**Romans 12:9-13 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12rejoicing in hope, patientin tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13distributing to the needs of the saints, givento hospitality.**

Today is Fellowship Sunday. We celebrate our church this morning and the love we find here. We celebrate those who hold official and unofficial jobs. We celebrate each person who takes a hand in this lovely family that we call Old Lea Bethel Baptist Church. From praying, to giving, to teaching, to leading, God calls, we answer. That answer is what we celebrate today. Never forget that, no matter who stands in the pulpit, it’s Christ we serve by serving His people.

In the early church, fellowship was seen as relatedness to God through Jesus. What made Christian Fellowship so different in the culture of that time was that there was a spirit of generous sharing and loving service to one another that was unlike what that culture was used to. The culture of that day was all about acquiring and wealth, selfish focus. The Roman Empire was rich and decadent. Any immorality was readily embraced, as long as the empire was served. But the Christian’s weren’t like the rest of the culture. In fact they were so different, that Nero was able to convince the Roman world that Christian’s were the enemy, while he committed horrible acts against the Roman people. Boy, that sounds pretty familiar doesn’t it?

Paul wrote to the Roman church in 56 AD. Christian’s were coming under persecution. Nero had just become Emperor. He’d later burn Christian’s alive, behead them, and hunt them as the enemy of the empire. The historian Taticus described the number of Christians killed by Nero as “an Immense Multitude.” It was in this situation that Paul wrote what would become known as The Gospel According to Paul or, as we call it, the Book of Romans.

In verse 9 we read, *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.* Let love be sincere. Love can’t be fake news in the Christian church. It has to be real! In order to be real, we must hate what is evil! This world is evil. 1 John 2:15 says *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* Push this world away. Nothing in it will last! People fail. Things fail. Memory fades. John says don’t love the world. Paul says cleave to what is good. The word cling or cleave has the idea of being glued. Luke 10:27 *So he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.”* Loving God with all my heart, all my soul, all my strength, and all my mind doesn’t leave any room to love this world. Luke 16 tells us that To love God and love mammon is impossible. A choice must be made… and that choice is ours.

Verses 10-13 describes our fellowship in action. *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.* Cherish one another as brothers and sisters. Cherish – we check on those we cherish, we do for those we cherish, we think about those we cherish. Giving preference to one another – In Luke 14, Jesus tells us to choose the low place, leave the place of honor for others. That’s in keeping with His teaching that he who would be first must be last and servant of all. Giving preference to others is a mark of humility.

Verse 11 says – *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* When we serve the Lord by serving His people, we mustn’t be slothful. We mustn’t look to be served but be on fire of how we can serve. Fervent in Spirit – that means boiling over with Spirit. Never think – well, I’m one of God’s people waiting to be served. Think – I am God’s servant! Who might I serve? Wouldn’t the world be a different place if we sought to serve?

Verse 12*rejoicing in hope, patientin tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.* Christians rejoice with one another in hope. We’re patient in trials, recognizing that God may be using our situation to demonstrate His strength. We continue steadfastly in prayer – always hoping, praying diligently for one another. Looking for ways to pursue the Kingdom.

Verse 13 *distributing to the needs of the saints, givento hospitality.* In the days of this letter, a Christian may show up at your door in the middle of the night, running from the Romans. 1 Peter 4:9-10 *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* Always see the opportunity to serve as stewarding the Grace of God. Hebrews 13:2 *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.* But he wasn’t an angel, he was just Bubba up the street? Jesus *would say - And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

Love, affection, preference, diligence – on fire for Jesus, serving others – rejoicing in hope, patient in trials, never ceasing in prayer. Serving the saints through humble hospitality, in hopes that it is an angel receiving our kindness. Fellowship offers us this opportunity. Will we *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another?* Jesus gave preference to us over His own life. May we always seek to do the same.