

I. Introduction

- A. We think of Reformation beginning with Luther nailing 95 theses to Wittenberg door
1. While he found disagreement with the church, he found no peace with God
 - a. Two years after nailing his 95 theses, Luther was overwhelmed by doubt and fear
 - b. The more he tried to obey God, the more distant and remote God seemed to him
 2. That's where the book of Romans comes in; one night he re-read **Romans 1:17** afresh
 - a. As he read those words, saw the impossible demands of Law swept away by grace
 - b. He saw a righteousness, not as his own perfection and performance, but as a gift
I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. All at once I felt that I had been born again... Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light.
 - c. He began to see Romans as *"The chief part of the NT, and very purest gospel of all."*
 - 1) Some will tell that night was when the Reformation really had its beginning!
 - 2) The engine that drove the Reformation was Luther's re-reading of Romans
- B. So aren't we glad that Luther read Romans that night— not Leviticus or Ecclesiastes!
1. As we've seen in our study, Paul points to righteousness apart from Law (**Rom 3:21**)
 - a. And Paul knows that he is going to be misunderstood (**Rom 3:8, 6:1, 6:15**)
 - b. Yep, some will see grace as license to sin, *"God's likes to forgive and I like to sin"*
 - c. Paul certainly condemns that, but he never softens his stance on preaching grace!
 2. Grace is the central argument of Romans— *but it's not the main point of the book!*
 - a. Paul wrote Romans to call the Roman church back to Christian unity and love.
 - 1) Jewish and Gentile Christian were united by common need for God's grace.
 - 2) Because they were given grace, they needed to live graciously with each other
 - b. Grace was the theological underpinning for the basic message of unity and love.
 - c. Grace isn't excuse to ignore you, *"I can do as I please because I'm under grace!"*
 - d. Grace rather means live WITH and FOR one another, so we must live graciously
 3. Here's how I see this short paragraph in **Romans 12** laying out for us this morning
 - a. He begins, *"Love must be sincere."* Well, he says, *"The love sincere..."* (**12:9**)
 - b. There's no verb; it's implied. What follows is intended to describe *"sincere love."*
 - c. We'll look at this "sincere love" and five or so characters that Paul lays out here

II. Love Must Be Sincere (Romans 12:9a)

- A. The text begins “*love must be sincere*” or “*Don’t just pretend to love others.*” (NLT)
1. Word “*Sincere*” is a form of “*hypocrite*,” literally “*one who wears a mask.*” An actor.
 - a. Actors in Greek dramas wore different masks so they could play different roles
 - b. That let same actor play different roles in the same play (*cut down on overhead*)
 2. Paul says to love each other sincerely, without wearing masks or playing parts.
 - a. English word “*sincere*” comes from a Latin word meaning literally “*without wax*”
 - b. Unscrupulous artisans hid flaws with wax; so “*sincere*” meant genuine (“*no wax*”)
 - c. Paul says love for each other must be sincere—the real thing, not wax imitation
- B. We received grace, now we must give grace back—sincere love of brothers and sisters
1. It’s said sincerity is key in sales, politics, anything; once you learn how to fake that...
 - a. That’s the point; we can’t fake it! Christian love must be sincere. Without wax!
 - b. A lot of is don’t get that; we just don’t get church as shared lives and shared love
 2. **Old Illustration:** See church as going to a movie; it helps to have other people there
 - a. Last thing want: **Interaction!** Share popcorn, ask questions, want a ride home
 - b. That’s the way some see other people at church—the show is better when it’s full
 - 1) When we feel that way Paul says, “*You don’t get it*” and the IT is God’s grace
 - 2) When you get grace, you live graciously—that requires sincere love of others

III. What Is Sincere Love (Romans 12:9b-16)

- A. **First**, sincere love is discerning in how it treats good and evil (Rom 12:9b)
1. It we love LIKE God loves, we must love WHAT God loves... and WHO He loves
 - a. Part of Paul’s definition of love is this same love of the truth (1 Cor 13:6)
 - b. Later in this chapter Paul will say, “*Be careful to do what is right...*” (Rom 12:17)
 - c. **Point:** Sincere love for everyone doesn’t mean that we will accept anything as OK!
 2. Church today really has two different problems when it comes to accepting sinners
 - a. **On the one hand**, we’re not very good at accepting sinners who don’t know Jesus
 - 1) We want people to come Christ, right? Just not bring a bunch of sin here!
 - 2) Church can cavalierly condemn the world, treating sinners as our enemies
 - 3) Jesus was “*friend of sinners.*” He accepted people who came—with their sin!
 - a) We will never minister to sinners and stay an arm’s length away from their sin
 - b) *Jesus, friend of sinners, open our eyes to the world at the end of pointing fingers...*

