



The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 39



CONDUCT BECOMING OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

^{12:9} Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. ^{NKJV} (Romans 12:9-21)

INTRODUCTION

Often spiritual life is represented as not being practical – not touching upon every aspect of life. Thus we hear sayings like, “Do not be so heavenly minded you are no earthly good,” “Lighten up,” or “What about **real** life?” There seems to be a prevailing attitude among professed believers that commitment to God and the

Word of God is too cerebral, and has little to do with day-to-day living. This erroneous view is precisely why Scripture is often ignored in preference for dealing with the supposed issues of the day. The development of “seeker friendly” formats and services is also traceable to this perspective. The persons who are devoted

enough to the Lord that He dominates their conversation are considered a bit “weird,” and out of touch with reality.

COMMON, BUT WRONG

Although these are common perceptions, they wholly misrepresent God and His truth. They distort salvation,

OUTLINE

- ▶ THE RESPONSE OF LOVE (12:9a)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD EVIL (12:9b)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD GOOD (12:9c)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER (12:10)
- ▶ THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE (12:11)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE IN HOPE, TRIBULATION, AND PRAYER (12:12)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD NEEDS OF SAINTS (12:13)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD OUR PERSECUTORS (12:14)
- ▶ REJOICING AND WEEPING WITH OTHERS (12:15)
- ▶ HAVING THE SAME MIND (12:16a)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD SELF (12:16b)
- ▶ GODLY RESPONSES (12:17)
- ▶ IF YOU DETERMINE THE CIRCUMSTANCE (12:18)
- ▶ THE RESPONSE TOWARD OUR ENEMIES (12:19-20)
- ▶ OVERCOMING, BUT NOT OVERCOME (12:21)

reproach Jesus, and do despite to the Spirit of grace. They reveal a frame of heart that is appropriately called *“minding earthly things”* (Phil 3:19). The people of God must develop a certain intolerance of such misrepresentations, for they contaminate the soul. They introduce carnal imaginations into the stream of thought, tending to harden the heart and dull the conscience. They put too much distance between the individual and eternity, pushing the coming of Christ and the day of judgment out of prominence in both heart and mind. No one should doubt the reality of these things. Only brief self examination will confirm what happens to the individual when the accent is removed from the things of God to matters relating to life in this world.

The propensity of *church* people to entertainment, trivia, issue-centered preaching and teaching, counseling, and spiritual brevity and shallowness, are all

outgrowths of this misperception: i.e., that heavenly mindedness is impractical.

IN SPITE OF CLARITY

This delusion exists in spite of the total absence of humor in the Bible, the obviously single focus of Jesus, and the spiritual thrust of Apostolic doctrine. One will search in vain for an extended commentary on the political issues of the day in which an inspired writer lived. The social issues of the day are equally shunned by inspired writers. The **only** mention of things relates to spiritual life, preparation for eternity, and fellowship with Deity. There is such a remarkable consistency in this, it is difficult to see how the thrust of Scripture could be missed. This condition is a confirmation of the dulling effect of carnal mindedness, or minding earthly things.

ALL OF LIFE ADDRESSED

Lest some conclude that being justified, or having the righteousness of God imputed to us, does not influence our manners in this world, the Spirit speaks of the practicality of spiritual life. With unusual power, He shows us **there is no facet of legitimate life and human relationships that is not impacted by newness of life**. In so doing, the Spirit removes all excuses for not living wholeheartedly for the Lord. No valid reason can be adduced for failing to love the Lord with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength. There is no justification for having our minds nailed to the earth.

F a i t h addresses every aspect of life in this world. The person who has been reconciled to God will find no point in life where the Lord may be pushed into the background, the Word of God ignored, and citizenship in heaven forgotten. Whatever causes these things to occur is wrong, and is to be shunned with zeal and consistency. Nothing about salvation allows for

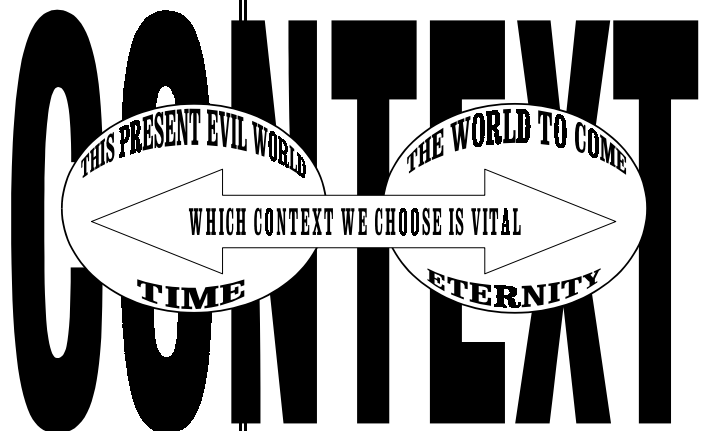
forgetting God. Nothing about newness of life moves a person to navigate in this world without an acute awareness of the coming of the Lord and imminent judgment. The law of God is not put into our hearts and written in our minds only to be placed into the background of thought. This should be abundantly clear.

THE PROPER CONTEXT

The context in which we live, think, and speak, is critical. Basically, there are only two contexts: *“this present evil world”* and *“the world to come.”* To put it another way, there are the contexts of time and eternity.

Let it be clear, the *“present world”* is fundamentally evil, contaminated by sin. Because of this, Jesus has *“delivered us”* from it (Gal 1:4), and it is destined for destruction (2 Pet 3:10-12). To make this world, or time, the context in which we live is disastrous. It contradicts the fact that we have been delivered from it.

The *“world to come”* is the lasting one. There is where the fulness of eternal life will be received (Mark 10:30). The *“world to come”* is the subject of Apostolic exposition (Heb 2:5). Every commandment, exhortation, correction, and elucidation of Scripture is set within the context of *“the world to come.”* If it were possible to remove that world, or if it were just an imagination, there would be no need for Christ Jesus or the Scriptures. **Salvation in all of its aspects is couched in the setting of eternity!**



The exhortations to which we will now be subjected are to be received as matters that tend to orient us for glory.

Life in this world is not their ultimate objective. Rather, they are given in order that life in this world will not distract us or disqualify us from the glory to which we have been appointed by God's grace.

IN VIEW OF THE TIMES

I have taken the time to mention these things because of my persuasion of the wickedness and religious corruption of the times. Certain religious manners and preferences have arisen that are not right.

They are in sharp conflict with the revealed purpose of God, and do not contribute to the eternal well being of people. Men have been given too much honor, and God has been given too little. The wisdom and writings of men have been given too much prominence, and the Word of God too little. In the mind of the average *church member* heaven is a distant thought, and the coming of the Lord is rarely brought into the meditative process.

As we enter into this section of practical exhortations, you will find they have more weight when they are considered within the context of eternity. When you contemplate your reception of the righteousness of God, these admonitions will make perfect sense, and you will desire to fulfill them. If they are viewed only as our duties, to be fulfilled in the energy of the flesh, they will appear beyond your reach. There is an unwavering consistency in this.

THE RESPONSE OF LOVE

^{12:9a} **Let love be without hypocrisy.** Other versions read, "Let love be without dissimulation,"^{KJV} "Love must be sincere,"^{NIV} "Let love be genuine,"^{NRSV} "Let love be unfeigned,"^{DARBY} "Let love be without deceit,"^{BBE} and "Let love be without any pretense."^{NJB} Our love is to be without disguise. It is to be the **genuine** expression of the "new man," the **outgrowth** of the "newness of life." The righteousness that has been given to us WILL express itself in this way. Just as surely as God Himself is averse to pretense, so the life that He has given to us cannot be so characterized.

The word "dissimulation" means "to hide under a false appearance." English synonyms include "camouflage, cloak, dress up, and mask."^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} Love with dissimulation, or hypocrisy, is love that is not genuine, even though the individual expressing it may not even know it. One of the dreadful results of walking in the flesh, or **not** living by faith, is that the individual can fall into reprehensible conduct without even knowing it. This is precisely why this exhortation is given – to awaken the heart to self examination.

Love with dissimulation, or feigned love, is draped with culture and painted with fleshly refinement. It is not what it appears to be. The fact that we are exhorted to avoid this pretense confirms that the seeds of such a tendency remain within our natural man. If we do not set

ourselves to avoid ostentatious love, we may easily be lulled into a spiritual sleep that finds us wearing the mask of carnal politeness.

THE SOURCE OF LOVE

The Genuineness of love is not determined by the feeling of the individual. Nor, indeed, is it determined by the intention of the person. **The thing that makes love genuine is its source!** Love "without hypocrisy" is the love that flows out from the love that has been "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). This love is not pumped up by the individual. It is not a mere attempt to do what is right,

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection"^{NKJV} (Col 3:14). A lack of love disrupts the "unity of the Spirit," allowing for the entrance of Satan, delusion, and spiritual death.

There is an attractiveness to genuine and uncomplicated love. It draws the people of God together, for it is consistently selfless, always seeking the welfare of others. It brings the saints together in mutuality, building up each member. Thus there comes an "increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph 4:16). That is the "bond of perfection" that causes one maturing member to profitably adhere to another.

INSTITUTIONAL LOVE

There is a feigned love I have chosen to call "institutional love." It is a love that centers in religious institutionalism rather than the love of God. Jesus spoke of this kind of love when He said, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" (Matt 5:46-47). Such love is based upon mere human confraternity. It gives no weight to faith, and certainly not to Divine acceptance.

There is a considerable emphasis in our day on religious camaraderie. This involves civility that is based upon institutional identity rather than the love of God. It has no place in Jesus.

Love is the spiritual adhesive that binds the saints of God together. That is why it cannot be fabricated, simulated, or expressed in pretension.

although the effort of the individual is involved. This is part of "the fruit of the Spirit," and is the consequence of walking in the Spirit.

THE BOND OF PERFECTION

Love is the spiritual adhesive that binds the saints of God together. That is why it cannot be fabricated, simulated, or expressed in pretension. It is written,

IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTRIVE

The admonition, “*Let love be without dissimulation,*”^{NKJV} does not suggest that genuine love – the “*fruit of the Spirit*” – can be possessed, yet imperfectly expressed. The idea here is that no professed believer is to attempt to cover up hatred and ill-will with the mask of love, or charity. In other words, those who do not love the people of God are not to pretend as though they did.

HELP IS AVAILABLE TO US

It is good to know that Divine help is available to us through our faith. The Lord can “*make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men*” (1 Thess 3:12). Other versions read, “*cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men,*”^{NASB} and “*make your love increase*

and overflow for each other and for everyone else.”^{NIV} In such a case, love will not be with hypocrisy. It will also yield the benefits only genuine love can produce. Some of them are as follows.

