

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

Paul speaks with a real understanding of the human soul. He observes what goes on around him and teaches practical and actual solutions. This is the task of every called teacher and pastor. It is pointless just to repeat scriptures, which is what many do, if those texts are not followed by applications to the lives of those we are speaking to.

Too many sermons are dry as dust because they have no application. In many cases this is because the speaker has not been called by God to speak or teach. In some instances, it is because the speaker is trying to teach as he was himself taught. I used to try to speak as my peers spoke! Oh, what a disaster that was! Because I did not feel it in my heart, my sermons always came out dull and without merit. Then, when I realized what I was doing and stopped it, not only did my teaching come alive, but so did my spirit!! It is true.

Basically, I began by speaking in Arminian fashion (yes, even reformed men do that, usually without realizing it). It did not work because it was not of God. When I discovered the truth, and I spoke as God demanded and led, things were very different. Fewer people wished to hear, but those who did were genuine.

In this chapter, after advising the Roman converted Jews that Jew and Gentile were the same in God's eyes when it came to salvation, he began to teach a variety of truths. Each truth counsels the soul and brings about a transformation of thinking, emotions and spirituality. And some of the counsel is very hard for some to come to terms with. Even so, they are essential truths that must be obeyed.

Verse 1

1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul now links back to the previous chapter and says, because God shows such mercy, his readers should give themselves as a "living sacrifice". To 'present', means to place ourselves at God's disposal. It also means to be available for questioning and examination and to be in fellowship. This applies to both individuals and to the Church, which is made up of every

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

individual.

A 'sacrifice', *thysia*, means what it says. It also means an offering, consisting of nourishing and increasing one's faith, as if it is a sacrifice to God. It also includes praise, doing good, etc. The readers, who were mainly Jews, would understand the allusion because they understood what sacrifices were. However, normally, a sacrifice is made of something dead, but, in this text, Paul is using the same idea to refer to something living and ongoing. We can sum up by saying that believers are expected to offer their whole lives to God, because He is gracious and merciful. In this way we live holy lives continually, throughout our span on this earth. 'Living', *zaō*, tells us that it only applies to those who are saved.

This is underlined by "holy, acceptable unto God". And note – it is only our "reasonable service". It is not unusual, nor is it extra. It is what we must do normally, every day. It is not a burden but a spiritual pleasure, to serve God in any way He demands. In this text, though, Paul is saying it is our "reasonable service" and not over and above what is usually required of us. It is for every Christian, though so many today think it is what pastors and the zealous do! How many live genuine Christian lives? Hardly any. How many know what it is to do battle against false believers, in order to make a stand for the Lord, as He demands? Very few. Many even think it is 'distasteful' to be such a soldier of the Lord!

When we live out our lives in holy ways, we are acceptable and pleasing to Him, *euarestos*. It is only when we are in this position that He gives us 'rewards' and every blessing. 'Reasonable' is what our word 'logic' is based on. In spiritual terms, it means that our lives should be logical and rooted in reason. This is important, for so many who call themselves 'Christian' today, think, speak and act illogically. What is it to be Biblically logical (and thus reasonable)? It is to live as Christ demands. It is to accept and live-out whatever God requires. It is not the logic of the world, but the logic of God.

Charismatics do not do this, because they believe they live in 'extra-Biblical times' and that how they feel is more important than how they think. In other words, their way of thinking (or lack of it) leads to the existence of many ignorant people. This is shared by many Christians today, even if they are not charismatic. They do not delve into scripture to determine the truth of anything. In this, then, they are not 'reasonable and logical' before God.

Somehow, many Christians think it is ungodly to speak of reason and logic. Personally, I think it is because they fear hard work and study! And yet, this is said to be our "reasonable service"!

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

Service in this text refers to the service of God. When we act out what we say we believe, we do God a 'service': this is not a favour, but something He demands anyway... we serve Him.

It is reasonable, then, to live godly lives. It is NOT 'godly' to sit at home and avoid all contact with anything that may upset or challenge. I know of many folks who do this, saying it is up to the pastor to sort out differences of theology. They read scripture, but not in the way God demands – logically. Instead, they replace it with a personalized approach to scripture, which often is at odds with true theology.

