

LUBE FOR YOUR LIFE
ROMANS 12:9-21

INTRODUCTION:

- A. ACC Pastor Lowell Wendt used to make a little speech every time he welcomed new members into the church. He would say, *“This is not a perfect church; and if it was, it would cease to be so when you joined.”*

BIG IDEA: It takes a lot of relational lubrication to keep Christians from abrading one another..

I. THE LUBRICATION OF LOVE

- A. Love Marked by Sincerity (v. 9, *Love must be sincere*, NASB, *Let love be without hypocrisy*).

1. There’s a lot of talk about love in this world...most of it insincere.
2. We say, “Talk is cheap” and it is. It gets costly when we deliver the goods. That’s what the Bible means by “love without hypocrisy.”
3. Hypocrisy was the Greek word for **actor**. *“Greek and Roman actors of Christ’s time wore large masks and costumes designed to increase the size of their appearance.”*¹
4. Hypocrisy doesn’t so much mean that the person is consciously living a lie. It means that his behavior doesn’t line up with his professed values. The hypocrite may be fully aware of his play acting. But more often than not he may be oblivious and self-deceived.
5. Like the speaker in **James 2:15**, *Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*
I think that speaker felt badly about that poor person’s plight. But he didn’t see any connection between feeling and doing.
6. Sincerity means...
 - that if I tell promise someone I will pray for him, I really do
 - that if we encourage a family to become a missionaries, we help support them
 - that if we say we want to reach the 38,000 unchurched people in this community, we warmly greet new people who show up in church and try to get to know them
 - that if you find out someone in this church family is lonely and isolated, you take steps to include her

- B. Love Marked by Devotion (v. 10, *be devoted to one another in brotherly love*)

1. I will always be proud of the way **Alderwood** showed its devoted love to a broken family in the church. One of the leading men had rebelled against God and left his family, moved to another state and abandoned his family for another woman. The Elders sent letters but there was no reply. They placed phone calls but couldn’t get past the secretary. No one would have faulted them for giving up at that point. But they bought 2 plane tickets and sent a Pastor and an Elder to contact that man in the parking lot as he walked out of his office to go home in the evening. I doubt that the man received that confrontation as an act of devoted, brotherly love. But it was. It was gutsy, scary and costly.
2. A healthy church possesses a family-depth of love. Family love persists. Family love doesn’t want to let people go. Family love doesn’t let people suffer alone. Families stick together and take care of their own.

- C. Love Marked by Sacrifice (v. 10, *Honor one another above yourselves*)

¹ Bill Rodgers, “Our Staged Performance,” *Moody Monthly*, December 1984, 100.

1. This is **Jonathan-love**. When young David came on the scene, Prince Jonathan honored him above himself. He symbolized it by clothing David with his own armor. He ratified it by risking his neck to protect David's life when he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that David was destined for the throne that was rightfully Jonathan's.
2. The essence of love is to treat another better than you treat yourself. We call that "sacrifice" and that's an appropriate term because it is an act of love that costs us something. **Philippians 2** says that we are never more like Christ than when we love like this.

II. THE LUBRICATION OF PURITY

- A. Purity Marked by Revulsion of Evil Things (v. 9, *Hate what is evil*)
 1. All the good things in this passage will die if we do not vigilantly guard against evil.
 2. It was for this very reason that Jesus gave the Church at Thyatira a personal wake-up call. **Revelation 2: 18** *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.*
[So far sounds like a very loving church. Sounds almost perfect, in fact! But listen to the next verse...]
20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.
 3. The principle of Scripture is clear: Sin is a cancer that destroys everything spiritual. In the Book of Judges, the Israelites tried to mix Jehovah worship with idol worship and it didn't work. First it destroyed their relationship with God and then it destroyed their relationships with each other. Once they allowed sin into the camp, it wasn't long before they **out-paganed the pagans**.
 4. But it's not enough to hate sin...
- B. Purity Marked by Passion for Good Things (v. 9, *cling to what is good*)
 1. Jesus expressed it in the Beatitudes, *6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* (**Matthew 5**)
 2. He said it again in the same sermon, *seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,* (**Matthew 6:33**)
 3. He called doing God's will his very **food and drink** in **John 4**.
 4. We have to want purity so much that we can taste it. We have to cling to it because the world is doing everything it can to pry our fingers off it.
 - The world ridicules **abstinence** and calls it prudish.
 - The world says that what one does in one's **private life** has nothing to do with public service.
 - The world bombards the **modesty** of the Christian from the theaters to billboards to grocery check-out lines with slogans and allurements that tempt and break down moral resistance.
 5. A church that is serious about Christlikeness is a church that treasures goodness and refuses to cave in to the pressures of the world.

