

"By the Mercies of God"

Romans 12:1-21

Part 1

- I. THE SACRIFICE OF THE BELIEVER – vs. 1**

Part 2

- II. THE SEPARATION OF THE BELIEVER – vs. 2**

Part 3

- III. THE SERVICE OF THE BELIEVER – vs. 3-8**

A. It is to be a humble service – vs. 3

B. It is to be a helpful service – vs. 4-5

Part 4

C. It is to be a harmonizing service – vs. 6-8

1. Prophecy – vs. 6b

2. Ministry – vs. 7a

Part 5

3. Teaching – vs. 7b

4. Exhortation – vs. 8a

5. Giving – vs. 8b

6. Ruling – vs. 8c

7. Shewing mercy - vs. 9d

Part 6

IV. THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE BELIEVER - VS. 9-21

A. Our social life with believers is to be sincere

1. Sincere in our love - vs. 9a
2. Sincere in doing good - vs. 9b
3. Sincere in our kindness - vs. 10
4. Sincere in our spiritual life and service (these three go together) - vs. 11
5. Sincere in our rejoicing - vs. 12a
6. Sincere in our reaction to trials - vs. 12b
7. Sincere in our prayer life - vs. 12c
8. Sincere in our giving - vs. 13
9. Sincere in our reaction to opposition - vs. 14
10. Sincere in our response to what happens to others - vs. 15
11. Sincere in our view of others - vs. 16

Part 7

B. Our social life with non-believers is to be sincere

Does the world see Jesus in us? I made the comment last week that we are to be those "lesser"

or “lower” lights to point people to Christ. Yes, Jesus said that we are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14), but only so much as we are to be the light-source to the world around us, pointing people to that Light “which lighteth ever man that cometh in to the world” (John 1:9). It’s “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” that we are to shine (2 Cor. 4:4).

How we act in public around the unsaved is what is dealt with in these verses. How we live outwardly around those without Christ will have a tremendous impact on their eternity, whether we want it to or not – and that can either be in a good way or a very bad way. The Bible says, “And ye shall be witnesses unto me...” (Acts 1:8) – every child of God is a witness, either a good one or a bad one.

1. Avoid retaliation – vs. 17a

“Recompense to no man evil for evil.”

- a) The words here refer to paying back someone for what they've done to us. Within the context of this section, this is speaking of how we react to the evil that is done to us by the unsaved, but this can (and does) apply equally to how we react to those within the household of faith when they have done us wrong. We are called upon to break the cycle of retaliation.
- b) If we're not willing to forgive our enemies, or those who have wronged us, then we are certainly not demonstrating the love of Christ to others.

Proverbs 20:22

²² Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Matthew 5:39

³⁹ But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

¹⁵ See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

1 Peter 3:9

⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

2. Maintain honesty and integrity - vs. 17b

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."

- a) This sentence is given to believers, but it is very clear to the people being spoken of - "all men."
- b) The content of the message here is that whatever "things" we do we are to give them in openness for all to see, the saved and the lost, and they are to be seen as "honest" (honorable) as to not bring a reproach unto the name of Christ.

Romans 14:16-18

¹⁶ Let not then your good be evil spoken of: ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. ¹⁸ For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.

1 Peter 2:12

¹² Having your conversation honest among the

Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 3:16

¹⁶ Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

3. Pursue peace – vs. 18

- a) “If it be possible” – This phrase recognizes that peace is not always achievable. Some people may reject reconciliation, and some situations may be beyond our ability to resolve. The burden of responsibility is on them, not us at that point.

The word used for “possible” is one that means strength or power – give our best with whatever strength we have to getting along with people.

- b) “As much as lieth in you” – This highlights our responsibility to take initiative in fostering peace. While we cannot control others' actions or responses, we are called to do our part by acting with kindness, humility, and grace.

Since we are saved and have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we should be more able to live peaceably with the world. It doesn't mean we are to be like them but do what we can in order to bring them to Christ.

- c) “Live peaceably with all men” – This is a broad command that extends to everyone, not just those who are easy to get along with. As followers of Christ, we are to seek peace in all

our interactions, whether with friends, family, or even (and maybe especially) enemies.

Hebrews 12:14

¹⁴ Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

James 3:16-18

¹⁶ For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

4. Respond to enemies with kindness - vs. 19-20

a) The first two words of verse nineteen (19) - "Dearly beloved" - are given to show the tenderness that the Apostle uses as he addresses this issue. It's important we understand that we should consider all we do, whether in action or reaction, in the light of the love and kindness that Christ displayed when He gave His life for the sins of mankind.

b) Although our understanding of "recompense" in verse seventeen (17) and the idea of vengeance in verse nineteen (19) are similar, there is an important difference.

