

## ***THE MARKS OF GENUINE LOVE***

### ***Romans 12:9-13***

Not everything professing to be love will prove to be the real thing, Some of this professed love consists only of words and profession. Christian love must be the real article. "Let love be without dissimulation". This brief exhortation introduces a whole series of practical, pointed exhortations. The best approach to this passage is to see the other exhortations as being nothing more than an amplification of this basic exhortation. Love is the primary thing, and the other statements give us the features of love.

"Dissimulation is the translation of the Greek word "unhypocritical". The word means that love is to be real, to be genuine. it is to involve more than words and profession. it will express itself in the day by day details of life in a very practical and helpful way. Since much that goes under the name of love in our day is a fraud, we need to check our love to make sure it is not hypocritical. You can do this by checking your love to see if it has each of these features. For the sake of brevity, I believe that we can condense them into six briefly stated features.

### ***GENUINE LOVE IS DISCRIMINATING***

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Love is not blind to moral distinctions, especially as it relates to actions toward others. "Abhor" is a strong, intensive word that means to hate, to abominate. The evil hated is

probably that which is injurious to others. The word may include everything that is wrong, and bad morally.

The good to be prized is that which is beneficial and helpful to others, as well as morally correct. "Cleave" means to be wed, to be glued to something, to be truly attached to it. Real love will be able to discern the difference between good and evil, especially as they affect other people, and will react toward them strongly. There will be an unquestioned opposition to the evil, and unending commitment to the good.

At this point our love will be taking on the qualities of the divine love for God hates evil while cleaving to the good. God hates everything that is inconsistent with His character and that which is hurtful and harmful to His creature man. If we are filled with his love, it will be seen in our discrimination.

### ***GENUINE LOVE IS WARMLY AFFECTIONED***

"Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love." Christian love will be at its best in the Christian fellowship. "Kindly affectioned" is used of the love that is found primarily in a parent child relationship. It is characterized by tenderness, warmth, and kindness. It is mutual love, reciprocal love.

Have you ever encountered a "stand-offish" spirit in the church? When you say that you love the fellow believers in the church, what do you mean? The love you should have will have a warmth, a tenderness in it. Your relationship to the other believers should be much like the relationship between the members of a closely knit family. The real article will have this kind of warmth.

Such a warmth goes deeper than just the "jolly-good-fellow" spirit that characterizes some fraternal and civic groups. It is genuine feelings of warmth.

### ***GENUINE LOVE IS HUMBLE***

"In honor preferring one another". This feature of real love is best seen within the fellowship of the church. Literally it says that the persons involved will not be waiting for someone to honor them, but will instead be out in front setting the example by honoring others. True love is not proud and self seeking, but is able to honestly evaluate and honor the fellow believer within the fellowship of the church. Such love will readily acknowledge personal dependence upon others, personal need of their ministry.

Another way of saying this would be, "Love is courteous and thoughtful of others." Love will not be proud, selfish, or rude, or thoughtless. Does not our world need a fresh demonstration of this kind of love?

## ***GENUINE LOVE IS ZEALOUS***

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. " This triplet of admonitions speaks to the same thing. Genuine love will be characterized by a burning zeal. "Business" is actually the translation of the word for zeal, earnestness, activity.

It means to manifest an outward zeal for something. "Fervent" means to boil, to be hot. The love is to be red hot in the inner spirit, burning with zeal. The motive for all of this is seen in the "serving the Lord".

Because the Christian sees all of his activity as being an expression of his love service for the Lord, he goes about it with a burning zeal. This carries over into personal relationships, in service rendered to others, in personal ministry within the church, into every part of life. Love will set you on fire with zeal and enthusiasm.

We are living in a day when zeal is often misunderstood. You are just supposed to not become zealous about spiritual things. It is alright to be red hot in your support of your favorite sports team, or red hot in the pursuit of business interest, but in ministry to the Lord and others, in religious devotion, you are supposed to be rather cool and matter of fact. But real love will just set the heart on fire. May God give us more of these "hot hearts" for the Lord.

## ***GENUINE LOVE IS HOPEFUL***

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." This makes up another of these helpful triplets. They speak to the same thing basically. The heart of this verse is hope. You will recall that in the Corinthian letter Paul described the qualities of love by saying, love, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." This verse is saying the same thing.

Love will always be finding joy in the hope it possesses. Regardless of the circumstances, it will rejoice on the basis of this hope. Because of this hope, this love will be patient in the afflictions and tribulations that come, And because of this hope, this love will keep on praying. When a person ceases to pray, this is the sure sign of the loss of hope and the presence of despair. True love never fails, it keeps on praying until the light breaks through.

Have you ever watched such love in action? It is a beautiful sight to behold. I have seen such love in the heart of a mother toward a wayward child. When the circumstances would seem to dictate the loss of hope, this mother kept on rejoicing in her hope, was patient with the troubles coming to her through the waywardness of the child, and kept up her consistent prayers. Such a feature is basic to the genuine article called Christian love. We need such a love for one

another, for God, and for the world about us, We need that love that will keep us ever at it, ever in the way of doing the right thing.

### ***GENUINE LOVE IS GENEROUS***

"Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." These two statements go together to make up a trait of liberality and generosity that is characteristic of true love. The necessity of the saints includes any physical need that might come their way. To distribute to them is literally to have fellowship with them in their need, The word means to partake, to share with them, to communicate with them in their need. It goes deeper than just doling out a little of our surplus to help them over their difficulty. Really we will be willing to become a part of their need at a much deeper level. As long as we have anything, they will have something. Sincere love just acts that way.

"Given to hospitality" is really a mild translation. Literally it means that hospitality is being pursued like a hunter hunting for game. It would be a far sight from being hospitable if nothing else could be done, but it is rather being zealous in your hospitality. In the context of the first century world, such hospitality was essential. Unless someone opened the door to his home to the stranger passing through, he would be sleeping out under the stars, and would be exposed to the danger associated with such circumstances, Selfishness would say, "let every man take care of himself. Let him "root hog or die." But Christian love will say, "I

have a bed and room for you, my friend. Come into my home." Such generosity, such selflessness is a mark of real love.

How does your love measure up? Is yours of the genuine variety? Or has your love consisted more of words than actual deeds? My own heart has surely been searched by this text. I am made to confess to the Lord that I do not always manifest this kind of love. Indeed, I am made to ask, "Can I ever know such love"?

The answer is yes. Again let me remind you of what precedes this passage in the Romans letter. Before this admonition there comes the message of salvation. This is a word for those who have received the gift of eternal life by faith. Then there is the word about consecration--giving your body as a living sacrifice. Then there is the word about inner renewal through the Spirit of God. Those who have known these three realities can begin to know the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. The first fruit the Spirit produces is "love"---real, genuine, unhypocritical love.