Remember, theology is not an activity of some remote fellow who is somehow detached from reality or the Bible. Theology is an extended and deep study of scripture; something we are ALL called to do. If something causes a stir, then we must seek out the truth of it, not wait for it to 'blow over'. (The growth of many sects, cults and evils can be traced to this kind of thinking). The first verse, then, is filled to the brim with meaning.

The question is: Do YOU stand against error? Do YOU offer yourself to God, that He might use you as He wishes? Do YOU understand that 'offering yourself' means to use logic and reason in your walk with God? If you do not accept or understand any of this, then you are not giving your body as a reasonable sacrifice to God.

Verse 2

1.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The verse begins with kai ('and'), a conjunction. Thus, it joins what follows with what precedes – the previous verse. To put it another way, Paul is saying that because of what he just said, we must "not (be) conformed to this world." This is very plain. It does not just mean we must avoid what this world does. It means that if we are truly a living sacrifice, our very way of living and thinking will automatically separate us from the world and its thought processes.

Thus, because we are not attuned to what the world does, we will not be "conformed" to it. This

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

means not to have our minds and hearts and character changed to be like the world. It happens when we live amongst the world and allow it to influence us. It can also happen without our knowledge, when we try our best to be ignorant of what God truly says! Simply by not searching God's word in truth until we get an answer, we lay ourselves open to Satan's wiles, who will gladly use our ignorance to his advantage.

Not conforming to this world is an active process, not one that makes us indolent or to use avoidance tactics alone. Yes, we must avoid what is sinful, but how can we know what is sinful unless God tells us in His word? If we do not know, then we will be swayed this way or that, always unsure. Or, we just leave things accrue, so that they remain in our minds but undealt with.

Note that 'world' in this text is not 'kosmos', but aiōn. In this text it means for all of our time on this earth. Or, we are not to mimic the times in which we live.

This is why Paul goes on to say we must not be conformed to this world. This is done by being "transformed by the renewing of your mind". To be transformed (from which we get our word 'metamorphosis') means to change from one thing to another. It carries the same connotation as transfiguration re Christ. It is, then, a radical change, from the world to God's spiritual requirements. This involves changing the way we think ("the renewing of your mind"). This is not automatic. If it were, Paul would not need to mention it. It is, rather, something we must work at and be conscious of; hence we must use logic and reason.

We are transformed by the "renewing" of our mind. This means changing for the better, from our former worldly selves to God's way, a spiritual way. By changing to be in line with God, everything about us changes: mind, body, actions. We then think as God wishes, not as we wish. And we sin less.

'Mind' is from the Greek 'nous'. It is a word used by ancient Greek philosophers. In this text, however, it refers to that part of us that thinks, perceives, understands. It also includes our emotions and feelings, our ability to judge, and so on. It roughly corresponds to 'soul'.

The soul dedicated to God and walking in His path will be able to discern good from bad, right from wrong, false from true. It will recognize what is divine and what is from the enemy. The

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

man whose mind is renewed, then, will think, speak and act as God wishes. He will not be free of the penchant for sin, but his sins will be fewer, because the heart filled with godly things is not conducive to sin.

Charismatics in particular sneer at using the mind. They insist that we are 'freed' of the mind and so rely more on feelings or experiences. This is an error of huge proportion, for it allows Satan easy access. We must always be aware of thoughts, and must think logically and reasonably, as Paul has already said. If we do not, we will think wrongly.

By renewing our minds, we "may prove what (is) that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Therefore, by aligning ourselves totally with God, we test and examine what God says and does and discover it to be genuine. If it is genuine, then it is acceptable to God because it is good, and if it is good to God it must be the "perfect will of God". It has to be!

This takes absolute faith in God, and involves our entire being. In this state we cannot be sleepy or lax, because what is not of God will tarnish our renewed minds. We must always be alert and aware, ready to fight the foe and stand firmly with our God.

Verses 3 - 5

1.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

2.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

3.

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

'For', gar, is another conjunction. It is a particle of affirmation and conclusion. That is, it confirms the truth of what was just said and precedes a statement based on the affirmation. In this case, Paul says that because of what was just said, no man must think himself to be better than he is.