- Faith works by love (Gal 5:6).
- In love we serve one another (Gal 5:13).
- Love edifies, or builds up (1 Cor 8:1).
- Love suffers long (1 Cor 13:4a).
- Love is kind (1 Cor 13:4b).
- Love does not envy (1 Cor 13:4c).
- Love does not parade itself (1 Cor 13:4d).
- Love is not puffed up (1 Cor 13:4e).
- Love does not behave rudely (1 Cor 13:5a).
- Love does not seek its own (1 Cor 13:5b).
- Love is not easily provoked (1 Cor

13:5c).

- Love thinks no evil (1 Cor 13:5d).
- Love does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Cor 13:6a).
- Love rejoices in the truth (1 Cor 13:6b).
- Love bears all things (1 Cor 13:7a).
- Love believes all things (1 Cor 13:7b).
- Love hopes all things (1 Cor 13:7c).
- Love endures all things (1 Cor 13:7d).
- Love will cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:8).

Love that is feigned is totally lacking in these traits. It may have a polished appearance, but it brings no benefit to the saints. Neither, indeed, can it open a door of opportunity for those who are outside of Christ. Love that is by dissimulation is totally worthless, and is to be discarded. God does not honor it, and neither can we.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD EVIL

“^{9b} **Abhor what is evil.**” Other versions read, “*Hate what is evil,*”^{NASB} and “*Avoid what is evil.*”^{NJB} The strength of this word is apparent. The word “*abhor*” means to “*hate utterly,*” entirely and totally. It also means to shrink away from, as from something that is loathsome or detestable. To “*abhor*” is to draw away

circumference of evil influence.

The intention of this exhortation is not simply the development of an attitude, but of a godly response. All of these are reactions that reflect the Divine nature. They include an attitude, feeling, or outlook, but extend into the area of the

strong aversion that exists deep within the individual. It is the word μισέω. The word used in our text (ἀποστρυφούντες) comes from another root word (στρυφέω). The difference between the two is that the latter is “*hatred expressed.*”^{VINCENT}

ABHOR MEANS TO DEPART

That is why I prefer the word “*abhor,*” for it carries the idea of withdrawal more than an inward attitude alone. That withdrawal, of course, is driven by an inward response to evil, which compels the believe to take action. Thus, when God said of Israel, “*I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces*” (Amos 6:8), He meant that He would withdraw from them, leaving them to the behest of their enemies. When the Psalmist said, “*the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man*” (Psa 5:6), he meant the Lord would have nothing to do with such a man. The Lord “*greatly abhorred Israel,*” “*He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, And His glory into the enemy’s hand*” (Psa 78:60-61). Again it is written, “*Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, So that He abhorred His own inheritance.*”

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from, out of a sense of utter disgust and repulsion. Something that is abhorred goes against the nature of the person. It chafes against the soul, and weighs the heart down with offensiveness. For that reason, the individual cannot abide the presence of the thing abhorred. He will not allow himself to remain within the

will and of action.

In the matter before us, to “*abhor*” is to have such a horror of something that is expressed by withdrawal. From the viewpoint of language, there is a Greek word for hatred that emphasizes the attitude of the heart and mind. It is a

And He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles, And those who hated them ruled over them” (Psa 106:40).

Let there be no mistake about this. What or who the Lord abhors, He leaves, or forsakes. You do not want your thinking to be loose or unstable on this point. Much of the psychological jargon that is spewing from the pulpits of the land leaves one imagining God tenderly embraces those He abhors. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Satan and his angels can testify.

The Relevance of the Observation

It may appear as though all of this has little to do with our text. But that is not the case. The response that is enjoined upon us is nothing less than the expression of the “Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), called the “new man,” or a “new creature” (Col 3:10; 2 Cor 5:17). We are being admonished to withdraw from the very things God and Christ withdraw from. They are things that God cannot tolerate, and that He will not abide in His presence.

Those who insist on remaining close to what God abhors will themselves become detestable to God.

That is precisely why the Lord speaks to His people in this manner. “Therefore Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you”^{”NKJV} (2 Cor 6:17). This is not a popular word in our time, but it is a very needful one, and must often be declared.

The Lord leaves no stone unturned in His appeal to us to abhor whatever is evil. “You who love the LORD, hate evil!” (Psa 97:10). “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Prov 8:13). “Hate the evil” (Amos 5:15). “Depart from evil” (Psa 34:14). One of the telling marks of the Savior of the world is that He “hates wickedness,” or “iniquity.” For this reason, God bestowed the greatest blessing upon Him. “God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psa 45:7;

Heb 1:9).

A person who abhors “that which is evil” will join David in this holy resolve. “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness” (Psa 101:3-4). When the Word of God brings understanding to the heart, the believer shouts, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psa 119:104).

One of the marks of a wicked man is, “he abhorreth not evil” (Psa 36:4). On the

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other hand, one of the points for which Jesus commended backsliding Ephesus was, “you cannot bear those who are evil” (Rev 2:2). We could do with a revival of that kind of attitude!

We must not allow the psychiatrists to deceive us about, what is called, “fallen leaders.” Reports of men and women falling into immortality are not confined to the politician arena. It has become altogether too common in the professing church. Why do such things occur? It is because the offenders did not “abhor that which is evil.” If such poor souls expect to be received by God, they do well to admit this is the case, and to aggressively seek to obey this text. Their sin did not occur because they were in the wrong place at the right time. It happened because they did not “abhor that which is evil.” Sin

does not lay hold of a person just because they are simple, or because others take advantage of them. It is because they do not “abhor that which is evil.” They chose to live close to what God commands them to hate and leave. They trafficked on forbidden territory with hearts that had been sullied with the love of the world.

THE DREADFULNESS OF EVIL

With the deterioration of sound doctrine and spiritual life, there has also come a blindness concerning the dreadful nature of evil. Religious people have been blinded to the reprehensible nature of “evil.” The very first issue that faced humanity related to “the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). At the very instant man came to “know evil,” he was thrust from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:22-24). The world of Noah’s day was utterly destroyed because “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). When God became incensed against Israel, it was because they were an “evil congregation” (Num 14:27).

Jesus spoke of vain words that came “from evil” (Matt 5:37). He taught us to pray, “deliver us from evil.” Some versions read “the evil one”^{NIV} (Matt 6:13). Jesus said “evil thoughts” defile a person (Matt 15:19-20). He spoke of an “evil eye” (Mark 7:22), “evil things” (Mark 7:23), an “evil man,” and an “evil treasure” in the heart (Lk 6:45). Troubling and defiling spirits from the domain of the devil are called “evil spirits” (Lk 7:21). Our Lord spoke of an “evil generation” (Lk 11:29), “deeds” that are evil (John 3:19), and those who “do evil” (John 3:20). The works of the world, Jesus said, “are evil” (John 7:7).

The fall of the Gentile world included the invention of “evil things” (Rom 1:30). The Spirit promises that “tribulation and anguish” will come upon “every soul of man that doeth evil” (Rom 2:9). There are communications and associations that are “evil” (1 Cor 15:33). This present word,

from which Jesus has delivered us, is “evil” (Gal 1:4). There is such a thing as “evil speaking” (Eph 4:31), days that “are evil” (Eph 5:16), and “evil workers” (Phil 3:2). There is an “appearance of evil” that is to be avoided at all cost (1 Thess 5:22). There are “evil surmisings,” or suspicions (1 Tim 6:4), and “evil men” that “wax worse and worse” (2 Tim 3:13). There is such a thing as an “evil heart of unbelief,” and we are to see to it that it does not enter into us (Heb 3:12). There are “evil thoughts” (James 2:4), and “evil” that can flow from the tongue (1 Pet 3:10).

The consistency and firmness with which we are addressed concerning evil makes it inexcusable for a tolerant attitude toward it. No justification can be given for choosing to be around evil, or allowing its encroachments into our hearts and minds.

What Is “EVIL”?

The word “evil” is very large in both its meaning and its implications. It carries the ideas of disadvantageous, bad,

harmful, and painful. It also connotes useless, unprofitable, and unserviceable. Anything or anyone that is “evil” is wicked, poisonous, and has no redeeming qualities. Evil inflicts injury upon the soul, corrupts the mind, and defiles the conscience. “That which is evil” is inherently bad. It is like a piece of rotten fruit that cannot be made good. It is to be discarded, and that with great haste.

You cannot sanctify something that is evil. You cannot convert it to useful purposes. It is contaminated throughout, and cannot blend with the unseen things to which we have been called (2 Cor 4:17-18). Whatever has the taint of the world upon it is evil. Whatever Satan uses is evil. Whatever competes with God is evil. Whatever makes living for the Lord more difficult is evil. Things that interrupt communion with the Lord are evil. Actions, thoughts, and objects that will cause shame on the day of judgment are evil. Evil is the opposite of God. It is what Jesus hates, and what causes the Holy Spirit of God to grieve. It is what stops the

Spirit’s work, drives a wedge between the soul and its Creator, and makes the blessing of God seem unworthy of pursuit.

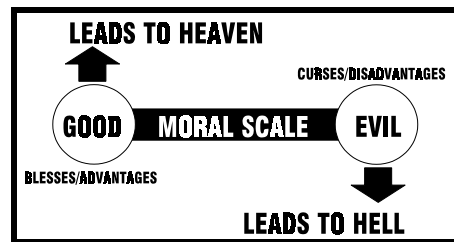
And what is to be our response to evil? We are to “abhor it.” When we are aware of it, we are to draw back in revulsion, putting a distance between it and us. We are to refuse what it offers, and close our ears to its suggestions. We are to run from it like Joseph fled from Potiphar’s wife.

Abhorring evil is not the result of a disciplinary procedure, or the exercise of self-will. Rather, it is the result of a heart that has been duly sensitized to the Lord. As Moses’ face was altered by exposure to the glory of God, so the heart is sharpened and stimulated. Evil became especially repulsive to Moses after he had been in the presence of the Lord – even more so than to Aaron, who had remained in the presence of the people (Ex 32:19-24). That is the secret to obtaining an utter hatred of sin – dwelling in the presence of God, walking in the light of His countenance.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD GOOD

“^{9c} **Cling to what is good.**” Other versions read, “Cleave to that which is good,”^{KJV} “hold fast to what is good,”^{NRSV} “keep your minds fixed on what is good,”^{BBE} “hold on to what is good,”^{NAB} and “Stand on the side of the good.”^{NLT}

Here is an aggressive stance – one that requires sustained effort and determination: “Cling,” “hold fast,” “hold on to!” The picture is of something that can be elusive – something that may not always be as accessible as it is at the moment. The word translated “cling,” or “cleave,”^{KJV} means to be joined to something – to be glued, or fastened firmly, together. Coming from *κολλάω*, this word is used to describe both illicit and holy relationships. “What? know ye not that he which is **joined** to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is **joined** unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor 6:16-17). Whatever is joined becomes a single entity, working together for a common objective.



