

INTRODUCTION

Paul has laid that foundation of things that unify Jewish and Gentile believers—— (1) both were equally under God's wrath because of their sin; (2) both were equally provided righteousness from God; (3) both equally received this righteousness through faith; (4) being or acting Jewish [keeping the law, etc] does not give one an advantaged to receiving or keeping the righteousness from God; (5) and while God has distinct plans for Jews and Gentiles as groups, these plan are intertwined and interrelated.

Now in chapter 12 Paul is getting to the crux of his argument...he is getting down to the nitty gritty of the purpose for writing—he wants these Jewish and Gentile believers to get along. There are problems in the church of Rome, but they are not doctrinal issues, they are relational issues. These issues stem from their different perspectives and backgrounds.

Some of the worse breaks in relationships happen in the local church. Someone says something unthinkingly... Someone takes something that is said in the wrong way...Someone does something and someone else gets offended [their feelings get hurt]. It happens all the time.

People have left church and been driven away from church because a broken relationship.

Let me just say...

- If you knowingly drive someone away from church—your wrong. If you become aware that something you did drove someone away from church, and you do nothing about it—your wrong.
- If you let what someone says or does drive you away from church—you are saying that what you feel and think is more important than Christ.

Here is the thing about church relationships:

- The Bible presents the church as the place where believers have their deepest most intimate relationships.
 - In a properly functioning church, a believer should be more closely connected to those in the church than they are even to unsaved family members.
 - Each believers is joined to Christ, and Christ joins each believer together. Unbelievers cannot be joined to a believer in this supernatural way—even if they are family.
 - We all value family, even those who don't have good family lives or even know what a good family life is supposed to look like value family.
 - The problem is when family becomes more important than you church relationships.
 - I know people can take this to extremes in opposite directions. They shun their family member because they are not saved or they neglect their church relationship at the drop of a hat for family. These are extremes.
 - As believers we need to recognize that there is a direct connection between our relationship with Christ and our relationship with other believers, especially those in our local church. To neglect the one is to neglect the other.
- Think of it like this:
 - As a Believer what is the most important relationship you have? With Christ.
 - More important than you relationship with: your spouse? Your children? Your siblings? YES.
 - When you have a relationship with Christ, Christ brings you into relationship with other believers.
 - This relationship is seen most clearly and really in the local church.
 - This means that to be in Christ, you ought to have the kind of relationship he wants you to have with others in Christ in your local church.

So how are we to make sure that we get along with one another.

- (1) **Make sure your right with God.** We saw this in vv. 1-2: present your bodies as a sacrifice, don't be conformed to this age, & be transformed by the renewal of your mind. If you want to know the will of God to do the will of God, do these three things.
- (2) **You have to think right about yourself.** In v. 3 we saw that the way a believer is to think about themselves, how they are to esteem or evaluate themselves...is based on whether or not they have been faithful to God. We are to think of ourselves in terms of our faithfulness to God. Have you been faithful in doing the three things mentioned in vv. 1-2?
- (3) **You must think right about other believers.** In vv. 4-5 Paul has used the analogy of a body for the church. In the church all the believers are interconnected, interrelated, and inter- & intra-dependent.¹ We must think of each other in terms of necessity. You and I are indispensable to each other. I need you and you need me. I can't get along without you and you cannot get along without me. This does not mean much with people we like, but this is just as true of those you don't like so much...those who you would like to limit your time with.
- (4) **When you think right—it affects how you use your spiritual gifts in the church.** In vv. 6-8 Paul uses several of the spiritual gifts to emphasize how they are to be used in relationship to others in the local church.²

As we know, one of the hardest, if not the hardest thing in the Christian life, is other Christians. It is hard to get along with everyone in your church. But do you know what is harder than that? Get along with believers in other churches who don't see things like us, or don't do things like we do. We have a tendency to look down on them: those poor people, they don't know what to believe; those poor people no one taught them how they should act in church... etc.