Rather, each Christian must accept his lot from God and think carefully upon it. How many Christians are always looking for greener grass! How many are so ambitious they cannot see they are walking on the very path they are trying to find? To think 'soberly', eis (a preposition) means to think towards something, in this case, towards what God wishes. Here we have a profound and vital teaching: that "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

How do you view 'faith'? Faith is a gift from God, like every other gift. God says that He gives gifts according to His wish and by measure. Take time to consider this fact, because it removes any pride in faith or in gifts! It also removes any thought that we are 'higher' than we really are. Whatever faith we have is given as a gift by God, and the amount of faith we have is determined by Him when He gives it, not by us.

It means we cannot increase faith by our own efforts. So, when we are told to increase our faith, it does not mean we can do so by ourselves. It means we must accept the measure of faith we have and exercise it. And if we are compelled to ask for 'more' faith, it must only be because the Spirit has prompted us to do so.

I know many people will simply not accept that! But, their non-acceptance is irrelevant. God says He gives faith BY MEASURE! To fight against that is futile. The lowest man may have greater faith than the man who thinks he is highest; the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Those with more faith have a duty to help those with less; they have a greater responsibility to teach what they know. And those with less must listen to the truth.

The text tells us that each Christian, with his own measure of faith, must think upon what God requires, and then act upon it. Whatever his faith is, it is perfect for him, because God has given it. No matter what level of faith we have, we must all think and act accordingly, to optimize what God has given. Again, this is another excellent example of predestination... for God elects the level of faith in every Christian; we cannot obtain it by our own efforts, by reading scripture, by praying, by meditating. It is a gift of God.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

Paul explains this: just as the body has many parts with their own functions, so every Christian has his own role to play in the Body of Christ, the Church. In that Body there are no dormant parts – each must function! Yet, today, many Christians do nothing and sit back, lax and asleep. This is why watchmen are hardly heard and troubles arrive like a destructive wave. The fact that Paul said “all members have not the same office” indicates that EVERY Christian has an office to perform. There are no passengers on God’s path! Each must walk himself in the strength given by God. Faith, then, cannot be borrowed, and Christian work is given to each one. YOU have your own office, so do it!

We are “members one of another”, meaning that we are all connected by our common faith in the Lord and in our common salvation. We exist to praise God and to help each other. Not that many show this help in their lives. As I have said before, it was not until 2005 that I experienced the love of fellow Christians outside of my family!

I had come never to expect genuine fellowship. That is a very sad thing to say, but it is true. It is true because so few Christians show their faith towards others who are brethren. It is very sad that I had to experience such a testing and devastating time before I could see that some Christians do have care and affection for their brethren. For this I am grateful. Paul saw this in his own life, so we share the same wonderment.

Verses 6 - 8

1.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

2.

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

3.

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

For reasons of human thinking, not of scripture, many Christians think gifts are no longer with us. Here, Paul clearly tells us that we each have “gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Every Christian has at least one gift. Before denouncing gifts, remember that salvation is a gift, as is faith and love! Christians are so afraid of entering into error, they tend to dismiss the gifts today. True Charismatics, however, use false gifts, for they are unsaved to begin with.

Paul now lists just some of the gifts given by God: prophecy, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, mercy. Do not be fearful of gifts! God has given them, and some abuse the concept, but this does not invalidate them. Do not fear them; accept them in truth, and God will steer you away from the false. Do not search hard for them, because God will give whatever He wishes to give. If you have any, they will become apparent. Each has one or more gifts. As Paul said, they are given by measure – whatever God has decided to give; and the word ‘measure’ includes the idea of limiting. Let us define what Paul talks about...

Prophecy. This is not as modern charismatics would have us believe. Prophecy is mainly the utterance of whatever God has given a man to say, particularly by expounding scripture. This includes admonishing wicked people, comforting, revealing things not known to others, such as telling future events, usually connected with the Church and spiritual things. Thus, prophecy is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit.

All genuine teachers have this gift and this is why they often say what others do not know or understand. (Few pastors and teachers are genuine, because they are not called to office). To reject prophecy is to reject God’s mercy towards us. I think you can see that prophecy is not a party-trick or something anyone can use. It is given at the time, to whoever is elected to receive it. It is the powerful word of God given through men. Again, this gift is given according to God’s pleasure and by measure.