Be Glued to Good!

This text exhorts us to be bonded to good, not merely acquainted with it. It is to be identified with good, not merely admit to its uprightness. The attitude toward evil was two-fold: have a disdain for it, and turn from it. Likewise, there is a two-fold response to good: love it, and attach ourselves to it.

Clinging to “what is good” presumes a preference for it. It also involves satisfaction and enjoyment realized from it. There is also a refusal to let it go.

WHAT IS “GOOD”?

“Good” is the opposite of evil, and is so represented throughout Scripture. No less than ninety-seven times, the words “good and evil” occur in Scripture. The first warning in human history regarded these extremities (Gen 2:9,17). In a plea to Israel, the Lord associated “good” with life, and “evil” with death (Deut 30:15).

“Good and evil” are the extremes on the scale of moral values. “Good” blesses, giving advantage and leading to heaven. “Evil” curses, robbing the soul and leading to hell.

“Good” is anything that is associated with the strait and narrow way that leads unto life (Matt 7:13-14). It is related to the “fruit of the Spirit,” which “is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph 5:9). “Good” has the hand of God upon it, who is Himself “good” (Psa 34:8; 100:5), and is “abundant in goodness” (Ex 34:6). In fact, as compared with all that is created, “there is none good but one, that

is, God" (Matt 19:17).

The Nature of Spiritual Life Seen

Here, the nature of spiritual life is seen. Not only are we to disassociate ourselves from evil, we are to associate ourselves with good. We are not only to refrain from doing evil, but engage in doing good. We avoid what tears down, and embrace what builds up. We shun what causes spiritual deterioration, and take hold of what contributes to spiritual growth and stability. In all of this, our heart is not only in accord with our thoughts, words, and deeds, it is the governor that dictates what we do.

Doing Good IS Emphasized

The particular point of emphasis here is the DOING of good. It is engaging in benevolent and helpful conduct toward all men, particularly those who live by faith. As it is written, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us **do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith**" (Gal 6:10). "Good," in this case, leaves the ones to whom it is directed better. It opens the door for the blessing of God, and leaves the individual with spiritual advantages.

Thus, we are admonished, "Depart from evil, and **do good**" (Psa 34:14; 37:27). Again, "Trust in the LORD, and **do good**" (Psa 37:3). It is possible for our words to "**do good to him that walks uprightly**" (Mic 2:7). Jesus admonished "**do good to them that hate you**" (Matt 5:44), and to "**do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again**" (Lk 6:35).

Those with an abundance of resources are exhorted to "**do good, that they be**

rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim 6:18-19). Here is something we must not forget. "**But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is**

Doing good is actually God ministering to others through a willing vessel. It is the result of walking so close with the Lord that others are actually benefitted by it.

Competitive Influences

For this reason it is written, "He that

There are contrary winds about us that can cause us to veer off course. We dare not imagine that adhering to the good will happen without any effort on our part. While it is true that our effort is not the determining factor, neither is it something that is excluded.

well pleased"^{NKJV} (Heb 13:16). Those who desire to love life and see good days are admonished, "**eschew evil, and do good**" (1 Pet 3:11).

"Good" is not to be the subject of empty discussion and philosophizing, it is to be done. **Only as we engage in the doing of good can we be joined to it.** We cannot "*cling*" to what we do not do. We can claim no association with anything with which we are not personally involved.

An Expression of the New Creation

Doing good, or bringing eternal advantages and kindness to others, is the expression of the new creation. By nature, "*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Psa 14:3; Rom 3:2). Our text, therefore, is not speaking of mere human goodness, kindness, or thoughtfulness.

doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 11). The fact that we are exhorted to "*cling to that which is good*" confirms we are in the midst of competitive influences. There are contrary winds about us that can cause us to veer off course. We dare not imagine that adhering to the good will happen without any effort on our part. While it is true that our effort is not the determining factor, neither is it something that is excluded.

If you have been in the Lord for any length of time, you have experienced the value of brethren who "*do good*" to you. Such kind and tender souls have associated themselves with good, clinging to it, and refusing to purge thoughts of doing good from their minds. You know how profitable that can be. May you be such a soul, holding on to the good.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

¹⁰ **Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another . . .**" In Scripture, a considerable amount of attention is given to believer's involvements with one another. Unity is not a mere institutional formality, and the attitude and conduct of believers among themselves is given

substantial weight. Our adversary the devil has been particularly effective in the matter of disrupting the unity of the Spirit, which can only be maintained in "*the bond of peace*" (Eph 4:3). Sectarianism has taken its toll among the people of God, as well as a worldly-minded spirit. These conditions have compelled professing believers to view admonitions

like the one before us in relation to a particular denomination. Some even restrict them to their local congregation. As a result, a significant amount of inconsideration and harshness exists in the Christian community. This is a most unfortunate circumstance that has actually neutralized the effectiveness of the truth, and brought great reproach

upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is imperative that the admonition before us be taken seriously. It is not a mere suggestion, nor is it something that is optional. It does not represent a high level of spirituality, only to be attained by a few unusual souls.

KINDLY AFFECTIONED

“Be kindly affectionate to one another . . .” Other versions read, *“Be devoted to one another,”* ^{NASB} *“be tenderly affectioned one to another,”* ^{ASV} *“with genuine affection,”* ^{NLT} and *“let your feelings of deep affection for one another come to expression.”* ^{NJB}

Kind affection involves cherishing the people of God and being profoundly considerate of their welfare. This is the kind of affection a parent has for a child, or for family members. The word carries the meaning of “tenderly affectionate, very loving, and naturally devoted to.” ^{ROBERTSON} This is a love that is “not called out by circumstance, but is the natural love of kindred.” ^{VINCENT}

Spiritual love, part of *“the fruit of the Spirit,”* is like a great tree with many branches. Kind affection is one of those branches, upon which much fruit can be borne. Tender affection is to be expressed among the household of faith regardless of social or domestic distinctions. The master can be profoundly considerate of the slave, who may reciprocate with joy. Thus Onesimus the slave can become profitable to Philemon the master (Phile 10-11), and a Centurion can seek the welfare of his slave (Matt 8:5-6). The Jew can be kindly affectioned toward the Gentile, enjoying a reciprocation of the same. Thus Titus the Greek can comfort Paul the Jew (Gal 2:3; 2 Cor 7:6), while Paul ministered and cared for Gentile believers (Rom 15:9-12). The thoughtful consideration can be enjoyed between male and female, in a beneficial and un sinful way. Thus Phebe can minister to Paul (Rom 16:1-2), and Paul can minister to Lydia (Acts 16:14,40). Spiritual affection can be experienced between the young and the old in Christ Jesus. Thus Eli can minister

to young Samuel, while Samuel served him (1 Sam 3:1-16).

The fact of our oneness in Christ allows for being kindly affectioned toward one another. *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:27-28). The Lord Jesus was tender toward all who were drawn to Him. He was gentle toward Nicodemus the Jew (John 3:1-16), and a Gentile centurion (Luke 7:1-9). He was gracious to a man who was a demoniac

Kind affection involves cherishing the people of God and being profoundly considerate of their welfare. This is the kind of affection a parent has for a child, or for family members.

(Mark 5:15), and a woman who was an adulteress (John 8:10-11). He healed an older woman, Peter’s mother-in-law (Lk 4:38-39), raised a twelve year old girl, and blessed little children (Lk 8:41-42,52-54; Mark 10:16). He answered the prayer of a master, and healed his servant (Matt 8:6-7). He was *“kindly affectioned.”*

Tender affection does not discriminate among the children of God! Yet, we are admonished to BE kindly affectioned toward one another, extending ourselves to express what God has put within us. The reason for this requirement is obvious: **when what the Lord gives us is not used, it soon withers and becomes useless.**

There is a profound need for tender affection within the household of faith. Because of our faith, we have become pilgrims and strangers in the world (1 Pet 2:11). The world does not love us because we no longer belong to its order (John

15:19). If, therefore, we are lacking in tenderness toward one another, we will have robbed the people of God of something provided for them.

You will note that the requirement is to express the tender affection, not receive it. It is not the business of the King’s children to seek for others to bestow tender affection upon them. Rather, it is their lot to bestow it upon their brethren. They will soon find the affection returning many fold to them, fulfilling the word of the Lord, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again”* (Luke 6:38). Many a small soul has become disgruntled because they did not receive the attention they thought was due to them. Almost without exception, such people have been stingy with their own affection, and thus have reaped an extremely small harvest of the same.

With Brotherly Love

“ . . . with brotherly love.”

This is a special kind of love, devoted to the family of God. This is the love that drives being *“kindly affectioned”* one to another. It is mentioned at least four other times in Scripture.

First, this love is taught to us by God Himself – not in the Scriptures, but within the context of fellowship with the Father and the Son. *“But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another”* (1 Thess 4:9). This is not a mere academic lesson, but involves the communication of God’s own propensity to love to those who have been joined to His Son.

Second, brotherly love is never to terminate, or find a conclusion. In Christ, no provision is made for it to end. *“Let brotherly love continue”* (Heb 13:1). This is not a crisis quality, or one that is intended to be temporary. It is an ongoing trait that enables the survival and growth of the saints.

Third, brotherly love is the outcome or purifying our souls in obeying the truth through the power of the Holy Spirit. *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently"* (1 Pet 1:22). The new birth is necessary before this love can ever be exhibited.

Fourth, the love of the brethren is the experiential proof that we have passed from death unto life. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because*

do so in *"brotherly love."* But the matter does not end there, as though we were fulfilling a law from Mount Sinai.

In Honor

" . . . in honor . . . " With very few exceptions, every translation uses the word *"honor."* This is the frame of spirit we are to have when we are kindly affectioned toward one another with brotherly love. It is to be done *"in honor," "showing honor,"* ^{NRSV} or *"with honor."* ^{DOUAY}

To *"honor"* means to respect, recognize as valuable, and esteem. This is

Giving Preference

" . . . giving preference to one another." Brotherly love is altogether selfless. It does not seek its own, but prefers another. Other versions read, *"give preference to one another,"* ^{NASB} *"Honor one another above yourselves,"* ^{NIV} *"outdo one another in showing honor,"* ^{NRSV} *"each taking the lead in paying it [honor] to one another,"* ^{DARBY} *"putting others before yourselves,"* ^{BBE} *"take delight in honoring each other,"* ^{NLT} and *"regard others as more important than yourself."* ^{NJB}

Flesh cannot do this, for it sees no benefit in it. That is why this attitude is so exceedingly rare. It is not of this world. This is the frame of spirit that Jesus displayed freely. He said, *"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Matt 20:28). It is seen when He miraculously provided tribute money for both Himself and Peter (Matt 17:27). It is seen when He washed the disciples feet (John 13:4-5), and prepared an early breakfast for them (John 21:9). How often His disciples must have recalled Jesus' acts of humility and consideration.