- b. ***On the other hand***, we can much too easy on the sinners inside of the church!
 - 1) OK, the church condemns sins like homosexuality and abortion “*out there*”
 - 2) What of greed, malice and deceit (*things Jesus actually talked about*) “*in here*”
 - a) Why was it critical to oppose homosexual marriage... *defend traditional family?*
 - b) Bigger threat is rise of divorce among us! *Push to change that law? Practice?*
 - 3) Paul tells Corinth to leave culture to God and police their own (**1 Cor 6:12-13**)
 - 3. Sincere love means we will sincerely intervene if family is on the path to destruction
- B. Second**, sincere love means (tribute to *Sister Sledge*) “*we are family*” (**Rom 12:10a**)
(If you’re in my Sunday class, this point will sound familiar; if not, then why aren’t you my class?)
- 1. Paul uses two Greek words that emphasize our family connection in the church
 - a. The familiar one is *philadelphia* (“*city of brotherly love*”). “*Mutual love*” (NET)
 - b. First, “*be devoted*,” this word is from *philos* (**love**) and *storge* (**family affection**)
 - 1) This kind of love, this family affect stresses that church is a place to belong
 - 2) Like Cheers, church is where everybody knows your name. It is like family!
 - 2. This kind of “*family love*” really has to take two forms.” *Both forms are essential*
 - a. There is the tender-affection, warm-fuzzy, unabashed pride kind of family love
 - b. Then there’s the grind-your-teeth, pull-out-hair, on-my-last-nerve family love
 - 1) Families need a healthy dose both kinds of love, right! Knew I get one amen!
 - 2) Members of healthy families never apathetically **ignore** and **neglect** each other
 - 3. Paul reminds us that to be devoted to God, we must also be devoted to one another
- C. Third**, sincere love also means putting yourself at the end of the line (**Rom 12:10b**)
- 1. This idea to “*honor one another above yourselves*” is not exactly a **new idea**
 - a. This sounds a lot like something Paul says to the Philippians (**Phil 2:3-4**)
 - b. Which sounds a lot like the same point he makes to Corinth (**1 Cor 10:24**)
 - c. Which sounds a lot like what he will say again later in Romans (**Rom 15:1-2**)
 - 2. Love means we shouldn’t be looking out for ourselves—something good to consider.
 - a. What cause most problems in marriage? She insists on her way! ½ right? ¼ right?
 - 1) We never had issues over trying to out-honor other! “*No honey, you’re right...*”
 - 2) Paul point exactly! Footnote in NASB: “*Outdo one another in showing honor.*”
 - b. We won’t have arguments in our church family if we listen to Paul (**Rom 12:12**)
 - c. Prescription for peace: Keep my eyes OFF me and ON God and ON one another

D. **Fourth**, sincere love never run out of spiritual “juice” (**Rom 12:11**)

1. The word used is literally “*lazy*,” same word used for one talent man (**Matt 25:26**)
 - a. We think this guy was cautious or conservative; parable calls him “lazy”
 - b. Paul says sincere love won’t let us get spiritually lazy! *Love keeps enthusiasm!*
 - 1) We must remain “*fervent in spirit*” (ESV) or “*fervent in the Spirit*” (ESV note)
 - 2) Either way, sincere love doesn’t allow us to get lazy in our service to the Lord
2. We went through 10 straight years of girls cheering for Denbigh High School
 - a. We saw a lot of ups and down in 10 years. OK, most downs and really downs.
 - b. One cheer sticks in my mind, “*Keep it up, keep it up, keep that Patriot spirit up*”
 - 1) They led that cheer when being pounded 77-0 by Hampton and Ronald Curry
 - 2) And that was knowing they had to play Michel Vick the next week
 - c. The football team may quit (with Denbigh, who could tell), not the cheerleaders!
3. Sincere Christian love allows us to keep up our spiritual enthusiasm up despite

E. **Finally**, sincere love looks across a table to meet the needs of others (**Rom 12:13**)

1. Sincere love is not just theoretical; it has a concrete way of meeting the needs
 - a. First church had “*favor with all the people*” because it met needs (**Acts 2:44-45**)
 - b. Laying down our life for each other means meeting needs (**1 John 3:16-17**)
 - c. John point there—how can we say we love and not help each other (**1 John 3:18**)
2. Hospitality can also mean sharing our table as a way of sharing lives together
 - a. One of the causalities of our busy lives is the casual meal—family and church
 - b. Table Fellowship: There is sharing around a table that seems happen nowhere else
 - 1) Real table fellowship last longer than food... servers are off-duty and join in!
 - 2) Parents had church friend over for lunch and then supper... never left the table!
 - c. Peter then raises the stakes on Paul here— “*without grumbling*” (**1 Peter 4:9**)

IV. Conclusion

- A. Grace is great! There’s no way to over-stress the place of grace of God’s scheme of things
1. You cannot get the gospel without getting the message of grace
 2. But if you get grace, then you will show grace by living a sincere love for others.
 3. And unlike just talking about grace, actually living love is a royal pain
- B. It was for Jesus; it will be for us. Won’t you show a sincere, common love today?