responsibility. And sometimes the positive part is more difficult. To withhold **revenge** is one thing; it only requires doing nothing. But to actually return **good for evil** is quite another.³⁴⁰ **On the contrary, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.”** These words, a straightforward rendering of **Proverbs 25:21**, are easy to read, but difficult to practice. **For by doing this, you will heap fiery coals [of shame] on his head**, not condemning your enemy deeper into hell, but attempting to get such a one to turn and to repent (**Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:22a**). When we **love** our **enemy**, we **shame** him for his hatred. However, **Paul** is not claiming that acts of kindness toward enemies will guarantee repentance; whatever degree of **shame** our sins might produce, they may be quickly pushed aside and produce even greater hostility toward both us and **the Lord**.³⁴¹

Paul rounds off **his** series of warnings about the believer’s response to hostility with a final, general summons: **Do not be conquered, or tempted, by evil, but conquer evil with good (12:21).** Temptation begins by capturing your attention. What gets your attention arouses your emotions. Then your emotions activate your behavior, and you act on what you feel. The more you focus on, “I don’t want to do this,” the stronger it draws you into its web.

Ignoring temptation is far more effective than fighting it. Once your mind is on something else, the temptation loses its power. Therefore, when temptation calls you on your cell phone, don’t argue with it . . . don’t answer!

Sometimes this means physically leaving a tempting situation. This is one time it’s okay to run away. Just ask Joseph (see the commentary on **Genesis Ji - Potiphar’s Wife said: Come to Bed with Me! But Joseph Ran**). You can shut down your computer. Walk away from a group that’s gossiping. Leave the theater in the middle of a movie. To avoid being stung, stay away from the bees. Do whatever is necessary to turn your attention away to something **good**.

The key to doing this is your mind. To reduce temptation, keep your mind occupied with **God’s Word** and other **good thoughts**. You defeat bad thoughts by thinking of something better. This is the principle of replacement. **You conquer evil with good**. Satan can’t get your attention when your mind is preoccupied with something else. That’s why the Bible repeatedly tells us to keep our minds focused: **Think carefully about Yeshua (Hebrews**

3:1); focus your thoughts on what is true, noble, righteous, pure, loveable or admirable, on some virtue or on something praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

If you're serious about defeating temptation you must manage your mind and monitor your media intake. The wisest man who ever lived warned: **Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts (Proverbs 4:23 TEV)**. Don't allow trash into your mind indiscriminately. Be selective. Choose carefully what you think about. Follow **Paul's** model: **Take every thought captive and make it obey the Messiah (Second Corinthians 10:5b)**. This takes a lifetime of practice, but with the help of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** you can reprogram the way you think.³⁴²