

Blessed Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church
Adult Sunday School
17 January 2021
Romans 12:16-17 (KJV)

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. **17** Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Esteem Other Better Than Themselves

(1) Let Each Esteem Other Better Than Themselves

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Hendricksen said well, "Believers are exhorted to agree among themselves, doubtless in order to exert a wholesome influence upon those who are still outside the kingdom. Now in order to live in harmony, it is necessary that every manifestation of sinful pride be banished."

What is this mind that we are to have one toward another? This is the mind of Christ undergirded by God's love articulated well by the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 2:1-3** "*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*"

Our Lord Jesus taught in Matthew **5:43-47** *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

Someone slapped you on the right cheek, give him your left cheek. What is Jesus saying here? Someone ask you to carry his bag and walk on mile you walk two miles. Someone take thy outer coat, give him your inner coat. Almost insane reaction right? These are people punishing you. What is Jesus saying here? What does it mean? How do you explain this? What kind of life are you advocating we live? It is almost an insane life, Jesus Himself said it. When someone punish you, you are willing to bear the greater punishment. If you slap me, slapping in all cultures is the same, is most humiliating. You can hit the body or anywhere else but don't slap the face, slapping the face is most humiliating. We all know that. And our natural reaction is that I will slap you back. What the Lord is saying here? You slap my face, instead of slapping you back, I have a heart within me that is so changed by my God that I have the heart to think "Why did you slap me?"

That's why Jesus says, if you want to talk about the law, Jesus says "*love thy neighbour as thyself*". How you love yourself, love your neighbour! That's enough. Jesus says, "I am willing to love my

neighbour as myself will I be willing to do this act.” No other reason you can give that you can do this act. He is willing to condescend himself to win the offended brother. There is no other reason that if you slap me this side I give you this side. There’s no other reason than love. Only when you realise that you must have hurt him a lot that you get such a reaction. So, love is more concerned about others than yourself. This is the essence of God’s law.

(2) Be Not Wise In Your Own Conceits

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

When he was a student, the famous Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi considered becoming a Christian. He read the Gospels and was moved by them. It seemed to him that Christianity offered a solution to the caste system that plagued the people of India.

One Sunday, he went to a local church. He had decided to see the pastor and ask for instruction on the way of salvation. But when he entered the church, which consisted of white people, the ushers refused to give him a seat. They told him to go and worship with his own people. He left and never went back. “If Christians have caste differences also,” he said, “I might as well remain a Hindu”.

This tragic story illustrates the sin of bringing worldly prejudices into the church of Jesus Christ. James teaches against it in James 2:1-8 *“My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:”* His focus is on the sin of showing favouritism to the rich and despising the poor, but his words apply to all types of prejudice, whether it is based on economic status, race or anything else. To favour some people and to disregard others based on outward factors is a terrible sin that plagued the early church in James’s day. It has plagued the church in every generation. It stemmed from our fallen hearts.

This is what the Apostle Paul warns against in this text. William MacDonald said well, “We should avoid any trace of snobbishness and should be as outgoing toward humble, lowly folk as toward those of wealth and position. When an illustrious Christian arrived at the terminal he was met by leaders from the church where he was to speak. The limousine pulled up to take him to a plush hotel. “Who usually entertains visiting preachers here?” he asked. They mentioned an elderly couple in a modest home nearby. “That’s where I would prefer to stay,” he said. Again, the apostle warns against a believer being wise in his own opinion. The realization that we have nothing that we did not receive should keep us from an inflated ego”.

May God help us to have a servant’s heart.

(3) Recompense to No Man Evil for Evil

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

The word “recompense” means literally to pay back or give back. It comes from the compound word with the preposition “from” and the verb “give” intimating the need to fulfil the obligation of paying back a debt. It denotes a responsibility to be discharged that is not optional. Here in our text, it is used in a negative sense to “pay back” or “get even” for what they have given us, to return tit for tat. This word is in the continuance tense teaching that the believer is to do this action habitually.

The Apostle Paul is reiterating here what our Lord Jesus teaches in **Matthew 5:38** *Ye have heard that **it hath been said**, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: **39** But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil...*

Our Lord forbids an unforgiving and revengeful spirit, by being quick to take offence, retaliating, having a quarrelsome and contentious demeanour, a keenness to assert one’s right, is contrary to the mind of Christ. The world may be at peace with such attitudes but our Lord says “*ye resist not evil.*” But rather, you are to have a spirit of universal love and charity. You should put away all such malice.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 5:39b, “*but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*”

What the Lord is saying here is this – you slap my face, instead of slapping you back, I have a heart within me that I am so changed by my God that I have a heart to think “*Why did you slap me?*” You must be very angry, right, for you to slap me because this is one of the most humiliating act. I must have caused you great anger, it must be something very offensive that I have done. Then if I can appease your anger, I am willing to offer you the other cheek (side).

The Lord is saying the heart is so changed, you have so much of God’s love, that my reaction is not that you slapped me but to realise that I must have caused you a lot of hurt so much so that you to slap me. If I can appease him, I will do it. It’s not that he is stupid. You take out my outer coat, again it is humiliating, have I offended you so much that you are so angry? If I can appease you, I will give you the garment.

That is the essence of His law. Are we willing? Are we more concerning with the other person’s feeling or concerned about myself. That’s why Jesus says, if you want to talk about the law, Jesus says “*love thy neighbour as thyself*”. How you love yourself, love your neighbour. That’s enough.

May the Lord grant us His grace to love our neighbour as ourselves.

(4) Provide Things Honest In the Sight of All Men

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

William MacDonald said well, "But this delight in vengeance should have no place in the lives of those who have been redeemed. Instead, they should act honourably in the face of abuse and injury, as in all the circumstances of life. To have regard means to take thought for or be careful to do." Take care to keep your Christian testimony before God and men in the face of persecution. Let the Christian's response be seasoned with charity.

Apostle Paul chides the members of the church in Corinth who takes one another to court for disputes they could not resolve amicably, **1 Corinthians 6:6-7** *But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?*

There is the story of the martyrdom of Graham Staines and his two sons:

In January, 1999 Graham Staines and his two sons, Phillip (10) and Timothy (6) were mobbed by radical Hindus, trapped inside their vehicle in ... India, and burned alive. The three charred bodies were recovered clinging to each other. Graham Staines had spent 34 years serving the people of India in the name of Jesus. He was the director of the Leprosy Mission in Baripada, Orissa.

He left behind his widow Gladys and daughter Esther. ... Her response was in every paper in India to the glory of Christ. She said, a few days after the martyrdom of her husband and sons, "I have only one message for the people of India. I'm not bitter. Neither am I angry. But I have one great desire: that each citizen of this country should establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who gave his life for their sins ... let us burn hatred and spread the flame of Christ's love."

Everyone thought she would move back to Australia. No. She said God had called them to India, and she would not leave. She said, "My husband and our children have sacrificed their lives for this nation; India is my home. I hope to be here and continue to serve the needy." Then, perhaps most remarkable of all—listen to this all you who are teenagers—her daughter Esther was asked how she felt about the murder of her dad, and the thirteen-year-old, said, "I praise the Lord that He found my father worthy to die for Him."

May God bless us with His wisdom to shine for Him though it be at a price.