

7.05.20 ~ 1Thessalonians 5:15; Ephesians 4:29-5:2, Unifying Love...

Read 1Thessalonians 5:15a... "See that no one repays another with evil for evil." The main reason we are not to return evil with evil is that it is God who will take revenge upon those who do evil to His people.

Romans 12:19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay' (pp. Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30), says the Lord."

Read 1Thessalonians 5:15b... "but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people."

God's people should desire, regard highly, and model, that which is good for everyone, but especially for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6, "...walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

We are not to retaliate, we are not to try and get even, we are not to repay evil with evil; but instead, we are to do what is right and good, responding to evil in a manner that is honoring and reflective of God.

I think it is obvious to most of us that we are never to use physical force to take revenge on someone for hurting us; but what about the way we use words? Do you ever use harsh and hurtful words through gossip, slander, or direct verbal attacks, on someone? Perhaps you have been the recipient of this verbal venom?

Read Ephesians 4:29-32... Paul commands (**verse 29**) that we speak only what is good and useful to others. Unwholesome talk (used of rotten vegetables/fruit, spoiled meat), i.e., foul language and corrupt speech should not be part of the life of a Christian. This includes profanity, dirty stories, off-colored jokes, vulgarity, i.e., all useless and offensive language, along with any talk that causes injury or incites disharmony.

Most of us will acknowledge the difficulty we have controlling our tongue, at times. James describes its destructive character (**James 3:8**), "no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison" (see also **James 3:1-7**).

Jesus says the tongue only speaks what is in the heart (**Matthew 15:18-19**), "The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."

A foul mouth is the faucet of filthy heart that needs to be cleansed by the Word of God. We are to put away all harmful language and learn to speak that which is pleasing to God and helpful to build up members of God's family and encourage all those who hear (cf. **1Thessalonians 5:15b**).

Our words are to be edifying [*helpful for building others up*], constructive, encouraging, uplifting, instructive; i.e., those things that harm, discourage, or disappoint, shouldn't be said unless it is absolutely necessary to do so.

Most of us appreciate the person who speaks less and has something gracious and/or beneficial to say when he/she does speak, benefiting those who hear.

Our conversations should be a means of conferring blessings and grace to others, not condemnations and condescensions. We were saved by grace and we are kept through grace; we are therefore to live and speak with grace.

It takes more effort to find something encouraging to say, then it does to say something that is condescending or cutting. We've all heard this saying, "If you can't say something nice don't say anything at all." There would be a lot more silence in our communications, if that were the standard. As Christians, we are to talk to each other graciously, generously, and respectfully.

In **Ephesians 4:30**, Paul speaks of the sorrow brought to the Holy Spirit by our unwholesome and unedifying words. Uncharitable and godless talk is sin and we must avoid doing this.

In **Ephesians 4:31** we are commanded to "put away," to get rid of, and to have nothing more to do with anything that is sinful. "All" expresses a need to get rid of any trace of these sins.

"Bitterness" is grudge-filled animosity that turns a person sour and venomous.

"Wrath" [rage] is uncontrolled frustration that leads us to act upon our bitterness.

"Anger" is emotional stewing and brewing that leads to deep smoldering, that often ignites into very unloving words, and sometimes, actions.

"Clamor" is loud cries or outbursts [i.e., brawling, loud quarreling], this is often witnessed in public outbursts, where someone totally loses control of their emotions and their words.

"Slander" is evil speaking [causing injury with speech], i.e., to falsely accuse or defame someone, this is driven by a bitter heart.

"Malice" is the general term for evil and Paul tells us to get rid of every form of it; all that is unhelpful, unkind, self-centered and carnal; that which is contrary to the mercy, grace and love of God.

These sins break fellowship, destroy relationships, and weaken the church's testimony to the lost. When unbelievers see Christians acting this way toward one another, they have no desire to hear what we have to say about Christ; for they can't see God's love in us.

Ephesians 4:32 commands us to express sincere concern and compassion toward others; forgiving "as" God has forgiven us. We are all guilty of sin, and we have been forgiven much more than we will ever be asked to forgive someone else; we should therefore, be eager to forgive others.

As a Christian, your very life belongs to God, and so you should speak and act in a manner that is gracious, appropriate, and edifying to your brothers and sisters

in the Lord, while also being a witness to all those who do not belong to God, so that they might see the love of Christ in you and ask you to tell them about Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, and coming again.

John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus died for sinners like you and me. He paid the highest price and He suffered the greatest pain -- so that anyone who believes in Him will be spiritually birthed into God's eternal family.

The OT is full of God's promises about the coming Savior, born of a woman and yet the Son of God, He would serve as the Sacrificial Lamb of God, the full payment for all our sin.

The NT records the fulfillment of these promises declaring that Jesus Christ is the Savior, and that He paid the penalty for our sins, on the Cross, demonstrating God's greatest expression of love toward us, that we might not perish but have eternal life.

Read Ephesians 5:1-2. We are commanded to imitate God, to live a life of love, as did Jesus Christ, for He was God in the flesh, and we are to follow His example:

Colossians 2:9, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

1John 2:6, "the one who says he [lives] in Him [Christ] ought himself to walk in the same manner as He [Jesus] walked."

Read 1John 4:7-8... Love and obedience are synonymous and they are to be reflected through the actions and the attitudes of a Christian's life.

Just as God has expressed His love for us, we also are to express our love for one another; in fact, for a person to say he/she is a Christian, and at the same time to be unwilling to forgive another Christian, is a contradiction; for, God is Love, and if you are His child you will also love.

Read 1John 4:9-10... God sent His Son to take our punishment for sin, this is God's greatest expression of love toward us (cf. **2Corinthians 5:21**).

Jesus is the once-for-all atoning sacrifice for all our sins; He is the full and final and only payment that satisfies God's judgment upon sin.

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, but only those who repent and believe in Him are freed from the penalty of sin (**Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

John 1:12-13, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

Read 1John 4:13... God confirms in our heart that we belong to Him; and at the moment of genuine salvation God places His Spirit in us, marking us as His own possession (**Ephesians 1:13-14**), "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him

with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory."

Read 1John 4:19... We are able to love others because God first loved us. And if you have received God's love, you will express God's love by loving others in His name. Jesus is our example of how we are to love others.

Love is a verb that declares both the action and the attitude of our service to God, that we might live a life of love; and this is clearly seen in the way we treat, talk to, and talk about our sisters and brothers in Christ.

John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

I believe every one of us here today, if we are honest with ourselves, needs to ask God to reveal in our own heart, where we have failed to love others on His behalf; where we have failed to forgive those who have offended us; where we have failed to seek forgiveness from those whom we have offended.

Read 1John 4:2... Let there be no mistake, you cannot love God and at the same time continue to be unwilling to express your love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ (i.e., reaching out to, caring for, freely forgiving and freely receiving forgiveness from other Christians).

Ephesians 5:1, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."

Hebrews 9:27-28, "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him."

Hebrews 12:1-3, "Therefore... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

1Thessalonians 5:15, "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. "

And all God's children said? Amen!

Pastor Mike

>'(((><