

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Fruit of a Sacrificed Life

Romans 12:9-21

2000

Introduction

In Matthew 22, Jesus summarized the whole Old Testament Law in two simple statements:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,"
and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

1. Love God by offering your body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him.
2. Love others

In Romans 12:9-21, Paul gives 25 distinct characteristics that should mark the life of a genuine believer – they are the fruit of a sacrificed life. As we consider these characteristics, I want to encourage you to avoid the two extremes of discouragement and pride. Where you fall short, ask the Lord for help. Where you have been faithful, give Him thanks and praise because the kind of life that Paul is describing is impossible to live apart from God and the transformational work of the Holy Spirit.

I A Life Offered to God Produces Love

A. Love must be **sincere** [verse 9a]

Love = Agape

The word *agape* has only been used in Romans to refer to God's love for man (5:5; 8:35, 39) and of man's love for God (8:28). But here it is used to indicate the kind of love that believers are to show one another. It's a love that loves regardless of the circumstances and keeps loving even when rejected.

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Genuine love is such a fundamental evidence of the Christian life that John states in 1

Jn 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

Because "the fruit of the Spirit is love ..." Galatians 5:22

In other words, a person who shows no evidence of agape love has no claim on Christ and has no assurance of eternal life.

Sincere = Anupokritos = "Without hypocrisy"

A hypocrite was an actor in the theatre. Someone who pretends to be what he is not.

So if we are to bear the fruit of a life genuinely surrendered to God, then our love must be more than an act – it must be sincere and without hypocrisy.

1 John 3:18 “... let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

1. Hate what is evil [verse 9b]

Hate = Apostugeo = “To utterly detest or abhor”

Psalms 97:10 “Let those who love the LORD hate evil ...”

The child of God, who loves what is good, will hate evil even as God hates evil.

1 Thess 5:21-22 “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”

Application:

It has been said that the only safeguard against sin is to be shocked by it. Unfortunately, we live in a culture that has become desensitized to sin. Through a non-stop assault of TV, movies, newspapers, magazines, and books, our senses have been desensitized to the sinfulness of sexual immorality, violence and various perversions and antichristian themes. We don't even flinch anymore at things that we would once have found shocking. So now the media, determined more than ever to prop up sagging ratings, continues to push the envelope of morality with “shock jocks” and shock television. The saddest part is that we support it by watching it. It's kind of like Star Magazine – no one admits buying it, but somehow it sells millions of copies a day.

2. Cling to what is good [verse 9c]

Cling = Kollao = “To be glued to or joined to”

As believers we are to be glued to what is good.

Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.”

B. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love [verse 10a]

Brotherly love = Philadelphia = “Brotherly or familial affection”

It is because we are related that we treat our believing brothers and sisters with affection, kindness, acceptance and forgiveness.

1 John 3:10-19 “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother ... We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death ... This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence.”

1. Honor one another above yourselves [verse 10b]

Honor = Progeomai = "To give preference"

The Phillips' translation says, "Be willing to let other men have the credit."

Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

To honor one another is to show genuine appreciation and admiration for the character, accomplishments and successes of others without being jealous or envious.

- C. Never be lacking **zeal** [verse 11a]

Lacking = Okneros = "To hesitate through weariness, sloth, anxiety, or negligence"

One thing that the Lord cannot put up with, as He tells us in Rev 3:16, is lukewarmness. He describes it as nauseating. If you are indifferent, neither hot nor cold, just going along with the crowd -- He will vomit you out of his mouth.

Zeal = Spoude = "Speed" = "Eagerness and diligence"

One of the most noticeable marks of a Christian walking in the Spirit is that he maintains his spiritual enthusiasm. It's not that he doesn't have moments of discouragement or difficulty. But he sees even the challenges of life through the eyes of faith and trust in God.

Illustration:

A great illustration of this principle is found in the Old Testament story of David and Goliath. Remember how all Israel depressed and in great fear because Goliath? The whole army of Israel had turned to Jell-O because of the taunts of this man. But little David – a mere teenager at the time -- was fearless. He looked at Goliath, in all his impressive height and great strength, and said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26) David went on to correctly say, "... the battle is the LORD's ..." (1 Sam 17:47) And you know the rest of the story. David led the people of Israel to a great victory over the Philistines.

1. Keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord [verse 11b]

Fervor = Zeo = "To be boiling hot or white hot"

Not out of control like a forest fire, but stoked like the engine on a train.

Serving the Lord = Doulos = "To be a voluntary bond-slave of Jesus Christ"

In order to maintain your spiritual fervor you must be careful not to allow your focus be the people who you are serving. If you are serving people, you will burn out.

Col 3:23-24 “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Application:

There are two things that Paul says in Col 3 that will help you maintain your spiritual fervor:

1. Make sure it is the Lord Christ you are serving – not man.
2. Remember that you will be rewarded with an inheritance from the Lord.

a. Be joyful in **hope** [verse 12a]

1 Peter 1:3-6 “In his great mercy *he has given us new birth into a living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade*—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

b. Be patient in affliction [verse 12b]

Because we have the hope of eternal life and the assurance of an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for us, we can persevere and endure suffering that would otherwise leave us frustrated and exhausted.

