

Romans 12:14-17

by Doc Greenway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Christian's resilience in the face of adversity, responding with kindness and love, and praying for others, even if they are difficult to live with.

Duration: 42:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2-21

Topics: "Romans"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the practical and personal aspects of the Christian life. He expresses joy in knowing that even new believers have found encouragement and direction through their studies together. The speaker highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in shedding abroad the love of God in believers' hearts. He encourages humility and warns against pride, urging believers to not judge others while recognizing their own flaws. The speaker also discusses the resilience of faith in the face of persecution and adversity, emphasizing how it can bring glory to Christ and strengthen believers' spiritual lives.

Transcript

The passage of which we are concerned tonight, from the twelfth chapter of Romans, is from verse fourteen to verse seventeen. This is fourteen to seventeen. And you know that verse fourteen begins with the words, Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not.

Rejoice for them that do rejoice, and weep for them that weep, and so on. Now those of you who have been present during these Sunday evening services since we commenced speaking from the twelfth chapter of Romans will know that there are several themes upon which we have touched. And all of these are intensely practical.

And I think that from verse fourteen right to the end of this chapter, we still are concerned with some tremendously practical and personal issues in our Christian life as believers. And I'm so happy to know that even some who have lately given their hearts to the Lord, and who are really babes in Christ, have received some help and encouragement and some sense of direction out of these studies that we have done together. I'm conscious of course of the time element, I'm always conscious of this.

And the result is that we do not seem to have the opportunity of entering very deeply into this study. Not as deeply as I would like. But at least if we can't get out where there are waters to swim in, we can pick up a

shell here or there along the seashore.

And that can be perhaps of some blessing and help to us. But certainly from verse fourteen to verse seventeen, you have what I think is a demonstration of the resilience of the believer's faith. Indeed right to the end of the chapter, the same theme seems to occupy the Apostle's attention.

Our faith is so resilient to life's adversities and conflicts and circumstances that are adverse, hard to take, and even people who are hard to live with, how the Christian's faith can somehow respond to the needs that are made upon him. And respond in such a way that Christ is glorified and the kingdom of God is extended. And what is more, his own spiritual life is built up thereby.

So it is the resilience of faith in relation to people and to circumstances that seems to be the main theme here. Here you will find the situations that test our faith. Remember, won't you, that faith is never regarded in the word of God as precious.

It is the testing of faith that is said to be precious. But the testing, the trial of your faith being far more precious than gold which is tried in the fire. Because you see, if faith had no testing, faith would have no testimony.

You don't win any conquests where there are no conflicts. Do you? And this is what we have to remember all the way through. As I said the other night, it would help us greatly in our Christian life if we remember that we are being trained for a battlefield and not for a flower show.

It would help us because we are traveling through the enemy's country on our way home because we have seen a city which has foundations. But we are in the enemy's country all right. And that is because the principles that motivate the men in the world around us are so diametrically opposed to the principles that motivate the child of God.

In the world is the survival of the fittest. In the church is the exaltation of the meekest. And it's a sort of topsy-turvy kind of thing.

If you want to live, you must die. If you want to succeed, you must fail. If you want to make any profit, you must learn the meaning of loss.

This is how it is. If you want to go up, you've got to go down. Jesus taught that this was so.

And this, I suppose, is why it is that our faith comes into conflict so often with principles which are so perfectly natural and yet so terribly worldly that they have no place in the Christian's reckoning. That's why he begins the chapter by saying, And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. And out of this, this concept of the otherworldly Christian, the Christian who is in the world but not of the world, comes all that follows in the way of ministry and in the way of the expression of the believer's personal faith in the living God.

Well, hallelujah, it's a grand thing to know that we've got faith in the Lord. It is a grander thing to know that we have a living Christ in whom our faith reposes and that he can never fail. I know that we may fail him often, but he never fails us.

I've been in the Christian walk now for a good many years and I've never known him to fail at any point at all. I've often failed him, unfortunately, but he's never failed me. And he'll never fail you, even if you're beginning your Christian walk and you're wondering about tomorrow and the tomorrows that follow and go on for years ahead.

Well, don't look too far ahead. Live a day at a time and you'll find that the Christ who can save and keep and hold you firm today will do so tomorrow and in the unborn tomorrows that are yet to come. He's a wonderful saviour.

