

Displaying the Character of Christ—
An Exposition of Rom. 12:9-21, #11

**“Our Love Must Not Repay Evil for Evil”
(Rom. 12:14, 17-19)**

--CEFC 7/28/19

What would this world look like

if our first ancestors had never eaten that forbidden fruit?

What would our lives be like

if there had never been rebellion against the good word of God

and sin had never raised its ugly head,

and the corruption of human nature and human society
had never begun?

What would this world look like?

What would human society look like?

I would guess, first, our lives would be morally pure—

as everyone would hate what is evil and cling to what is good.

And surely, all our relationships would be filled with the kind of affection

that is now found only in a close-knit family.

We wouldn't try to out-do one another,

living in competition for pride of place—

No, we would be quick to bestow honor on others

rather than ourselves.

There would, no doubt, be a passion for serving the Lord,

and because we would know his goodness,
we would live in hopeful expectation
and patient prayer.

No one would be stingy and Scroogelike, looking out only for themselves.

We would all share what we have generously,
knowing from whom we received it.

Surely, there would be no outsiders or strangers.

A warm welcome would be extended to all.

We would be sensitive to the feelings of others—

sharing each other's joys and sorrows.

And we would maintain a humble mindset

that considered others more important than ourselves.

Just imagine what sort of world that would be—

such harmony, such beauty, such love.

Imagine a community where we could be free to put down our guards,

and quit assuming a false front of piety;

a place where we would not be afraid of people condemning us,

but we would be treated with grace and forgiveness instead,

a community where we could truly give of ourselves to one another

in very practical ways,

building up one another, not tearing each other down.

Just imagine a community of real love—in a circle of friends,

in a marriage, in a family, in a church.

It's a wonderful thought--a beautiful thing.

I'd say it is nothing less than a picture of heaven,
which is a world of
love.

Well, that's the world that Paul has been describing for us
in the passage that we have been expounding for the last three months.
The Apostle has been calling us to exhibit the new kind of life
which Jesus has come to bring.

This is life as it is meant to be lived—

life in the kingdom of God.

It's a life not conformed to the pattern of this world,

but one that has been transformed by the renewing of our minds—

a life lived in response to God's mercies in the gospel

and one that expresses the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.

It is a new community in which that will of God is done on earth

as it is in

heaven.

We call it a life of "**sincere love**,"

since that's the way Paul first describes it in Rom. 12:9—

"Love must be sincere," he says.

This is the way God, in his wisdom, has designed us to live,

so that we might flourish as human beings.

This is the kind of world that Christ came to bring—

for it is a way of life that shines with his light and his love.

And in this new community called the church

the gospel is now at work to give us a glimpse of this new world—

a world redeemed by the blood of Christ
a world sanctified by the power of the Spirit.

Our experience in the life of the church should give us a taste
of what life in heaven is like.

So I say, may this description of love inspire us--
may it move us to new heights of love here and now,
and to a new hope as we look forward to what is yet to be.
Isn't this what we want our life together to look like. //

But at the same time, we must be realistic,
for the kingdom of God has not yet arrived in its fullness on earth.
We still live in a fallen world, a spoiled world, a sinful world,
and so long as we live,
we must be aware of this reality.

That's why Paul has to say in v. 18 of our passage—

**"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you,
live at peace with everyone."**

We are to live in peace with everyone—

we are to be peacemakers—
that's how life is meant to be lived,
but Paul has to qualify that statement in two ways—

First, he says, "**If it is possible**"—which assumes that sometimes
that condition of peace will elude us.

He's not talking about a peace at all costs.

He realizes that sometimes a real peace won't be possible.

And then Paul says, "as far as it depends on you"—

Real peace takes two parties,

and you can only do what you can do to live in peace with others.

We are to "**Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.**"

We are to seek to "**live at peace with everyone.**"

But Paul knows from the teaching of Jesus,

and by his own experience,

that even if we are as loving and selfless as Jesus himself,

we will encounter opposition.

Didn't Jesus end up on a cross?

And didn't Paul have to endure beatings and imprisonment,

and he was almost stoned to death just for preaching the gospel?

So much for living at peace with everyone!