In preferring one another, we speak honorably of each believer, throwing the mantle of love upon them all, lest they be disgraced by some unwilling weakness. If our brethren have sins, we prefer they not be seen, and extend ourselves to conceal them from others. This word is appropriately described in Philippians 2:3-4. *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

There is a certain dignity associated with being called "the sons of God" (1 John 3:1-2), and it is our business to recognize it in our brethren. If our Father is going to "honor" those who serve the Son (John 12:26), we do well to also give them "honor."

we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14).

Brotherly love is the well from which *"brotherly kindness"* (2 Pet 1:7) and tender affection are drawn.

PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER

As with several passages of Scripture, there is a Divine progression in this thought. As we allow the sails of inspiration to bear us up, we will find ourselves mounting up with the wings of the eagle, soaring into lofty heights. Not only are we to be kindly affectioned, we

perceiving the people of God as He sees them – as *"jewels"* belonging to Him (Mal 3:17). There is a certain dignity associated with being called *"the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1-2), and it is our business to recognize it in our brethren. If our Father is going to *"honor"* those who serve the Son (John 12:26), we do well to also give them *"honor."*

To honor the saints by being kindly affectioned toward them in brother love, is the opposite of despising them. It involves preferring their company, benefitting from the grace they have received, and bestowing labor upon them.

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

"¹¹ Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Here the Spirit touches upon an area of especial weakness among believers. In the routine matters of life, whether directly or indirectly related to the Lord's work,

there is an attitude to be avoided, and one to be obtained. The Divine stamp of approval is never given to halfheartedness, retardation, and slowness of response. Never are such traits commended or represented as being

tolerable. Those who are bent in such a direction will do well to give heed to this word, receiving it with all sobriety.

NOT SLOTHFUL

"Not lagging in diligence. . . " Other

versions read, “*Not slothful in business,*”
KJV “*not lagging behind in diligence,*”NASB
 “*Never be lacking in zeal,*”NIV “*Be not slow in your work,*”BBE and “*Never be lazy in your work.*”NLT

Here, the various translations appear to obscure the text. Linguists insist that the word “*business,*” as used in the KJV, is not correct. Yet Thayer, the esteemed Greek lexicographer defines the word used here (σπουδή) as, “earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything.” That, of course, is precisely what the word “*business*” means: “purposeful activity . . . an immediate task or objective . . . a particular field of endeavor.”MERRIAM-WEBSTER

The Meaning

In this verse “*diligence*” means commitment to do something, or giving oneself to the completion of a specific task: i.e., the *business* of learning, What is your *business* here?, the best in the *business*, etc.

The meaning of the exhortation is this: whatever you set your mind and hand to do, do not be slothful in accomplishing it. It is another way of saying, “*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might*” (Eccl 9:10). Bringing that exhortation into the domain of the New Covenant, it says, “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*” (Col 3:23-24). Another way of saying the same thing is, “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Eph 5:15-16).

You will search the Scripture in vain for any word of encouragement for slothful souls. Slothfulness and lagging behind have no place in the walk of faith. God is not slothful. Jesus is not slothful. The Holy Spirit is not slothful. The holy angels are not slothful. What would lead

any soul to believe this grievous trait is acceptable among men – particularly those who have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13)?

In this time of falling away, the church is not noted for its zeal. There is an unfortunate spirit of stupor that has

one (James 5:16). Our love for one another is to be done “*fervently*” (1 Pet 1:22). Those who repent are to do so with zeal (Rev 3:19).

Can you imagine Noah being slothful in building the ark? How about Israel’s preparation to come out of Egypt? “*Whatever you do*” (Col 3:17), throw

There is an unfortunate spirit of stupor that has settled upon the Christian community, and it is altogether unacceptable. Aggressive preachers, teachers, elders, and deacons are not common.

settled upon the Christian community, and it is altogether unacceptable. Aggressive preachers, teachers, elders, and deacons are not common. In practical financial and business matters, Christians do not generally have good record.

We are solemnly admonished, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him*” (Col 3:17). It should be evident that no place is made for slothfulness in that exhortation.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT

“ . . . *fervent in spirit.*” Other versions read, “*keep your spiritual fervor,*”NIV “*be ardent in spirit,*”NRSV “*enthusiastically,*”NLT and “*with conscientiousness and an eager spirit.*”NJB This is equivalent to “*with all your might*” (Eccl 9:10), “*heartily*” (Col 3:23), and “*making the most of every opportunity*”NIV (Eph 5:16).

Apollos is an example of fervency. “*This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord*” (Acts 18:25). Another example is Epaphras. “*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers*” (Col 4:12). We are told that the prayer heaven will honor is a “*fervent*”

yourself into it. Do so because the Lord is honored by it. Do so because the people of God are helped by it. Do so because you are adorning the doctrine by it.

SERVING THE LORD

“ . . . *serving the Lord.*” Spiritual fervor is not an end of itself. It is the spirit in which God is served. Nothing in all of Scripture remotely suggests that God is served by halfheartedness or lukewarmness. Those who attempt to serve the Lord in a spirit of disinterest, infrequency, or out of a sense of obligation are not serving the Lord, and their efforts will not be recognized by Him. It simply is not possible to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and be haphazard or nonchalant in serving Him.

Those religious leaders who have pioneered brief meetings, infrequency of gatherings, and shallow presentations, should explain their preferences and practices in view of this passage. They have chosen to cater to the carnal mind, and to a manner of religious life that does not comport with the revealed will of God. It is quite true that we ought not be overbearing, or more demanding of the saints than the Lord. Such a custom is altogether unacceptable. Everyone, however, does well to take this text seriously, and to purge from their lives all forms of indolence and sloth.

HOPE, TRIBULATION, AND PRAYER

“¹² *Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer . . .*” Faith responds correctly

New Life in Christ Expresses Itself Consistently and to the Glory of God.--by Given O. Blakely

and beneficially under all circumstances. It always walks through difficulties, through the fire and water, hand-in-hand with the Deliverer. The eye of faith always sees beyond trials and tribulations, enabling the survival of the child of God, even though he is sorely tested.

Our text now addresses the difficulties of life. These are areas where survival and continuance are maintained with great difficulty. The race that is set before us leads to glory, yet it goes through the grievous "straits" in which even our persecutors "overlook" us (Lam 1:3). Faith is triumphant, overcoming the world, but not without a fierce conflict. If this was not the case, admonitions regarding "hope," "tribulation," and "prayer" would not be necessary.

These three responses are to accompany our service to the Lord: "serving the Lord" (verse 11). These are attending graces. They do not stand by themselves, but are put to work in the crucible of service to God. Apart from that service to, or worship of (12:1-2), the Lord, they have neither meaning nor purpose.

HOPE

"Rejoicing in hope . . ."

Other versions read, "Be joyful in hope," ^{NIV} "As regards hope, rejoicing," ^{DARBY} and "Being glad in hope." ^{BBE} The Spirit has already mentioned this marvelous quality: ". . . our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (5:2). This rejoicing, therefore, is "by," or "through," Christ Jesus. It is realized by means of His power and through fellowship with Him. Yet, this does not mean no effort is required from us. God does not admonish Jesus to cause us to rejoice in hope. We are the ones exhorted to do so! Divine appointments must be appropriated through faith.

What does it mean to "rejoice in hope?"

Hope regards the future. It is faith peering beyond the horizon of time and circumstance, seeing what God has "prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor

2:9). Hope does not look down, but up. It does not survey the circumstances, but ponders the future, when we will "ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17). Hope does not ask, "What is happening to me?," but declares, "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb 10:37). Hope does not linger in the outer court of where we are, but looks into the most holy place, where we are going.

Rejoicing in hope results from the contemplation of "the crown of righteousness" that will be given to us (2 Tim 4:8). It is awakened by the consideration of receiving "praise from God" (1 Cor 4:5), and hearing His "well done!" (Matt 25:23). When our thoughts

These are areas where survival and continuance are maintained with great difficulty. The race that is set before us leads to glory, yet it goes through the grievous "straits" in which even our persecutors "overlook" us

linger on the fact that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 7:17), joy erupts, pouring refreshing water upon our souls. Meditating upon the coming glory, when we will "ever be with the Lord," sitting with Him in His throne (Rev 3:21), and reigning with Him (2 Tim 2:12), summons rejoicing to the place of dominance.

Things related to "the hope of His calling" (Eph 1:18) can only bring joy when they are duly considered. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4-5). "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and

his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev 22:3-5).

If these things seem too good to be true, the God of heaven adds, "These sayings are faithful and true" (Rev 22:6).

It goes without saying that rejoicing in hope is only possible as these blessed realities are brought to the forefront of our thoughts. You may consider the possibility of your circumstances in this world improving. You may even associate such improvement with the grace and power of God. **But such thoughts cannot produce the rejoicing of hope.** If, whether concerning your own person, or those to whom you minister, you labor to bring rejoicing in the hope of earthly circumstance improving, you have not done well. You must hold the revealed future for all saints before people if they are to rejoice! Neither faith nor hope can flourish and refresh while thoughts are wrapped around earthly circumstances.

TRIBULATION

" . . . patient in tribulation . . ."

Other versions read, "persevering in tribulation," ^{NASB} "patient in affliction," ^{NIV} "be patient in suffering," and ^{NRSV} "endure in affliction" ^{NAB}

Patience is perseverance, persistence, or endurance. It is making progress when the details of life are not conducive to progress. It is continuing in the race when it leads through the Red Sea of impossibility or the burning desert of trial. Patience shouts to the soul what Moses was told to cry out to Israel: "speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex 14:15).

Patience is also an aspect of faith. Faith appropriately responds when it enters into the furnace of tribulation. Rather than being beat down by the flames, it becomes more determined than

ever to stand. When circumstance throws troops of complication and walls of impossibility before the child of God, faith shouts, *“For by Thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall”* (Psa 18:29).

It is not possible for those who live by faith to avoid tribulation.

Jesus has declared, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation”* (John 16:33). The only issue here is whether we will continue to run the race set before us or not. Many a professed believer has thrown in the towel when things become seemingly too difficult. Such imagine they will find relief by withdrawing from the race, and ceasing to fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). Thus, they are thrown to the ground by discouragement, and pummeled into despair by frustration. Poor souls, indeed, for they have actually incurred the indignation of God by their response. Is it not written, *“but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Heb 10:38-39).

This is the word from heaven: *“be patient in tribulation!”* No other alternative is offered! This can only mean that our Father has graciously supplied all that we need to be *“patient in tribulation.”* If we quit in tribulation, it is because we have not availed ourselves of the resources God has provided. It is because we have not believed, or kept the faith. There is no valid reason for this to happen!

