

Sermon Title: The Social Dynamics of Christian Love

Sermon Text: Romans 12:14-16

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to reflect transformed behavior in the social circles of life.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 responses of Christian love in social circles.

Introduction: The Word of God instructs us to “be in the world but not of the world.”

John 17:14-19 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **15** "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. **16** "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **17** "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. **18** "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. **19** "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

The book of Philippians in Chapter 3:17-21 [**17** Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. **18** For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: **19** whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things. **20** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.] reminds us that our citizenship is not of this world. It also reminds us about our behavior in society while in the world.

Philippians 2:14-18 Do all things without complaining and disputing, **15** that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. **17** Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. **18** For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

The world hated Jesus, therefore the world will hate those who follow Jesus.

John 15:18-22 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. **19** "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. **20** "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. **21** "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. **22** "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

“SOMEONE ELSE SAID, ‘Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of a rebel heart.’” C.S. Lewis said, ‘God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.’” – C.S. Lewis [Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1998, p.417.]

I. The transformed response to persecutor’s and perjury. V.14

II. The transformed response to pleasure and pain. V.15

III. The transformed response to pride and prejudice. V.16

I. The transformed response to persecutor’s and perjury. V.14

What is very important for us all to understand as the theme of love as a main Christian virtue, blessing one’s persecutor’s is one of the evidences of “sincere love” which “shuns evil” and “clings to what is good.” It is also a demonstration of true transformational thinking (v.2), which proceeds from a consecrated life. To blessing one’s persecutors and those who perjure you is completely contrary to the unredeemed human nature. Not only are we commanded not to hate, but we are to bless people who persecute and perjure us. To bless them is to treat them as a friend. (**Romans 5:6-11**)

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Luke 6:27-30 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. **29** "To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. **30** "Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back.

A. The 1st command is to bless those who **physically** persecute you. V.14a

The normal response is to retaliate when done wrong by someone, but Christians are called to serve and minister God' grace to a lost and hostile society and world.

Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

Acts 7:20 "At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.

Luke 6:32-33 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

Jesus is the ultimate model.

B. The 2nd command is to bless those who **verbally** perjure you. V.14b

1 Peter 2:20 For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. **21** For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: **22** "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; **23** who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; **24** who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-- by whose stripes you were healed.

"Jesus commanded that His followers respond to persecution and perjury with love and blessing was unprecedented in both the Greek and Jewish world." [Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, pp.109-110]

[The New International Commentary on the New Testament "The Epistle to the Romans" Douglas J. Moo, p. 781] "It is often a host of 'little foxes' that do the most damage in our spiritual and emotional 'vineyards.'" (cf Song of Solomon 2:15)

II. The transformed response to **pleasure and pain**. V.15

A. The 1st positive exhortation is to **rejoice** with everyone. V.15a

Identifying with others in both their joys and successes is an appropriate way for Christians to demonstrate the sincerity of the love for non-Christians as well as Christians.

1 Corinthians 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

Proverbs 17:5 He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

B. The 2nd positive exhortation is to **weep** with everyone. V.15b

Identifying with others in both their weeping and sorrows is an appropriate way for Christians to demonstrate the sincerity of love for non-Christians as well as Christians.

"Love that is genuine will not respond to a fellow believer's joy with envy or bitterness, but will enter wholeheartedly into that same joy. Similarly, love that is genuine will bring us to identify so intimately with our brothers and sisters in Christ that their sorrows will become ours." [The New International Commentary on the New Testament "The Epistle to the Romans" Douglas J. Moo, p. 782]

Christians as a result of a consecrated presentation of their body, and an outworking of a transformed mind, prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. This is done by entering into the sympathy, empathy, and compassion of the suffering of others. Compassion has in the very word the idea of suffering with someone. God is so compassionate, so tender toward His people, that "His compassion never fails."

Lamentations 3:22 *Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.*

James 5:11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended* by the Lord-- that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

John 11:35 Jesus wept.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

a) Grieving for national sin. (**Jeremiah 9:1-3**)

b) Grieving over societal sin. (**Luke 19:41-44**)

“A first-grader named Billy had a classmate Jim, who lost his father in a tractor accident. Billy prayed for Jim every day. One day as Billy was walking down the stairs at school, he saw Jim and decided to reach out to him.

‘How are you getting along?’

‘Oh, fine, jus’ fine.’

Billy continued, ‘Do you know, I’ve been praying for you ever since your daddy was killed.’

The other little guy stopped and looked at Billy, grabbed his hand, then led him out back behind the school building. Then he opened up.

‘You know, that was a lie when I said things were going fine; they aren’t fine. We are having trouble with the cows and the machines. My mother doesn’t know what to do. But I didn’t know you were praying for me.’

Just goes to show us, doesn’t it, how many people are hurting, but don’t feel free to say so until we voluntarily reach out to them.” – Marion Leach Jacobsen, *Crowded Pews and Lonely People* [Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1998, p.107.]

III. The transformed response to **pride** and **prejudice**. V.16

A. Be of the same renewed mind.

Paul’s point, is for Christians to think the same thing toward one another. Therefore, the focus may be that Christians should display the same attitude toward all other people, whatever their social, ethnic, or economic status. This is not a command to think alike on everything, but that we adopt an attitude toward everything from a renewed mind of the new realm which we belong by grace.

B. Do not be of a high mind.

The biggest obstacle to unity is pride.

Philippians 2:2-4 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. **3** *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. **4** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Our high exalted opinion of ourselves, leading us to think that we are always right and others are always wrong, and that our opinions matter more than others, often prevents the church from modeling the unity and love which God calls.

C. Associate with the humble as a solution for pride and prejudice. V.16c

The solution for pride and prejudice is to associate or fellowship or living life in common with people who are “the lowly.” The idea is to “be carried away with.”

Philippians 2:6-7 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **7** but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.

D. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Conclusion: “The phone rang in a high society Boston home. On the other end of the line was a son who had just returned from Viet Nam and was calling from California. His folks were the cocktail-circuit, party kind-drinking, wife-swapping, gambling, all the other things that go with it. The boy said to his mother, ‘I just called to tell you that I wanted to bring a buddy home with me.’ His mother said, ‘Sure, bring him along for a few days.’ ‘But, mother, there is something you need to know about this boy. One leg is gone, one arm’s gone, one eye’s gone, and his face is quite disfigured. Is it all right if I bring him home?’

His mother said, ‘Bring him home for a few days.’ The son said, ‘You didn’t understand me, mother. I want to bring him home to live with us.’ The mother began to make all kinds of excuses about embarrassment and what people would think ... and the phone clicked.

A few hours later the police called from California to Boston. The mother picked up the phone again. The police sergeant at the other end said, ‘We just found a boy with one arm, one leg, one eye and a mangled face, who has just killed himself with a shot in the head. The identification papers on the body say he is your son.’ – Dale E. Galloway, *Rebuild Your Life* [Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1998, p.109.]