So in the final five verses of our passage

Paul turns to that hard reality of living in this fallen world,

and he describes

how sincere love responds to those who oppose us. /

Actually, this theme was introduced in v. 14--

"Bless those who persecute you;

bles and do not curse."

and it is picked up again in v. 17--

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil."

and in v. 19—"Do not take revenge, my dear friends,"

In the closing verses of this passage,

Paul speaks both negatively and positively--

negatively, he calls us to repudiate the way of retribution

in our dealings with those who do us wrong.

and then, positively,

as he calls us to love even our enemies.

Our focus this morning is on that negative side

of non-retaliation,

and next week we'll focus on the positive dimension of love. //

Do you ever watch children fighting?

I used to do it at my house all the time (well, not really!).

But the fights I have seen

tend to go something like this--

One kid makes a comment about the other with a slightly sarcastic tone of voice--

Perhaps after spilling a glass of milk, you hear,

"That was real smart."

Then the other, seizing the opportunity,

puts in his own dig--

this time, perhaps referring to some other past incident of public knowledge.

"Yea, like when you broke Mom's mirror!"

The interchange increases in intensity,

as mere words are joined with physical contact--

a little shove accompanies the comeback--

“Hey, that wasn’t my fault,”

often with a verbal grenade thrown in--

“You’re so stupid.”

“Who are you calling stupid?”--

and the first blow is launched.

That calls for a response in kind,

and before Mom or Dad can break things up,

somebody ends up with a bloody lip.

It’s the law of escalating retaliation--

It happens between kids on the playground ending in a scuffle,

and it happens between nations on a border ending in a war.

It is what disrupts the harmony of an office,

and it’s what shatters the tranquility of a marriage.

You know you do it—we all do.

Somebody offends us—

and an anger is stirred up within us over the injustice of it.

And we may respond with a sharp word to counter our wound,

or maybe we don’t use words at all—

the cold-shoulder treatment will do—

with its passive hostility.

And that, of course, is picked up by our antagonist,
and they will conjure up their own counter blow,
and the stakes are raised.

It's the law of escalating retaliation.

This law is a distortion of one of the foundational principles of justice--
the principle of retribution.

Our idea of justice is based in the notion
that a person who does something wrong ought to be punished.

Wrongdoing creates a debt that needs to be paid.

The offender ought to pay for what he has done.

He ought to get what he deserves.

That principle of retribution is embodied in the Old Testament law
when it says, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

That may sound barbaric, but, in fact, it's not that at all--
first, because it was never intended to be implemented literally,
by inflicting punishment in the form of physical mutilation.
It simply expressed an essential rule of justice—that is, proportionality,
and was not a literal prescription of the way it was to be executed.

And the value of this principle is seen, second,
in the fact that "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"
was intended to prevent the escalation of retaliation.

In other words, it was intended to put limits
on the retribution that could be inflicted on any given crime--

for the punishment was to fit the crime—
“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”
and no more.

The scales of justice are to balance the crime and the punishment--
so that the criminal doesn't get more than what he deserves.
And this was especially important
when families and clans and tribes were involved,
for there, the potential for escalating retaliation is tremendous.
A member of your clan steals one of my chickens,
so I steal one of his cows.
He, in turn, burns down my barn,
so I kidnap his daughter.
and he then kills my son,
So I destroy his village.

And this sort of thing is carried over for generations!
Isn't this what we have seen in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East, and in Sudan?

The spirit of retaliation has created a hatred in those places that defies description--
I once heard Chuck Colson tell the story
of the man who was visiting Belfast in Northern Ireland one night
when he was suddenly accosted by a masked man with a knife.
“Protestant or Catholic?” he asked.
“Protestant or Catholic?”

The man knew that his life hung in the balance
depending on how he answered that question--
he had no idea whose side the assailant was on,

so in a moment of brilliance he responds--

“Neither--I’m a Jew.”

“Well, what do you know?” said the masked man,

“I’ve got to be the luckiest Palestinian terrorist

in all of Belfast!”

This provision of the Old Testament law was designed to prevent that kind of hatred.

It was to put a damper on this destructive law of escalating retaliation. /

But Jesus introduces a whole new way of thinking about this issue,

which Paul is simply echoing in our passage.

In his Sermon on the Mount,

Jesus says that the kind of life that God desires from his people

goes beyond that mere limitation of retaliation—

Matt. 5:38--“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt,

hand over your coat as well.

