

Sunday, May 30th, 2010

Living Hope EFC

Art Smith

How are we to respond to those who hurt us? (Rom.12:14-21)

CARTOON: Lucy, "I'm sure I have a good life ahead of me. It's only fair!"

Tozer Comment

"We are all idealists. We picture to ourselves a life on earth completely free from every hindrance, a kind of spiritual Utopia where we can always control events, where we can move about as favorites of heaven, adjusting circumstances to suit ourselves. This we feel would be quite compatible with the life of faith and in keeping with the privileged place we hold as children of God.

In thinking thus we simply misplace ourselves; **we mistake earth for heaven** and expect conditions here below which can never be realized till we reach the better world above. While we live we may expect troubles, and plenty of them. **We are never promised a life without problems as long as we remain among fallen men...."**

ILLUS: Loretta & Aud Brown's great trial! (Sept. 1999)

I first met Aud Brown when I went to share about prison ministry in his church. In his 70's, former air force pilot, lost arm in farming accident.

- Aud & I participated in several Bill Glass Prison weekends together.
- Aud had a heart for inmates. Started teaching in county jail ministry.

THEN – one hot autumn night

- Aud had fallen asleep in his chair—the door open, Loretta was in bed.
- About 2am, two men, 34 year old John Parker & 31 year old Ken Enlow decided to rob them.
- They came in the open front door, carried out what they wanted, without waking anyone. A perfect robbery. No one woke up.
- Then, for who knows why, John Parker saw an axe handle setting on the front porch, picked it up, went back & beat Loretta asleep in bed.

Kay Brown's Email: Here is a description of her surgery.

- Aud did something I don't know that I could do, but it was God's will! He did what Paul describes as "the transformed Christian life."
- The following week he went up to the county jail and told these men that what they did was wrong and they would have to pay the consequences. But that he forgave them, as God had forgiven him.

Q: *How would you have responded?*

What is the proper response, as Christians, to those who hurt us?

- Everyone carries wounds! Someone has betrayed us, lied, rejected, neglected, passed over you, left you, deceived or cheated you?

TODAY: **How are we to respond to those who hurt us? (12:14-21)**

Rom.12:9-21 - *What loving God looks like applied to relationships.*

- 12:9-13 = our **bachelors degree** program in Christian conduct.
- 12:14-21 = our **graduate course!**

- 1 = Love one another as I loved you. 2 = Love your enemy as...

WHAT WE'RE **NOT** DEALING WITH TODAY:

- 1 - Whether criminal activity is to be punished. – This is chapter 13.
- 2 – Disputes between Christians over amoral issues. – This is chap 14-15.

RATHER – How is the Christian to react toward those who wrong him?

12:14-16 Seem to apply to relations with Christian & non-Christian

VERSE 14: Bless those who persecute you, don't curse them.

εὐλογεῖω = Eulogy. "To speak well of/ to, to act graciously toward."

- NOT that we ever praise evil actions, but that we demonstrate God's love (love that seeks the welfare of another) even toward unkind acts.
- **Don't curse**=not referring to profanity. Rather, don't seek their harm.
- This is impossible to do unless first we apply Rom. 6 & 12:1-2.

EXAMPLES: Perhaps Paul was thinking of:

- **JESUS**- Luke 23:34. **STEPHEN**- Acts 7:59-60.
- Paul lived out this admonition repeatedly, himself: Acts 21-22.
- It is the action **Aud** Brown took in forgiving those who beat his wife.

VERSE 15: Rejoice & weep with others. Demonstrate Empathy.

With so many things going on in our personal lives - it is easy to ignore others. To stop feeling & caring, and showing compassion. (*Self-focused.*)

- **μεν:** It is difficult to weep with them, when we cannot fix problems.
- **δε:** It is equally hard to rejoice with others when we are suffering.

VERSE 16: Live in Harmony with one another. (*More in ch.14-15.*)

¹⁶**Live in harmony with one another.** Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Lit: "Thinking the same thing with one another," = be in agreement.

NOTE: the emphasis on ATTITUDE, and the MIND – in this section.