Romans 5:2-5 “And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

c. Be faithful in **prayer** [verse 12c]

Faithful = Proskartereo = “To be strong, steadfast or unwavering”

One of the reasons that God allows us to go through difficulties in life is to drive us to prayer. This is one of the reasons that we can rejoice in life's challenges. It forces us into an ever-deepening dependence on God.

Prayer was the mark of the New Testament church:

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Prayer is also one of the characteristic marks of a genuine believer today:

Col 4:2 “Devote yourselves to prayer ...”

Eph 6:18 “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions ...”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

D. **Share** with God's people who are in need [verse 13a]

Share = Koinonia = “Sharing in common”

This kind of generosity was one of the amazing characteristics of the NT church.

Acts 2:44-47 “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Application:

Everything that we have has been given to us by God, not only for our own enjoyment, but also for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Galatians 6:10 “[So] as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

E. Practice **hospitality** [verse 13b]

Practice = “To pursue or to chase”

In other words, we are not only to meet the needs of people who show up on our doorstep, but we are to actually go out and pursue opportunities to invite people into our homes.

Hospitality is such a basic evidence of Christian maturity that it is one of the qualifying characteristics of an elder in the church. (Titus 1:8)

1 Peter 4:9 “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

Hebrews 13:2 “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

II A Life Offered To God Produces Humility

A. **Bless** those who persecute you [verse 14]

1. Bless and do not curse

We are not to stop with simply resisting the temptation to retaliate and exact vengeance, but we are to take the additional step of blessing our enemies.

Luke 6:27-28, 32-33 “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” ... “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that.”

How are we to do this? By following the example of Jesus:

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

B. **Rejoice** with those who rejoice [verse 15a]

Agape love adjusts to other people's needs and moods. I think he puts rejoicing first because that is so hard to do sometimes. If there is something someone else has achieved that we think we ought to have, it is hard to go up to that person and say, "I'm so glad for you." But that is what love does, and it is possible to do it -- for those who walk in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:26 “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

C. **Mourn** with those who mourn [verse 15b]

Love should motivate us to be sensitive to the disappointments, hardships and sorrows of others.

2 Cor 1:3-5 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”

Application:

When someone is struggling or discouraged, don't say, "What's the matter with you? Why are you so down all the time? Why can't you be cheerful like me?" No, Paul says, adjust yourself. Be a caring and sensitive representative of the Father's love.

D. Live in **harmony** with one another [verse 16a]

Romans 15:5-6 “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Do not be proud [verse 16b]

1 Corinthians 13:4 “Love is not proud.”

2. Be willing to associate with people of low position [verse 16c]

James 2:1-9 “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have

you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?
But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.”

James isn't saying that we can't associate with successful people. But he is encouraging us not to show favoritism by treating the wealthy with greater respect, honor and love than the poor.

3. Do not be conceited [verse 16d]

Conceited = “Having an exaggerated opinion of oneself”

We are not to think that we are in any way superior to fellow believers.

Galatians 5:26 “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

III A Life Offered To God Produces Faith

A. Do not repay anyone **evil** for evil [verse 17a]

1 Peter 3:8-9 “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

B. Do what is **right** in the eyes of everybody [verse 17b]

Right = “What is good, proper, and honest”

2 Corinthians 8:21 “For we *are taking pains to do what is right*, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.”

C. Live at **peace** with everyone [verse 18]

1. As far as it depends on you

Peace, by definition, requires two participating parties to exist. Our responsibility is to make sure that we have done everything within our power, without compromising God's truth, to create an atmosphere of peace.

Col 3:15 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.”

D. Do not take **revenge** [verse 19a]

Revenge is one of the most natural human responses to hurt or injury. But Paul's admonition is, "Don't avenge yourself." The inevitable result of trying to get even is that you will be guilty of sin and only further escalate the conflict.

Deuteronomy 32:35 “It is mine to avenge; I will repay.

1. Leave room for God's wrath [verse 19b]

Rom 1:18 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

Colossians 3:6 “Because of these [sins], the wrath of God is coming.”

You say, "What do you expect me to do? Somebody hits me -- do you expect me just to sit there and do nothing? Oh, no. There is something you can do!

E. Do **good** to your enemy [verse 20]

Proverbs 25:21-22 “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.”

1. Feed him if he is hungry
2. Give him a drink if he is thirsty

You could read this verse two different ways:

1. Treat your enemy kindly and thus ensure him a more terrible punishment on the day of God’s wrath.
2. Treat your enemy kindly and thus present the opportunity for shame and embarrassment to lead him to repentance.

Illustration: In 1 Samuel 24:8-19, we find King Saul pursuing David to kill him. One day David actually had the opportunity to kill Saul, but he would not lift his hand against Saul even though the king was seeking David’s life. When Saul realized that David had spared his life, he said, “You are more righteous than I,” he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.”

The world expects retaliation when they have wronged someone. To receive kindness and love when it seems uncalled for, can melt the hardest heart.

F. Do not be **overcome** by evil [verse 21]

1. Overcome evil with good

There are two meanings here:

1. We must not allow the evil done to us by other people to overcome and overwhelm us.
2. We must not allow ourselves to be overcome by our own evil response.

James 2:12-13 “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”

Conclusion

So there you have it! Twenty-five fruits of a life offered up to God as a living sacrifice!

Can you imagine what would happen to this community if we began to live in this manner?

What a testimony of grace it would be! And it all begins with God! His mercy prompts our response of self-surrender which leads to the beautiful fruit of sacrificed life.

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