
“True Worldview”

ROMANS 12:9-21, PT. 2

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PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

How we think and how we reason in the world is called a worldview. Christians ought to have a biblical worldview, a true worldview. Our salvation ought to impact not only what we do on Sunday mornings, but how we think and how we respond to life 24/7. Do you have a true worldview?

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at the first part of verse 9, then 10, 13, 15 and 16. Today we’re looking at the second part of verse 9, then 11, 12, and 14. Next week we’ll cover verses 17-21. Remember, these are what the ESV calls “Marks of a true Christian.” These are life evidences of a belief in the right doctrine (Romans 1-11), which results in right doxology (Romans 11:33-36). This is what a life looks like when it is laid before the Lord as a living sacrifice. In these verses today I see a description of the Christian’s mind. It’s how we ought to think and reason in the world; it’s living with a biblical worldview.

ROMANS 12:9-21

^{9b}**Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good...** ¹¹**Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.** ¹²**Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.** ¹⁴**Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.**

The first part of **verse 9**, says, “Let love be genuine.” I told you last week that truth without love is brutality and love without truth is sentimentality. For love to be genuine, it must be discerning. It must be truthful. Now we see that for love to be genuine, we must **abhor what is evil**.

HATE EVIL

To abhor means to hate. It’s about as strong a word as you can use to describe how we’re to think about the evil in the world. This is not the same as saying, “abhor those who do evil things.” On the contrary, as we’ll see later, we’re called to bless people who do evil against us.

This is a call to think clearly speak plainly about worldviews that destroy rather than build up. It’s a call to reject the presuppositions of the secular world. And it’s a call to fundamentally repent of our former way of living.

Genuine love cannot deny what the Holy, Creator God declared to be right and wrong. Genuine love for God and other people, cannot advocate for that which causes harm, runs contrary to the moral law, and threatens human flourishing. Evil is the enemy of good; the antithesis of Christlikeness. For that reason, Christians hate evil.

We’ve been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. When you understand that you’ve been made new and given the righteousness of Christ, when you find a new identity in Him, you think differently. Your taste for worldly things begins to fade. You come to

recognize evil as evil. You see that evil is an affront to the God who saved you and made His own. *"O you who love the Lord, hate evil!" Psalm 97:10*

SEARCH MY HEART, O GOD

It is certainly not only others' evil we must be on guard against. In fact, if we're going to be faithful to Jesus, we're going to first take the log out of our own eye so we can see clearly how to remove the speck from our brother's. We're not going to presume that because we're saved we're immune from sin. We're going to echo David's prayer in the psalms, "Search me, O God, and see if there is any grievous way in me!"

Paul wrote to Timothy, "...*Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.*" *2 Timothy 4:10* Apparently, you can join an apostle on a missionary journey, being so fired up for Jesus, and yet find yourself abandoning him because you love the world too much. Tragically, Christians entertain themselves with worldly and sinful things, toying with them as if they believe they can play with fire and not get burned.

Genuine love leads us to flee from these things. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 and 10:14 Paul warns us to "flee" from sexual immorality and idolatry. He said the same to Timothy in both letters. *"But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness."* *1 Timothy 6:11* and *"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace..."* *2 Timothy 2:22* The truth is we cannot pursue righteousness while tolerating evil. Let love be genuine, abhor what is evil.

HOLD FAST

Verse 9 continues, **hold fast to what is good.** I've heard people say, "The church should be known by what it's for, not what it's against." I get the sentiment. Joy is fruit of the Spirit, and it ought to be conspicuous. If we're just a bunch of curmudgeons, we'll lose our ability to influence and impact the world around us. But by abhorring what is evil and holding fast to what is good, we offer something better than the world offers. We offer real life, real hope, and real joy.

So, we say plainly that we abhor abortion. We advocate for its abolition and justice for the innocent victim. We do not support people who advocate for the expunge, or even preservation, of the murdering of unborn children. That this is even controversial in the church is to our shame. In no uncertain terms Christians have always abhorred abortion.

