

“See That None ...”

“... render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another and toward all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:15-18).

Paul continues his pithy exhortations in these verses by commanding that none render unto any one evil for evil. Such was the command of our Savior. From the sermon on the mount are these words: “Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, resist not him who is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mt. 5:38f). We have no difficulty understanding Jesus’ words: we have difficulty following them. Even Paul, having written the cited words from the first Thessalonian epistle, lapsed at one point in his life. When he stood before the Jewish council to answer the serious charges against him, he started his testimony by saying, “Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day” (Acts 23:1). Immediately the high priest, Ananias, commanded those who stood near him to smite him on the mouth. Instantly, Paul responded, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” (Acts 23:3). Paul did apologize for his remarks, but his instant response to the obviously wrong treatment by Jewish authorities shows just how hard it is to always keep control over one’s self.

Jesus instructed and Jesus demonstrated. He “left us an example that we should follow in his steps, who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ...” (1 Pet. 2:21-23). He washed the feet of the traitor, Judas. When he had been tortured and then nailed to the tree, He prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34). He rendered to no man “evil for evil.” Nor should we — toward no man.

Then Paul wrote, “Rejoice always..” Elsewhere the same apostle wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:4f). Christians should be happy people. We have such wonderful prospects before us — an immortal body free from the debilitating results of the aging process with the pain and sickness life brings; an eternal home in the glorious city which street is of pure gold; a loving Savior who died to redeem us who will greet us and welcome us home. Why should we not be happy? Perhaps the answer to that is it is difficult to get past the shame and guilt of past actions. It is difficult to “walk by faith, not sight.” The present makes it hard to see the future. But, we must try.

“Pray with ceasing, in everything give thanks” does not mean that each day is just one long prayer; it means that we are constant, regular, and consistent in prayer. There are many examples of people being constant in prayer. Daniel’s enemies knew he was so constant in prayer that they depended on that that they might accuse him of asking a petition of someone else other than King Darius. And, they were not wrong: his habit of

praying three times a day was not disrupted by the Persian law which forbade it. A study of Old Testament prophets will reveal that these men of God, separated from others sometime by centuries, were identical in their being constant in prayer. So should we be, and we will be if we keep close to our heart two truths: 1) God's eyes ever are open to the righteous, and His ears are open to their petitions; and, 2) there is great benefit in prayer.

"In everything give thanks." Christians not only should be happy people, they should be thankful people. There is so much to be thankful for; our blessings far outweigh our hinderances. The exclamation of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, should comfort us all: "Thou, God, seest me." Driven from Abraham's home because she despised her mistress because she had conceived a child which her mistress was not able to do; which attitude prompted Sarah to see her driven away. Hagar despaired. But God saw her, made provision for her. She exclaimed, at God's care and provisions: "Thou, God, seest me." God's eye is on the sparrow and His eye is on you. His eye is on me. What greater reason to be thankful? Our God cares, sees, and provides for His own. Let all reflect on these truths and be thankful! Such is God's will toward us.

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