

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"

June 19, 2022

GOOD FOR EVIL

by L.A. Stauffer

Most Bible students remember the teaching of Jesus that commands his disciples "to turn the other cheek." In the Sermon on the Mount, He called to mind the teaching of Moses' law which demanded that Jews as a matter of justice exact an *"eye for an eye"* and a *"tooth for a tooth."* He then taught His disciples to the contrary: if a man *"smites thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also"* (**Matthew 5:39**).

This certainly, at first reading, would be viewed by His disciples as a "hard saying"—one that is difficult to accept and practice. And it is. But as the years pass—maybe as a result of age, physical weakness, or a natural tendency to be cowardly—I have found this command to be less demanding. I seldom build up or feel any urge to retaliate and get even when I feel I have been wronged. Where I do struggle, however, is at the next level to which both Peter and Paul take this instruction of the Lord.

The apostle Paul when he reaches the practical application of the gospel in his epistle to the Romans instructs them to *"render to no man evil for evil"* and then goes to another level and commands these brethren: *"if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink"* and *"be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good"* (**Romans 12:17,20,21**). Peter also writes of disciples being *"loving," "tenderhearted," "humble minded"* and rather than *"rendering evil for evil"* or *"reviling for reviling"* to turn away from evil and render a *"blessing"* to those who persecute and reproach them (**1 Peter 3:8-11**).

What both apostles tell us reveals what the love of Christ, who died for the ungodly, demands of His

disciples. As followers of Jesus who must walk in the footsteps of their master, disciples must act with positive good and loving kindness toward their enemies. With many brethren it would be fine if they could pray for their enemies, as Jesus taught His disciples (**Matthew 5:44**), and then leave them to themselves and their own thoughts and feelings. Few of us would feel a need to harm our enemies or to get even by rendering evil to them.

But are we able to move to the next level? Can we reach out to them with positive acts of kindness to show them the love of our Master and Savior? Gospel preachers, likely more than others, have had to face brethren who are angry, who want them fired, and who say and do unkind things to advance their agenda of getting rid of the preacher.

Multiple other reasons create faction and bitterness in the lives and hearts of brethren toward one another. Incidents likewise occur in the world of sinners where saints must live and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. I personally have found little problem overcoming bitterness and petitioning God for them and my relationship with them. But the next level of reaching out with positive and loving acts of kindness to mend and reestablish relationships that might open up opportunities to influence enemies spiritually and bring them to Christ is one that challenges a disciple's maturity in Christ.

Rendering "good" for "evil," brethren, is the ultimate challenge and meaning of love and maturity and perfection in Christ (**Matthew 5:43-46**). If your enemy is naked, clothe him; if he is hungry, feed him; if he is

thirsty, give him a drink. Love, William Barclay writes, is “undefeatable good will” and “unconquerable benevolence”—a devotion to mankind, including enemies, that no evil deed or spiteful act must be allowed to remove from a disciple's heart or life.

~via *Southside Sower; Springfield, Missouri.*

A FORMULA FOR OBEDIENCE

“Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zephaniah 2:3 NASB). God’s own people were without “shame.” They lacked remorse for their rebellions; their “longings” were not for Jehovah. A lion *longs* for fresh meat and acts to feed himself. Israel *longed* for the gods of idolatry and served Baal. They resisted words of warning given by the Lord’s prophets. In mercy, God warned about judgment. In mercy, there was hope for those who would seek the Lord.

The Israelites lived in “the land” of Promise. God kept His initial promise to Abraham, and through that Patriarch, subsequent generations of God’s chosen people lived in the land that flowed with milk and honey. The Jews enjoyed that land, reaping benefits without much effort on their part (**Deuteronomy 8**). Eventually, displacement happened when Israel turned away in rebellion and failed *“to watch”* themselves as Moses had instructed (**Deuteronomy 4:23**; Assyrian and Babylonian captivity). Now the Lord extends hope to His people.

Israel was to seek the LORD. The LORD, Jehovah, was their covenant God. *“Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant” (Exodus 6:5).* Israel forgot her promise to keep their end of the covenant; yet they could start again. Israel needed to practice humility before the Lord and needed to see their need to keep God’s will. Responses and lives of pride and arrogance reflect no fear of the Lord. Yet, true hearts rejoice to fear, respect, and obey the LORD. *“The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility” (Proverbs 15:33).* Seeking righteousness is a common theme in the prophets. *“But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).* Taking advantage of the poor, the widows, and the orphans, was common among God’s people. True righteousness, doing what God commands, is concerned with the disenfranchised. Lacking humility, Israel thought only of herself.

“Perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the

Lord’s anger.” A righteous, just God must and will punish sin. The history of the Old Testament says that. Yet, even amid rebellion, there is the possibility of repentance, restoration, and service again as God’s faithful. God continued to seek the return of His people. He promised that He would receive them back when they turned away from self, sin, and idolatry and acknowledge Him as LORD (**Deuteronomy 30**). The Lord’s righteous anger can be averted.

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid” (Romans 6:1). God will forgive; but we must not assume that we will always have time to repent. God will forgive; He made that clear at the Cross. The Cross does not mean that our sin will not be punished. Let us not in our idolatries assume that all is well with our souls. All cannot be well until we *“Seek the Lord.”*

Randy Harshbarger

The Day of the Lord

In the bible, the phrase *“the day of the LORD”* is noted in thirty verses. The concept is first expressed in the OT prophets, where it addresses a day of judgment, of separation, of testing. It consistently exposes those who lack real trust in God and becomes the impetus to their destruction - sometimes physically but always spiritually. But it also serves as a day of deliverance and identification for the faithful remnant (and, again consistently, it is but a remnant who maintain their trust). The specific circumstance may vary - the Assyrian invasion (Isaiah; Amos); the Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Zephaniah); a locust plague (Joel); the introduction of the gospel (Peter); the final judgment (Paul; Peter) - but each event serves to identify and divide the unfaithful from the remnant. And they all prefigure the ultimate eternal separation of the just and unjust by the Lord Himself.

I'm no prophet and only God can reveal what circumstances truly serve as divine efforts at refining mankind. But nothing in my lifetime has so identified and distinguished persons of real faith like the present pandemic. I don't know if COVID is a true *“day of the Lord”* event, the latest and most effective effort of Satan to undermine real trust and discipleship, or simply the experience of life under the sun. Regardless of which is true, this much is certain - now is the time for people of faith to stand up, be counted, be active, and persevere. God's people are not to cower in fear nor subsist in selfish hypocrisy.

Regardless of the events in the world around us, we are to serve, worship, influence, love, and sacrifice. Our King rules. We either trust Him completely or we don't. Let's start living like people of faith - not pretenders.

Russ Bowman

Pharisaism

Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’”* (Matthew 15:7–9) In this case the Pharisees decided to enforce what they deemed important, which was not commanded by God and leave undone those things God had commanded. This was what created the constant conflict with the Lord.

By contrast Jesus in an attempt to define Himself for His apostles said, *“...I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”* (John 14:6)

He did not say He **knew** the way, truth and life, but rather that He **was** the way, truth and the life. There is a difference in the child of God who attempts to do the Father's will by simply learning the specific commandments and remembering to do those as best he can and the one who submits himself to the Lord, by loving Him with all his heart. This person attempts then to be exactly like the Lord. He is trying to have a heart like the Lord. He is attempting to be an imitator of the Lord as Paul encourages us (1 Corinthians 11:1).

It is the classic example James explains as he contrasts the one who is a *hearer of the word and not a doer...* (James 1:22-25). To be a doer of the word one must allow it to take root in his heart (Luke 8:15). The result of the word taking root in our heart is the new birth Jesus teaches Nicodemus about in John 3:3-5. It is the new creature one becomes that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. It is the person who is *seeking those things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1). The one who has been *...transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect* (Romans 12:1,2).

The one who has become the disciple described in the previous paragraph fits the description Paul gives of himself and the way in which Christ guides his life, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* (Galatians 2:20)

If we fail to allow His word, the Scriptures, the Bible itself to enter our hearts and lead and guide our lives, we will be walking by the flesh rather than the spirit and incur the wrath of God that comes on the disobedient. We will be the modern day Pharisees.

Jim Stauffer

Hell

Take all the things in this testing ground called earth that you don't like and remove all the good things God has provided, and remove Bibles and the church, and all hope of any better world ahead for you, and add darkness, weeping, gnashing teeth, and torment, and you have what you bargained for when you decided Jesus was too inconvenient for your life. He demanded time for Him and His church/kingdom, and the world had your heart. *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"* (Heb.2:1f). Is that what you really want?

Terry W. Benton

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We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

It is commonly believed the many denominations that exist in the world today represent the church Jesus established and they are all representative of the church Jesus said in Matthew 16:18,19, He would build.

It is obvious, however, those denominations did not exist in the Book of Acts which provides the history of the church Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

It is easy to verify when these denominations came into effect and who the person was who led their establishment.

It is even easier to match what they believe and teach with those things believed and taught by the church the Lord established in the Book of Acts in the Bible. You can do this yourself very easily. Do you want to know the truth. If you seek the truth it *will set you free* as Jesus promised (John 8:32).

Jim Stauffer

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10