

This One Thing

June 30, 2019

Philippians 3:7-13

Apparently this is one of the first “to-do” lists. It belonged to Benjamin Franklin. But notice this. Franklin went to bed around 1:00 a.m. and got up around 5:00 a.m. And “Franklin was known to be a meticulous tracker of his daily routine and his work towards the virtues he prioritized. Unfortunately, the demands of his business meant that he didn’t always keep up with his ideal daily routine. He often got interrupted by clients and had to ignore his schedule to meet with them. He also noticed that some of the virtues he aspired to practice, such as frugality—not wasting anything—took up too much time for him to live life as he wanted to. Preparing his own meals and mending his own clothes all the time, for instance, meant that he didn’t have enough time for business or his side projects. The result of these conflicting priorities was unhappiness over not completing the tasks he set for himself. As a result, he had to re-prioritize...” [Found on <https://buffer.com> “The Surprising History of the To-Do List and How to Design One That Actually Works” by Belle Beth Cooper].

People all around the globe today use lists. Some of you use lists every day. You like to prioritize. You like to think through the things you intend to do each day. Some of you like to feel at the end of the day as though you’ve accomplished something. So, you make a list. You write down those things on a piece of paper and you like to scratch off the ones you complete. Then, when your day’s over, you’re satisfied that you did what you needed to do that day.

Of course, some of you have created a “bucket list;” things you’d like to do before you quote “kick” the proverbial bucket.

But, here’s the one that stands out the most in my mind when it comes to to-to lists. “First I make a list of priorities: one, two, three, and so on. Then I cross out everything from three down.” [Found on <https://buffer.com> – same article as above].

Then, there are those who make a list, but they underestimate the amount of time it will take to do some of those things.

And, as you all know, it’s especially important to use a list when you’re feeling overwhelmed, wouldn’t you agree?

Now, I want you to open up your Bible today to a list. It’s not just any list; but a list written by God. It’s in the Book of Romans at chapter twelve.

I’ve titled today’s message “This One Thing.” Shall we pray?

Now, before we look at the LORD’s “list,” let me mention a book. The book is titled “The One Thing.” It was written by Gary Keller. Who’s Gary Keller? He’s the founder of the real estate company “Keller-Williams.” He’s also an author and he’s also a motivation speaker.

But, here’s what his book “The One Thing” is about. No lists for Gary. Instead, he says, decide on *one* thing; decide on the *most* important thing. Every day let that *one* thing keep you focused. In other words, spend your time and spend your life doing that one thing you believe you need to do in the eyes of the LORD. As the old Russian Proverb puts it, “If you chase two rabbits, you will not catch either one” [Found in “The One Thing” by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan].

So, the last thing I want to say to you today is that God has a list of fourteen things He wants you to do and when

you do them, you'll be pleasing to Him. No, not at all. Instead, when I show you the things in this list in Romans twelve, do not, I repeat, do not do them. Or, at least, do not consider them "God's To-Do List" for you and me.

Rather, I want to encourage you to do what Paul says in Colossians 3:16 "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" Let God's Word get you thinking on Him and meditating and appreciating and enjoying Him and letting His Word dwell in you richly. No list in the Bible was designed by the LORD to create a frenetic Christian or frantic Christians or overwhelmed Christians. Instead, imagine this list here in Romans as a word of encouragement and blessing. And, even more, imagine it like this. See it as a well that the LORD has designed to refresh and revitalize you.

Here's what Romans twelve really is. Psalm 36:8 "*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness [fulness] of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. (9) For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.*"

Your Bible is the river of God's pleasures. The LORD says you can drink of the river of His pleasures. And in drinking in the Bible, you find the fountain of life. And you also find the fulness of the LORD's house.

Here's the list. Please follow with me in your Bible at Romans 12:9 "*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. (10) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; (11) Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; (12) Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; (13) Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (14) Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. (15) Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*"

So, when it comes to God's Word, be realistic. The LORD is not asking you to follow these fourteen things on His "To-do" list.

What then, is this list about?

Here's what's on my heart today: "This One Thing." My hope today is this; that you will see what is the one thing you need to do today.

First, then, who here is willing to look at the big picture?

Did you ever notice that when you make your "to-do" list, you cover your entire day? So, the entire day is your context. When the Apostle Paul makes a list, his list is part of a large picture. And the large picture is the context of this chapter. How do you deal with the other members of Christ's body? That's the context for the list.

What he says here, he says in the context of this verse.

Romans 12:4 "*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office [duty]: (5) so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*"

Just like your body has its 7,500 parts, so the LORD's body has many parts; many members. And every single member is designed by the LORD to fulfill a role. You see the word "office" in verse four? Romans 12:4 "*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: ...*"

The word "office" means "function or duty." Everybody has a job. Everybody got his gift. Every member has a duty, a function. And when you carry out your assigned role, you demonstrate your relationship to the rest of the body. And when everybody does that, the body can be healthy.