(1) The word for "recompense" (ἀποδίδωμι) is one that means to give back or pay back and can be used for right or wrong purposes - in this case, for the wrong done us.

(2) The word for "avenge" (ἐκδικέω) is one that

means to execute justice or judgment; to punish (as a judge would pass sentence). It implies taking justice into one's own hands and seeking retribution for the wrongs suffered rather than trusting in the sovereign justice of God ("I will repay, saith the Lord").

- (3) "Recompense" is more general, referring to any act of paying back evil for evil, while "avenge" specifically relates to seeking justice or retribution.
- c) The idea of vengeance bears a stronger connotation than that of recompense, but Hebrews 10:30 (which is a quote from Deut. 32:25) shows they both belong to the Lord, which is what the end of verse nineteen (19) states.

Hebrews 10:30

³⁰ For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

When we seek vengeance, we are taking the place of the Almighty and passing sentence upon someone else that is not ours to do. This is what is meant in Matthew 7:1, where Jesus gives this command: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

- d) Instead of seeking vengeance when it is not our place to do so, God tells us what we are to do: "but rather give place unto wrath." There's two parts to this:
- (1) Believers should not take revenge but instead allow God to administer justice. The

idea is that vengeance belongs to God alone, and He will repay wrongdoing in His own perfect timing. The quote from Deut. 32:25 following this statement bears this out.

- (2) *Giving place* means stepping away from wrath, both human and divine. Instead of letting anger take control, believers should remove themselves from the situation and respond with patience, trusting that God will handle matters justly. The entire context of verses seventeen to twenty-one (17-21) shows this.

Proverbs 24:17-18

¹⁷ Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: ¹⁸ Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

- e) Verse twenty (20) begins with the word “therefore,” and is directly connected with the idea of responding in kindness to the wrong done to us.

- (1) “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink” – clearly showing that we are not to respond in kind to wrong, but respond in love and kindness.
- (2) “For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head”

- (a) This is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22.

Proverbs 25:21-22

²¹ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give

him water to drink: ²² For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

- (b) There are varied views on this text - some are clearly out of line with the context of Romans 12. As far as I'm concerned, to keep this within the context of reacting to wrong by love and kindness, the explanation of this must stay within that view.

This refers to bringing an enemy to shame, remorse, and eventual repentance. By responding to hostility with kindness, the wrongdoer may feel convicted of their actions, leading them to regret their behavior and possibly seek reconciliation. This interpretation aligns with the idea that kindness can soften a hardened heart.

Dr. Wuest: "In Bible times an oriental needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time in order to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, oriental fashion, back to his home. The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of getting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury, the only thing a Christian is allowed to give back to the one who has injured him.

This act of kindness God could use to soften the heart of the person and lead him on to repentance and the offering of a recompense for the injury sustained. In this way the Christian would overcome evil with good."

5. Good, not evil, should dominate our lives - vs. 21

- a) This verse goes with the two before it and serves as a concluding point to both those verses as well as the entirety of the chapter we have been studying.
- b) "Be not overcome of evil" - don't let the bad ("evil") get the victory over us, especially the bad done to us by others.
- c) "But overcome evil with good" - we are to overcome that evil, that bad, that wrong done to us by our good. Use kindness and compassion to get the victory over those that oppose us.

Proverbs 16:32

³² *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Conclusion: The mainstay of the life we live around our

family, at work, in our neighborhood, in the world at large, is how we respond to opposition and those that may come against us (our enemies). If we respond in kind to how we are treated, we are no better than they are and are certainly not demonstrating the love of God that we are commanded to do.

When Joseph's brothers came before him in Egypt asking for food, he faced a stiff test. Years before, they had threatened to kill him. Then they sold him into slavery. But Joseph forgave them. Even after their father Jacob died and they feared Joseph might take revenge, he assured them of his complete forgiveness.

It is reported that a seminary student in Chicago faced a similar forgiveness test. Although he preferred to work in some kind of ministry, the only job he could find was driving a bus on Chicago's south side. One day a gang of tough teens got on board and refused to pay the fare. After a few days of this, the seminarian spotted a policeman on the corner, stopped the bus and reported them. The officer made them pay, but then he got off. When the bus rounded a corner, the gang robbed the seminarian and beat him severely. He pressed charges and the gang was rounded up. They were found guilty. But as soon as the jail sentences were given the young Christian saw their spiritual need and felt pity for them. So he asked the judge if he could serve their sentences for them. The gang members and the judge were dumbfounded. "It's because I forgive you," he explained. His request was denied but he visited the young men in jail and led several of them to faith in Christ.