

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

The word of the Seven Spirits that we consider for this morning is from the letter to the Romans 12:17-21.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 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." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

Some of the wars in history have started for very trivial reasons. Don't get me wrong, there can be justification for going to war. But in 1969 when Honduras and El Salvador went to war, it might be for the silliest reason I've heard of. The war in question is typically called The Soccer War.

Now as with anything there is some background before the two countries started the actual battle. After some elections the economy in Honduras started to fail. One particular Honduran leader blamed the 300,000 undocumented Salvadorans who entered Honduras.

He began to associate the Salvadorans as land invaders causing a turn in attitude of the general public. The treaty of 1967 which regulated the immigration from El Salvador into Honduras wasn't renewed. And finally people were expelled from Honduras if they were found to be in the country illegally.

One would actually expect that it would be at this point that the war would begin. People were being forced to leave their homes. The amount of anxiety must've been very high. With 300,000 Salvadorans the word must've spread quickly as to the fact that people were being forced to leave. But it wasn't at this time that the war began.

Being in Central America football is the sport of choice. Not American Football, but what we call Soccer. And in June of 1969 the two countries had a triple elimination match as a preliminary to the World Cup.

It was reported that disturbances broke out during the first match. But during the second match in El Salvador things did get a bit worse. Some Honduran fans were roughed up; the Honduran flag and the Honduran national anthem were insulted.

From this point is when things started to escalate and the war began. Around 2,000 people mostly civilians were killed in the brief war. All over a demonstration at a football match that could've been taken on any other day as a bunch of hooligans supporting their team. This, the nature of man.

In hindsight we can say how trivial this war was. We can easily sit back and fault others for the choices that have been made. But we have the same nature.

Therefore our Lord reminds us in our text today that **“Evil is overcome with good.”**

Our text today says this in many different ways. And typically don't we need to be told many different times and in many different ways for us to understand? But what we have before us is the Word of God which is able to make one wise unto salvation.

The first statement in our text says so simply, **“Repay no one evil for evil.”** The idea of repaying someone is not lost on any of us. I assume that the vast majority of us here today have bills. We go into a situation where we understand and assume the responsibility for repaying someone for the services they provide. We even begin to teach our children at a very young age what this concept is about. We often compensate them for doing chores to teach them about life.

But the repaying that the Lord is speaking of here is speaking of evil intentions. As sinful human beings we even need to define what evil is. Since the fall of mankind and from the point of our conception evil is our natural state. Evil, simply put is when something is done contrary to God's will.

All of Scripture shows us what God's will is. The Ten Commandments clearly define what His will is. But to even simplify things we hear about a lawyer who questioned Jesus trying to trick Him.

Matt 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 "This is the first and great commandment. 39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

What a humbling thing to hear. Each and every time we do not love God above all else we do not love our neighbor. And when we do not love our neighbor as ourselves we actually make ourselves out to be God. And our text says that we should not repay anyone with evil. Society can make many different excuses for loving some and not another. If we take it to the extreme we see the example of the K.K.K.

So then we are to **“Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”** Although the Law condemns us it can also be used as a rule. We use it as a way to know what we should and should not do. In that we can come to know what the “good things” are from our text.

Having this regard should be a 24 hour a day way of living. The term Sunday Christian might do well in describing what our text is speaking of. We come to church and love those who love us. But do we show the same regard for everyone we come into contact with?

But the Lord shows us that it is at times not possible to live at peace with one another. Our text says, **“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”** As stated earlier sometimes wars are justified. If an army invades a country it is good and right to defend oneself. In speaking of governments which God establishes He says, **“But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”**

Our text continues, **“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.”** The term beloved is one that is used when

one wishes to exhort in a loving, concerned way. It is the same as when a parent sits down with their child to instruct them out of love. So then it is our Lord speaking to us as a loving Father through the Apostle Paul.

We are told to give place to wrath. The idea is that we should allow for the occasion or the chance to let it occur in our lives against us.

And here we are told why we shouldn't avenge ourselves; because it is God's responsibility alone. We are His creation and we are subject to His wishes. Not only all of mankind but especially as children who love their heavenly Father. And when mankind receives his reward it will be a vengeance that we could never accomplish, punishment forever in hell.

And just like I stated earlier, we often need to be told things in more than one way to understand things. So our text continues, **"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."**

The examples used are general truths. They are a way to show whatever your neighbor is need of we should try to supply. In the age we live in, social programs have seemingly taken over the role of supplying food and shelter for much of the world. But often these organizations cannot be trusted. And we also find ourselves outside of fellowship with them.

But we should first begin with our families. Parents will go to work so they will provide for their families even though husbands and wives don't always get along. Children can be unruly. Boss' can be unfair. The talk around the water cooler can be filled with gossip. People drive rudely. But when we respond with love evil is overcome with good. We make way for it in our lives. We in turn love God and our neighbor.

And the result of evil being overcome with good is also found in our text, **"For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."** We don't approach loving someone for the purpose of causing them harm. Then it wouldn't be love. But we are told what the response will often be in heaping coals onto someone's head. The act of love in the face of evil is something that the world doesn't understand. People will even accuse you of doing good for the sole purpose of embarrassing them. But this part of our text is meant to keep us in mind of what might happen.

Sometimes though, another reaction is seen. It is one of wonderment and confusion. People might be trying to get you upset. To get under your skin so they have the upper hand. But when you respond with love evil is overcome with good. This happens when they see your good works and in turn glorify your Father in heaven. This takes place by them wondering why and how you reacted the way you did. They see something attractive to them and they want to have it. It may even lead to an opportunity to witness to them about Jesus.

In whom we find the greatest example of evil being overcome with good. In Jesus Christ we see that He has done all these things. This is called the active obedience of Christ. And our salvation through Him is partially hinged on this obedience.

Once again our text says, **“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”** In this, our Savior was faithful. On one occasion Jesus was in the Synagogue and He was questioned whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. **“Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 “Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.”**

If Jesus gave into the temptation and didn't heal the man in this account we would've seen Jesus repaying the evil intentions of those who questioned Jesus taken out against the man with the withered hand. He had regard for good things in the sight of all men. He showed those who questioned Him what having regard for good was. Jesus' life was being sought out for much of His time on Earth. But He put things into the hands of His Heavenly Father and trusted that He would fulfill all things. To give Him a chance of escape until the proper time.

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” How much more could God keep this promise? We rebelled against Him. We were the ones who created sin. But our loving, patient God made it possible for Him and us to live peaceably. When He even before time began had the plan of our salvation laid out through His Son, Christ Jesus. And when we come to know our sinfulness how true and wonderful do these words wring upon our ears. **“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”** So then vengeance was served. Not upon us, but upon the sinless Son of God.

Taking strides to live a sanctified life is something that is going to be very hard for all of us. We still have the old Adam living in us. Don't go forward feeling guilty and feeling like you have to fulfill God's Law for the salvation of your souls. Go forward with this in the forefront of your minds, **“We love Him because He first loved us.”**

With this as your motivation your love towards God and all of mankind will be pleasing to Him. A sweet smelling aroma, a sacrifice pleasing to God. And in turn, evil will be overcome with good. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.