We abhor abortion because it is the taking of the life of an image bearer of God. Life is precious. We abhor abortion and we hold fast to life. We hold fast to full quivers. We hold fast to motherhood and fatherhood. We hold fast to homemaking and parenting. We hold fast to adoption.

We dedicate ourselves as parents to raising our children and the children of others in the fear of the Lord. We love children, we don't despise them. We embrace them as gifts from the Lord. We also hold fast to our aging parents and the elderly and the widow, caring for them in their time of need. We demonstrate that we value life and hold fast to life at every stage because life is good. We hold fast to the preciousness and sanctity of life.

We also abhor all sexual immorality, including homosexuality and transgenderism, and anything else that cheapens the sanctity of marriage.

We advocate for the proper understanding of marriage and sexuality. We reject the advancement of agendas and policies that deny God's design for marriage and male/female sexuality. In no uncertain terms do we abhor sexual immorality.

We do so because sexual immorality, including homosexuality and transgenderism is a blatant assault upon the goodness of creation and therefore on the goodness of the Creator. When God created us,

He created us male and female, in His image. He joined one man and one woman together as one flesh for the sake of human flourishing and to be a vivid, living depiction of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We recognize that the perversion of marriage and sexuality, in any form, is evil and that marriage and sexual purity is not only good, but is also necessary for human flourishing. We love marriage and we love purity. We hold fast to them as gifts from the Lord and we call them good.

We do not capitulate to peer pressure and popular culture regarding good and evil, nor do we toy with evil in our own lives as if we're somehow immune to its effects. We hold fast, which means we stand our ground. We don't back down. We don't give up even when we're charged with the unpardonable sin of "offending" someone. A true worldview abhors evil and holds fast to what is good.

FIRED UP

This requires a spine. It means we must have an uncommon zeal; a spiritual fervor. Paul says in **verse 11, Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.** In Romans 12:3-8 Paul says that the body is composed of many members; each given a gift to be used for the building up of the body. We ought to put those gifts to use in service to the Lord. For that reason, we cannot be **slothful in zeal.**

We have been born again with a spiritual vigor, a spiritual life. Therefore, every believer should set as his or her primary function in life to use that vigor for the glory of God. The kingdom of God is, in the words of R.C. Sproul, the "primary business" of every believer. As Paul said, "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men...*" *Colossians 3:23*

We're to live with an awareness that we're going to give account for our lives. I sense that some people waste their lives in slothful pursuit of pleasure and comfort. They fear and avoid difficult things. They resist stepping out of what is comfortable. They just go along with the crowd because it's easier than swimming upstream.

Or they hide behind their weaknesses, allowing them to justify a lazy and lackadaisical approach to life. They say, "I haven't been gifted that way," to excuse their apathy. But Jesus invites us to be **fervent!** Fervor involves passion!

The word fervent literally means "to boil." Not like boiling out of control, but to use John MacArthur's phrase, like a "steam engine." There is passionate heat that destroys and passionate heat that delivers power. Spiritual fervor is the heat necessary to propel us forward in our mission of making disciples of all nations.

It's easy to get fired up in the heat of the moment. We call these "mountain-top" experiences. You attend a rally or a retreat and you're fired up. But like a coal that rolls away from the fire, you slowly cool down and lose that fervor. When fervor is emotional, that's what you can expect.

But when it's spiritual, coming from the Holy Spirit, when it comes from abiding in Christ, you can anticipate going the distance. Being fervent in spirit means being passionate about Jesus. It means living with one purpose on your mind – the glory of Christ to all nations!

It means pursuing holiness. It means throwing off the sin and weight that so easily entangles and running with endurance the race marked out for you. (Hebrews 12:1) But we're not running aimlessly. It profits no one to have a bunch of people fired up but having no direction or discernment. Thus, Paul modifies it, adding **serving the Lord.**

Our zeal and our spiritual fervor, like everything else in our lives must be submitted to King Jesus. Passion is great, but if it leads us to do anything inconsistent with God's Word or out of step with the Spirit, it is to be brought into submission. Our entire lives are to be spent with one singular purpose, that of serving the Lord.

