**Lesson 34: Genuine Christian Love**

Text: Romans 12:9-13

**Introduction**

We live in the age of computer-generated imagery. The ability to use computer graphics to create special effects in films, television programs, commercials, and printed media has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between reality and the virtual. Jesus said that loving one another was the mark of the believer who is living a genuine Christian life (John 13:35). In a world of virtual reality, genuine Christians are in great demand.

In Romans 12:9, Paul said that evidence of a transformed life is love “without dissimulation.” This means that love ought to be “without hypocrisy; hence genuine, sincere” (Friberg). It ought to be “lacking in pretense or show” (Low and Nida). That which follows serves to explain genuine Christian love. What are the characteristics of genuine Christian love?

1. **Genuine Christian love does what is best for others. (v. 9)**
   1. It leads the believer to avoid words and actions that would be harmful to others.
      1. In our society, much of that which is called “love” is really lust. True love is pure. It abhors evil.
      2. *Abhor* means “to have a strong dislike for someone or something, implying repulsion and desire for avoidance “ (Low and Nida). Love will not lead you to do evil.
   2. Genuine love leads you to cleave to that which is good.
      1. *Cleave* indicates” to give oneself steadfastly to” (Thayer).
      2. It is used of the marriage relationship. A husband is to give himself steadfastly to his wife. Paul used this word to show the relationship a believer is to have with that which is moral and beneficial to others. We are to give ourselves steadfastly to those words and actions that would edify others.
2. **Genuine Christian love is focused on others. (v. 10)** 
   1. The words “one another” are highlighted in this verse.
   2. Genuine Christian love produces tender loving care within God’s family.
      1. We are to be *kindly affectioned* to one another. Our love for Christ ought to produce a heartfelt love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we are thinking with a transformed mind, we will manifest authentic concern for one another.
      2. The love between believers is the love between family members. It is *brotherly love*. Those within the family of God are bound to one another through the Lord Jesus Christ.
   3. Following Christ leads you away from self-centered living. To show *honor* (respect) for others, you prefer them ahead of yourself. You put them first and yourself last.
3. **Genuine Christian love is an active love. (v. 11)** 
   1. Low and Nida define *slothful* as “shrinking from or hesitating to engage in something worthwhile, possibly implying lack of ambition.”
      1. In the context, this is to be applied to the way we show love to one another. We should not be slothful in the business of showing love. Genuine Christian love is busy serving others.
      2. Instead of finding ways to help others, it is easy to find ways to avoid involvement. This spirit does not manifest real Christlike love.
      3. When no one else was willing to take the towel and wash the feet of the disciples, Jesus did so.
      4. It is genuine Christlike love that prompts you to stay later to help after an activity when you would prefer to get on home. It leads you to visit a co-worker in the hospital when it would be easier not to do so.
   2. Instead of being slothful, we are to be fervent in the way that we love one another. *Fervent* literally mean to boil. The love we have for others is to be welling up within. Since love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), it is the Spirit of God that produces fervent love for others. In the flesh, we are not eager to help anyone but ourselves. By the work of the Holy Spirit, we can be enthused to serve others.
   3. The way we serve the Lord is by serving others. Christlike love will prompt you to make meals for those in need, do something special for your spouse or kids, work a bus route, teach a Sunday school class, and many other practical ways of showing Christ’s love.
4. **Genuine Christian love perseveres in the hard times. (v. 12)**
   1. Love for God and others motivates us to rejoice in hope. Regardless of the circumstances, we have a hope that is steadfast and sure. (Hebrews 6:19)
   2. It is for that reason that we may be patient in tribulation.
      1. *Patient* means “to endure, continue firm, persevere” (Friberg).
      2. Naturally, we are glad when God keeps us *from* a trying time, but He also helps us to keep going *through* a trying time.
   3. This is possible as we continue in prayer.
      1. *Continuing instant* means to “busy oneself with, be busily engaged in, be devoted to” (Gingrich). It is used in reference to prayer in Acts 1:14 and 6:4.
      2. Instead of being occupied with thoughts of doubt and bitterness, love compels us to persist in prayer.
5. **Genuine Christian love seeks to meet the needs of others. (v. 13)**
   1. We meet the needs of others by giving.
      1. *Distributing* indicates that real love participates or takes part in providing the necessities of others.
      2. The reference here is to the material needs of other believers (Acts 2:45, 4:35, 28:10, Ephesians 4:28, Philippians 2:25, 1 John 3:17). The early believers gave sacrificially to meet the needs of those within their membership, as well as those in other churches.
   2. We meet the needs of others by seeking ways to be hospitable.
      1. Hospitality was especially important in their day because they did not have hotels as we do. Believers opened their homes to traveling missionaries and Christian workers.
      2. The fact that they were to be given to it means that they were to go out of the way to provide a place to stay and meals to eat. It may be inconvenient, but genuine Christian love led them to do so.
6. **Apply the characteristics of genuine Christian love to your life.** 
   1. Do you do that which is best for others in your thoughts, words, and actions?
   2. Do you treat others kindly?
   3. Do you put others ahead of yourself?
   4. Do you look for ways to serve others?
   5. Do you persevere when life gets tough?
   6. Do you allow God to use the resources He has given you to be a help to others?

**Conclusion**

This is basic Christianity. If you find that the characteristics of genuine Christian love are absent from your life, start back at Romans 12:1-2. Reflect on the merciful way God has dealt with you as a sinner. Refuse to allow the world to press you into their mold. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. As you do, you will take on the characteristics of genuine Christian love, the kind that can’t be computer-generated. It is love that generated by God.