



PART 16: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

INTRODUCTION – Martin VS. Malcolm

Romans 12:21

Look To The Book

Romans 12:14-13:7

1. Together we are called to offer our bodies as one harmonious, holy, living sacrifice to God. This act of worship will be accomplished through how we live our lives every day of the week, not just in a special service one day of the week. It will call for us to renew our way of thinking according to Scripture, the Spirit, and the love ethic of Jesus. This will change our relationships with other believers and with others outside our family of faith, including our enemies.
2. **12:14-16...** Paul is illustrating how being a living sacrifice radically changes our orientation in relationships with God, other Christ-followers, and even our enemies. Because we seek to live lives that are no longer egocentric but Christocentric, we will not strive for our own rights, success, or security, but will lay it all down for the good of others and the glory of God. No matter what our status in the world, in church life we will be happy to do “lowly” tasks or to work closely with people of low status. Church is the safe and loving community where we can leave our world-based roles behind to be who we are truly meant to be.
3. **12:17-21...** Christ-followers must have no part in *revenge* or *wrath* (also see **Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9**). We must leave all issues of punishment up to God and focus on loving our enemies. Here Paul is highlighting one stream of Old Testament thought (see **Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 32:35; 2 Kings 6:21-23; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 25:21-22**) and obviously closely following the counter-cultural, counter-intuitive teaching of Jesus (**Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36**). Still, he is not parroting Jesus, but teaching Jesus’ thoughts from his heart. He understands Christ’s teaching on enemy love and he is closely following it, although teaching it in his own words. He “owns” it. This is a fantastic example of what Christian discipleship should look like.
4. **13:1-7...** Paul has made it clear that Christians should have no part of a process of revenge or wrath (i.e., payback), but that God would take care of that. This raises the question – how will God “repay”? Chapter 13 now answers that question in part. Not only will God judge at the end of time, but even now he is bringing justice and order into the world through governments. Governments may function far from perfectly (as does the Church!), but they still represent God’s desire for justice and order which, no matter how imperfectly they manifest it, is still better than total anarchy and disorder (see **Daniel 4:17, 25, 32; Proverbs 8:15; 1 Timothy 2:1-4**). Christians are to submit to and be supportive of human authority, knowing that God is working through their decisions (also see **Matthew 22:15-22; John 19:11; 1 Peter 2:13-17**). We should find it encouraging that God can and does work through earthly systems, even those that appear to work against his will (e.g., **Judges 20:35; 2 Chronicles 36:15-19; Isaiah 10:5-11; 19:1-4; 45:1-7; Jeremiah 4:11-18; Habakkuk 1:5-12**).

5. **12:17-13:7...** Paul lays out two aspects of God’s work in this world: on the one hand is mercy, grace, forgiveness, compassion and on the other hand is justice, punishment, and vengeance for wrongdoing. Both aspects are ways human beings can fight evil. The question is, where do Christ-followers fit in? Romans 12 highlights the role of the Church, the body of Christ. Romans 13 highlights the role of the State, the government. Christians are clearly called to *submit* to the government, but to *function like* the Church. To *function* as part of the government is to place oneself at odds with the clear teaching of chapter 12.

So What?

TAKE OUT #1:

In light of **Romans 12**, Christ-followers must _____ evil, not reflect it.

TAKE OUT #2:

In light of **Romans 13**, Christ-followers must always submit to and honour the government, although we may not always _____ it.

Exodus 1:17; Daniel 3; 6; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29; 23:1-5

TAKE OUT #3:

In light of the combined teaching of **Romans 12 & 13**, Christ-followers should seriously question participation with government in being an agent of God’s _____.

CONCLUSION – Holding The Right Sword

Revelation 19:15

FOR FURTHER STUDY... *When Darkness Falls (teaching series)*

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP & REVIEW...

1. Discuss the implications of this quote by Richard B. Hays: *Harming or killing enemies is no longer a justifiable option in the light of Jesus’ kingdom demand. Believers must renounce violence in their personal relationships and avoid governmental positions that might force them to use violence.*
2. Use your notes to review this week’s message, including our key text. As you go, talk about what challenged, perplexed, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Read over **Romans 12:14-13:7** in different translations. a) Does anything new stand out to you while hearing the same message presented differently? b) The message of **12:16** can mean that we should associate with “lowly” people or things (i.e., people of low status or menial tasks). Are there any kinds of people or tasks that you find it difficult to associate with? Why do you think that is? c) Can you picture yourself really living out in practical terms the teaching of **12:20-21**? Talk about areas in your life where you need the strength to live this principle or times that you have and what the results were. d) Look at TAKE OUT #2 (including Scripture passages). What is the difference between submission and obedience? Is it possible to fully honour a government while refusing to obey? How might that look in various potential situations around the world (past, present, or potential future)? e) Are there ways today that you think the Evangelical church (of which we are a part... sort of) is not doing a good job living out the principles of this passage of Scripture?

SO WHAT?...

4. Take a few minutes to meditate on **12:21** with a focus on what it would look like fully lived out in your life. Talk about ways you need God’s help to live this out and pray for each other regarding this.

Bruxy Cavey @ THE MEETING HOUSE – Sunday, August 7 / 14 , 2005