In our passage today, Paul moves from talking about spiritual gifts, which is something focused inside of a local church, to speaking more broadly about how believers ought to treat other believers in general.

So, When we as believers think right it will affect how we treat other believers around us; no matter if they are our spouse, our children, people we go to church with, or people who go to the church across town.

¹ "interdependent" puts stress on the connection 'between' individuals. "Interdependent" puts stress on the connection 'within' the body.

² These verses are characterized by "either/or" + "in"; εἴτε + ἐν; "whether (this)...or (that)."

I. HOW WE ARE TO TREAT OTHER BELIEVERS IN GENERAL. 9-16

A. It Starts With Your Own Attitude. 9

Three (3) Attitudes:

1. Love With Sincerity. 9a

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος...

- a) The opposite of hypocrisy is sincerity.
- b) Genuine love; loving genuinely.
- c) A believer's love for others is not for show or pretense—it is to be sincere and genuine.
- d) Your attitude in love is to be sincere.

2. Detest Evil. 9b

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. **Abhor what is evil.** Cling to what is good. ... Ἀποστουγούντες τὸ πονηρόν, ...

- a) The word **"abhor"** or **"detest"** is the emphatic word for HATE.
- b) Believers are to hate evil is the strongest possible way. When we do this, we hate to see it in ourselves and others.
- c) Let me add...this is not saying to "hate the evil person."³ we are to hate the evil thing or evil activity.
- d) Your attitude towards evil is to be hate.

3. Cling to Good. 9c

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. **Cling to what is good.** ... κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ.

- a) The opposite of "evil" is "good", and our response to "good" should be different than it is to "evil."
- b) We are to "cling to what is good". The word "cling" means to: glue, cement, or even weld.
- c) The idea is the joining to things so as to make them inseparable.
- d) The believer is to behave in a way that their behavior is inseparably good.
- e) Your attitude towards good is that you want to be inseparable from it.

These three things are all about what is in you and your attitude. If you are going to think right and behave right towards others, not in a superficial way but in a real and genuine way—your attitude must be correct.

Are you sincere in your love—do you hate evil—do you want to be inseparably connected to good?

B. This Leads To Your Attitude Toward Others. 10

You will notice the use of **"one another"** in this verse.

1. Brotherly-Loving. 10a

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; Ἡ φιλαδελφία εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι ...

- a) Believers are to love other believers, especially those in their church, as family.
- b) "Brotherly-love" is FAMILIAL LOVE.
- c) You have probably heard the saying **"blood is thicker than water"**. What does that mean? Family (blood relative) is the most important thing. But to put a Christian sense to this we might say **"the blood of Christ is thicker than water."** Meaning: what Christ does in connecting the believer to himself and to other believers is the most important relationships you have.

Your attitude towards other believers is to be BROTHERLY LOVE; loving them like a member of your family.

³ "evil" is neuter.

2. Honoring. 10b

10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ... τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι·

- a) You be the first to give honor to another.
- b) When honor is due, don't wait, take the initiative and give it.
- c) And do not seek to honor yourself over another.

When you have the attitude of v. 9 about yourself, it will lead you to having the right attitude toward other believers. Loving them as family, honoring them over yourself.

C. It Is Expressed In How You Do What You Do. 11-13

Think of these next 8 things as describing HOW you are to have brotherly love for one another and to honor others over yourself.

1. Quickly, Not Slowly. 11a

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί· ...

- a) When it comes to doing any of the things of v. 10, be quick about it, not slow to do them.
- b) Hesitancy is often a sign that you don't really believe someone deserves something; or that you, not they, are the one who deserves it.
- c) Don't wait for someone else to go first; you go first.

2. Excited in Spirit. 11b

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί· τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες· τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες·

- a) The word "fervent" is to the term "boiling"; and it pictures excitement.
- b) When we do these things we are to be excited in our spirit.
- c) This does not mean that this excitement must be outwardly expressed, but it could be. The issue is not the outward expression but the heart.
- d) Your attitude ought to be that You just can't wait to love correctly and honor people.