You know the Church wasn't designed to operate on the 80/20 principle. You know what this principle says? It's 20 percent of the people doing 80 percent of the work.

Back in the 1800's an Italian economist, Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), was researching wealth and income, he noticed this:

- 80 percent of results come from 20 percent of efforts
- 80 percent of activity requires 20 percent of resources
- 80 percent of usage is by 20 percent of users

- 80 percent of revenue comes from 20 percent of customers
- 80 percent of problems come from 20 percent of causes
- 80 percent of profit comes from 20 percent of the products
- 80 percent of complaints come from 20 percent of customers
- 80 percent of sales will come from 20 percent of sales people

Now, the 80/20 ratio may be true in business. But, that's not the way the LORD designed either your physical body or the Church. In the Church every one of us has been gifted with a specific duty. Teachers teach. But, do teachers have to know how to repair broken copiers? Administrators organize. They don't usually have the gift of mercy. Those with the gift of mercy aren't necessarily givers.

So, the context of the list in this chapter is the LORD's body. Each of you has his gift. You have a gift that's been given to you by the LORD. And your gift is to be used to the benefit of the entire body. That's the context of this list in Romans twelve.

First, then, are you willing to look at the big picture?

Second, when you study your Bible, do you look for the main point? What does Paul do? What's his main point? He says, in essence, "This is how you treat three specific groups of people."

So, he divides his message into three separate sermons; three different groups. First, the Saints. Look for the words "one of another."

Notice verse five "*everyone members one of another.*"

Notice verse ten "*kindly affectioned one to another...*"

Notice verse ten "*in honor preferring one another...*"

And verse sixteen "*be of the same mind one toward another...*" So, says Paul, these are attitudes you need to have towards the Saints, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Then he tells you how to deal with *everybody*; verse eighteen "*live peaceably with all men...*" Whether it's a Believer or an Unbeliever, here's what you do.

And then, third, he tells you how to treat your enemies; verse twenty "*if thine enemy hunger, feed him...*"

You see, everybody interacts with these three entities: Christians, everyone who comes into your life, and then, we've all got enemies.

You see, the Bible is quite practical. The Holy Spirit tells you *how* to live in this world no matter who have to live with; no matter who you have to work with. But, far too many of us are, as one man puts it "*so heavenly minded, we are no earthly good.*" Folks, we may not be "*of the world.*" But we *are* "*in the world.*" So you must deal have a godly way of dealing with everyone.

First, then, look at the big picture.

Second, look for the main point.

Third, how do you treat other Christians? The passage deals with the practical side of the LORD's people dealing with the LORD's people. How do Christians deal with other Christians? What's your role as a Church member? Here's Paul, verse four. Romans 12:4 "*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*"

You see, it's not merely a question of how you use *your* gift. It's just as important how you *treat* the people in your life.

Some of you are animal lovers. But, haven't you noticed this? Some animal lovers treat their animals with kindness and their family members with harshness. Some Christians think it's OK when using their God-given gift to be harsh

and unkind with the people around them. That's how Christians deal with others? I don't think so.

Then there are those who think that their particular gift makes them special; special among other Christians; special in their families; special to everybody. But you're not special. Now, it's true that to your Heavenly Father you are more than special. But to the Christian Church, to other Christians, you are an equal. Those with the gift of exhortation or prophecy are not better than those with the gift of mercy or giving. Those who have the gift of giving are not more important than those who teach.

If that were the case, then you'd be saying that your ears are more important than your eyes. You need those eyes. And you need those ears. You need your legs just as much as you need your arms. We are "*members one of another*." You are needed as much as the person sitting next to you today. Your gift doesn't make you special among the Saints any more than your ears are more important than your eyes.

So, here's what you need to ask yourself from this passage. How are you treating your brothers and sisters in the LORD?

Folks, I realize there are fourteen things on Paul's list. But, what is the one thing? Verse nine. Romans 12:9 '*Let love be without dissimulation.*'

Now, what's the one thing? What does that mean? It means this is what you count as the most important thing.

And notice verse nine. Paul is immediately concerned with hypocrites. He says "Let love be without dissimulation." Dissimulation is the Old English for "hypocrisy." So, dissimulation is the exact opposite of love.

Here's how some other translators put this verse.

NIV "Love must be sincere."

ESV "Let love be genuine."

NASB "Let love be without hypocrisy."

NLT "Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them."

The MESSAGE "Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it."

Dissimulation means "pretense." It means "false representation." And, in essence, it's lying. It means you put on a false appearance before people. And, of course, on the positive side, it means "sincere and genuine."

One writer puts it this way. "Only crime and the criminal, it is true, confront us with the perplexity of radical evil; but only the hypocrite is really rotten to the core" (Hannah Arendt).

Listen, folks, we all struggle with hypocrisy. We don't want to be something in public that we aren't in private. And we don't want to pretend to love somebody when we aren't looking to the LORD to enable that love to be genuine.