III. THE LUBRICATION OF ACTION

- A. Action marked by Zealous Hearts (v. 11, *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep up your spiritual fervor...*)
 1. One of the guys of the church sent me an e-mail recently. He was surfing the net when he stumbled on a web page with an entry on it for "LIFE." He double-clicked on a sub-title called "Religion" and up came two sub-categories listed under "Religion": "Lifestyle" and "Hobbies."
 2. Lifestyle is the category that fits this context.

3. Contrast two men in the Bible.
 - a. One was Amaziah, **II Chronicles 25:1** *Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. ... 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but **not wholeheartedly.***
 - b. The other was the Apostle Paul, **Romans 1:9**, *I serve [God] with my **whole heart** in preaching the gospel of his Son,*
4. What is true in the heart shows up in the life...so...
- B. Action Marked by Serving Hands (v. 11, *serving the Lord*)
 1. Much of our serving the Lord takes the form of serving others for His sake. That's what verses 3-8 are all about.
 2. A healthy church doesn't have to struggle to find people willing to serve in its core ministries, like discipling new believers and helping with first grade Sunday School. In fact, in a healthy church, there aren't enough core ministry jobs to involve all the people of the church. Such a church has so many available workers, that they need to be deployed out in the community serving and reaching people for Christ.
 3. One summer the SCC guys helped three families **re-roof** their houses, saving them thousands of dollars.
 4. Have you ever helped people to load and unload moving vans?
 5. Is there anything spiritual about all these projects? There sure is when you're the one who was praying for help!
 6. "Sermons We See" by **Edgar Guest**

*I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel's oft' confusing, but example's always clear.*

*And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds;
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs.
I can soon learn how to do it if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action but your tongue too fast may run.*

*And the lectures you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you, and the high advice you give.
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.*

*When I see a deed of kindness, I am eager to be kind.
When a weaker brother stumbles and a strong man stays behind
Just to see if he can help him, then the wish grows strong in me
To become as big and thoughtful as I know that friend to be.*

*And all travelers can witness that the best of guides today
Is not the one who tells them, but the one who shows the way.
One good man teaches many, men believe what they behold;
One deed of kindness noticed is worth forty that are told.*

*Who stands with men of honor learns to hold his honor dear,
For right living speaks a language which to every one is clear.
Though an able speaker charms me with his eloquence, I say,
I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one, any day.*

IV. THE LUBRICATION OF A DIVINE PERSPECTIVE

- A. Perspective Marked by Confidence about God's Future Plans (v. 12, *Be joyful in hope.*)
- B. Perspective Marked by Confidence that God Uses Suffering (v. 12, *patient in affliction.*)

C. Perspective Marked by Confidence that God Answer Prayer (v. 12, *faithful in prayer.*)

V. THE LUBRICATION OF GENEROSITY

A. Generosity Marked by Acts of Giving (v. 13, *share with God's people who are in need*)

1. The early church didn't do everything right, but they really nailed the practice of generosity. Listen to this sound bite out of the First Church of Jerusalem, *32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. 34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:32-35)*
2. I believe that this is true of our church and I am so pleased that it is. There may be unmet needs of which we are unaware, but if there is a need brought to our attention, it gets met. We...
 - Buy groceries
 - Take prepared meals to front doors
 - Repair cars
 - Pay utility bills
 - Help with mortgage payments
 - Repair furnaces
 - Provide professional marriage counseling
 - Buy plane tickets
 - Help with extraordinary medical expenses
3. How does it happen? It happens quietly friend to friend. It happens within the circle of love in Home Groups. It happens through Women's Ministries. It happens through our Pastors dispensing Benevolence Funds given by people of the church.
4. Take a quick look at **I Corinthians 16: 1** *Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.* This was special giving for needy Christians in Jerusalem. The Corinthian Christians still needed to support their church and their missionaries. But this was something extra and it required deliberate planning so that when the opportunity arose, they would have been prepared for it. Paul had a great plan. Part of Sunday worship is not just putting something in the offering at church...It is also putting something in the offering at home...a sacred savings account set apart for helping Christians in need.