3. Serving as to the Lord. 11c

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί· τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες· τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες·

- a) How you treat others, what your attitude is toward others, is not just an indication of what you think about them, but it is also an indication about what you think about the Lord.
- b) When you love others correctly, when you honor others firstly, it is because you want to do what is right before the Lord.
- c) Your attitude is control by the fact when you love and honor correctly you are serving the Lord.

4. In Hope—Rejoicing. 12a

12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες· τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες· τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες·

- a) We are to Rejoice in one another.
- b) The word "**hope**" indicates that this rejoicing looks to the future—it is not fixated on the past or present.
- c) We might even say, it overlooks the past and present to focus on the future. It does not focus on what is, but what will be.
- d) This is an attitude of OPTIMISM: We are to be Optimistic in our relations with other believers.

It is a general Bible truth that one way to overcome present troubles is to fix our attention on the future; what God has for us in the future—to have an eternal perspective. This is also true for our relationships with other people and particularly with other Christians.

It is easy to get focused on what someone is doing wrong now; to get fixated on all their problems, inadequacies, and sins. But we need to focus on what God is going to do in them, what they will be according to God's promises.

5. In Tribulation—Enduring. 12b

12 rejoicing in hope, **patient in tribulation**, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες· τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες· τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες·

- a) Our attitude in tough times.
- b) Anytime you put two people together, there are going to be times of troubles. And the closer the relationship between those two people, it usually means greater troubles (at least it will seem that way).
 - (1) There are two reasons for this:
 - (2) We usually have higher expectations for people we are close to.
 - (3) And we get to see all the failures and inadequacy of people we are close to.
- c) When face with troubles in our relationships we need to be patient.
 - (1) To be patient means that we endure through the troubles. We stay under it, we stick at it, we don't run, we don't escape.
- d) Our tendency is escapism.
 - (1) When there is trouble in a marriage—people either ignore it (that is not enduring) or leave. This never solves the problem; in fact it only creates other bigger problems.
 - (2) When there is trouble in church relationships—people do the same thing.
 - (a) They ignore it...until it can't be ignored...and then they leave.
 - (3) Being patient, or enduring — does not necessarily confront all troubles, but it does mean that you aren't going to cut and run; you are going to stick to it.

We must endure the troubles in our relationships. If we do this, our relationship will become stronger. It is kind of like metal—if you beat on it, keep it under the pressure of the hammer, it hardens and becomes tougher, stronger.

6. In Prayer—Persisting. 12c

12 rejoicing in hope, **patient in tribulation**, **continuing steadfastly in prayer**;

τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες· τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες· τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες·

- a) I believe the point here is that we need to pray for one another.
 - (1) Not just asking the Lord to help the other person with their issues, but to help us with our issues as we live with others.
- b) All relationships are a matter for prayer.
- c) By praying we are admitting we don't have the solution or ability to deal with all our relationships.
- d) We are to have a persistent prayerful attitude in our relationships.

We need to be constantly and continually engaged in praying for those around us.

One thing you will find is that if you pray for someone your attitude towards them will always change for the better. If you are struggling with your relationship with someone pray for them. They might not change, but you will.

BTW: When we refuse to pray for someone, it is usually because we don't really want a change in our relationship. If you won't pray for someone, it means you are not thinking rightly about them.

7. The Needs of the Saints—Sharing. 13a

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

ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων κοινωνοῦντες· τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες.

- a) When you see another believer with a physical need, and you have the ability to help, you are to share what you have.
- b) Very few people have a problem sharing with their family; even sacrificing for their family.
- c) This should apply to other believers as well.
- d) An attitude of sharing.

Sharing is not really sharing if there are strings attached. When we share, we share as to the Lord.

Now we should not give things to people that we know is going to support, encourage, empower them to sin. But we should give in a way that meets their particular need. So maybe it is food and not money, maybe it is a fixed meal instead of food that can be sold for money.