Ministry. This applies to co-workers, ministers who work on behalf of others who send them. These ministers can be anyone sent: apostles, evangelists, pastors, deacons, or those who prepare and serve food. Often, people say to me that they have no ministry or do not know what it is. But, they help me, give me sustenance, funds and advice, and pray for me. This is their ministry!

As I have said to those closest to me, I cannot function in my own ministry if certain others did not help as co-workers. As a pastor and teacher I am myself a minister, and those who co-work

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

with me are ministers. If you intercede for others in prayer, you are a minister. If you help with funding, you are a minister. If you help those who need it, you are a minister. And so on.

Teaching. This is to instruct others by speech or writing. It is to teach doctrine and to make sure it is learned. The teacher explains what may not be understood by many. It is to bring out God's message from texts, so that it can be used by Christians in their everyday life. At other times, it is not for physical application, but enables fellow believers to understand doctrine, etc., so that the principles of spiritual life can be applied in every circumstance.

A teacher is NOT one who simply attends a Bible college and is supposedly 'ordained' by an institution or denomination. A teacher may, or may not, have been to a college. The main point is that he is called by God to his tasks and will faithfully teach whatever God says. The task includes being a watchman, or rebuking error and wickedness. Amazingly, few Christians accept these latter things.

Exhortation. This can be a call to rebuke, admonish, instruct, even to beg one to obey God. It is encouragement in God's word and life; it is strengthening others in their walk with God. This is not as continuous as teaching, but is ad hoc. It is likely that a teacher or/ and pastor also has this gift.

Giving. This is often underrated and misunderstood. Giving is not the same as putting a few coins in a charity box in the center of town. Nor is it the usual 'soup kitchen' approach, or sending money to missionaries, because we have been asked, etc. True giving is to impart something, usually of one's substance, but maybe also of time, effort, etc. It is the act of sacrificially sharing what one has with other Christians; something they need. This may be money, food, clothing, shelter, counsel, or anything else.

The Gospel witness is also 'giving'. It bears the idea of selflessness, and does not tell everyone what is being done. It is to give secretly and freely, because that is what God directs to do. By giving freely to someone who needs whatever it is, one is being a part of God's plan. To give without stint or thought of personal gain is the essence ('simplicity'). It is a full giving of one's self to God and to other believers, as needed.

Ruling. This applies to anyone who presides over others. It also refers to guardians or

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

protectors. It applies to 'honest occupations' and caring for others. It speaks of giving aid. It can, at times, mean those who rule, but not in our present sense of the word. Rather, the ruler in this text is one with a conscience, who deals well with others in terms of leadership, Christian fellowship and help, and does so earnestly, with due diligence.

Mercy. We do not usually associate mercy with the gifts, but that is what it is. It is similar in nature to giving or ruling, in that it is about helping the afflicted and those who feel wretched. It is to show mercy to those who do not expect it, or those who need it. It is to help those who seek help. Mainly, it is to show kindness and to have compassion. In all these gifts the prime 'target' is fellow Christians. It is to sympathise with Christians who need it, and to act upon those sympathies. The main point is that this must be done with 'cheerfulness'. That is, with readiness and without self-appreciation, not with hypocrisy or thinking of one's self as wonderful! God always rewards the cheerful giver.

Verses 9 - 13

1.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

2.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

3.

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

4.

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

5.

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

Love. In this text the word is agapē. Most Christians know this word but few understand it. Indeed, nearly all Christians think it is the only word for 'love' in scripture, when, in truth, there are at least 20 forms. Agapē is the more common type. It means to show affection and good-will; to show generalized brotherly love or respect. Agapē is also applied to 'love feasts', which were communal meals in the early churches.

However, it also refers to 'deceivings', as pagans also used to have 'love feasts', which usually got out of hand and degenerated. This is why there is a warning in scripture against eating for eating sake at the time of communion, and this is why the Lord's Supper was eventually removed from the love feasts. In this text, then, agapē mainly refers to having a genuine affection for fellow believers, showing as care for their welfare, prayer for their afflictions, sympathy when needed, help with needs, and so on.

"Without dissimulation" means to show this love without pretence, sincerely, with no affectation or ulterior motive. How many Christians do this? How many show Christian love because it is what they have in their heart? How many, rather, show 'love' because they feel it is their duty, and who have no real regard for the one they pretend to love? How many local churches tolerate their fellows rather than love them truly as brethren?