B. Generosity Marked by Acts of Hospitality (v.13, *practice hospitality*)

1. Christian Schwarz wanted to find out what makes churches grow. He surveyed 1000 churches in 32 countries around the world. He ended up with 4.2 million responses in 18 languages. Out of this extensive study he identified 8 quality characteristics of growing churches. One of the eight is "Loving Relationships." How do you measure love in a written survey? I was intrigued with one way he did it. He asked people how many times they invited one another over to their homes for meals or coffee. The per family average of invitations in a year was **17** for people in high quality growing churches.
2. The words "hospitable" and "hospitality" appear seven times in the New Testament.
 - It is a requirement for Elders
 - It is a requirement for the Staff Widows Paul describes in I Timothy 5

- It is something every Christian should do even though it may be inconvenient. I think the inconvenience factor is why **I Peter 4:9** says *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*
 - It is something we should do for missionaries as they come through town (III John 1:8)
3. An open heart translates into an open home.
 4. We have lost much of the spirit of hospitality in our culture. Faith Popcorn claims that we have become a “cocooning” people who foray out to work and shop and work out at the gym. But then we come home with a video movie and microwavable popcorn and with a push of a button drop the garage door drawbridge and seal ourselves off from other people.
 5. Let’s each get out our calendars and a little slip of paper and plan to have some people over for at least a cup of coffee. It’s a small but significant act of self-giving generosity.

VI. THE LUBRICATION OF LOYALTY

A. Loyalty Marked by Friendship that Weathers the Lows (v. 15, *mourn with those who mourn*)

1. Have you ever had a friend who became deeply depressed? You had to work at loving your friend, didn’t you?
 - He stopped calling you and you had to take all the initiative
 - She didn’t want to talk about anything except her problems which left you totally drained after every conversation.
 - He was negative and accusatory.
 - She rejected every helpful suggestion you made.
 - Your friend didn’t even want to pray and said some pretty unchristian things about God. But you were there for your friend and you loved him through it.
 - You were to your friend what **Dinah Craik** wrote about more than 100 years ago: *Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with another person. Having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together - Certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.”*
2. Have you walked with a friend through the grief of divorce, the death of a loved one or a major health threat?
 - You didn’t know what to say; after all, you weren’t trained to be a professional counselor!
 - You were afraid that you might be intruding or that you’d be getting in over your head.
 - You were uncomfortable at the prospect of being around grief and tears.
 - But you went anyway. You sat with your friend. You didn’t say very much but you were there. You gave a hug or you squeezed a hand.
 - You invested time that you really didn’t have to give. But you adjusted your schedule to make it work.

B. Loyalty Marked by Friendship that Weathers the Highs (v. 15, *rejoice with those who rejoice*)

1. You might think that this is a no-brainer, but be careful...it gets more complicated than you think.
 - An infertile couple hear the news that their closest friends just got pregnant. They ask, “Why them and not us?!” It’s hard to rejoice.
 - He finally pops the question and she excitedly calls her closest girlfriend to share the happy news. The girlfriend tries to sound happy

for her but hangs up the phone with a bitter spirit. “Why her and not me?”

- The guy in the office next door gets a big promotion and pay raise. You feel overlooked. You feel overlooked. You force out words of congratulation but they have a hollow ring.
2. There is a **fable** “*wherein the devil once was crossing the Libyan Desert when he met a group of small fiends who were tempting a holy hermit. They tried him with the seductions of the flesh; they sought to sour his mind with doubts and fears; they told him that all his austerities were nothing worth. But it was of no avail; the holy man was impeccable. Then the devil stepped forward. Addressing the imps, he said, ‘Your methods are too crude. Permit me for one moment. This is what I should recommend.’ Going up to the hermit he said, ‘Have you heard the news? Your brother has been made the Bishop of Alexandria.’ The fable says that a scowl of malignant jealousy clouded the serene face of the holy man.*” (Ralph Turnbull, *A Minister’s Obstacles*, p.37)
 3. It is sometimes an easier things to mourn with friends than to rejoice with them. Because we must love them as ourselves. We must rejoice as robustly with them as if their good fortune was our very own.