In fact, I feel that, you know, every service, every Sunday evening service, I wish I could get saved all over again. You know that sort of feeling? The sort of thing that, I don't know, does it hit you like that? It was so wonderful that night when I gave my heart to the Lord and found him as my saviour that I feel like this every Sunday evening. Oh, it would be so marvellous to get saved all over again.

Of course, there's no need for that. And the joy of the Lord can still be our strength even though we don't have the same sort of experience. All right, well, here's something that really fizzes us in verse 14.

And I think it's the answer of faith to the question of consistency as a Christian. Bless them which persecute you. Bless and curse not.

Now, that's not easy, is it? That's not easy to the man of the world. It's not easy to the newborn Christian. In fact, it's not easy to many Christians who have gone on for a long way.

The man who likes to say, I gave him a piece of my mind, it's a wonder he could have afforded it, really. You know, that sort of thing. I let him see where he was standing, cut him off at the pockets and let him see where he was standing.

Oh, it's so easy to be like that, isn't it? But you know, it doesn't say that at all. It says, bless them which persecute you. Bless and curse not.

And this response of faith is consistent, really, with the exhortation of Jesus. And you can't go to a higher quote than this. Listen to what he said in Matthew 5 and 44.

For I say unto you, never mind about what the Pharisees have said or the rabbis have taught, I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that spitefully use you and persecute you, that he may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. Those that spitefully use you, do spiteful things against you. How to treat these people? Well, here is the answer.

You know, this is not the initial faith that justifies, but this is the perpetual faith that fortifies. You see, as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord by faith, so walk ye in him. For we are told, we walk by faith and not by sight.

And so it isn't just the initial faith that accepts Christ as Savior that is mentioned here. The faith that justifies. But this continual, this perpetual faith that fortifies and strengthens and equips and enables you to have a spirit like this, a spirit about which Jesus spoke in such terms, so that those who spitefully use you will find not any trace at all of resentment or of trying to get back at them, but rather a desire to bless and curse not, to really help wherever it's possible to do so.

You know, we have a funny sort of a custom in Wales. We have so many Evanses and Joneses and Davises and Thomases and Williamses and so on, that you have to, in towns and villages particularly, attach something to their surname in order to know who you're talking about. You don't talk about Mr. Williams the mailman, you talk about Williams the post.

I know it sounds funny, but this is how it goes, you know. And if you're going to a village and you're looking for Mr. Gormer John the auctioneer, you don't ask for Mr. Gormer John the auctioneer. They look at you in amazement.

If you did, you'd see them working in, Mr. Gormer John the auctioneer. Oh, you mean Gormer John the going-on. Now you know who you're talking about, you see.

And sometimes if it isn't their position or their occupation, it's their place of origin. Sometimes it's some peculiarity that they have in their makeup or perhaps in their experience. But I can remember one character in the village where I was born, and they called him Joe Dowlice.

Now Dowlice is a place in Wales, it's a mining area. And Joe was a miner from Dowlice, so they called him Joe Dowlice. And that's how he was known, I mean, throughout the village.

You didn't know him by any... in fact, I never knew what his surname was. Joe Dowlice. Now Joe Dowlice was a real down-in-the-gutter sort of sinner.

Real down-and-out. But he had the loveliest wife you could possibly imagine meeting. She was a beautiful Christian.

She belonged to the church where I found the Lord as my Savior. And I can remember times without number hearing her pray, Lord, don't forget my Joe. Don't forget him, Lord.

You know how much I love him, and I want you to save him because you love him even more than I do. And there have been times when I've seen her praying that prayer, and she's been in that meeting bruised and bleeding from what he had done to her. I remember one night in particular, her eyes were so swollen where he had bashed her about.

She couldn't see out of them. And she was so bruised in her body, it took her all the time to get down the aisle to her little favorite place, you know, a pew in the meeting. But that night she was still there struggling to her feet and saying, Save my Joe, Lord.

I love him, but you love him more than I do. You save him, Lord. And I was there the night that Joe came into the meeting looking for his wife when he was drunk.

And he came in shouting, Where is she? Where is she? And she stood up from her usual little place. Here I am, Joe, she said. And he came staggering down the aisle, and we wondered what was going to happen.

And when he got as far as where she was standing, you know, he just put her arms out to him like this and put her arms around him. And suddenly he put his arms around her and began to weep like a little baby. And they ended up, both of them, right out there in the aisle on their knees.