PRAYER

“ . . . continuing steadfastly in prayer.” Other versions read, *“continuing instant in prayer,”* ^{KJV} *“devoted to prayer,”* ^{NASB} *“faithful in prayer,”* ^{NIV} *“persevere in prayer,”* ^{NRSV} *“be constant in prayer,”* ^{RSV} and *“at all times given to prayer.”* ^{BBE}

importunate widow, who refused to cease from asking until she received an answer (Luke 18:1-8). They are also seen in the mighty prophet Elijah, who prayed seven times for rain – until his servant saw a small cloud forming, about the size of a man’s hand (1 Kgs 18:44). The early church was *“instant in prayer,”* immediately going to the Lord when they

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The words *“continuing steadfastly,”* or *“continuing instant,”* come from a single word (προσκαρτεροῦντες). The word has a broad meaning. It includes the ideas of *continuance* and *readiness*. It also means to *pay persistent attention to*, and *be devoted to*.

The meaning of the exhortation is this: **we are to remain so sensitive and devoted to prayer that it is your first and continual resort.** Concerning our response, we are to be *“instant in prayer,”* not tardy or slow in heart. Concerning the manner of prayer itself, we are to *“continue steadfastly”* in it, not giving up in difficult cases. Regarding our attitude concerning prayer, we are to be *“devoted to prayer,”* not allowing anything to move us from it.

All of these are seen in the

were threatened (Acts 4:24-31).

“Continuing instant in prayer” requires a sensitive spirit – one that is more aware of heaven than it is of earth. Such a soul is not shaken by circumstance, or moved by threats from the enemy. It is persuaded that God is *“a very present help in the time of trouble,”* and relies upon that fact (Psa 46:1).

Such people live and move and have their being within the framework of an acute consciousness of God. They know they are reconciled to Him. They know they have access to Him. They know He is seeking their welfare. Without such persuasions, one cannot continue *“instant in prayer.”* With them, such prayer is possible to the child of God. Blessed is the person who knows that joyful sound, and embraces it with joy and faith!

THE RESPONSE TOWARD NEEDS OF SAINTS

¹³ . . . distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.”

Here is an exceedingly practical area of living by faith. It is not common to hear exhortations in this area, or to behold any degree of consistency in the fulfillment of the exhortation. I want to keep before you that the Spirit is showing how faith works. He is also revealing the response of the individual to whom righteousness has been imputed. The individual who is able

to fervently desire, and enter into, these good works possesses confirmation that he is righteous. As it is written, *“ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him”* (1 John 2:29). And again, *“he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous”* (1 John 3:7).

DISTRIBUTING

“Distributing to the needs of the saints.” Other versions read,

“Distributing to the necessity of saints,” ^{KJV} *“contributing to the needs of the saints,”* ^{NASB} *“Share with God’s people who are in need,”* ^{NIV} and *“When God’s children are in need, be the one to help them out.”* ^{NLT}

For some, this is a most difficult text. Particularly in the Western world, a kind of Christianity is being marketed that looks with disdain upon any believer being

needy. The resurrection of the health and wealth gospel (falsely so called) teaches that salvation includes financial prosperity and health of body. Thus, these benighted souls surmise, need is an evidence of unbelief. Of course, if these people were right, you would not contribute to the needs of the saints, but exhort them to have no needs at all. The best thing to do with such teaching is to throw it into the theological scrap heap.

The word “*distribute*” postulates that we are stewards of the resources God has given us. They are not intended to be for ourselves alone, but are to be used for the glory of God. Those who have more than an adequate supply of resources are admonished to handle them properly. “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*” (1 Tim 6:17-19). Notice the wealth of insight that is here made known.

- ❑ The rich are to be “*charged,*” commanded, ^{NKJV} or instructed ^{NASB} regarding their riches.
- ❑ The rich are not to be “*highminded,*” haughty ^{NKJV} or conceited. ^{NASB}
- ❑ They are not to “*trust in uncertain riches,*” of fix their hope in fading resources.
- ❑ Their hope is to be firmly “*in the living God.*”
- ❑ The things they have received have come from Him, who richly supplies us all things to enjoy.
- ❑ The rich are to “*do good*” with their riches.
- ❑ They are to see to it they are “*rich in good works,*” rather than only in goods or possessions.
- ❑ The rich are to be “*ready to distribute,*” “*ready to give,*” ^{NKJV} and “*generous.*” ^{NASB}
- ❑ They are to be “*willing to*

communicate,” or “*share.*” ^{NKJV}

- ❑ By so doing, they are “*storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life,*” or “*storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.*” ^{NASB}

The proper handling of earthly resources is a matter of stewardship. It reveals whether or not a person has faith. It also provides an opportunity to excel in

The proper handling of earthly resources is a matter of stewardship. It reveals whether or not a person has faith. It also provides an opportunity to excel in good works. Faithfulness in this area directly impacts upon our future—“the time to come.”

good works. Faithfulness in this area directly impacts upon our future—“*the time to come.*” Finally. It relates to taking hold of eternal life. When, therefore, we speak of giving to the needs of the saints, we are not dealing with a trivial and inconsequential matter!

Determining Our Eternal Destiny

Jesus revealed that our response to the needs of His brethren – “*the saints*” – had a direct bearing upon our eternal destiny. He mentioned several areas, relating them all to Himself personally. “*I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . I was naked . . . I was sick . . . I was in prison.*” The response of the people to these situations revealed whether they were “*sheep*” or “*goats,*” accepted or rejected. It became the basis for being on His right hand or left hand. It determined if they inherited the kingdom prepared for them, or were cursed, forced to depart from him and have their part in

the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and His angels.

Those who were blessed to be forever with the Lord were told, “*you gave Me food . . . you gave Me drink . . . you took ME in . . . you clothed Me . . . you visited Me . . . you came to Me.*” Those who were cursed and cast into everlasting fire were told: “*you gave Me no food . . . you gave Me no drink . . . you did not take Me in . . . you did not clothe Me . . . you did not visit Me.*”

In both cases, the people were not aware of any action they had performed toward the Lord Himself. The righteous responded, “*Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?*” The wicked responded, “*Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?*”

Our Lord’s answer unveiled the kind of realm into which we have been called. To the righteous He said, “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*” To the wicked He replied, “*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.*” (Matt 25:32-46).

Weighty Words

Within the context of those words, our text takes on a greater weight. This is no mere suggestion: “*Distributing to the necessity of saints.*” No wonder David exclaimed, “*Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble*” (Psa 41:1) – particularly when they are the saints of God (Gal 6:10)!

The Experience of the Early Church

Almost immediately, the early church was faced with the need of the saints. Devout men “*from every nation under heaven*” had flocked to Jerusalem to

observe the feast of Pentecost. They had not come to stay, but had planned to return home after the festivities. However, during their stay, they heard the news of the exalted Savior, were convinced of their need to be reconciled to God, and were "added to the church." As a result, they remained, basking in the blessing of the Lord and the newness of life.

Consequently, their resources soon were depleted, and need surfaced. Faith rose to the occasion. It is written, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:44-45).

While this was an unusual circumstance, it provides an excellent example of being "ready to distribute." We are told that God "is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb 6:10). Such sharing is described as "sacrifices" with which God is "well pleased" (Heb 13:16).

Elsewhere the Spirit reminds us that the love of God does not dwell in the individual who fails to respond to the needs of Christ's brethren. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

What of Those with Chronic Needs?

What of those with chronic needs, who always seem to stand in need of assistance? What is to be done in their case.

The Helpless

First, there ARE people who, due to debilitating circumstances, always need to be helped. Such was the beggar Lazarus, full of sores, who was daily laid at the gate of a rich man (Lk 16:20). In the case of Lazarus, he found no relief until he died and was escorted by angels to Abraham's bosom (16:22). There was also the lame beggar who was carried every day and placed at the "gate of the temple" (Acts

3:2). His situation was changed when Peter and John, in the name of Jesus, eliminated his need (3:6-7). There was also blind Bartimaeus who regularly begged alms (Mark 10:46).

Thus, there are people whose need is never really eliminated, and we ought not to grow impatient with them. They have disadvantages that prohibit them from meeting their needs. Of such, Jesus said, "For you have the poor with you always" ^{NKJV} (Matt 26:11).

Elsewhere the Spirit reminds us that the love of God does not dwell in the individual who fails to respond to the needs of Christ's brethren.

The Slothful

There are others, however, whose need has arisen because of their lack of diligence and productivity. The role of believers is not to nurse such along, ignoring their slothfulness. Of such, it is written, "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: **If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.** For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thess 3:10-12).

From the very moment man was thrust from the garden, hearty work was ordained. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:19). Any person who seeks to avoid this judgment is in rebellion against God. Such souls are sluggards who can always find a reason for NOT working, or NOT eating his bread as the result of his own work. Of such Solomon said, "The sluggard will not plow by

reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (Prov 20:4). He hands "refuse to labor," and thus God has withdrawn help from him (Prov 21:25).

You see, then, that discretion is required as we distribute "to the necessity of the saints." We are handling God's resources, and therefore are to do so for His honor and glory, as well as the assistance of the poor.

HOSPITALITY

"... given to hospitality."

Other versions read, "practicing hospitality," ^{NASB} "extend hospitality to strangers," ^{NRSV} "pursuing hospitality," ^{DOUAY} "ready to take people into your houses," ^{BBE} "And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night," ^{NLT} and "look for opportunities to be hospitable." ^{NJB}

In a day of economical motels and credit cards, this exhortation may sound strange. It may even be viewed as a cultural thing, with no bearing upon the nature of spiritual life. However, the Holy Spirit does not apply the effects of imputed righteousness and faith to mere cultural matters. Such a postulate is wholly without foundation. It has the Lord admonishing us to conform to culture on the one hand, and yet refuse to conform to the fashion of the world on the other hand (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 7:31). Such thinking is unbecoming for those with renewed minds.

There are numerous examples of hospitality in Scripture.

- Pharaoh to Abraham (Gen 12:16).
- Melchizedec to Abraham (Gen 14:18).
- Abraham to angels (Gen 18:1-8).
- Lot to angels (Gen 19:1-11).
- Abimelech to Abraham (Gen 20:14-15).
- Sons of Heth to Abraham (Gen 23:6-11).
- Laban to Abraham's servant (Gen 24:31).
- Laban to Jacob (Gen 29:13-14).
- Isaac to Abimelech (Gen 26:30).
- Joseph to his brethren (Gen 43:31-34).
- Pharaoh to Jacob (Gen 45:16-20).