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Give to the one who asks you,

and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

Yes, “do not resist an evil person,” Jesus says.

which Paul interprets here as “Do not repay anyone evil for evil,”

and “Do not take revenge.”

Some have taken Jesus' words at face value
and come to the conclusion that total pacifism
is the only option for the followers of Jesus.

Christians can not only not be soldiers,
they can't be policemen or even judges either.

But I think that fails to appreciate the teaching of the New Testament elsewhere
and what Jesus is doing in his sermon.

Jesus at his own trial recognizes the God-given authority of the Roman government.

And Paul in the very next chapter--Romans 13--speaks of the governing authorities
as God's instruments in protecting the moral order in the world,
rightfully "bearing the sword."

"They are God's servants," he says,

"agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rm. 13:4).¹

There is a rightful place for retribution,

when rightly administered by the rightful authorities.

Judges, policemen, and even soldiers

have a valid role to play in God's ordering of the world.

And when you look at the examples Jesus gives here

you see that what he has in mind is not my response to evil

as someone in an official position of authority,

but my response to evil when someone confronts me personally.

¹ Peter makes the same affirmation—1 Peter 2:13-14.

These examples—and they are meant to be illustrative and not prescriptive—
Jesus is challenging our moral assumptions,
not promulgating laws.

These examples deal with an individual's personal response to other individuals.

It is a mistake to try to apply these principles directly to social ethics,
and still less to law.

And it would be wrong to think that what Jesus says here would, for example,
sanction physical abuse.

If you are assaulted, you should go to the police—
the government has the legal authority to punish the evil doer.

But even then, your attitude should not be that of revenge.

The relatives of the people killed in the Charleston church shooting
could forgive the killer,
but that didn't mean that he shouldn't go to jail.

The law prescribes an eye for an eye,
and in a legal setting that is appropriate,
but Jesus is pointing to a quality of life that doesn't need that prescription.

Jesus is pointing to a radical faith that doesn't need to get even
even when someone does me wrong.

Just look at the four examples Jesus gives--

v. 39--"If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

At first that appears to refer one's response to physical violence,
but notice the reference to the "right" cheek--

to be slapped on the right cheek by someone who is right-handed
is the result of a blow with the back of the hand,
which even today in the Middle East expresses extreme contempt,
on the level of being spat upon.

The situation is one of personal insult more than physical injury.

Here Jesus is saying that we are to display a faith
that doesn't need to guard our own personal honor.

He wants us to reach a state where our self-esteem
is unaffected by our treatment by other people,
but grounded completely on our relationship with God our Father.

So what difference does it make if someone insults you--
and "slaps you on the right cheek"?

What's the big deal?

"I can take an insult," we should say.

"It is God's honor, not mine, that is important to me.

I know who I am in his sight—

why should I care what this person thinks of me?"

And didn't Jesus display just this kind of faith
when he endured the pain of the cross--
when he was dressed in a purple robe with a crown of thorns
by the Roman soldiers who mocked him,
and spat upon him, and struck him on the head again and again?

None of that changed who he was.

Yes, as Peter says--

“When they hurled their insults at him,

[Jesus] did not retaliate;

when he suffered, he made no threats.

Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly”² (1Pet. 2:23).

It was his honor in the eyes of God that mattered--

and so it should be for us.

How many unsportsmanlike conduct penalties occur in football

just because some player has to defend his own honor

against another player who shoved him?

It’s silly, really,

and maddening to the coach, you can be sure.

We are rightly appalled when we think that

people used to engage in duels to the death

over some slanderous statement.

But how many knife fights and shootings occur in our schools and neighborhoods

just because kids are defending their honor against some insult?

We don’t engage in duels,

we just seethe in anger for years against someone

²cf. the words that speak of the “Suffering Servant” to come in Isa. 50:6,7—“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.”

because we feel we have been wounded in some way.

Insults come in all shapes and sizes, you know--

a sarcastic remark,

a social slight,

a racial or ethnic slur,

an ungrateful response,

a cutting comment of criticism.

How do you respond to these?

Do you sulk and pout?

Do you secretly plot your revenge?

Or do you turn the other cheek and forgive--

because your personal honor is secure in the eyes of God?

Don't guard your own honor—

let God do it for you.

Instead, be concerned about guarding the honor of others.