Paul then says we must hate what is evil and stick closely to whatever is good. To hate evil means just that... but how many allow evil to carry on and say nothing? How many even hate fellow Christians who fight on the Lord's side? I know it happens. In the past some have looked upon me with utter distaste because I oppose evil, or fight wickedness, or highlight bad doctrine. Yet, they pretend to 'love' me! Frankly, I prefer straightforward hatred. Similar things happen to others in the ministry.

Paul repeats what he said above, to love one's fellow believers, "preferring one another". That is, giving them greater honour than you give to yourself. This does not mean ignoring their sins and faults, or refusing to speak out against error. It means that even if you have to speak out, you do so with honour and civil regard, knowing that you can also fail at any time.

In business we may not be slothful or 'sluggish', or slow to come forward. It is to be slow to take up truth, to be irksome, or to shrink from what needs to be done. It also means to do what we do with great zeal. The word 'business' does not mean what we usually use it for. It means to be earnest about what we do in the Lord's name. This is why Paul adds a phrase: "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Do all for the Lord, not for yourself. Whatever you set out to do, do it well, with

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

zeal and with the aim of honouring God.

Rejoice in hope. Thrive on it! Enjoy the expectation of good from God because you already enjoy the expectation of heaven and salvation. Have hope in the God of all.

Be patient in tribulation. Do not flag or give in, for God is with you. A friend recently sent me a few words copied from another: "Don't tell God how big your problems are. Tell your problems how big God is." I like that! It is the very essence of faith. In particular, this text refers to troubles brought upon you for being a Christian, or by serious problems from outside.

Along with patience is a need to "(continue) instant in prayer". This means to constantly speak to God and never to think He will not answer; to be always ready to pray. If you give up because God does not seem to answer immediately, then get back to prayer! Sometimes the slow response is a trial to show you how to have faith and to keep looking to God. Prayer should not be the last resort, but the first port of call, and not just for serious matters!

As a young man I remember saying to my aunty that prayer was the answer to her brother's extreme condition (he was in hospital about to have a dangerous and potentially fatal operation). She smiled at me indulgently and said "Well, we need something more practical than that right now." Prayer is as practical as you can get! It is to talk directly to the only Person Who can overcome and put right.

Paul mentions another needful act: "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality." To distribute in this text means to think of yourself as a partner in someone else's woes or needs. It is to be a co-worker in that person's life and showing complete empathy. It is one thing to give help. It is another to join with that person with your love and care. To help a fellow believer is an immense privilege. To help greatly is even better. The Lord looks kindly upon all who help His saints. And He wants us to help fellow saints before we ever help others who are unsaved.

Most Christians will remain silent and never mention their needs. This is because they know that few will be interested and even fewer will give practical help. As some know, I have experienced this myself for many years. So have others. What a difference in the early churches: see how local churches far away sent money in abundance to help Christians they

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

did not even know by name! And what a privilege to show hospitality to your fellows.

Verses 14 - 17

1.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

2.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

3.

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

4.

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

“Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not.” Here comes something hard to do! Yet, it is easier if our abiding frame of mind is godly. Not many know what it is like to be persecuted, so they tend to think they would ‘of course’ stand up well to it. I sincerely hope so. Persecution can lead many to become aggressive and bitter, or to give up. It is certainly not natural to bless those who do us harm. And that is the point! It is not natural, because the automatic wish of the unsaved is to hit-out. But, it is possible to bless if we are attuned to the Lord, as Paul initially said. It is, then, a spiritual strength, not a natural one.

At times this blessing of enemies can be very hard indeed, as feelings of hurt and anger swell up inside. Many Christians will try to repress these feelings, and that makes matters worse. The answer is to hand it all over to God and to repent of the resultant wishes to do harm back. Live as God wants you to and He will adjust your mind and heart to that of His, and you will have no problem blessing your enemy. I can say these things because I have experience in what I speak of.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier

Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

“Bless, and curse not”. Not easy! But, it depends on how closely one walks with the Lord. However, Satan will always want to hit you hard with something unsuspected or unusual. Just when you think your walk with God is going well, Satan will get behind you and use a tactic you have not seen before. It will shake you to the core of your being, probably bringing you much fear. But, with your eye on God, you will come to rights again. It is when you give in to your feelings that trouble emerges. No matter what the danger or trouble, look to God. It is your only refuge and strength. Again, I speak from experience.