VII. THE LUBRICATION OF HUMILITY

A. Humility Marked by Divine Objectivity (v. 16, *Do not be proud....Do not be conceited*)

1. It’s no wonder the warning against pride is twice repeated in this verse. If I read my Bible correctly, pride is the greatest of sins.
 - It was Satan’s first and greatest sin (Ezekiel 28:17; I Timothy 3:6)
 - It led Eve to eat the forbidden fruit
 - David succumbed to it and 70,000 innocent people died (II Samuel 24:15)
 - Young Elders are especially vulnerable to it (I Timothy 3:6).
 - It plagued the Twelve Disciples as they jostled each other for thrones in the Kingdom
 - It split the Church at Corinth into ugly factions
 - It will rob you of God’s grace and will put God in opposition against you (I Peter 5:5)
2. The antidote is humility. Every time the Disciples got on a pride kick, Jesus reminded them about servanthood. He held little kids on His lap, He washed their feet, He died on the cross.
3. Although He was their Master and Lord, He described Himself in these words to them, *...I am among you as one who serves.* (Luke 22:27)

B. Humility Marked by Leveling (v. 16, *be willing to associate with people of low position*)

1. It is very human to want to hang a round with people you feel are your equals or better. Test yourself by looking at the invitation list for the **last party** you threw.
2. Did you know that Jesus talked about **party invitation lists**? He was invited to a Sabbath dinner party by a prominent Pharisee. During the dinner, *12 ... Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:12-14)*
3. Church parking lots ought to be well mixed with new cars and old beat-up station wagons.
Home Groups should well mixed with blue and white collars.
This church ought to have open arms for welfare families and struggling single moms and the mentally retarded and wives of prison inmates.

We ought to never forget to visit and love our elderly who can't attend church anymore and are no longer useful in staffing our programs or putting money in the offering.

We need to see affection between struggling young couples and comfortably-well-off retirees.

We should change our party lists.

VIII. THE LUBRICATION OF GRACE

- A. Grace Marked by Dissimilar Response (v. 17, *Do not repay anyone evil for evil*)
1. You call home from work to check on your family. Your wife answers the phone crying and chokes out the news that the neighbor man got angry at your 9 year old son and was 2 inches from his face, screaming at him.
 2. A neighbor borrows one of my woodworking chisels from my kids when I'm not home, uses it to scrape gasket material from a car part, and returns it, crudely resharpened on the wrong side.
- B. Grace Marked by Dismissal of Debt (v. 17, *Do not repay anyone evil for evil*)
1. Revenge can destroy your future.
 - a. Chaired pastor search committee. Talked with candidate who had just been dismissed from another church. I was willing to hear the story why until he said: "I am planning to file a wrongful dismissal lawsuit against my former church." Don't call us, we'll call you. No chance that guy would ever be considered for our church.
 - b. Remember how David had two chances to kill his persecutor, King Saul. His men were practically on their knees begging him to do it. They even played the God card, "*This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'*" (I Samuel 24:4) But if David had done that he would have been just another political assassin and the evil would have haunted him the rest of his life.
 2. Revenge releases a flood you may never stop
 - a. Somebody does a number on you. You do a number on them. Then they feel they have to do another number on you. And then you.... and so it goes.
 - b. Hatfields and the McCoys
 3. Revenge is the antithesis to forgiveness
 - a. When someone wrongs us, it creates what we could call a "relationship debt." Suddenly we feel they owe us something. It might be an apology or money or the satisfaction of seeing them squirm.
 - b. Now every one of us owes a relationship debt to God. By our sin we have wronged and offended Him. So, Jesus taught us that when we pray, one of the first items on the agenda is to clear us the debt. After a preamble of praise, the first item on the request list is: "*forgive us our debts.*" But there is a condition. Jesus taught us to also say, "*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*" (Matthew 6:12). As soon as He finished the prayer, there was item that Jesus felt needed extra comment.
 - It wasn't the subject of temptation,
 - it wasn't daily bread,
 - it wasn't adoration or confession.
 - It was the issue of forgiving others. **Verses 14-15**, *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*
 - c. If I want to bask in the warmth of God's forgiveness, I have to be willing to thaw the icy vengeance out of my heart. I can't have it both ways. Getting even is a two edged sword that I can't use without cutting my own soul.