Prov. 19:11—"A man's wisdom gives him patience;

it is to his glory to overlook an offense."

That is, to turn the other cheek.

The second example Jesus gives here has a slightly different focus--

Mt. 5:40—"And if someone wants to sue you and take your shirt,

let him have your coat as well."

The shirt or tunic would be roughly equivalent to our suit of clothes,
but the coat, which goes over your clothes,
is significant in that it was often used as one's covering when sleeping at night
as a protection against the cold.

Because of that,

the Jewish law prohibited the taking of someone's coat as collateral for a loan,
or at least if you did, you had to return it in the evening.

In other words, you had a legal right to your own coat.

But Jesus is saying--display a strength of character in which you don't
stand on your own rights--
give your adversary in court your coat also
if that's what he wants.

Why are you always so concerned about your rights anyway?

Isn't that very concern what drives us apart?

What marriage can survive

when both partners are standing on their rights?

What friendship can grow

when both friends insist upon their rights?

What community can thrive when everyone is asserting their rights?

Evidently the Corinthian Christians were standing on their rights with one another
and were taking each other to court as a result.

Paul was appalled—

1Cor. 6:7—"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you

means you have been completely defeated already.

Why not rather be wronged?

Why not rather be cheated?"

Sometimes, the right thing to do is to suffer a wrong,

and the just thing, in Jesus' eyes, and Paul's, is to suffer injustice.

Don't assert your own rights--

Instead, stand up for the rights of others.

In a third example, Jesus touches a raw nerve in the life of the Jews of Palestine.

Israel was under Roman rule,

and Rome demanded that its soldiers

had the right to commandeer civilian labor if need be

to carry their baggage and equipment.

It's interesting that in Israel today,

members of the Israeli military sometimes hitchhike

as a mode of transportation,

and if you are driving you are required to pick them up.

Susan and I did that once when we were driving in Israel--

we had two Israeli soldiers sitting in the back seat of our rental car

with their assault rifles in hand.

We didn't just take them one mile--

We took them wherever they wanted to go!

In Jesus' day, this practice was resented greatly—

as the Romans were a brutal occupying power,
the way many Palestinians view the Israelis today.

But what does Jesus say?

**"If someone forces you to go one mile,
go with him two miles."**

Here he is saying, instead of resisting the demands of authority upon you,
you should willingly volunteer to do more than is required,
even when you think that authority is wrong in what they demand.

Our egos chafe at the thought of submitting to authority--any authority.

But Peter, echoing Jesus' thought here, says,

**"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake
to every authority instituted among men:
whether to kings or to governors."**

In particular, Peter addresses those under the harshest form of authority of all--

**"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect,
not only to those who are good and considerate,
but also to those who are harsh" (1 Pet. 2:13,14,18).**

And didn't Jesus—the King of kings and Lord of lords—

didn't Jesus submit himself to earthly authorities--

to the Jewish Sanhedrin and to the Roman governor—

and he suffered the ultimate injustice

when he was condemned to die like a common criminal?

It is our concern for the supremacy of our own self,

that rebels against the demands of authority upon us.

And it is our self, Jesus says, that must give way.

We must submit to God's authority

as that authority is mediated in human forms.

So examine your own attitude to the authorities you face--

the authority of employers, or teachers,

or parents, or leaders in the church,

or the authority of government.

If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two, Jesus says.

And there is a fourth example given here--

"Give to the one who asks you,

and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

Certainly, this one can't be taken literally,

for as one commentator put it, such an application

would quickly become self-defeating--

"There would soon be a class of saintly paupers, owning nothing,

and another [class] of prosperous idlers and thieves, owning everything."³

³Morris, Luke, p. 130

Jesus is simply insisting that our free and unselfish attitude toward our rights
must extend even to our right to property--
how un-American that sounds!

Lighten your grip--

it's only money, and it's not yours anyway.

Be willing to give it up!

As Elsa would say, "Let it go!"//

"Do not resist an evil person;"

"Do not repay evil for evil;"

"Do not take revenge."

This is a quality of that sincere love that Paul has been expounding--

it is the principle of non-retaliation.

And this principle that comes from Jesus is deeply embedded in Christian teaching—

Paul speaks of it in 1 Cor. 4:12--

"We work hard with our own hands.

When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;"

and again in 1 Thess. 5:15—

"Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong,

but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."