Allied to this instruction is to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with them that weep. Does this mean to literally weep? Not exactly. It has a deeper significance. It means that we must respond to people's needs on the right level and at the right time. Do not wait to be asked, just get on with it. If a fellow Christian has reason to rejoice, then rejoice with him. Be happy for that person. If he has reason to weep, then feel his sorrow. This does not mean collapsing in a heap if there is a problem, because that is the worst thing you can do. Rather, understand his sorrow and then make sure you do what you can to help. If everyone is crying, nothing gets done, and there can be no progress or improvement!

As Christians we must all be of the same mind. (Verse 16). This is another text that is greatly misunderstood. Being of the same mind means to know God and to live and believe accordingly. Every genuine Christian will believe as another genuine Christian does. He will have the same beliefs; not necessarily expressed in the same way, but the essential sameness is there, because we have the same Lord. Because of this we should be able to empathise with our fellow believers, no matter what they endure or enjoy in God.

In this we should not pretend to be something we are not, or try to be arrogant or proud. Rather, we should be at the same level as those we commune with. I have said it before: how one pastor I had was only interested in talking to the students in his congregation. As a result the majority of his members did not understand much of what he said. No matter who your listeners are, you must speak appropriately. Everyone can understand simple language, but only a few can understand intellectualized speech.

Thus, said Paul, “condescend to men of low estate”. That means simply to submit your mind and speech to those who cannot understand the speech of professors! If your listeners are all professors then to talk with them on their level is fine. But, in mixed company or when speaking to those whose intellectual ability is less, adjust to that, without being arrogant. This is a most apt teaching for all pastors and teachers! Never pretend to be higher than anyone else. And never look down on those you think are ‘inferior’. No man is ‘inferior’... but many make themselves appear to be inferior for thinking it!

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

To carry on Paul's statement on tormentors and persecutors: do not return evil for evil. This is along similar lines to turning the other cheek. If someone does you harm, do not seek to wreak vengeance, for vengeance is God's prerogative.

It is very tempting (because that is what it is – temptation) to hit back or to devise a clever way to do them harm. But, it is not what we should be doing. God will deal with that person, in ways you may not know. Always be honest before all men. This means to always provide what is peaceful and true, lovely and esteemed, genuine and not fake, precious and moral. This goes for everything in life.

Artwork should be good and lovely. Music should be edifying and lovely to hear, not raucous and of the world. Literature should be the same. TV programmes should be sound and useful, or pleasant, not sexualized and foul, with bad language. And so on.

Verses 18 - 21

1.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

2.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

3.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

4.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

And, as far as possible, be at peace with fellow men. Note that Paul does not rule out another response. Rather, he says “If it be possible” and “as much as lieth in you”. There are times when being peaceable is not an option. The other person may not be amenable to peace or quiet, and will attack. Always try to get a peaceful result. If this is not possible, use minimal opposition or force, whether this is in words or action.

I remember a Quaker who rebuked me for saying I would fight any man who attacked my family. And I meant it. No true man can stand by and watch an attack on someone he loves! We can extend this to wars between nations. At all times I attempt to be peaceable with everyone. But, I also know there may be occasions when another way must be found. Do not be unrealistic and do not be ‘holier-than-thou’ in these matters, especially if you have no idea what you are talking about.

In the area of doctrine, etc., the same principles apply, but do not think that saying “we will have to agree to disagree” is always sufficient. If the other person is teaching heresy, for example, no Christian may stay quiet. If the heretic refuses to stop and continues to teach publicly, then he must be oppose, publicly.

To remain silent in the face of godless declarations is to condone them. The opposition must be as public as the declarations, even though it will bring about a condition of anger on the part of the heretic. In matters of behaviour, the same applies. Where sexual impropriety is taught as a good way of life, for example, whether by Christians or the unsaved, it must be opposed. The overall aim should be borne in mind – to live at peace with everyone. But, it is not always possible.