IX. THE LUBRICATION OF PEACE

A. Peace Marked by Honorableness (v. 17b, *Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.*)

1. Most of the unbelievers out there may think it's all right to get even, but they know what a Christian is supposed to do and they hold us to our own standard. They know, sometimes better than we, that Jesus said, "38 *You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'* 39 *But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* 40 *And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.* 41 *If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.* 42 *Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.* 43 *You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* 44 *But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* 45 *that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5)
2. We may not like it, but we Christians *do* live in glass houses. When people find out we are Christians, and we want them to find that out, then they watch us more closely, and we had better hold up to that inspection.
3. We are supposed to be people who live like Christ, and that Christlikeness shows up in how we handle wrongs and conflict faster than almost anywhere else. After all, everybody knows the words Jesus spoke from the cross, said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" (Luke 23:34)
4. The world is not used to people who give a blessing in exchange for a curse. People take note when Christians truly love their enemies.
5. I want to impress you with one of the greatest relationship verses in all the Bible. Meditate on this verse and it will explode with meaning in your mind. It is absolutely incredible. After it gets woven into your reflexes you will wonder how you ever got along with out it. Here it is:
Proverbs 12:16, *A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.*
6. But, be aware that...

B. Peace Marked by Earnestness (v. 18, *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*)

1. Jesus didn't win over the Pharisees and He lost Judas Iscariot. Church-planter Paul had his detractors back in Corinth and wasn't able to shake Alexander the Coppersmith off his scent. David despaired over the political damage done him by his captains, the Sons of Zeruiah, his cousins Joab and Abishai. He couldn't live with them and he couldn't live without them. (II Samuel 3:39, *And today, though I am the anointed king, I am weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer according to his evil deeds!*")
2. Despite your best effort, there are some people you will never win over.
 - There are neighbors who will never wave to you.
 - There are colleagues who will oppose you every chance they get.
 - There are family members who will always get under your skin at Christmas.
3. The job of the Christian is to try to solve the problem. But when you've done all you can, just leave the rest with God. He understands. And pray for sustaining grace.
4. I have a pastor friend who was grooming a young man in his church for a paid staff position. Then, in one of those blind side developments, the guy and his wife went totally negative. They badmouthed the leadership and announced that they were leaving the church. Well, since the fellow was a virtual pastor-appointee, you can imagine that it caused a lot of consternation. So I asked my friend how they handled it and I was so proud of his reply. He said, "We just

blessed them and kept blessing them. They gave them a going away party and littered their departure with conspicuous grace. Isn't that wonderful! My friend was not responsible for the behavior of his associate. But he was responsible for his own behavior.

5. We can't win 'em all, but we can do the right thing ourselves. That's all God asks of us.

X. THE LUBRICATION OF PATIENCE

A. Patience Marked by Trust (v. 19, *Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath*). Cf. Jesus in **1 Peter 2:23**, *he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

1. I drove a rental truck once for my boss in California. It drove me crazy. I was on my way to Fresno with a delivery and couldn't get over 55. The rental company had put a governor on the engine. It'd go 55 and not a mph faster.
2. Too bad God didn't make one of those for our mouths. James reminds us that we all have a high-speed tongue that can cause a lot more damage than a blown engine! **James 3:8-9**, *"It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness."*

B. Patience Marked by Non-Retaliatio. (v. 14, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse*)

1. Here's what can go wrong when we try to take God's role of dispensing judgment:

a. **We overreact and do stupid things.** Cf. David in the Nabal incident. All season David and his men have been providing protection from the desert raiders for the local businessmen. Then when the customary time comes from a gift of gratitude, *10 Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. 11 Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?" 12 David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word.13 David said to his men, "Put on your swords!" (I Samuel 25)*

Nabal's wise wife Abigail heads David off at the pass and says to him, *24 Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. 31 my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. 32 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. 33 May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. (I Samuel 25)*

David lost control and came within a hair's breadth of destroying the kingly career God had planned for him.

b. **We are more harsh judges than God.** You would think that sinners would be more merciful to sinners but the opposite is true. Holy God is much more merciful than we.

- 1) Don't get me wrong. God knows how to punish the ungodly. But He also knows when to temper justice. **Psalms 103:10**, *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

Habakkuk 3:2, *in wrath remember mercy.*

- 2) Contrast that with the ways of men...