8. The Hospitality—Pursuing. 13b

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

ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων κοινωνοῦντες· τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες.

- a) Pursuing — is the idea of **looking for, searching for**.
 - (1) We are to search for opportunities to be hospitable.
- b) Hospitality is different than meeting a need. Hospitality doesn't involve a need, it is just being friendly. A love for, a friendliness toward those who might not fit into your specific friend group.
- c) I think this is to be done towards all believers, but especially those in our church.
 - (1) And when this is done in a church, there can be no clichés.
- d) One of the biggest turn offs to people in a church is the clichés that develop.
 - (1) A cliché is a group that intentionally excludes or limits who can be in it.
 - (2) There is no place in a church for clichés.
 - (3) When there is a cliché you are violating the principle of thinking rightly about yourself and others.

Hospitality is a lost Christian virtue.

These 8 things that not only speak to what we are to do to other believers, but how we are to do them. If we are going to love and honor correctly, we must think in terms of these 8 attitudes.

D. It Is Seen In Difficult Circumstances. 14

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντάς ὑμᾶς· εὐλογεῖτε, καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε.

This is about how we respond to those who either do not reciprocate the things mentioned by Paul in this passage; or how we respond to people who for whatever reason don't like us.

1. Three Commands: Bless! Bless! Do Not Curse!

- a) There is no doubt as to what Paul is saying. Anytime you have something repeated like this it is for emphasis.
- b) To Bless — to speak good about or to want good for someone.
- c) Not Curse — no imprecatory prayer.
- d) The combination of these words (bless & curse) has the idea that you would ask the Lord to bless or do good for these people and not harm.

2. Who Is To Be Blessed and Not Cursed — the Person Who Persecutes You.

- a) It is easy to ask the Lord to do good for people you like or people who do good to you; but what about someone who is coming after you.

- b) The word “persecute” is the idea of coming after you to do you harm, to hurt you in some way.
- c) Paul says, you are to ask the Lord to do good for the person who wants to do you harm.

This is totally backward to our natural way of thinking. Our instinct says... Do unto others before they can do unto me. I have to get my licks in first, make the first move before they can hurt me.

What is more shocking is that in this context, the one who is persecuting you is another believer. We don't get to our relationship with “all men” until vv. 17 & 18.

It might be hard to imagine, but it is true that there will be other believers you try to hurt you. Your response to them is to ask the Lord to bring good into their life.

E. It Involves Mutual Fellowship. 15

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, καὶ κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων.⁴

1. Sharing in the same activity and situation with one another.
2. If someone is rejoicing over something, you join in.
3. If someone is weeping in grief, you join in.

Again, this is between believers. And if we are to put this is a phrase, “**be empathetic.**” Join in with that other believer in whatever they are going through.

F. It Ends With Unity And Humility. 16

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.

Τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες. Μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι. Μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ’ ἑαυτοῖς.⁵

1. Note How v. 16 Ends the Way That v. 3 Began—How You Think About Yourself.

2. Paul Makes Three Points:

- a) Think the same way toward one another.
 - (1) This could be taken in one of two ways:
 - (2) Think mutually — that is two people think the same way towards one another.
 - (3) Or, Think impartially — think the same way towards everyone.
 - (4) I kind of think it is a combination of the two.
- b) Think humbly.
 - (1) This could be an independent thought or a further description of the first.
 - (2) Whatever it is the point is clear: don't think arrogantly, but rather, literally, “be lead the way with the humble.”
- c) Command: don't be wise concerning yourself.
 - (1) This final point goes back to v. 3 “not to think more highly than you ought, but to think rightly about yourself.”
- d) All believers are to be doing all these things with one another.

Each of the points that Paul has made here relate to how one believer is to think and act towards another believer. And while it is certainly true that this is especially important in a local church, it is also true for believers in general.

Think about how much trouble would be avoided in church and even in families if these principles were followed.

⁴ 2 infinitives.

⁵ 3 participles followed by an imperative.

