

INTRODUCTION

1. Surrender is at the base of all true Christian behavior (vv. 1, 2).
2. God has equipped His Son's Body (the church) with a variety of gifts. These are designed to cause the effective functioning of the Body (vv. 3-8).
3. Out of this marvelous provision of God for the Body, flows a series of injunctions under grace. Each one is as challenging to the believer as another. Yet, all stand there as the will of God (vv. 12-21). Some seem more toward the inside (vv. 9-13) while others are more outward (vv. 14-21). It is a matter of emphasis.

4. Consider further expressions of love:

1. LOVE AND REVENGE v. 17a

The verb render is "give back." It is a participle. The principle was laid down in v. 14, but here is a warning against any active efforts. There is no place for "getting even" with anybody, believer or non believer. The connection with v. 16 is patent. Pride wounded is ready to act. Yet nothing is more Christlike than this injunction (1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9; 1 Thess. 5:15). Compare Mt. 5:38, 43. It is manly to punish; it is Christlike to forgive.

2. LOVE AND THOUGHT v. 17b

The verb "provide" is better rendered "take thought before hand" (cf. 2 Cor. 8:21). This is a good admonition to support the adage: think before you act! The behaviour you perform in the sight of all men must have forethought. The kind of deportment we do should be "honorable" i.e. beautiful or excellent. By our conduct, we are not to injure the Gospel in the sight of men. This is not to be a contradiction to Jude 3. It is only possible, too possible, to be faithful in a hard, censorious spirit while our testimony is colored and spoiled. Be faithful, but not bitter.

3. LOVE AND PEACE v. 18

Consider: Suffer baseness from any man (v. 17a). Plan only things excellent in all men's eyes (v. 17b) and now--peace. Peace is not always possible, but let not what originates with you be in that direction. It takes two to make an argument; don't be one to do it! Believers are to be the peace makers with "all

men." This verse must be in harmony with Mt. 10:34 and the often turbulent life of Paul (cf. 2 Cor.).

4. LOVE AND VENGEANCE v. 19, 20

a. Negative

Here is an independent participle which includes the idea of exacting justice. This is not a case of dethroning justice, but taking it out of your own hands (cf. v. 14, 17). To exact justice ourselves we'd probably fall from justice for our wrongs swell out of proportion in our own minds. Note the appeal to the "beloved."

b. Positive

The aorist imperative says: give place to the wrath (of God). Step aside and let God's wrath take charge. It will leave the believer untouched, but will rush to do justice. What a word (cf. Eph. 4:27).

c. Scripture

The quote is from Deut. 32:35 (cf. Heb. 10:30). It is still on record (perfect tense) that perfect justice will be meted out in every case and will be done perfectly. Believers are to take care of their character; God will take care of their interests.

d. Example

This is opposite to what the world does. The present tense verbs signal: get to hunger, get to thirst. The ideas are pictured in course, therefore, "morsel him." What a charitable way to treat a person who offends!

CONCLUSION

The sum of all regarding evil is given (v. 21). Here is the expulsive power of Christianity. It is a crowning point. The present imperatives, one passive and the other active, are durative. If they are iterative in meaning, the verse reads, "do not let evil gain one victory after another over you, but in every battle gain a victory over the evil." The definite article with good and evil may personify them. It is true: we win by yielding, we gain by giving, we avenge by forgiving, we conquer by forgetting ourselves so as to return good for evil. Amen.