

Sunday, March 17, 2019—Body Building: Conflict Resolution

Introduction

- I Timothy 4:7-8—this series has been about a particular kind of exercise, spiritual exercise. Spiritual exercise that is designed to build a spiritual body not a physical one. Our goal is to learn how to flex our spiritual muscles with the goal of building up the body of Christ.
- Philippians 2:12—this type of exercise is going to require working out and spiritual discipline. Our goal is to take the life of Christ that is in us and work it out through us or manifest it in our mortal flesh.
- Romans 12:5
- Last Sunday we finished up our look at Paul’s one-anothering statements by considering Paul’s statement in I Thess. 5:11 to “edify one another.”
- In doing so, we concluded the first section of this series on body building which was devoted studying the principle of one-anothering.
- In summation, we saw that when the members in particular of the body of Christ “edify one another” the entire body is edified (Eph. 4:16). This is how the body of Christ is designed to edify itself in love.
- Romans 14:19—this is accomplished as believers “follow after the things that make for peace and the things wherewith one may edify another.”
 - I Corinthians 10:23
- In the next segment of this series I would like to use Rom. 14:19 as a launching pad to discuss behaviors, attitudes, and actions that impact the issues of peace and edification among the brethren.
- The issue that I would like to begin addressing in today’s study is the issue of conflict resolution among believers.

Conflict Resolution Among Believers

- Ephesians 4:32—the question of conflict resolution often comes up when the topic of forgiveness is the discussed. Does forgiving someone as the verse clearly instructs mean that one must have a continues ongoing relationship with the party who injured them? These are not easy questions to answer.

- Members of the body of Christ often find themselves in conflict with other believers for a host of reasons:
 - Doctrinal disputes
 - Philosophy of ministry
 - Church discipline & relationships in the local church
 - Matters of personal conscience & conviction: music, holidays, schooling, etc.
 - Personal behavior & conduct
 - Personal injury: gossip, slander, jesting, foolish talking, evil speaking, abuse
 - Family matters: infidelity, divorce, child rearing, and abuse of all forms
- Does “forgiving one another as God for Christ sake hath forgiven you” mean that one needs to purposefully place themselves in difficult and dangerous situations for the sake of the truth? If not, how does one know what is appropriate and what is not?
- Romans 12:17-21—I believe that this passage can help us think through these difficult questions. Before we look at this passage specifically, I would like to review the context.
 - Romans 12:1-2—contains Paul’s statements about the renewing of the mind. Everything that comes next in the passage is about explaining how this renewed mind is to function.
 - Romans 12:3-8—sets forth a basic understanding of the body of Christ (v. 3-5), the principal of one-anothering (v. 5) as well as some basic information about spiritual gifts and how they were functioning in the body of Christ at that time (vs. 6-8).
 - Romans 12:9-16—contains two one-anothering statements (v. 10) and explains how thinking “soberly” (v.3) with the “same mind” (v. 16) should cause believers to treat one another (vs. 11-16).
 - In short, the context of Romans 12 is very much in line with what we have seen in our study of Paul’s one-anothering statements.
- Romans 12:17—despite the renewed mind/one-anothering context, verse 17 makes it clear that believers are going to be the recipients of evil from time to time. The statements “no man” in the first half of the verse and “all men” in the second half of these verse indicate that the evil one receives can originate from within or without the body of Christ.

- The instruction in this verse is not to “recompense” or repay “evil for evil.” In other words, just because someone has committed evil against me does not mean that I am justified in doing evil against them. Retribution and getting even is the response of the flesh not the renewed mind.
- So, does this mean that I just must put up with evil being perpetrated against me? Is there a response under grace that would be representative of the renewed mind? I believe that there is and that verse 18 can help us think through the matter.
- *If it be possible*—based upon the wording of this phrase it must sometimes be the case that its not possible. Sometimes there will be circumstances where fixing the relationship is simply not possible.
 - Impossible—inserts “Im” before possible. “Im” inserts self into the equation. I am sure that I am right. The other person is the whole problem. Drop the “Im” and it becomes possible. It is possible to have peace in most circumstances.
- *As much as lieth in you*—the verse does not say as far as it depends on them or the other person. Is there any self still left in the equation? We are not responsible for the attitudes and actions of others. The only thing we can control is ourselves. Is it possible there is too much of yourself left in a situation? We need to stop focusing on the other person and what they can do and focus on ourselves and what we can do.
 - We don’t control someone else’s legal pad. Peace begins with forgiveness.
- *Live peaceably with all men*—

Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark: A Scriptural Example

- Acts 12:12, 25—the individual known as John Mark is mentioned for the first time in these verses. John Mark is the nephew of Barnabas.
- Acts 13:1-4—Paul and Barnabas are sent forth by the church at Antioch.
- Acts 13:13—John Mark leaves and goes home.
- Acts 15:36-41—Paul and Barnabas part ways with one another over a disagreement regarding personal. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark and Paul did not. The contention between them was so “sharp” that they “departed asunder one from the other.” Even among mature members of the body of Christ it’s not possible to live peaceably with them.
- II Timothy 4:11—years later, at the end of His life Paul is able to think differently about John Mark. We don’t know if Paul and Barnabas ever reconciled. The New Testament simply doesn’t tell us. But I think we can infer based upon Paul’s change of mind and heart toward John Mark that he and Barnabas would have reconciled with one another had they had opportunity and occasion to do so. This example teaches us that sometimes we need to take the long view in life.

- Philemon 24—sometimes how and where you end is more important than how you begin. In the immaturity of his youth John Mark could not handle the work of the ministry and abandoned Paul. Later Mark grew up and matured. Paul operating in the same grace that he besought Philemon to demonstrate towards Onesimus embraced John Mark as a fellow servant and profitable for the work of the ministry. Better to be found faithful in the end than to have started out correctly and have fallen away.
- The relationship between Philemon and Onesimus is another great example/illustration of conflict resolution between believers.