

Tuesday's Touch ...#34

...from Pastor Ed ...September 15, 2009

Doormats Indeed!

Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven... Matt 5:11

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him who strikes you on the one cheek offer also the other... Luke 6:27-29

Repay to no one evil for evil... Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Rom 12:17-20

I am sometimes amazed at how self righteous we can become as Christians while blatantly ignoring and violating one of our Lord's most basic commands to His New Covenant people- ***Love your enemies***. When someone is confronted about this the response is often, "Well, we are not called to be doormats." Excuse me? Bless those who revile, persecute and abuse you; repay no one evil for evil; do not avenge yourselves; feed your enemies; turn the other cheek? Sounds pretty much like "doormats" to me. The problem is that we so easily defend the flesh by twisting the Lord's commands into that which is acceptable by the *world's* standards. We are not at all willing to accept the fact that *Christ said* we must die to self if we would be His disciples (Matt 16:24-26; Lk 14:25-27; Gal 2:20; 6:14). And if we are not His disciples, then we have no Biblical basis on which to claim salvation by some superficial profession. Friends, this is serious stuff!

How then should we respond to the insults and injuries of others? By the power of the Holy Spirit we must willing, and prepare ourselves to face the inevitable affronts of others graciously, with longsuffering and patience (Colos 1:11).

1. First, we must maintain daily communion with the Lord, keeping ourselves in the love of God (Jude 19-21); praying not to be led into temptation (Matt 6:12-13); being led by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:8:14, cf vs9).

2. When others do offend or hurt us, we must resist the immediate fleshly urge to respond in kind or to lash out (Rom 12:17-20; Prov 25:28).
3. Flee to Christ immediately. Commit your pain to Him. Seek the grace to walk as He walked (1 Peter 2:19-23; Heb 4:16).
4. Forgive. Be willing to let it go. Do nothing else until you *are* willing. **Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling.** We choose to forgive, remembering our own infinite debt against God, which debt He has freely forgiven us in Christ (Colos. 3:12-13). We must never wait until the other person asks forgiveness. Jesus' executioners weren't asking forgiveness as they nailed him to the cross, yet He forgave them (Lk 23:34). Those stoning Steven certainly weren't repenting when he forgave them (Acts 7:59-60). Don't fall into the trap. Otherwise, you will be held hostage by the offense. You will bear needless suffering and subject yourself to great temptations to sin. While those who harm you can't receive the benefit of forgiveness until they repent, you must not be held captive by binding yourself with bitterness and unforgiveness (even though the flesh actually loves obsessing about such things).
5. Pray for your enemies. If possible, bless them with demonstrations of kindness. It may be that that very witness will bring them to repentance. If they remain hardened, it isn't wrong to remember that justice will be brought to bear in God's time; and that those who have resisted the kindnesses of God and others are heaping coals of fire upon their own heads (Rom 2:4-5; 12:19-20; 1 Peter 2:23).
6. If the offender is a professing Christian, then, after we have cleared our own hearts before the Lord, we must go and seek reconciliation, following Matt 18:15-20.
7. ALWAYS ask the Lord to give you grace to see the lesson He wants to teach *you* through all this. Needed rebuke doesn't always come justly or with kind words; but we always must be willing to hear it and, by His grace, benefit.

*Merciful Father,
May the meekness and gentleness of Christ make us mighty to glorify You.
Struggling to die daily,
Amen*

*To comment, add a friend, or to ask more information about the salvation offered to us in Christ, please respond to: pastored@springwoodchapel.com
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