**Do Not Render Evil for Evil**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**1 Thessalonians 5:8-15**

**Wednesday Evening**

**February 12, 2020**

**8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.**

Saints, people who live in the light have a whole different reason to be alive. Life is not all about personal pleasure but about loving and serving God and getting to know him better.

The reward for being God’s children is that when he returns, he will take his people to eternal blessing.

This means that in this:

**Sinful world, the world of “darkness” and “night,” believers have to be different**

First of all Saints, we must think clearly. Believers need to realize that they are in a battle. Spiritual warfare is very real, and Satan does not easily accept people leaving his kingdom for God’s Kingdom.

So believers must be armed and ready, like a soldier, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing a helmet of confidence in their salvation (see also Ephesians 6:11-13).

**Photo of the Amor of God>**

**Ephesians 6:11-18**

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--

Saints, believers face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ’s church. Those who believe in Christ are assured of victory. We must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, however, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord’s side.

Christians need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving his Holy Spirit and his armor for protection. Believers have faith and love to protect their hearts, and confidence to keep their minds focused on the goal—God’s eternal Kingdom.

**9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**

Saints, in order to wear “confidence” as a helmet, believers must know in what (or in whom) they have confidence. God saved his people, so he will not pour out his anger on them. God’s wrath is very real. Sin will be punished, and those who have refused his offer of forgiveness will indeed face punishment.

**Revelation 20:11-15**

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Saints, we need to truly see what God has truly spared us from!

**Romans 1:18-32**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,

30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Saints, but the good news is believers will not face the condemnation that their sins deserve. Instead, they will live with God forever because they have put their faith in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for forgiveness of their sins. The confidence rests secure, whether believers are dead or alive at Christ’s return. Salvation is a certainty because the Christ who is coming is the same Christ who died for sinners.

**11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.**

Saints, despite persecution and their sorrow over fellow believers who had died, the Christians needed to encourage each other about the certainty of their future reunion with all believers who had gone on before and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 2:1-4**

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Saints, we need to also to build each other up in the faith. Even as one believer receives encouragement, he or she at another time will be in a position to offer it. The mutual giving and receiving in the body of Christ keep the church strong against the forces that attack it. God’s people always need to stand together as they anticipate their Savior’s return.

**12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,**

Saints, the brothers and sisters in the church needed to show honor to those in leadership in order for everything to function smoothly. The word “honor” is also translated “respect.” These leaders in the Lord’s work probably were the elders who held positions of leadership and responsibility.

Elders carried great responsibility, and they were expected to be good examples. Because these men work hard among the believers, they deserved to be honored. Paul expressed a similar thought in his letter to Timothy.

**1 Timothy 5:17**

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”

Saints, the leadership structure in local churches began very early. As Paul planted a church and then moved on, he needed to leave behind an organized group of believers (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1).

**Acts 11:30**

“This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

**Acts 14:23**

“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

**1 Timothy 4:14**

“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”

**Titus 1:5**

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—"

**James 5:14**

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

**1 Peter 5:1-3**

1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly…

**13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.**

Saints, leaders are not to be ignored or argued with, they are to be thought of highly and given wholehearted love because of their work. When believers respect their leaders and join them in their work for God’s Kingdom, the church will grow.

Of course, it also helps if the leader does not have to spend all his time in dealing with internal conflicts—hence, Paul’s reminder that believers should live peaceably with each other.

All are to work together to build the Kingdom and to serve one another. The best way for this “peace” to occur is for all believers to serve with their God-given gifts, to let others use their gifts, and then to respect and love one another for what God is doing through them.

**14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.**

Saints, While the leaders have special responsibility to guide the church, believers are not exempt from their responsibilities to care for one another. Paul singled out three groups in this church and “urged” the believers to look after or deal with them—each in a different way.

First, they are to warn those who are lazy. The word “warn” means to firmly admonish. They were to warn the lazy, idle believers. The word translated “lazy” is used only in the letters to the Thessalonians (see also 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7, 11) and seems to have been a particular concern for this church.

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-10**

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

Second, they are to encourage those who are timid. The lazy need to be warned, but the timid need to be encouraged. The “timid” are the fearful people who lack confidence—perhaps in themselves or even in their faith. They have become discouraged or worried, possibly by persecution or by the deaths of their fellow believers. These people need loving instruction from their fellow believers to calm their fears and to build their confidence.

Third, they are to take tender care of those who are weak. The word for “take tender care” is antechesthe (also translated simply as “help”); it pictures the action of holding on to these people, wrapping arms around them, clinging to them. This is the kind of help suggested for the spiritually “weak,” those weak in faith, those in need (such as financial need) or those who might be struggling with the sins associated with paganism that Paul wrote about in.

These might be struggling, needy, or immature Christians who need the arms of strong fellow believers to guide them, give them support, and let them know they are not alone. See also Romans 5:6; 14:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9.

**15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all**

Saints, to a church under persecution, the command against retaliation is especially poignant. See that no one pays back evil for evil. Personal revenge and retaliation are clearly forbidden to those who call themselves followers of Christ.

**Matthew 5:8-9**

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

**Matthew 5:38-39**

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

**Romans 12:17-19**

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.

**In Closing:**

Saints, there would be times where relationships between believers would be strained. They would also need to remember that they should never pay back evil for evil, but should always try to do good to each other and to everyone else,

including those in the church and those outside, even their enemies. That believers should “always try” indicates a lifestyle of kindness that should permeate all their dealings with people.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**