

## BIBLICAL NORMS

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Romans 12:9-13

1. When Jesus walked the earth Judaism had little resemblance to God's original intent for His people.
2. The same can be said for that which calls itself the church and those who constitute the church's membership.
3. Watchman Nee, a Chinese preacher who spent the last twenty years of his life in a Communist prison, and died there in 1972, wrote a book titled, "The Normal Christian Life."
4. The life Nee describes is the life that God desires for every Christian, and the life that can be, and should be, a reality for every true follower of Jesus Christ.
- 5. An honest evaluation of today's church will lead to the conclusion that what is now normal is actually abnormal.**
6. Starting in Romans 12:1 Paul sets forth a series of biblical norms; things that should be true of every person who is in fact a follower of Jesus Christ.
7. These concluding chapters of Romans constitute God's will for every true Christian and the churches they make up.
8. Last week we covered some foundational norms: total surrender, a transformed mind, and a life characterized by humility and shared ministry.
9. Today we are going to discuss a series of Holy Spirit inspired admonitions that Paul delivered to the Christians in Rome, and that should be true of us as well.
10. These admonitions provide a clear picture of what God intends our lives as followers of Jesus Christ to look like.
11. They also constitute a prayer list that we can follow as we pray for ourselves and others.

### I. Be real. 9

- A. "Let love (agape) be without hypocrisy."
  1. Let the love you express be sacrificial and real.
  2. Do not be a pretender, rather be an expender who expends himself or herself for others.
- B. "Abhor what is evil."
  1. We are to abhor (detest) evil and not just abstain from evil. Amos 5:15  
"Hate evil, love good."
  2. There are things God hates, and we ought to hate what He hates.
    - a. Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for hating what He hated. Rev 2:6  
"Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

b. . Yet He reproved the church at Pergamum for tolerating what He hated. Rev 2:15-16

“So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”

3. The Psalmist commanded, “Hate evil, you who love the Lord.” Psalm 97:10

C. “Cling to (be glued to) what is good.

1. Our lives are to demonstrate what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

2. This requires discernment. 1 Thess 5:21-22

“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form (appearance) of evil.”

## II. Be devoted. 10

A. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Philadelphia).

1. Translated “kindly affectioned” in some translations.

2. A church is to be a spiritual family, and each member should manifest brotherly love and affection for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

NOTE: In 2 Timothy 3:1-9 the Apostle Paul pointed out that the culture would become increasingly dysfunctional over time. One trait he mentioned is that people would be “unloving” or “without natural affection.” We see evidence of this fact every day, and sadly, even within the church. Christians should naturally love one another, and their lives and life choices should demonstrate that they do.”

3. One commentator wrote, “Love the brethren in the faith as though they were brothers in blood.”

4. Love for one’s brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the defining characteristics of a genuine Christian. 1 John 3:13-21

Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.** 15 Everyone who hates (fails to love) his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

16 **We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 **Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

B. “Give preference to one another in honor.” Phil 2:1-4

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty

conceit, **but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves**; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

### **III. Be servants. 11-13**

- A. Paul admonished his readers to serve the Lord with diligence and fervency.
1. Not lagging: sluggish (slow) or slothful (lazy, half-hearted).
  2. Fervent (to boil with heat) as opposed to dignified, cold, or unemotional.
  3. Serving as an obedient servant or slave.
- B. He encouraged them to:
1. Rejoice in hope--manifest expectancy.
  2. Persevere in tribulation—keep on keeping on.
  3. Be devoted to prayer—steadfastly attentive to, be earnest towards, fixated on.
- NOTE: The world and the church owe a debt of gratitude to the faithful few whose lives are devoted to prayer.**
- C. They were also to be compassionate (to make the needs of others their own), and hospitable (willing to host and to house itinerant preachers and persecuted persons in need).

NOTE: We are not to enable irresponsible lifestyle choices, but we are to share with those who have genuine needs.

### **APPLICATION**

1. Over the next several weeks we will be challenged to examine our lives in view of other biblical norms that Paul deals with.
2. For now each of us should evaluate to what degree are the above norms true in our lives.
3. May God help us to be real, devoted, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.