

The Old Paths

Volume 13, Issue 26

August 20, 2006

“Live Peaceably With All Men”

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Last Wednesday night (8/16), we were studying about our attitude toward others. In the midst of our study, Romans 12:18 was introduced (“*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*”). At first glance, we might not appreciate just how overwhelming and encompassing this passage is. Yet, when we allow our minds to meditate upon the words of this chapter, we soon see that this passage is one of those “golden texts” to which men often refer when talking about the Bible.

The Context Of Romans 12

When we read Romans 12:18 in its immediate context, we see that Paul is talking about how one is to live after becoming a Christian. The Christian is to recognize his being a slave/servant of God, and offer himself as a “*living sacrifice*” to God (Rom. 12:1-2). As the chapter unfolds, we read first of a Christian’s relationship with God, and then a Christian’s relationship with others. Therefore, Christians must not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (v. 3), and remember that we each are a part of the one body, the church, and benefit each other (v. 5-6).

We then see how a Christian is to act in reference to love (v. 9),

patience and prayer (v. 12), generosity (v. 13), and in unity (v. 16). Upon reading verse 18, we learn that “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*” He concludes this chapter by reminding Christians that it is not our place to exact revenge on others; we leave this to God. (In chapter 13, we learn that some “revenge” is carried out by the government authorities, v. 3-4). In a very real sense, the final three verses of Romans 12 are just expanding the thought of verse 18.

Living Peaceably With All Men

Do we appreciate what it means to live “*peaceably with all men*”? Some folks do not. Yet, “peace” is needed if we are going to live as Christians upon this earth. In studying, let us understand that this verse is not teaching that we will always have “peaceful” times. Some people are not happy unless things are “stirred up” and folks are in one fuss or another. Satan is like this.

True peace can be had, however, where there is first purity (Jas. 3:17). Pure words and deeds will produce peace, for when folks are intent upon simply following the Lord’s will, then we will have the unity the Bible describes (I Cor. 1:10; I Pet. 4:11). Sadly, there are folks who do not want this. They want things “their way.” They are selfish, and such attitudes ruin friendships, families, and will definitely ruin and wreck a church!

Therefore, “*If it be possible, as*

much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” In other words, you can control no one but yourself. Make sure that you are in control of yourself so that you can live peacefully with others. No, this does not guarantee that others will always like or appreciate you, but we rest in the comfort that God sees us and will reward us for our labor in the Lord (Prov. 15:3; Matt. 6:4, 6, 18; I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

Knowing these things are true, hopefully, we can see that we must examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5) and ask, “Am I trying to live peacefully with all men?” Am I really trying and working toward this end? No, it is not easy, and no, not everyone wishes to “live peacefully” with you or me; but with all that “lies within,” we need to try and “*live peaceably with all men*”!!

The Results Of Obedience To Romans 12:18

What will be the result when we obey Romans 12:18 as we ought? For one thing, we will be obedient to the will of God in the New Testament, and this is always the right thing to do (Mk. 9:50; I Jn. 5:2-3). Secondly, consider what happens when folks simply obey Romans 12:18. No, I cannot control you, nor can you control me; but when we control ourselves and try to live in a peaceful manner, can we not see that there will be good results? If I am working at obeying this passage and you are doing the same, do not we both end up living peacefully with one another? Of course, we do! In so doing, have we not also been obedient to Christ’s words in Matthew 7:12 (“*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*”)? Treating others the way I want to be treated demands my living

peacefully with others (Rom. 12:18). Our faithful obedience to Matthew 7:12 and Romans 12:18 can easily change this world for the better.

What If "Others" Will Not Obey God?

Someone may argue, "What if I try to obey Romans 12:18, but the other person doesn't want to?" This happens, but bear in mind that the statements in both Romans 12:18 and Matthew 7:12 are based upon what lies within us, and not upon what we get other people to do! At the same time, aren't there times when we think we are at the end of our rope, but know we still have a "little extra" we can use to help a bad situation? Of course, we can. This reminds me of Wednesday night's study because there we noticed that if I obey Matthew 7:12, this makes me vulnerable to those who do not want to obey that passage! Yet, it must be done. In fact the more I obey Matthew 7:12, the more that influence rubs off on others, and it will bring us closer together. Romans 12:18 works the same way. Yes, you may start out by being peaceful with some folks who do not want peace, but as we work at it day-by-day, we can win many people over to God's way! It is possible, and it can happen if we will but work at it with a willing heart. Start this week! Start at home!!

Romans 12:18 And Trying To Justify Sin

Can I "live peaceably" with those who are engaged in sin? By no means. There is no agreement with Christ and sin (II Cor. 6:14-16). Neither Romans 12:18, Matthew 7:12 nor any other Bible passage teaches that! The wisdom from above is first pure, then it is peaceful, and we need

to remember to keep it in the right order (Jas. 3:17). Yes, let all Christians strive for peace with God and man, working at it on a daily basis. But, this is not "peace-at-any-price"! Our peace comes as a result of a right relationship with God, not in spite of it!

Conclusion

A parallel passage to Romans 12:18, is Romans 14:19. It says, "*Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*" Let us remember our need for peace with one another. When at peace, we can build up (edify) each other in God's truth. When we are at peace with one another, it also helps us to determine who the "true enemy" is, for Satan continues to wage war with us (I Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:16). In our culture, it seems we have an easier time being friendly with strangers than we do friends or family. Let us change that habit today and treat family and friends in a proper manner. You'd be amazed at the blessings that will be realized.

People of the world will know we are Christ's disciples when we show love for one another (Jn. 13:34-35). This love and corresponding peace is not only a good thing for the world to see, but it is good for the brethren to experience (Psa. 133). Let us be at peace and help one another go to Heaven!

"Too many Christians worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship."

Thoughts From The Past

"E rror never dies a natural death, it has to be killed with the sword of the Spirit I do know this, nothing, but nothing, beats old time gospel preaching and hard-nosed Bible study. This is what it will take to keep the church on the straight and narrow path. When we depart from the fundamentals, we take our first step toward apostasy. Could it be that we are more concerned about being politically correct than with being Scripturally correct?"

(James P. Needham, *Guardian of Truth*, November 16, 1995, p. 11).

Historical Note: Bro. Needham preached for the Central congregation in Owensboro in the late 1950's.

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