And that night he gave his heart to the Lord Jesus. And I remember him testifying. I remember him praying the first time in the meeting.

Got up to his feet. He had been told he should stop, you know, praying in public. Lord, he said, and he stopped.

God, stopped. Jesus, stopped. Savior, stopped.

And, you know, he said, Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child. It was so simple and so lovely. And so very, very real.

But why? Why all this? Because during all the years, the long years of persecution, she had never once reviled him. She had never once turned against him. But every time, without exception, she had taken all the beatings and all the bruising, without a murmur of resentment.

And she had done her level best to be a Christian wife to this ungodly man. And in the end, it broke him down and brought him to the feet of Christ. And there may be some of you tonight who are praying for your husbands or your wives.

I don't think God will ever answer your prayers if your eyes are still too dry. The time is bound to come when God will bring you to the place where you realize not simply that you have a responsibility as a Christian to pray for your husband, but you'll go to lengths, perhaps, beyond human endurance, apart from the grace of God. But this that Jesus said will be fulfilled in you.

And you know you can never outgive God. And if you give and give and give and give and give again, and not retaliate and not resent, and not try to justify yourself, even as this reminds us, bless them which persecute you. Bless and curse not them, remembering the exhortation of Jesus.

And here, of course, of Paul the Apostle. You will find an answer that perhaps you've never found up to this point. Not only is this, the answer of faith, consistent with the exhortation of Jesus, but you know it's consistent with the example of Jesus.

Peter reminds us of this in 1 Peter 2 and verse 23. Who, when he, that is Jesus, was reviled, reviled not again. Where he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

What a tremendous thing this is. Who, when he was reviled. Now this word reviled means to use words like a stinging scourge.

Thus this word reviled. When these words came like a stinging scourge upon his very heart, instead of using the same sort of tactics, he kept absolutely quiet so far as any resentment was concerned, and instead committed the keeping of his soul unto God. The tense is imperfect tense.

He kept on committing, kept on. Every time the reviling words came like a stinging scourge, he instead kept on giving himself over into the hands of God and committing the keeping of his soul to God and refused to retaliate, refused to revile again. It's the example of Jesus.

I know that sometimes people make the mistake of thinking that when Jesus prayed from Calvary, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. It was a sort of blanket forgiveness for the sins of ignorance. It wasn't quite like that.

Forgive them. That word forgive is used when Jesus, you remember, looked at the women who brought their children to him and turned to the disciples. When the disciples would have driven them away and he said, suffer the children to come unto me.

That's the same word, suffer. What Jesus is praying is not simply, Father forgive them because they don't know what they do. They're doing it in ignorance and therefore, well, just close your eyes, but not at all.

Suffer them, Father. Suffer them to do this to me. Allow them to do it now.

And instead of judgment and wrath falling upon them, let it fall on me. This is the example of Jesus. And this is why the Apostle Paul can take up the very words of Christ and interpret them in the way that he does.

Bless them that persecute you. Bless and curse not. This answer of faith is also, I think, consistent with the example of the early Christians and many Christians since those early days too.

You remember the Christian martyr Stephen. Lay not this sin to their charge, he said. Instead of the implications and the curses which were normal and usual to come from the lips of a Jew who was being stoned, instead of that, there is nothing but prayer for God's goodness toward these people.

And I think as Augustine tells us, it was the prayer of Stephen that gave us Paul as an apostle to the Church. And there's a great sense in which this is true. So this is the first thing.

It's the answer of faith to the question of consistency as a Christian. Now please do remember that it is not a Christian's position or attitude in the sight of God to answer the persecution with more persecution, to answer the reviling with reviling, to answer the hardness with hardness, but to adopt the very opposite spirit and attitude. For this is always the resilience of faith in the situation.

And you know it's a law, a fixed law in the moral universe that another wrong can never right the wrongs that wrong has done. It never will work that way. He has done this to me, she did that against me, all right, I'll see to it that they get their reserves.

No. This is not the answer of faith. It is not the Christian's position.

Then you come to verse 15 where you have the answer of faith to the question of sympathy. Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep. Here, of course, it is the household of faith, the body of Christ that is in view.

You remember 1 Corinthians 12, 26 and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. You cannot live independently, you see.

You can only live as a Christian interdependently. Dependent upon your fellow member as the members of your own physical body are dependent upon each other. Rejoice with them that do rejoice.