In almost every circumstance where there is a break in a relationship, it is the result of pride, usually some amount of pride on the part of both people involved. And very often the breach in a relationship starts in pride way before there is an eruption.

When you think right about yourself...when you think right about others...it affects how you treat people.

II. HOW WE ARE TO TREAT THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. 17-20

A. A Shift In The Object Of Attention.

1. We see this shift in the phrase “no one” (indefinite, includes all) and the repeated phrase “all men.”
2. I take this as “all men” in general, and not as “all believers.”

B. Three Points. 17-18

1. Don't Repay Evil for Evil. 17a

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες. Προνοοῦμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων.

- a) The solution to someone doing evil to you is not to do evil back to them.
- b) One time my brother sucker punched me as I was coming out of our bedroom. He punched me, I was dazed and he took off. I was chasing him and in mind might I wasn't thinking about giving him a hug.

2. Be Known for Preparing To Do Good. 17b

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

Μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες. Προνοοῦμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων.

- a) In the community you should be known as a person who is ready to do what is good and right because you have prepared before hand to do so.
- b) If we are not prepared both mentally and physically to do good, when the opportunity arises, we won't be able to do it.
- c) ***BTW: If we always live right to the edge of our means, our time, our resources, we will not only not be able to prepare to do good, we won't be able to do the good and right thing when it is needed.

3. Live at Peace. 18

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Εἰ δυνατόν, τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν, μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες.

- a) Living at peace with everyone is not unqualified. It is not saying, “live at peace with everyone no matter what.” It is not saying you have to roll over; it is not saying you have to go along to get along.
- b) It is live at peace with everyone...if it is possible...you do your part.
- c) There are some instance with some people where it is almost impossible to live at peace with them.
 - (1) Maybe you have a neighbor, and no matter what you do, there is no peace. Usually when this happens it is not you who are the problem.
- d) The point is...if there is any possibility for there to be peace between you and all those around you, you do whatever is necessary on your part to have peace.

C. The Reason — God Is The One Who Takes Care Of Evil. 19

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.

Μὴ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδικοῦντες, ἀγαπητοί, ἀλλὰ δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ· γέγραπται γάρ, Ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει κύριος.

1. The Quotation From the OT Comes From Dt 32:35.

- a) This is particularly speaking of the Jews as they are about to enter the Promised Land. They are about to enter a situation where the inhabitants of the land are always going to seek to do them harm.
- b) The point that Moses is making is that it is not the job of the Jews to make sure every wicked towards them is repaid. This is God's task and He will do it. They must trust in the LORD for this.
- c) Might it be that Paul uses this in the sense of the evil that unbelievers might do to believers? I think it is. It is not our job to worry about dealing with the evil done to us, God will take care of it.

2. It Is Not Your Job To Make Sure That Every Evil and Wicked Deed Is Answered.

- a) Don't intervene in what is not your responsibility. Stay in your lane.
- b) It seems like it is the perpetual temptation for believers to do what God says He will do.
 - (1) There are believer who think it is their job to convict, when that is the HS's job.
 - (2) Likewise, there are believers who think it is their job to make sure that every evil and wicked thing done is addressed and repaid.⁶

When we as believers have to suffer evil being done to us, one thing of comfort that you should always remember is the God is the righteous judge. If you judge you might get it wrong; you might over penalize or under penalize; but God always gets it right.

[BTW — this is something that we will never have to concern ourselves with in the Millennial Kingdom. And in fact, because evil goes unpunished it should convince us that we are not in the Kingdom now.]

D. Summary — What We Should Do. 20

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.”

Ἐὰν οὖν πεινᾷ ὁ ἐχθρὸς σου, ψώμιζε αὐτόν· ἐὰν διψᾷ, πότιζε αὐτόν· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν, ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.

If we are not to take vengeance, but leave it to the LORD, what should be do?