James 1:19-20, *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger*

does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

- 3) When David sinned and was given multiple choice punishments, 2 involved the instrumentality of enemies and 1 was a direct punishment from God. He chose “God direct” with this insight, *Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.” (II Samuel 24:14)*
 - c. **We forfeit an opportunity to learn a lesson from God.** Again and again the Bible reminds us that suffering is God’s greatest school of character development. When we kick into revenge mode, we attack the classroom and miss the lesson. See the first 4 verses of the book of James.
 - d. **We miss the chance to be vindicated by God.** God knows when wrongs need to be righted. (v. 19, *“leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’, says the Lord.”*) Think of all the great stories in the Bible that wouldn’t be there of people had not let God do the work of vindication: Prime Minister Joseph forgiving his treacherous brothers, Moses in the Rebellion of Korah complete with earthquake and brimstone special effects, Daniel in the lion’s den with the sequel movie, Daniel’s accusers in the lion’s den,
2. Every act of vengeance is driven by a sense of moral outrage.
 - I am the innocent victim.
 - I have been wronged.
 - I am on the side of justice.
 - The Pastor is on my side
 - My wife is on my side
 - My friends are on my side
 - God is on my side.
 - The angels are on my side.
 - Anyone with a brain in his head is on my side.
3. But the minute I make a move of vengeance, I surrender the high ground. Suddenly I’m not the innocent victim anymore. I am a predator. I am a culprit. Now I am crucified on the crosshairs of God’s rifle scope of judgment. A moment ago I could rest in the security of God’s protective hand. Now I’m on the run from an unhappy God with a rod in His hand.
4. Don’t ever go there. Don’t fool yourself. You aren’t strong enough or good enough to do righteous vengeance. It will always get you in hot water with God.

XI. THE LUBRICATION OF GOODNESS

- A. Goodness Marked by Defense (v. 21a, *Do not be overcome by evil*).
 1. In this context, to be overcome by evil means that we surrender to our passions. If we try to get revenge, even if we win, we lose.
 2. That was going on in Corinth. Christians were falling over each other hauling fellow Christians to court. Paul tackles this one in **I Corinthians 6** and yells, “OK, time out!”—**verse 7** *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?*
 3. Corinthian Sam walks out of the courtroom with a favorable court order in his fist. “I won” he calls to his friends on the street... and Paul says, “In your dreams, brother. You lost! You have been defeated by evil in your own heart. It’s not worth it. Give it up!”
 4. Now this doesn’t mean that a Christian should never seek to resolve relationship conflict. On the contrary, we are to be very good at it. There are clear biblical steps outlined in **Matthew 5, 18 and Galatians 6** to do that very thing.

5. But what it does mean is that we are never to try to get even. If it comes to that the Bible is clear: Give it up! Give it up or it will eat you up. There are no winners in the getting even game.
- B. Goodness Marked by Offense (v. 20, 21b, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.... but overcome evil with good.*)
1. **Proverbs 16:7**, *When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.*
 2. **Proverbs 15:1** *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
 3. Peter tried to solve the Gethsemane problem with a sword but Jesus told him to put it away. He said, *"all who draw the sword will die by the sword"* Peter. (Matthew 26:52) He told the disciples that He could call for 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set Him free. And then He went to the Cross.
 4. As Jesus hung on that Cross, there wasn't one person, friend, foe or curious onlooker, who would have dared to suggest that Jesus had in any sense overcome. But He had. He ruled from the Cross. He conquered from the Cross. He conquered sin, He conquered death, He conquered the Devil. And He did all with good.
 5. Overcoming evil with good is one of the most faith-intensive things we ever do as Christians. It only works if God is in it. And He is in it. When we do the right and good thing. When we bless instead of curse; give food; give water to people, in the flesh, we would rather drop-kick!
 6. Now, what does the **burning coals** metaphor mean? This is quoted from **Proverbs 25:21, 22** and may have its roots in "an Egyptian ritual in which a man gave public evidence of his penitence by carrying a pan of burning charcoal on his head." If so, then the word picture is that of an enemy having a change of mind. F. F. Bruce writes, *"Treat your enemy kindly, for this may make him ashamed and lead to his repentance." In other words, the best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend, and so 'overcome evil with good' (verse 21)." (F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Romans, p. 230)*

CONCLUSION:

- A. "Television personality Garry Moore had a marvelous comeback to those who sent him crank letters. Whenever he received a particularly nasty letter, he would send it back with a note: 'The enclosed letter arrived on my desk a few days ago. I am sending it back to you in the belief that as a responsible citizen you should know that some idiot is sending out letters over your signature.'"
- B. As much as I would like to use that line sometime, I'm going to do my very best, God helping me, to use God's line instead, *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil....but overcome evil with good."*
How about you???

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