Jealousy will prevent this and again and again it will strive hard to prevent it. When F. P. Mayer, a great preacher of a former generation, was praying for Campbell Morgan when Campbell Morgan, like you minister, was in America, he found it quite easy to pray, Oh Lord, bless him and make him a blessing. When Campbell Morgan took a church in the same street as F. P. Mayer and F. P. Mayer's congregation started going along to Campbell Morgan, then he found it wasn't quite so easy to pray, Lord, bless him and make him a blessing.

But God dealt with F. P. Mayer on this question and he saw what his attitude was and how foreign to the spirit of Christ it was. And so he changed his whole attitude and approach and he asked his congregation to do the same thing. And the first thing they did was to arrange for an evening when they could really

welcome Campbell Morgan back to his own country.

And the whole congregation turned out and gave him a wonderful evening. And then he got his congregation to pray, F. P. Mayer got his congregation to pray regularly, Bless this man of God. And they had special prayer meetings for him.

And the result was, of course, that as they prayed and asked God to bless Campbell Morgan, God answered their prayer and filled the church and overflowed the church. And they got such an overflowed congregation that F. P. Mayer's church was overflowing. And God, in a marvelous way, blessed this man of God for his faithfulness in exhibiting the spirit of Christ, the spirit of true faith as a Christian.

And so this question of sympathy, you know, can become a very involved one. Jealousy will prevent rejoicing with those that do rejoice. But again, there's something else here.

There's a strange sort of a reasoning, and I've seen it. It's the reasoning of jealousy that what cannot be equaled ought to be condemned. And you'll find this works out time and again in church life.

If a person has something, or a person is able to do something, and you can't do it, or you don't possess it, and you can't have it, well, then you ought to condemn it. This seems to be a sort of thing that happens over and over again. It's a wrong spirit.

It's a wrong attitude. It's not the answer of faith at all. It's not the answer of the Christian concept of what life is all about, or what the conflicts of life are all about.

All right, you can rejoice with those that rejoice, if you're a Christian and if your faith is really in good working order. But weep with them that weep. Ah, selfishness will strive to prevent this.

Weep with those that weep. Unwillingness to become involved. What did Paul say? That he may fill up in me, in my body, that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the church.

There's a principle involved in this. Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Not fill up what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for the world's sake, because there's nothing lacking in that.

But what is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church? Sympathy, sympathia, is suffering together. And so the head in heaven feels the sufferings of his members on earth. But how can he sympathize with them? How can he really weep with them if he does not have human eyes through whom he may weep? Human beings, human channels that he can use.

This is what Paul saw. And so he said to the Lord, Take me, take my body, and you express your sympathy through me. And help me just as readily to weep with those that weep, as I would rejoice with those that do rejoice.

In Talmud, the great American evangelist lost his son. He sat for days, and no one seemed to be able to console or comfort him. One dear friend of his traveled for many, many miles to visit him.

And he came into the room where Talmud sat, and he never said a word. But he reached out his hand, and he took Talmud's hand in his. And he sat there, and his body shook with sobs.

He just wept. And after a while, he got up and left the room and never said a word. And Talmud said afterwards, Suddenly, he said, I felt that there was still balm in Gilead.

Suddenly, I realized there was still a mighty position there. You forget very easily those with whom you laugh. You will never forget those with whom you weep.

This answer of faith to the question of sympathy is, as I said, an involved one. There are so many who are willing to go through the sunlit gate into joy and into rejoicing where those who do rejoice but who shun the valley gate because it's too much involved for them. And they can't find the words to say.

And they don't know how to react. And they're all embarrassed. Ah, yes, but the need is there.

And this should be the answer of faith to the question of sympathy, even as the Apostle Paul expresses it so clearly and so definitely here. Number three, the answer of faith to the question of unity. This you have in the first part of verse 16.

Be of the same mind, one toward another. This is a sort of loving unanimity in thoughtfulness for each other. And here again, it demands the concept of the body of Christ controlled by the disposition of the living head.

In actuality, it pictures a sort of Pentecostal continuance. We remember how the early church is reported to have been of one mind, one soul, one heart when after the Spirit of God fell upon them. And when the same Holy Spirit is controlling all the members, then you will have this unanimity of thoughtfulness, this oneness of mind and soul and heart and purpose where there is no struggling and striving for preeminence and to be the predominant one, but rather a longing and yearning that Christ shall be magnified by the Spirit of God.