- Jethro to Moses (Ex 2:20).
- Rahab to the spies (Josh 2:1-16).
- Men of Gibeah to the Levite (Judges 19:16-21).
- Pharaoh to Hadad (1 Kgs 11:17,22).
- David to Mephibosheth (2 Sam 9:7-13).
- The widow of Zarephath to Elijah (1 Kings 17:10-24).
- The Shunammite to Elisha (2 Kgs 4:8-10).
- Elisha to the Syrian spies (2 Kgs 6:22).
- Job to strangers (Job 31:32).
- Martha to Jesus (Lk 10:38; John 12:1-2).
- A Pharisee to Jesus (Luke 11:37-38).
- Zaccheus to Jesus (Luke 19:1-10).
- Simon the tanner to Peter (Acts 10:6,23).
- Lydia to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:15).
- Jailor to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:33-

- 34).
- Publius to Paul (Acts 28:7).
- Phebe to Paul (Rom 16:2).
- Onesiphorus to Paul (2 Tim 1:16).
- Gaius (3 John 5-8).

Considerable blessing was conferred upon people in the above instances of hospitality. It became an environment in which encouragement was ministered and the work of God was extended. In Zaccheus' case, salvation came to his house in the atmosphere of hospitality. In Rahab's case, her whole family was spared because of her hospitality. The father of Publius was healed because of his hospitality to Paul. The Shunammite woman was given a child because of her hospitality.

Let the people of God be known for

their kindly spirit, and for sharing their home and possessions with others. We can well afford to receive others because Christ *"has received us to the glory of God"* (Rom 15:7).

One of the qualifications for an elder is, *"given to hospitality"* (1 Tim 3:2), and even being a *"lover of hospitality"* (Tit 1:8). Before a widow can be supported by the church, she must *"have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted"* (1 Tim 5:10). Such hospitality is to be given to one another *"without grumbling"* (1 Pet 4:9).

Here is a virtue in which considerable advancement can be realized. The church is deficient in this area.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD OUR PERSECUTORS

"¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." Spiritual life expresses itself on all levels, and in all relationships. There is no legitimate area of life where it is not productive, or does not bear fruit. Here, faith responds to those who persecute and abuse the saints.

BLESS! BLESS!

How are we to respond to those who hurt us - who persecute us, and do all manner of evil against us? How does Divine life react to people like that? What kind of grace are we to seek to help in a need such as that?

Bless!

Here is a challenge worthy of the people of God: *"Bless your persecutors!"* ^{NJB} Seek their advantage! Ask the Lord to bestow benefits upon them. Pursue their welfare!

Jesus put it this way: *"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; **that ye may be***

the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:44-45).

Spiritual life expresses itself on all levels, and in all relationships. There is no legitimate area of life where it is not productive, or does not bear fruit. Here, faith responds to those who persecute and abuse the saints.

One of the traits to which Paul confessed was this: *"being reviled, we bless"* (1 Cor 4:10).

When a band of men and officers came to arrest Jesus in the garden, Peter rushed to His defense, drawing his sword, *"and smote the high priest's servant, and*

cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus" (John 18:10). The reaction of Jesus to that deed is recorded by Luke. *"And He touched his ear, and healed him"* (Lk 22:51). He blessed His enemies, and did good to those despitefully using Him.

Luke records the first words Jesus said after He was crucified: *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"* (Lk 23:34). He was blessing His enemies, and those who persecuted Him. Stephen did the same regarding his enemies, blessing them with these words, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"* (Acts 7:60). He blessed them while the stones they were throwing battered the life from his body.

To bless our enemies is not a natural disposition, and it cannot be carried out in the energy of the flesh. You will have to live in fellowship with Christ to do it, and you really have no choice but to do so.

Do Not Curse!

Of old time, holy men were known to curse their enemies. Elisha cursed forty

two children who had chided him saying, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Two she bears forthwith came out of the wood and mauled them all to death! On another occasion, when hostile men were sent to Elijah by the king of Samaria, he called fire down from heaven upon them, consuming two groups of fifty, together with their leaders (2 Kgs 1:10-12).

Drawing upon these two occasions, the disciples of Jesus once confronted some Samaritans who did not want to receive Jesus because they saw He was headed for Jerusalem. Infuriated by the circumstance, James and John asked the Lord, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" Most solemnly, the Lord replied, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk 9:52-56).

Thus did He set the tone for His followers to "curse not!"

If it seems too difficult for this word to be fulfilled in your life, you must consider Job, who had neither Bible nor kindred spirits around him. He confessed, "If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul" (Job 31:29-30).

Even under the Law, the Lord demanded of the people, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him" (Ex 23:4-5). I doubt not that most Israelites failed to see the kernel of truth in that commandment. But that must not be said of us!

Some centuries later, David, the man after God's own heart, acknowledged, "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother" (Psa 35:13-14).

Even Solomon declared, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished" (Prov 17:5). Through the poor, the hearts of men are discovered.

The Lord, therefore, has asked nothing of us that is too difficult. We have, by grace, been called into affiliation with the One who reconciled us when we were enemies (Rom 5:10). We have been the recipients of great blessing, and can now refrain ourselves from cursing our enemies, and those who do us harm.

REJOICING AND WEEPING WITH OTHERS

¹⁵ **Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.** Here is another admonition that cannot be fulfilled by mere discipline, or out of a sense of obedience alone. Heart and affection can be admonished, but they cannot be commanded, as in the sense of law. In this very sensitive exhortation we are urged to make the experiences of our brethren our own. How can such a word be viewed as a cold and heartless commandment, or obeyed out of a sense of obligation? Your heart will tell you such a thing is not possible.

Nature cannot rise to this requirement. It has neither the strength nor the inclination to do so. Neither, indeed, can legalism fulfill this admonition. Job's "friends," driven by a spirit of law, were not able to weep with Job in his sorrow, nor rejoice with him in his deliverance. They were suspicious, not sensitive, and antipathetic, not

empathetic. Although God refused to excuse their inconsideration, these men lived in the dim light of limited revelation. However, those living in the high noon of

The saved cannot always rejoice or weep with the unsaved, for they do not have the same sense of values. While there are common experiences in which measured empathy can take place (death, birth, etc), those occasions are not the thrust of this word.

the Gospel of Christ are abundantly capable of rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep. It only remains for them to do so.

HOUSEHOLD RESPONSES

This is an encouragement to identify more fully with those who are in Christ Jesus. The saved cannot always rejoice or weep with the unsaved, for they do not have the same sense of values. While there are common experiences in which measured empathy can take place (death, birth, etc), those occasions are not the thrust of this word.

Rejoicing with Those Who Rejoice

David provided an example of one trusting person rejoicing with another. "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psa 34:2). And again, "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word" (Psa 119:74).

Elizabeth, who gave birth to John the Baptist, experienced the same type of

fellowship. When John was born, “*her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her*” (Luke 1:58).

Another picture is provided in the parable of the lost sheep. The good shepherd left the ninety and nine sheep to find the one that was lost. Finding it, he carried it upon his shoulder “*with rejoicing.*” Upon returning home, “*he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost*” (Luke 15:4-6).

One of the measures of true spiritual advancement is the ability to rejoice at the well being and successfulness of our brothers and sisters. It confirms that we have been delivered from the tyranny of self. Thus, if “*one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it*” (1 Cor 12:26). There is a great comfort that comes to us in the realization that our brethren are rejoicing with us. It mitigates otherwise selfish tendencies.

Weeping with Those Who Weep

When we rejoice with those who rejoice, the joy is, as it was, multiplied. However, when we weep with those who weep, sorrow is reduced, and made more

bearable.

One remarkable passage that touches upon this matter, regards our consideration of those who are suffering in bonds, or chains. “*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body*” (Heb 13:3).

This is not a mere formality, like those who came to lament the passing of Lazarus (John 11:33-38), or the passing of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:37-40). It is an action driven by insight, and the capacity to participate in the experiences of those of like precious faith.

WHY WE CAN REJOICE AND WEEP

Common. These responses are possible because of the “*common faith*” (Tit 1:4) that exists among us. We are all members of one body, have the same values, have left the same condemned realm, and are headed for the same glorious liberty.

Capacity. In Christ, we have the capacity to rejoice and weep with fellow strangers and pilgrims. We are able to do this by virtue of the same Spirit that we possess. We also have been given the same kind of nature in Christ, and have the same law written upon our hearts and put

into our minds.

Versatility. Faith can adapt to all kinds of experiences. While we are rejoicing in our own blessings, we can, at the same time, weep with those who have been less fortunate. Suffering ones, on the other hand, can rejoice in their brethren who have been exalted at the same time they are standing in the furnace of trial. **Faith works at the extremities of human experience as well as at its center – in the valleys as well as on the mountains.**

Many of us have been able to negotiate through very difficult times because our brothers and sisters wept with us. Also, we have been able to handle great blessings without being overcome with pride, because our brethren rejoiced with us. This is a good family benefit.

One might ask why such an exhortation is necessary. It is because the remnants of the old nature remain in us, quite willing to express themselves during times of spiritual obtuseness. Sinful selfishness can overcome the expression of mutual feelings if we do not walk by faith and live in the power of the Spirit. Satan is particularly active in this area, and thus we are to be alert to his delusions.

HAVING THE SAME MIND

“^{16a} **Be of the same mind toward one another.**” Other versions read, “*Live in harmony with one another,*”^{NIV} “*Have the same respect one for another,*”^{DARBY} “*Have the same regard for one another,*”^{NAB} and “*Give the same consideration to all others alike.*”^{NJB} This is another way of saying we are not to have “*respect of persons,*” for “*if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin*” (James 2:9).

There are several texts in which we are admonished to “*be of the same mind,*” embracing the same perspectives of God and His great salvation, or having the same emphasis (Rom 15:6; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 1:27; 2:2; 4:2). **However, that is not the thrust of this verse.**

The key here is “*toward one another.*” That is, we are not to be selective about those with whom we “*rejoice*” or “*weep.*” We are not to have our favorites, so to speak, developing religious cliques, or groups. This is a lamentable tendency that is quite common among professed Christians. Sectarianism encourages such a stance, driving wedges between those whom faith unites.

This is having “*the same love*” (Phil 2:2) and thoughtful consideration toward one another. Being “*of the same mind toward one another*” will move us to “*by love serve one another*” (Gal 5:13). We will thus live considerately of one another, “*forbearing one another, and forgiving*

one another” (Col 3:13), thereby encouraging growth in Christ Jesus.

In this attitude, we view one another as we are in Christ Jesus, without regard to social or other fleshly distinctions. We are all born of God, washed, sanctified, and justified. We have all received the Spirit of adoption, an eternal inheritance, and grace for grace. Our names are all written in the book of life, the angels minister to us all, and Jesus makes intercession for us all. Recalling these, and other things, will assist us in having the same regard for one another. This will produce a pleasant spiritual environment in which encouragement and comfort will be ministered.