When was the last time you were fired up for the right things and for the right reasons? When was the last time the zeal of the Lord consumed you? A true worldview does not allow you to be passive and lazy. A true worldview is fired up to serve the Lord.

EVEN IN SUFFERING

Suffering causes many Christians' passion to grow cold. When they experience resistance, they draw back and ease up. Paul addressed the true worldview's response to suffering in **verse 12, Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.**

Rejoice in hope means to let your hope of eternity, your hope in Christ, as a beloved child of God cause you to have joy and gratitude in spite of your circumstances. Biblically, hope is not an uncertainty, but a certainty.

It is confidence that you will hear, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"* Matthew 25:21

Our hope is that there really is a God, that He really does reward those who seek Him, that we really will live forever in a glorious place called Heaven. It's a settled conviction that we don't have to make Heaven on earth because we're going to Heaven when we die. So, we can endure hardships and tribulation with joy because this world is not our home. It is this hope that caused Paul to say, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Philippians 1:21 Do you believe that when you die, you gain?

Settling that in your mind helps you **be patient in tribulation.** That is because you recognize that God is working things out for your good in every situation. Embrace the fact that as with gold, purity in your faith takes purification. And purification takes the fire of hardship and suffering. But there will be a day when the purification is complete, and you will observe the glory that will make your tribulation pale in comparison. *"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,"* 2 Corinthians 4:17

Keep trusting the Lord through the storm. Keep believing that the Lord is working it out. Keep entrusting yourself to the justice of God. This is the example of Christ who, *"When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."* 1 Peter 2:23 It is this hope that we rejoice in when we suffer.

Speaking of suffering, Charles Spurgeon once said, "I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages." One of the blessed effects of tribulation is greater dependance upon, and increased closeness to the Lord. Suffering can cause us to draw near to God, which is where we ought to always remain, as Paul calls us to **be constant in prayer.**

Prayer puts us where we ought to be, in full submission to the Lord. This is what ought to characterize our lives. To be constant in prayer means that we train ourselves to instinctively respond to life by going to Him in prayer.

It means we've trained ourselves to thank Him for small victories, ask Him for even simple provision, depend upon Him for protection, wisdom, discernment, and all uncertainties. It is to know and believe that the Spirit of God intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26) so that even when we do not know what to say, we simply assume a posture and attitude of prayer.

When you're tempted to complain about your circumstances, pray. When you fear, pray. When you lack strength to endure, pray. This is the will of God for you! *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 A true worldview keeps us in a spirit of hopeful and joyful prayer continually.

BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE

This is absolutely necessary if there's any chance we're going to be faithful to what Paul calls us to in our final point today. In **verse 14** he says, **Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.** Paul was no stranger to persecution. He felt the blows of the stones. He knew the harassment, the beatings, the imprisonment and ultimately martyrdom.

To refrain from cursing someone is one thing. But to bless someone who is persecuting you, that requires a radical change of heart. That's something only the Holy Spirit can do in you. It's a mark of genuine love. A true worldview seeks others' good, not harm.

To bless someone is to ask the Lord to do good to them. What could be better for them than that they would see Christ in you, believe the Gospel, repent of their sins, and be saved? This was, after all, Paul's very own experience. From violent persecutor of the church to Apostle and missionary. That is the power of Christ! And it ought to be our hope that even our persecutors would find forgiveness and salvation in Him.

Be comforted by the words of Jesus, *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* Matthew 5:11-12

There are two things to note here. When you're persecuted, you're in good company. They persecuted the prophets, too. And the Lord sees and rewards your faithfulness in persecution forever. Your reward is great in Heaven. Which is why you can rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, constant in prayer, and serve the Lord with zeal and fervor. You've got life and reward on the other side!

What part of a true worldview do you need to bring to the Lord today? Abhorring evil while holding fast to what is good? Serving the Lord with zeal? A constant spirit of hopeful and grateful prayer? A readiness to ask the Lord to bless those who do you harm?

The reality is the Lord already knows where you fall short here. Why not bring it to Him and ask Him to help you grow in this by His grace and for His glory?

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