And in this sort of concept which binds people together, something emerges which brings glory and praise to the Lord Jesus and real abiding blessing to his own people, members of his church. That's when I see first of all that it's possible to be of one accord when the Spirit of God is really in control. I remember years and years ago in Ticuiti, I was conducting a service there and in the course of the service towards the end, I felt the Lord impelling me to say, now look, I'm going into the little vestry for a few minutes at the end of the service.

If anyone would like to join me, I'd be very grateful. I'm going in to worship the Lord and have a time of prayer and waiting on God. I feel that I must do this.

Now, I didn't know these people. I was a stranger to them. They were strangers to me.

I'd simply been asked there to preach as a guest speaker. As I am here at the moment, although I'm not a stranger to you anymore, praise the Lord. But anyway, at the end of the service, I did this.

I went quietly into the vestry and it was a very large one. I knelt down because I do like to kneel to pray. And I just prayed and worshipped the Lord and sang a little chorus quietly.

And I could hear the sound of moving feet, you know. I didn't lift up my head or open my eyes, but I sensed that the place was filling up. And as I was singing away there and worshipping the Lord, I felt the Spirit of God fall upon me.

And I began to respond to Him in worship, in praise, in thanksgiving, in adoration, in devotion, in telling Him how much I loved Him and how lovely and glorious He is, you know. And I felt this was happening. It was no longer myself who was doing it.

I knew this. The Spirit of God had taken over and over here and over there and over here. In no time at all, the whole of that congregation were in the same attitude and frame of mind, if you like, but in the same spirit.

The Spirit of God fell upon them. And we were there for several hours. And you know, many were filled with the Spirit that night, just kneeling there.

No one touched them. No one said, well, I've got the right kind of technique to get you through. No one said a word to anybody like that at all.

But the Holy Spirit Himself just descended like dew upon Mount Hermon. And everybody was saturated and everybody was filled. It was a marvelous time.

That's unanimity, isn't it? Not uniformity. No, no. Unanimity.

A oneness in spirit which can come if our attitude is right. Now one of the effects of this thinking the same thing with respect to one another is let each soul enter into the feelings and desires of the other as to be of one mind with Him. This is literally the meaning of the word *ais alelus* to be one in mind with Him.

It's impossible to express it in the English. I can't. I've been struggling to find something to express this.

But certainly it's a feeling of mutual allowance and kindness one for the other. No sense of criticism at all here. No stain of a critical spirit at all.

This doesn't enter into it. But rather this unanimity of feeling and compassion one for the other that somehow makes allowances for each other's weaknesses and finds a reason behind it all and is willing to go the second mile in love and compassion and kindness and gentleness and forbearance and patience and all that is Christ-like in disposition. Remember a dear old minister used to express it this way.

He said if you want to get on with people he said remember this my boy to their faults a little blind and to their virtues very kind. I've never forgotten that. To their faults a little blind to their virtues very kind.

This is the sort of thing and it's an expression of faith. It will produce this sort of feeling of allowance for the weaknesses and the failings of other people. There's one other agency that comes into view here too and that is for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

And I think this is the final answer isn't it? The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is not the love of liking. This is the love of prizing.

Prizing the soul for whom Jesus died. Oh there are many unlikable things in your brother and sister. And don't forget that there are many unlikable things in you too.

With the same sort of dispassionate God-like independence that you are judging them. They're judging you. This is the normal procedure isn't it in human life.

But there's something beyond the normal and the usual here. And this is the expression of faith. Alright? Four.

The answer of faith to the question of humility. This is the latter part of verse 16. Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate.

Be not wise in your own conceits. Mind not high things but condescend. Now this word condescend may appear to be out of its setting here.

But when you get the real meaning of the word son sonopago is the word. It means to lead away. Letting the lowly lead you by the hand.

Not the important people. Not the high and mighty ones. But letting the lowly lead you by the hand.

It's a lovely picture. In other words, you have a concern for the lowly ones in the church. And not simply a concern to be reckoned as something by those who are in authority or in the leading part of the service or something like that.

But the lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits. Living letters is a good translation I think.

Don't try to get into the good graces of important people. But enjoy the company of ordinary folk. That's like me and like you.

Enjoy the company of ordinary folk. And don't think you know it all. These negative clauses will destroy the unanimity of love.

This is why the apostle is saying what he is. There shall be no pride of spiritual exclusiveness. Walk hand in hand with lowly things and lowly people.