It must be remembered that faith has alienated us from the world. It does not and cannot love us, even though we often receive helps from it. But they are not of the sort that are received from the household of faith, and are not to be compared with the same. At the very best,

those who are of the world can assist us in temporal ways. We are grateful for such helps, but they are not to be compared with the lifting up of the hands than hang down, and the strengthening of the feeble knees received amidst the saints of God. There is a comfort that is superior. There

is a help that is more excellent. There are advantages that are more beneficial, more laden with Divine resources. These are blessings Jesus ministers through the members of His body. No one can bring these to us but those who are reconciled to God. They are needful to us all.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD SELF

“^{16b} **Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.**” Once again, I am reminded of the presence of the sinful nature within us. It is what necessitates exhortations like this, and we do well to remember it. You may recall the fierce spiritual struggle that was depicted in the seventh chapter of Romans. There arise in us thoughts and inclinations that we hate, and we are powerless to stop them from asserting themselves. Time and time again, we must reject them, throwing them down in the energy of faith (7:15-18). All of this confirms that in our natural persons, or “*flesh*,” there is nothing good, nothing salvageable, nothing that must be allowed to dominate (7:18). With the Adamic nature we “*serve the law of sin*” (7:25).

Salvation has freed us from an obligation to the flesh. We are no longer debtors to it, to live after it – even though it is constantly crying to us for attention (8:12).

This condition is the reason for this word. There is in us a propensity that must be cast down to the ground, and that with aggression.

MINDING HIGH THINGS

“*Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.*” Other versions read, “*Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate,*”^{KJV} “*do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly,*”^{NASB} “*Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position,*”^{NIV} and “*Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people*

on their own terms.”^{NJB}

The idea is that we are not to gravitate to people who appear to give us the greater advantage. The KJV version accentuates this by saying, “*condescend to*

There arise in us thoughts and inclinations that we hate, and we are powerless to stop them from asserting themselves. Time and time again, we must reject them, throwing them down in the energy of faith

men of low estate.” The meaning is **not** to condescend to ourselves be men of low estate (although that **is** emphasized in the next clause), but to be identified with others who are of lower social standing.

The church in Rome had people from “*Caesar’s household*” (Phil 4:21), and those who served in the households of others, having none of their own (16:10,11). There was not to be division in the church with, for example, the slaves meeting together in one place, and those of high social standing in another. The most advanced in Christ were to associate themselves with those of most ignoble backgrounds and associations, showing no preference.

The Lord Jesus

Our blessed Lord lived out this spirit in a public manner. It was so contrary to

the nature of the religious bigots of His day, that they criticized Him for it. They said of Him, “*Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*” (Matt 11:19). Jesus was neither gluttonous nor a winebibber (drunkard). However, because He condescended to bring the Gospel to them, His enemies thought He had become defiled by the association.

Again, when He stooped to wash the disciples’ feet, He was condescending to be identified with men of low estate (John 13:4-5). He was the King, yet was not demeaned by performing the work of a servant to those He Himself created!

Again, when mothers brought their little children to Jesus, that He would “*touch them,*” His disciples were much displeased. It seemed much to lowly for the Master Teacher to engage in such mundane things. Therefore, the disciples sternly “*rebuked those that brought*” the little children. When the Lord saw this conduct, He was “*greatly displeased.*” He told His disciples to cease from forbidding little children to be brought to Him. He then took the little children “*up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them*” (Matt 19:13-16). He stooped to be identified with the lowliest estate of all – that of little children.

The Practice of Paul

We learn from Scripture that a certain runaway slave, Onesimus, was converted by Paul. This took place when Paul was in prison (Philemon 10). Onesimus was probably in prison with

Paul at the time. Later, Paul referred to him as “a faithful brother,” sending him to Colossae with Tychicus (Col 4:9). Eventually, Paul sent him back to Philemon, saying he would prove profitable to his former master (Philemon 11-16). This circumstance would never have arisen if Paul, from an illustrious Jewish background, did not associate with Onesimus the runaway. He was not haughty in mind, but associated with the lowly.^{NASB} This was not grace given to an Apostle, but grace for the saints.

Who can forget the time when Paul was shipwrecked. The entire crew of the ship, together with its prisoners (of whom Paul was one), finally making it to the shore of an island of uncultured and “barbarous” people. Because of “the rain, and because of the cold,” the islanders received them, even kindling a fire for them. Paul, however, did not simply sit by the fire, but “gathered a bundle of sticks” for the fire. In the process, he was bitten by a poisonous snake, which he shook off in the fire, that no one else would be harmed (Acts 28:2-3). He condescended to be identified with men of low estate, thereby opening the door for the Lord to work on that island.

The church has too long suffered from men of haughty spirit, who refused to be identified with those they imagined were too lowly. It is our business to make sure this uncomely trait is not in us.

WISE IN OUR OWN EYES

“Do not be wise in your own opinion.” Other versions read, “Be not wise in your own conceits,”^{KJV} “Do not be wise in your own estimation,”^{NASB} “Do not be conceited,”^{NIV} and “do not claim to be

wiser than you are.”^{NRSV} Flesh tends to provoke us to overestimate our own worth. It is not unusual to find professing Christians engaging in all manner of activities for which they are not well suited. Some, for example, imagine that academic credentials qualify them for these tasks. Those in Christ are to “think soberly,” and in strict accord with their role in the body of Christ (12:3).

Isaiah declared, “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa 5:21). Solomon enjoined, “Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the LORD, and depart from evil” (Prov 3:7). Again he warned, “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov 26:12). Paul warned those who speculated about the Jews without hearing what God has said of them, “For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in”^{NASB} (Rom 11:25).

A person who is wise in his own eyes has used worldly standards to make that vain determination. He has asked the world for the criterion of judgment. Such a person is solemnly warned, “Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise”^{NIV} (1 Cor 3:18). Whether it is in the area of logic, language, history, or other forms of worldly knowledge, the world cannot produce “wisdom” in the child of God. The wisdom of this world, in its totality, is “foolishness in God’s sight” (1 Cor 3:19). It tends to puff up, and cause men to

over-evaluate their own worth before God and to the saints. Such people must give heed to the words of our text!

Those who are “wise” in their “own opinion” are leaning to their own understanding. They do not understand “through faith” (Heb 11:3), and thus their understanding is vain. For this reason it is written, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov 3:5). The person who is wise in his own eyes has failed to give heed to this word. For this reason, his wisdom is without value.

If this word was given due heed within the professing church, it would require changes of great magnitude. The structure of local congregations and Christian institutions would be altered so radically, one would scarcely be able to identify the results with what presently exists. There is a certain manner in place in the professing church, that has assigned high value to things of minuscule spiritual worth. People with very little spiritual insight have been vaulted into places of prominence. They have been given the responsibility of teaching and training others in the ways of the institution while they themselves are grossly ignorant of the ways of God. It may appear that this is a harsh judgment, and is characterized by inconsideration. However, when men are unable to move about in heavenly places, handle the Word of God, and open the mysteries of the Kingdom, they are not wise, regardless of their imagined credentials. A system that allows, and even encourages, them to consider themselves wise is seriously deficient, to say the least. I doubt that it can be blessed by God.

GODLY RESPONSES

“¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” Good and evil are all about us, personally impacting upon our lives. It is essential that we respond properly to them both.

DO NOT REPAY EVIL FOR EVIL

“Repay no one evil for evil.” Other versions read, “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone,”^{NASB} and “Do not give evil for evil to any man.”^{BBE} The commandment is firm.

Under the Law

Under the Law it was written, “But if

any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Ex 21:23-24). Again it was written, “If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him; fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for

tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him" (Lev 24:19-20). And again, "then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deut 19:19-21).

The Law was a harsh and retaliatory system. It was ordained of God, and was suited for those who were not reconciled to Him. It was a covenant for those who lived in the flesh, under the dominance of sin, with a defiled conscience and an unchanged heart. It was designed to keep sin in check, lest it break forth on all sides, becoming uncontrollable.

Because the people had not been joined to the Lord, and were unlike Him in their thoughts and ways, they were often required to take some matters into their own hands. They were charged with the responsibility of restraining sin from bursting out of bounds, as it did in the days of Noah. However, this was not the ideal situation, to say the least.

Under the New Covenant

Things are quite different under the New Covenant. This difference is not owing to a mere change of the legal code. It is because men themselves are changed. Their sins are remitted, and the law of God is written upon their hearts and put into their minds (Heb 10:16-17). They are partakers of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4), partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), and have been made "a new creature" in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17).

Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who

asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" NKJV (Matt 5:38-42). In the words of our text, "Repay no one evil for evil."

Peter admonished us, "not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling" (1 Pet 3:9). Whether in word or deed, those who do evil to us are not to be allowed to set our agenda, or determine how we react. The Lord is our Shepherd, and as such

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dictates how we respond to our enemies.

If you are tempted to return evil for evil, heed this word: "Do not say, 'I will recompense evil'; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you" (Prov 20:22). It is our responsibility to "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all" (1 Thess 5:15).

Should we choose to ignore this word, all manner of evil will be awakened within us. When we set ourselves to return evil for evil, the "old man" is raised in great strength, and begins to sit upon the throne of our heart and mind. He will not rule us well, and will again put us on the broad road that leads to destruction. Returning evil for evil gives a large room of residence to the devil, and he will not fail to occupy it.

REGARD GOOD THINGS

"Have regard for good things in the sight of all men." Other versions read,

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men," KJV "Respect what is right in the sight of all men," NASB "Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody," NIV and "but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." NRSV

This is another call for a total departure from self-centeredness. We are to have a regard for how others – even "everybody" – perceives our manners.

This does not mean we are to become pleasers of men, for then we would cease to be the servants of Christ (Gal 1:10; Eph 6:6; Col 3:22). However, there is a general sense in men, even unregenerate men, of what is good and proper. While the wicked may not act upon this general knowledge, we must not be guilty of violating that consciousness.

Prepare beforehand. By saying "Have regard," or "provide" for such things, the Spirit means we are to think about our manners ahead of time. We are to consider how "all men" will view what we do – not because we seek to please them, **but because we do not want them to have a wrong view of life in Christ.** Whether it is our countenance, words, deeds, clothing, or social preferences, **the world must not conclude that we are no different than they.** They must not see our profession as empty and without an impact upon our lives.

Avoiding offence. Young Titus was told to exhort young men about these things. The words given to him are applicable to us as well, and we do well to take them seriously. "Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you" (Tit 2:6-8). An aggressive exhortation, indeed!

Make no mistake about this, we are to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a

crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). The name of the Lord and His doctrine has suffered much reproach because of the manners of many who wear His name. They have not provided for things honest in the eyes of all men.

