

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... How to Live in Peace With All Men

Last week's article explained that government was established by God to punish evildoers who are disobedient to His word. "For rulers are not a cause for fear for good behavior, but for evil." Government is a "minister of God," an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil (Romans 13:3-4).

Today's article will address how individuals can live in peace with each other. The scripture being discussed can be found in Romans 12:9-21. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, cling to what is good." Feigned love is hate disguised. It was once said by a brother in Christ "I love you because I have to". While the other brother said, rightly so, "I love you because I want to." We should shrink from every evil deed as if it were deadly poison. A man cannot love and honor the good, from the heart, without detesting the evil. He must come to abhor it in himself as in others. "From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psm. 119:104). To abhor the wrong does not carry with it the hating of the wrongdoer.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality." The admonition to brotherly love is frequently repeated by the apostles. "Let love of the brethren continue" (Heb. 13:1). "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22). Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). In diligence we should keep these commands without any slothfulness or laziness for Solomon says: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10).

To keep peace with others we should all work, that we should not be idle, lacking in nothing, living in honesty, paying what is owed to others, and giving to those who are in need. Idleness is a disorderly walk (2 Thess. 3:7). "He must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who is in need" (Eph. 4:28). We are exhorted to look beyond the present trials, afflictions, and despite them all, "rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). A despondent, complaining, disheartened spirit that always sees evil is not in accord with the divine will (1 Cor. 10:10).

We are to persevere in tribulation (James 1:2-3). A complaining, faultfinding spirit is not in harmony with the spirit of Christ. By persevering under trials, the Christian character is completed, perfected, and fitted to dwell with God. We are to be devoted to prayer (1 Thess. 5:17) both in our sufferings as well as in the hours of peace and prosperity. We are to contribute to the needs of the saints and be glad to render assistance to a needy brother. We are God's steward; and if we do not use the blessings given to us, these blessings will be changed into a curse. We are told that "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17). We are to practice hospitality, especially to strangers (Matt. 25:40; Heb. 13:2).

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse". The spirit of Christ is to return good for evil (Matt. 5:44-45). To do good will not always be what will please or gratify those who are in opposition to God, but will be of help to them. We should tell them in a kind but firm spirit their wrongs, and seek to lead them into the right. In some cases this may cause them to respect you; but in others it may provoke some form of opposition from the ungodly world.

"Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of men." Jesus, by example, taught that no one should pay back evil for evil to his neighbor. If one has wronged you, bear it patiently, and return good for evil. Jesus prayed that His Father would forgive those who crucified Him. We are to use all means in our power to live peaceably with all men (1 Thess. 4:11-12).

We have seen in America over the past months rage and hate-filled people killing each other as well as those who have been placed in authority by God. Remember, authorities such as police have the right to carry the sword [instrument of death] are ministers and avengers of God, who will bring wrath on the ones who practice evil (Rom. 13:4). We have been instructed by God's word to "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay says the Lord'." "We as individuals are to leave it in the hands of God to punish the wrongdoers through the authorities. Do not let acts of evil that are done to you so overcome you as to do evil in return. If you are provoked to revenge, you will be yielding to your enemy - you are overcome by that which is evil itself. God's instruction in the context of the verses discussed today is to love each other, live in peace, and overcome evil with good.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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