Jesus did this and the common people heard him gladly. I love that. There's no pride of social distinctiveness here.

And Jesus was like this too. I am meek and lowly in heart. Meek and lowly.

And how can you be anything else in the church of God if your life is expressing Christian faith as it should be. I don't see how it could possibly be at all any different from what the apostle says here. For this is the answer of faith to the question of humility.

There was a little country church and out in the front at the altar was a well-dressed man kneeling. And a country woman came in because she had a moment or two to spare and thought she might just spend it in prayer. And she went forward and knelt alongside this well-dressed gentleman to kneel to pray.

And then she took a sideways glance at him and she saw it was King George VI. And she sort of quietly tried to pull herself to her feet and walk away. And he reached out a restraining hand and he said, No, no, don't go.

We are all equal here. All equal here. And although Calvary may be a hill at the base of the cross, it's absolutely flat.

We're all equal there. And we're all equal as members of the body of Christ in God's sight. Don't ever think for a moment that because you are perhaps more intelligent than someone else that God can use you in a greater capacity.

He may be able to. But it isn't your intelligence that he wants, it's your heart that he wants. And if he's got your heart, then he's got everything that he requires.

No pride of social distinctiveness. And no pride of personal greatness. Be not wise in your own conceits, he says.

Stop overestimating your own opinion of yourself. I can recall a missionary returning from Africa and telling us that he visited one of the chiefs of a tribe there. And he went into this hut business, you know, where the chief was sitting on a stool, a three-legged stool, he said.

It reminded him somehow of a dairy, the old-fashioned type. But he saw this man sitting on the three-legged stool. And he had a loincloth on and a bowler hat, you know, the old-fashioned hard hat? And a spear in his hand.

And my friend, who was well known as a missionary in the district, walked in. And the first thing this man said to him was, Now, what do they think of me in London? They'd never even heard of him in London. But the idea that was there, the pride of place, the pride of position, the pride of real social exclusiveness in a mud hat is almost unbelievable, isn't it? And yet I am afraid that in the church of the living God, time and time again, where God intended our bodies should be sanctuaries for the indwelling Holy Spirit, they can become slums because of our freshly indulgences and because of our own lack of understanding of where we are in the sight of God.

I can remember a man praying once in a prayer meeting. And he was one of these intellectuals, too, and he thought he had it all. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard him pray.

Paradoxical as it may appear unto thee, O Lord. I don't know where he expected the Lord to be. Yes, paradoxical as it may appear unto thee, O Lord.

Oh, dear. How can we cure ourselves of this idea of overestimating our own importance? And you know, let's face it, there's something of this in us all, isn't there? We do think we are the most important people in the world at times. We do.

We're inclined to think this way until God cuts us down to size, of course. But I believe this. If we see the depths from which God has brought us in view of the heights to which he calls us, if we see our colossal ignorance in the light of his divine intelligence, if we see our human weakness in the light of God's all-mightiness, and above all, if we see our human sinfulness in the light of God's perfect holiness, it will cure us of any great ideas of our self-importance.

Oh, but I'm so inadequate. I'm so unable to do things. I feel myself to be so small and insignificant.

Well, as we said the other night, the smaller you are, the more room there is for God. And I believe that this is the answer of faith to the question of humility, set here quite practically and indeed quite clearly and plainly. And we ought never to forget this lesson.

It's of tremendous importance. One thing more, the answer of faith to the question of honesty in verse 17. Recompense an old man evil for evil.

Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Recompense is to give back, give back to no man wrong for his wrong to you. But provide for noy.

Perceive in advance or take thought for this beforehand. For what? That there may be things honest. This word honest is kalos.

Exterior goodness. The word for intrinsic goodness, hidden goodness, is agathos. What the apostle is saying is this.

Let there be an outshining goodness in your life that somehow will be a recompense rather than the evil for evil which is natural in the world. So this is the answer of faith to this question of what the authorized version calls honesty. It really is outshining goodness.

Ask a Christian, he seems to say, let this be the answer of your faith to the question of what you do when people do wrong to you. Do not pay back wrong for wrong. Don't do that.

And secondly, take thought beforehand so that your Christianity is an outward expression of goodness which is true of your inward character so that there is no hypocrisy, no compromise, no insincerity, no presumption, no pretense, but absolute and complete honesty as a Christian in an outshining life that is bound to register.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27136.mp3>

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