Paul repeats the rule, that we should not seek revenge for wrongdoing. Despite outward piety, many Christians find this hard. It is true to say that when we are viciously attacked or somehow wronged, even if we maintain an outward calm and we say the ‘right’ things, what we feel and think inside is often very different. This is because, in the main, Christians are not very good at being honest! They ‘bottle up’ their true feelings and responses, and continue to appear to be ‘Christian’ to others. There is, then, a very clear repression of thoughts and actions, and this is harmful to the person.

What happens is that the feelings and wishes become sinful, and this is why the Christian does not express the truth. It is a common and widespread practice in the churches, because everyone thinks they must keep to the ‘party line’! This is most unreal and it keeps building up

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

inside.

The result will either be a violent reaction (verbal or physical), or, more commonly, a form of depression or anxiety, which will show itself in one of many ways. There is also a deep feeling of guilt, that a Christian should feel or experience such emotions and reactions. This proves just how repressive many Christian groups can be. It is not the desire, but it is the result of years of misunderstanding the human psyche, and how we ought to react.

It does NOT mean we should just strike out. It means that there is another way – the genuine godly way. That is, to hand it all over to God. He knows exactly how you think and feel, so why pretend He does not know? Just be honest with Him and ask for His protection (from yourself) and mercy. Tell Him you really want to take revenge, and ask for it to be removed. But, never repress it, because it will fester in your soul.

Take steps not to react badly. Talk to trusted Christian friends about it and ask for their prayers. I have taken longer to deal with these things because I know they are very real to every Christian and can cause much harm to the spiritual walk. Just bear in mind that you are not alone and most Christians have the same reactions, but they dare not talk about them.

“I will repay, saith the Lord”. Yes, He really does. In our minds, especially when the hurt is fresh, we tend to think along our own human lines, of a form of revenge that is public and immediate. But, God will act as He sees fit. Remember that even if we see no outward sign that God has acted, He certainly will. Also remember that the most potent form of God’s revenge is hell, so you might have to wait to see God acting against a person.

Even on this earth, too, God can act by removing all good things from the life of the person who wronged you so badly. There are many unseen ways that a wrongdoer can be punished by God, so do not fret. Indeed, think more of applying verse 14 and you will start to be healed of your adverse feelings.

This is why Paul says in verse 20, to feed your enemy. This is because violence breeds violence. Wrong reactions breed wrong actions. You might well have been totally innocent when you were attacked in some way. But, if you react with the same kind of evil, you become part of that sin. Your immediate response may indeed not be as it should be, but if you repent and

Romans 12

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 17 August 2015 15:40

stand back, God will not bring you to book. He knows how frail our human frame is! We all make mistakes, and to react badly at first to a bad situation involving us is not ideal but it is normal. The problem only arises if we let it continue, so that it leads us into sin. On the other hand, if our usual demeanour is constant and we always think along godly lines, such a bad reaction may not occur.

Now, does verse 20 literally mean what it says? Yes, it does. It means that if an enemy seeks your help, you must give it. Even if he does not seek it and you are in a position to offer it, you must do so. Always keep in your head the fact that the person is headed for hell if he is an unbeliever. If a believer, he is being warned inwardly by God. This is why Paul says that the reason you should help is not necessarily to do with your wishes, but with the fact that such acts of kindness will make the wrongdoer even more guilty for not repenting and asking for your forgiveness. It is also possible that your kindness will cause him to repent, maybe bringing you a new friendship.

Above all, do not commit sin to repay a sin! If you do, then Satan has won his game, and you lose. Any time a Christian repays a wrongdoing with sin, he will feel the weight of his own sin heavily. And it can often feel greater than the wrongdoing against him. The sin will cause untold misery in the soul until it is dealt with, and even when dealt with it can leave a scar. Thus, that person has been “overcome of evil”.

Far better to “overcome evil with good”. You do not necessarily have to face the wrongdoer (who may not be saved anyway), but you certainly must regain composure, mentally, physically and spiritually. Let the wrongdoer gloat, or feel badly; either way, you must return to the true path of righteousness and not resort to a sinful reaction – which will only satisfy for a very brief moment, before it turns rancid in your soul. God will repay! In all of this I speak with a voice of experience, as did Paul.

© August 2009

---oOo---

{loadposition btm_address}