And Peter says the same thing—

1Pet. 3:9—"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing,

because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

This is fundamental Christian teaching,
but I don't think there is anything that so cuts against the grain
of our own natural ways of thinking than this.
There's nothing that is so foreign to the ways of the world,
and so difficult for us to put into practice
than resisting the urge to get a payback
when someone has wronged us in some way.

"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea," wrote C.S. Lewis,
"until they have something to forgive." /

First of all, when you think about it, what Jesus and Paul are calling us to do,
just isn't **fair**.

When someone does me wrong,
I have a right to get him back, don't I?
They have it coming.

Where is the justice of letting them get away with some outrageous offense?

We ought to be offended by injustice;
injustice rightly makes us angry.

And this is the root of the human desire for revenge—
which is retribution turned bad.

Perhaps you've seen the bumper sticker--

"I don't get mad,
I just get even."

Revenge is not simply the desire to hurt someone.

In the words of Thomas Hobbes, it is the "desire by doing hurt to another
to make him condemn some act of his own."⁴

We want the evil we perceive in a bad person to be to them
what it is to everybody else.

"This is proved," as C.S. Lewis observes,
"by the fact that the avenger wants the guilty party not merely to suffer,
but to suffer at his hands,
and to know it,
and to know why."⁵

We want "to even the score,"
"to let him know what it feels like."
We want "to teach him a lesson"--
a lesson in justice.
So non-retaliation seems unjust to us. //

And then there is the weakness of it--

George Bernard Shaw called forgiveness "a beggar's refuge."

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche called it "a slave morality."

Vengeance is a form of power.

In the relations between nations, not to retaliate at some offense
can be perceived as an invitation to be attacked.

The lust for revenge can energize and motivate.

It's said that the American prisoners who survived the WWII battle of Bataan,

⁴*Leviathan*, Pt. I, cap. 6. Quoted in Lewis, *Pain*, p. 94.

⁵ Lewis, *Pain*, p. 94.

and were forced on their terrible death march,
 prodded by the bayonets of their captors, forced to eat rotten food,
 with no hope of escape,
these prisoners tell us that it was their *hate* of their enemies
 that gave them the power to survive.⁶
But forgiveness--it's for wimps.

What do you think?

What Jesus advocates *is* unfair--and in the eyes of the world,
 this sort of non-retaliation *is* a form of weakness.

And weak is exactly how Jesus appeared--
 when Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd,
 after he had been beaten and mocked and humiliated,
 and he just stood there and took it all—
 and didn't defend himself or retaliate,
 he did appear weak and harmless—
 not at all the powerful Messiah the people hoped he would be.
No wonder they cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The cross is folly to the world—
 it is a sign of weakness in the face of power.
 But, of course, we know the opposite to be true—
 the cross is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
Aren't we to be followers of this crucified Savior?

⁶Cf. Smedes, *Forgive*, p. .138

To follow Christ in this path of non-retaliation is not weakness—not at all.

Not when our model of strength is the Son of God.

He never displayed the strength of his will more fully

than when he hung on that cross.

To retaliate—that's easy—that's our natural response—that's human.

To forgive is hard—that takes courage and strength—that's divine.

Not paying back evil for evil takes a moral fortitude that few can muster.

May the Lord give us his strength to do it.

As for fairness,

the cross is the greatest miscarriage of justice the world has ever seen.

Jesus didn't deserve to be crucified—not at all!

But he took all the abuse the world had to offer,

and in response, he offered more than just the other cheek.

Isn't that unjust?

But there is one thing that Paul want us to see that makes all the difference--

Look at v. 19--"**Do not take revenge, my friends,**

but leave room for God's wrath,

for it is written [citing Deut. 32:35],

"It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord."

There will be justice, Paul says.

You can be sure of it.

It's just not our job to see that we get it.

We can leave that job to God.

We're not to be vigilantes—

taking justice into our own hands.

We shouldn't expect fairness in this life.

It is God who will bring about fairness--

that's his job,

and the job of those to whom he has delegated judicial authority.

And he will bring about justice in his due time—

and there is no question—it will come.

We know that in the end God will have the last word--

no one ever "gets away" with anything--not ultimately--

the scales of justice will be seen to be perfectly just.

Every sin will be paid for—

either by the sinner

or by the Savior.