1. Paul Quotes From Proverb 25:21-22.

2. We Should Return Good for Evil.

- a) If the one who does us evil is hungry, feed him.
 - (1) If someone steal from you to eat, give them food.⁷

3. Turning an Enemy Into a Friend.

- a) The phrase “you will heap coals of fire on his head” is not about get back at the person or getting revenge by doing good. Remember vengeance is the LORD's job.

⁶ Discernment Ministries — There is a big movement within Christian circles called “Discernment Ministries.” These people and organizations take it upon themselves to speak out again every wrong done. With the Internet they have a platform so that many will listen to them. Unfortunately they are not attached to a church and therefore don't and can't deal with leading believers through difficult situations. IMO, they are a net detriment to believers living godly lives. They are all about revenge. Anytime you hear of a ministry that focuses on justice, you probably should interpret that as revenge.

⁷ I am reminded of a story Phil Roberson told. Someone was stealing fish from his fishing line, which was part of his income. He caught who was doing it, and they were doing it to eat. Instead of turning them in, he told them that if they needed food to eat come see him and he would give it to them.

- b) It was a custom that if someone's fire went out that they would go to a neighbor and get some coals in a pan which would be carried on their head. Heaping coals of fire on someone's head means that you are helping them in their time of need.
- c) In this way, if someone is an enemy and you can meet their need, by helping them you could be making a friend.

The unsaved operate with different moral values than believers. Lower moral values. Unbelievers want justice when wronged. Believers don't have to worry about justice because God will take care of that (in fact we will learn how God takes care of that in chapter 13).

Believers, instead of getting back at those who might hurt us or see us harmed, we are to help them when they have a need.

III. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE IN RELATIONSHIPS. 21

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

Μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ, ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν.

Two commands.

A. Don't Allow Evil Conquer You.

1. This is not saying "don't let the evil done to you get you down."
2. Evil conquers you when you give in to it and do evil instead of doing good.
3. Don't give to the natural instinct to return evil for evil.

B. Overcome Evil By Doing Good.

1. Conquer the evil that is done to you by doing good.

CONCLUSION

If we as believers are going to have good, healthy and godly relationships we have to do certain things:

- First, we have to think rightly about ourselves. Are we in fellowship with God; are we being faithful to God by doing what He says.
- Second, we have to think rightly about those around us. In the church this means that we understand that we are in an interdependent and intra-dependent relationship with every believer we attend church with.
- Third, we have to have a right attitude ourselves: love sincerely, detest evil, cling to good.
- Forth, we have to act rightly towards one another: brotherly love towards others, honoring others above ourselves.
- Fifth, we have to do these things with a right attitude.

When it come to those outside the church, understand that they are working with a different moral compass.

- They want to return evil for evil—we don't do that.
- We need to be prepared to do good to those who hurt us.
- We need to live at peace with people — even if it is difficult.
- Don't take revenge—that is God's role.
- Doing what is good and right trumps evil.

If we will live by these rather simple principles, it is amazing what kind of relationships we can have. If we do these things, bad relationships can turn into good ones.

And while Paul has been relatively specific in the relationships he has been addressing: in the local church, with believers in general, and with those outside the church (unbelievers), these principles can also be applied to:

- Marriages —Just think if we applied what we learned here to our marriages. What issues could not be handled? Just think if you loved your spouse as you ought to. What if you honor your spouse above yourself? What if you did not return a harsh word or attitude with a biting come back?

- Parents and children — What if we treated each other this way?

So why don't we. Why don't you live like this passage?

Answer: Pride and selfishness.

Pride, selfishness, self-centeredness strain every relationship we have.

You can't do these things if you think of yourself as #1. And let me tell you that is your default mode.

Every time we think someone has done something bad to us, we go back to factory settings. And our factory setting since Adam's sin is to put ourself first.

If we are going to have right relationships, we have to set ourself aside (our wants, our desires, what we think will make us happy) and sacrifice for others (spouse, children, others in church)—just like Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself, His position with the Father, for us.

All of this is easy to say but hard to do. Thankfully we are not alone. Thankfully we have the Word of God to instruct us, and we have the Spirit of God to help us.