- Paul uses **φρονην:** In vs.3 (4 times), Vs.16 (3 times), Vs.17 (1 time).
- **Our attitude, what we think of ourselves & others, will determine our treatment of one another, and our degree of harmony.**
- Our first problem is that we think TOO MUCH of ourselves!
- Neither gifts, nor status, nor intellect, nor privilege is cause for pride.
- We need a dose of reality: **Psalms 103:8-16. Phil.2:3-11.**

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.

⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as **our sins deserve**

or repay us according to **our iniquities.** ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed **our transgressions** from us.

¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, **he remembers that we are dust.**

¹⁵ **As for man**, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,

- **Humility** is imperative to harmony & fulfilling all of Rom.12:9-21.

Q: Are you out of harmony with your spouse, kids, other Christians?

- Seek forgiveness, restoration, peace...for Christ's sake & yours.

12:17-21 Seems to apply to relations with non-Christians.

VERSE 17: Don't repay anyone evil for evil.

Rather: "Think ahead about what is a good, noble or honorable response

- Paul is saying, "When someone does something bad to you, resist the natural tendency to get even. Rather, think about a response that would be consistent with Jesus Christ's response to sinners."
- Our natural response=get even, silent treatment, malice, anger.
- **Jesus** gave us instruction for these circumstances, that will cause us to be "sons of our Father in heaven" **Matt.5:43-8, Luke 6:35-36.**

Matt.5 ⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you: **Love your enemies] and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do

that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 6 ³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them... Then your reward will be great, **and you will be sons of the Most High**, because **he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.** ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

- *God demonstrates His love **for us**, while we were yet sinners!*
- **Peter** also writes about how believers undergoing persecution should respond: 1 **Peter 3:9-18a; 4:12-19. Give answer for your hope.**

ILLUS: David's treatment of Saul is one of the classic examples.

- **1 Samuel 24:1-22.** Here is a man after God's own heart!

¹⁵ May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

- Not only does David not retaliate, but he assures of future kindness.
- This is a picture of what it looks like to be sons of our Father in hvn.

VERSE 18: If possible as far as you are concerned, live at peace.

No matter what the other person does, attempt to live at peace with them

- Understand, some people will never change. Beware of them.
- There will even be times you may need to escape their presence.
- BUT...live at peace with them, don't retaliate.

VERSE 19: Don't take revenge. Leave that up to God!

Isn't this what David did? (**1 Sam.24:12,15 VS 31:1-4.**)

- Imagine saying this to a soldier in the church at Rome! Or to a soldier today. Or trying to take the advice *ourselves*.

- **Can you trust God to avenge wrongs suffered? 2 Thes.1:6**

⁶God is just: **He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷and give relief to you who are troubled**, and to us as well.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

¹⁰on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

POINT: God is the only Person in the universe who knows ALL the complexities of every individual life, circumstance, history, every motive and action. **HE ALONE IS ABLE TO JUDGE JUSTLY – us, or our enemy!**

- **For us to take revenge – is to play the role of the omnipotent Judge**, to play God. Only God can judge us, or our enemies, fairly!
- STOP avenging yourself. Stop demanding revenge upon others.

VERSE 20: Treat your enemy with human dignity.

²⁰On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

- A Christian should feed his enemy & quench his thirst. He should respond to his evil with God's love. *God is kind to the ungrateful!*
- The hope is that such treatment will cause him to be ashamed and repent. (Coals on the head may refer to an Egyptian ritual of showing repentance.) **Rom.2:4 "God's kindness leads to repentance."**
- Showing non-retaliation and kindness to an enemy may = salvation!

VERSE 21: SUMMARIZE: Overcome evil with good!

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Be the conqueror, not the conquered!

- How easy it is to just give in to the spirit of the age and retaliate! Get even. Hold on to your anger & pride! Demand your rights!
- BUT that is not the TRANSFORMED LIFE, which achieves God's will.
- It is not what Christ did, Paul did, David did, Joseph did, Daniel did.

SUMMARY: There will be times when we will suffer unjustly.

Hold to Christ as your example of how we should respond. Seek the good of those who seek our harm. Do not respond with animosity. Do not take revenge. Entrust yourself to God, for He will see every wrong is punished. Pray, that those doing wrong will come to God instead.

CARTOON: Lucy & Charlie. **Adversity is what makes you mature!**

We must say this to ourselves – daily!
"Adversity is God's tool of making Transformed Lives!"