Adorn the doctrine. There is a word spoken to slaves that is also a timely one for us all. It will have particular application to those in the employment of others, yet can be adapted to every person in Christ. *"Exhort bondservants to be*

obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tit 2:9-10).

What others think of your expressions does have a bearing on how you are to live. If you live in violation of even the common sense of goodness that all men have, you greatly dishonor the Savior, and place yourself in great jeopardy. God will not ignore such inconsideration. Again, we live in times that require this to be taught

aggressively. There is far too much looseness in the professing church concerning this matter. The attitude of the people living under the Judges has resurfaced to the shame of the church. *"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Our text forbids such an attitude, for no person in Christ is an island to himself. Hence, he cannot live independently of the body. The church is the "fulness" of Christ (Eph 1:23), and thus is essential to us.

IF YOU DETERMINE THE CIRCUMSTANCE

¹⁸ ***If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*** Other versions read, *"Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible,"*^{NLT} and *"As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone."*^{NJB} **Agitation and turmoil are the foe of spiritual progress.** Many a soul has gone down in defeat because of a troublesome environment! If you want a harvest of righteousness, *"the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"* (James 3:16). The NIV reads, *"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."*

There is such a thing as being able to *"MAKE peace"* – that is what our text declares. This is not a constant circumstance, or something over which we

have total control. However, there are times when peaceableness depends upon us: *"as much as depends upon you!"* A wise woman once said to the fierce warrior Joab, *"I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel."* Her words spared a city, and only a single offender was punished. Peace depended on that wise woman (2 Sam 20:19-21).

There is a sense in which we are the cause of division and agitation. Even as Jesus said of Himself, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword"* (Matt 10:34). But this is not the preference of *"The Prince of peace"* (Isa 9:6). He prefers that men be reconciled to God, and gave His life for that purpose (2 Cor 5:18-20).

So it is with the children of God. We

do not desire to have war and conflict all about it. It is not in our heart to set every person against us, and be constantly opposed in what we do. We find no delight in such circumstances. As David would say, *"I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war"* (Psa 120:7). We will do everything short of dishonoring our Lord to keep peace. We will not go out of our way to make war or cause dissension, but will extend ourselves to *"make peace."*

As with all such matters, this high regard for peace is to be had in our associations with *"all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal 6:10). May the words of our blessed Lord find residence in our hearts: *"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"* (Matt 5:9). The benefit is worth the effort.

THE RESPONSE TOWARD OUR ENEMIES

¹⁹ ***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*** ²⁰ ***Therefore If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*** This is a text worthy of deep contemplation.

Perhaps you have begun to see the magnitude of these exhortations. They extend far beyond the capabilities of the flesh or mere civility. That is one of the reasons for the abundance of them, and the insistence that they be carried out. This moves us to rely the more upon the Lord, showing us how utterly insufficient we are of ourselves.

If we keep religion in the realm of philosophy, it will place no pressure upon us. Nor, indeed, will it move us to call upon the name of the Lord, or to see the futility of our own understanding and strength. But if we will hear the words of this passage, particular regarding our response to our enemies, we will move beyond the boundary of speculation. The passage before us is a most excellent

example of this truth.

AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves. . .”

Other versions read, *“Never take your own revenge, beloved,”*^{NASB} *“Beloved, do not look for revenge,”*^{NAB} and *“Do not give punishment for wrongs done to you, dear brothers.”*^{BBE}

You are not to be the judge of your enemies, or the avenger of wrongs done to you. God has withdrawn that right from you. The Lord does not allow us to take matters into our own hands, dispensing vengeance as though we had omniscience. Even under the Law it was said, *“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD”* (Lev 19:18).

One of the judgments again Edom, Esau’s descendants, was that they took vengeance themselves. *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword”* (Ezek 25:12-13). If God reacted in this manner to the self-assertive vengeance of the Edomites, what will be His response to such conduct among those who wear the name of His Son?

This prohibition does not suggest that those who wrong you have not been duly noted by your Father in heaven. In fact, it is written, *“it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you”* (2 Thess 1:6). You must believe His promise, and be willing to wait for Him. His judgment will be righteous taking everything into consideration.

“ . . . but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” Other versions read, *“but leave room for the wrath of*

God,”^{NASB} and *“but leave it to the wrath of God.”*^{RSV} The meaning is that we are provide room for God to execute His wrath, not take it upon ourselves to settle the matter. The implication is that **if we take matters into our own hands, God will not work for us.**

God has spoken, declaring the right to show wrath *“belongs”* to Him. It does not belong to us. The reason for this is simple. *“For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (James 1:20). God’s purpose is not served, and His name is not honored by the explosion of man’s anger. It is something to be controlled.

All of this means that unlawful wrath

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is resident in the flesh, and is to be subdued in the power of the Spirit. *“Wrath,”* or *“outbursts of wrath,”*^{NKJV} are part of the *“works of the flesh”* (Gal 5:20). If you have been truly wronged, God will settle your case.

HOW TO TREAT YOUR ENEMY

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” How flesh cringes when it hears this word! Once again, even under the Law, there was a glimmer of this kind of conduct. *“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it”* (Ex 23:4-5). This word, therefore, ought not have a strange sound to us,

even though it is challenging.

These words are taken from Proverbs 25:21-22. *“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.”* Jesus said the same thing in these words, *“do good to them that hate you”* (Matt 5:44).

If these words appear too difficult (and surely they are not), let us remember the action of our Lord toward us when we were His enemies. *“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son”* (Rom 5:10). Let us also remember what our Father in heaven did.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6). These recollections will assist us in doing good to our enemies whenever it is in our hand to do so. Although they may not receive the Word from us, or give ear to our testimony, yet they may be put in a situation where they will receive the normal amenities of life from us. Thus the way may very well be paved for the Lord to work in them as He did in Saul of Tarsus.

In So Doing

“ . . . for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” This does not mean we **intend** to heap coals of fire upon the heads of our enemies. Rather, it means that is what will result. We cannot do good to our enemies, giving them bread and water, with the intent of bringing misery upon them. That should be evident, for it is not in keeping with the spirit of the passage.

The figure of *“coals of fire”* heaped upon the head is, indeed, a figure of intense pain. This pain, however, is of a special sort. It is the pangs of a condemning conscience – the bitter regret of having wronged someone to whom no wrong was due. It is the conviction that the wrong inflicted by

our enemies was not right. Thus the door is opened for repentance. At least one paraphrased version emphasizes this: *“and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you.”*^{NLT}

This teaching is also expounded by Peter, and confirms this is the intent of the passage: *“having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation”* (1 Pet 2:12). The day of visitation is the time when God judges the

person, whether in a temporal punishment, or when Jesus comes again.

Again Peter writes, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed”* (1 Pet 3:15-16).

Thus, a gracious response to our enemies can be used of God to convince them of their wrongdoing and move them

to repentance. By the same token, a failure to react in the prescribed manner will place the blood of our persecutors on our own hands.

It Has Been Noticed

It is not that those who do evil to you have not been duly noted in heaven. Nor, indeed, does this mean they are excluded from all judgment if they do not repent. But, we are not the ones charged with the responsibility of exacting this judgment. We have been *“joined to the Lord”* (1 Cor 6:17), and He alone *“will repay”* (Heb 10:39).

OVERCOMING, BUT NOT OVERCOME

“²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Here is a short but pungent word. Here is something we are NOT to do, and something we ARE to do. Both of them have to do with evil that is directed toward us. Among other things, this alerts us to the inevitability of suffering at the hands of men.

WHAT WE ARE NOT TO DO

Regarding evil, we are not to allow it to overcome us. This is the evil that men do to us. Their persecutions are not to be the means by which we fall. They are not to be the occasions when flesh erupts with defiling power. This has to do with being slow to anger, and having control of your own spirit. As it is written, *“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city”* (Prov 16:32). Nothing must be permitted to stop the well of blessing flowing from us. Thus it is written, *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing”* (1 Pet 3:9).

When *“rivers of living water”* cease to

flow from our belly, or inmost person, we have been *“overcome by evil”* (John 7:37-38). It is possible for believers to actually be vanquished by the evil that is done to them. That possibility, however, is only because of the flesh, which is to be subdued. As stewards of life, God has supplied us with all of the graces necessary to *“not be overcome by evil.”* If you will put on *“the whole armor of God”* and *“resist the devil,”* you will NOT be overcome by evil (Eph 6:10-18; 1 Pet 5:8-9).

WHAT WE ARE TO DO

If you are looking for a challenge worthy of a hearty effort, here is one. *“Overcome evil with good!”* In a way, you can overcome the evil person by doing good to him when he does evil to you: feeding him when he is hungry and giving him something to drink when he is thirsty. After all, *“greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4). Why should you not be able to continue doing good, even when those aligned against you continue to do evil?

If we avenge ourselves, we have been overcome by evil. If we *“do good”* to our enemies, we are overcoming evil with good.

In this case, overcoming evil does not mean evil disappears, or that the wicked cease to inflict evil upon us. **Rather, it means that the intentions of the evil doer are not realized.** Daniel’s opponents sought to get rid of him by raising a false accusation against him. He overcame evil with good, continuing in prayer in spite of the threat of a lion’s den. The evil intent of his enemies was not realized. They were the losers, not Daniel. His response is still ministering to and encouraging us.

As for you, you have been given even more grace than Daniel received. It is not that you are greater than Daniel. Rather, you are participating in the salvation of which he received but faint glimpses. He lived in a preparatory period. You are living in *“the day of salvation”* when more is being given to men than was ever given before. This is the time of spiritual plentitude, when heaven has been opened to the sons of men. It is a time of fulness, satisfaction, and adequacy. The way to God has been thrown open for heavenly commerce! The sun of righteousness has risen in power. There is no reason why you cannot excel in this regard. I encourage you to put your hand to the plow!

CONCLUSION

Now, be up and doing this great commission! The Lord has set before you an array of responsibilities that are too

great to be fulfilled in the energy of the flesh. Mere human discipline cannot accomplish them. There is no secret knowledge in the world that will put them within your reach. This is work for faith! It is doing that is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit! Your “new

man” can do all of these things, and your “old man” is set to resist them. I encourage you to throw yourself into the doing of them, all the while calling upon the name of the Lord. As you see them being fulfilled in your life, joy and confidence will come together in your

heart, causing strength and determination to become strong within you. Now, “Be of good courage . . . play the men . . . and the LORD do that which seemeth Him good” (2 Sam 10:12). There is no reason why a harvest of righteousness cannot be enjoyed by you, dear child of God!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/27/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 1-7 of the thirteenth chapter. The theme will be, **SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT.”** The practicality of being justified by God is most arresting. One might suppose it has nothing whatsoever to do with our relationship to the government. Our text will confirm this is not the case at all. We do have a God-ordained relationship to everything having its origin with the Lord. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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