That's the conviction that enables us to forgive,

and to leave the issue of justice with God. /

We see this working out in Paul's own life—

He writes to Timothy--

2 Tim. 4:14—"Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm.

The Lord will repay him for what he has done.”

Paul is not naïve. He warns Timothy about Alexander in the next verse--

**v 15—“You too should be on your guard against him,
because he strongly opposed our message.”**

But Paul is content to leave Alexander’s judgment to God.

And isn’t that what Jesus did?

1Pet. 2:23—“When they hurled their insults at him,
he did not retaliate;
when he suffered, he made no threats.
Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

Jesus entrusted himself,
he entrusted his enemies,
he entrusted the entire unjust situation into God's hands,
knowing in faith that his heavenly Father always judges justly.

Can we do that?--

Can we bear unjust treatment patiently,
believing that God is in control,
and that he will judge rightly?

Our God is faithful.

Our God is just.

No one will ever "get away" with anything?

Do you believe that?

If you do, then do as Peter says to do later in his letter--

4:19--"So then, those who suffer according to God's will
should commit themselves to their faithful Creator
and continue to do good."

When you are tempted to get even,

just remember this:

Jesus, Our Savior, Did Not Retaliate,
and God, Our Father, Is a Righteous Judge

But as we close,

I want you to see that not returning evil for evil not only is an act of faith,
that is commended by God;
it is also good for the world.

When we try to resist the person who comes against us

by returning evil for evil

we only increase the amount of evil in the world.

We end up participating in the destructive law of escalating retribution.

It's like a nuclear reaction in a power plant--

some atoms are split and the reaction begins,

and the atomic particles start bouncing around

splitting atoms everywhere,

and if the reaction is left unchecked

you get an immensely destructive nuclear explosion.
But to prevent that, control rods are lowered into this nuclear mess,
and these rods absorb those particles
so that the power that is generated may be controlled
and harnessed for good.

God has called us to be like those control rods--
absorbing evil so that it doesn't get out of control.

For isn't that what the cross of Christ is all about—
Jesus absorbed all the evil the world could throw at him,
so that through that act
we can have peace with God.

We are called to bear the cost of forgiveness ourselves.
Isn't that what Jesus did for us.

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil.”

**Do not take revenge, my dear friends,
but leave room for God's wrath”**

This is what God's love requires,
for this is what God's love did.

Prayer—

Closing Song: *The Perfect Wisdom of Our God*

Benediction:

Phil. 1:9-11 [May] your love may abound more and more

in knowledge and depth of insight,

so that you may be able to discern what is best

and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ --

to the glory and praise of God.

Displaying the Character of Christ—

An Exposition of Rom. 12:9-21, #11

July 28, 2019

“Our Love Must Not Repay Evil for Evil”

(Rom. 12:14, 17-19)

Paul’s description of the “sincere love” that is to characterize the community of Christ is a thing of beauty. But Paul knows that we still live in a fallen world that rejected its Savior. We are to seek to live in peace with all, but we can only do our part to make that happen. When we are treated poorly, Paul urges to resist the impulse to repay evil for evil, and instead to leave the judgement to God.

I. The Destructive Law of Escalating Retribution

II. Do Not Seek Retribution

according to Jesus (Mt. 5:38-42)

A. Don’t guard your honor (v. 39)

B. Don’t assert your rights (v. 40)

C. Don’t resist the demands of authority (v. 41)

D. Don't cling to your possessions (v. 42)

III. Remember:

A. Jesus, Our Savior, Did Not Retaliate

B. God, Our Father, Is a Righteous Judge

Sermon Response:

“Our Love Must Not Repay Evil for Evil”

(Rom. 12:14, 17-19)

- Are you considered a “peacemaker” or a “disturber of the peace” in your home, at school, at work, in the church?

- Where have you seen the "law of escalating retaliation" at work? Why is it so common?

- Can you think of a situation in which your personal honor was insulted? How did you want to respond? What response is Jesus calling you to? Why is that so hard?

- When have you deliberately not stood on your rights in some conflict? How did it turn out? How did you feel about it?

- Where do you find yourself resisting the demands of authority in your life? Have you ever considered doing more than it required?

- Why is forgiveness so hard?

- Consider Prov. 15:1—“A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
How does this relate to what Paul teaches us here?