And, of all the things Paul could have said to you and me about love, he chooses to tell you how *not* to do it. You might have expected Paul to glamorize love. But, no, not when he writes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here's what I've discovered in Romans. Every time the word "love" is used before Romans twelve, Paul is telling us about the love of *God*. But every time thereafter; every time it's used after Romans twelve, it's love on the horizontal level; the love that we express to each other.

So, Paul immediately brings up the matter of hypocrisy. Verse nine again. Romans 12:9 '*Let love be without dissimulation.*"

A woman contacted me last week with a problem; a Christian woman. Her neighbor has become a pest. She comes over to her house almost every day. And this Christian woman says to me "I don't like it. I like to be alone most of the day. And the other day I was quite blunt with

her. I'm losing sleep over this. I'm even losing weight, I'm so upset. I've prayed. Now, what should I do?"

I pointed her to a passage of Scripture, Romans twelve. And then I suggested she tell the woman to only come over once a week at a specific time.

Now, is that what Paul tells us to do? His first piece of direction is a negative. "Don't love hypocritically." What advice would you have given her?

Folks, the highest and best thing you can do for someone is to love them. And everyone needs love. Now, your situation will never match this woman's. Her situation is her situation. God allows people into your life; often someone you just don't like. Yet, He calls you to love them.

So, let's ask ourselves the question. How do you *really* feel about that person? Are you able to love them through all their quirks and through all their ways that aren't like your ways? When was the last time you said "I'm sick and tired of _____"? And, who did you say it to? And just as soon as you said it, you got a text from that very same person. And you text them back or speak to them so "totally the opposite" of what you really feel about them.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you tell every person you know how much you dislike them. You see, you can't like everybody. And when there's someone in your life that you don't love, instead of taking *them* before the LORD, take *yourself* to the LORD and ask Him for more grace and for more mercy for *yourself*.

The body of Christ is made up of all sorts of people. And you won't like some of them. But, will you play the hypocrite towards them? Or, will you go before the LORD and confess your own hypocrisy? And will you ask Him to love them through you?

So then, what is the one thing? This must be it. This is the "one thing" that should be written on your Post-it note before you place it on your dashboard.

God has a plan as to how we are to treat the other members of His body. It's right here in this passage. It's a passage that you must memorize.

Romans 12:9 "*Let love be without dissimulation (hypocrisy).*"

So, is love the one thing? In other words, is it the most important thing? Does the LORD say it's the one thing that carries the most consequences? Verse nine.

Romans 12:9 "*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. (10) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; ...*"

Romans 13:8 "*Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*

Romans 13:9 "*For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*"

So, just how significant is love to a Christian? Paul's answer -- no hypocrisy.

What do you owe everybody? You owe them your love.

You see, when you love your neighbor, you fulfill at least these five commandments: "*Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet...*"

You are fulfilling the law of God when you love.

Now, let's add the Apostle John.

I John 3:11 "*For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*"

I John 3:23 “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and **love** one another, as he gave us commandment.”

This was the message you heard from Jesus from the very beginning. And this was His commandment. If you've believed on the Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, then what's the very next thing you are to do? Love as Jesus gave us His command.

I John 4:7 ‘Beloved, let us love one another: for **love** is of God; and every one that **loveth** is born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that **loveth** not knoweth not God; for God is **love**.’

It not only originates with God. It is God. His very essence is love.

I John 2:9 ‘He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. (10) He that **loveth** his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. (11) But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.’

You see, even to say that you hate your brother indicates the true state of your heart. You are still in darkness. But when you love your brother you there's no occasion for stumbling.

But, if you hate him, you are in darkness. You walk in darkness. And that darkness has blinded your eyes.

So, folks, is it or is it not the one thing?

A while back a friend was telling my wife and I about what was happening in the Church he attends. So, he'd gone elsewhere. Then he went to a friend for advice. And here's the advice he received. “*Stop thinking of yourself as a consumer when it comes to the Church. Instead, think of yourself as a contributor.*”

You see, as a consumer, your goal is to “get something” from the Church. And some of you may have this exact same

attitude. The LORD says you are here to be a contributor. You're a member. Your gift, your time, your ability, your talent, your life is designed by the LORD to be of use and benefit to the rest of His body. And what the one thing that will make the difference this week?

Jesus died so that you might be completely forgiven for every sin. Are you forgiven? Now, go out and distribute that forgiveness to someone.

So, what is it that you do?

And, in light of what the Word says, what will you do? Will Romans 12:9 make any difference to you this week? Or will nothing change even after you've heard the Word? Will you memorize it? Will you apply to your situation?

Can't you see how important you are to the Church? Can't you see that God expects you to connect yourself with the rest of His body? Can't you see that you are here to minister to others and not merely to be ministered to?

Folks, we are the body of Christ, the local body. What part do you play?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 630 “What A Friend”