**Romans 12:14-17 14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17Repay no one evil for evil. Haveregard for good things in the sight of all men.**

Last week, we talked about Romans 12:9-13. The section between verse 9 and verse 21 is known as the Hallmarks of a Christian, in some Bibles the section is titled, “Behave Like a Christian”. This week we’re going to take a look at verses 14-17.

 Our world is in disarray. Evil marches openly in the streets. Evil governs in state houses. Evil spews from our TV. Yet, all of this evil does not relieve us of Christ’s commandments. Christ doesn’t say – when someone persecutes you, the gloves are off. Say what you want to and call it Christian. No. He gives us direct instruction. Paul repeats these in Romans 12 and in other letters he writes. It’s not just said once, but a theme throughout the New Testament. Christ doesn’t call for condemnation, but forgiveness. It was Christ, bleeding on the cross, Who called for God to forgive while the leaders sneered, and the soldiers mocked, and the crowds gawked, and the thief blasphemed. *Luke 23:34 Father forgive them for they do not know what they do.*

 *Verse 14 says - Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*Paul is repeating what Jesus said in *Luke 6:27-28 But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.* The word for bless here is the same word that we get our word eulogy from. In a eulogy at a funeral, we speak of all the wonderful things the deceased person did. We speak of happy memories and good deeds. We speak well of the dead… In telling us to bless, Paul and Jesus are saying, “Speak well of those who persecute you”. Oh, but Richard, that’s hard to do! They’re doing evil! They’re not respecting the Bible! Yeah… Jesus said, “Forgive them” while they spit on Him and killed Him. Maybe it’s pride and self that makes it hard and not our love for Jesus.

 *Verse 15* - *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*Rejoice **-** Be calmly happy, be peaceful with one another. Celebrate a Christian brother or sister’s joy. Weep – this is the same word that we find describing Peter when he wept bitterly after betraying Jesus. It means sob with one another when misfortune strikes.

 *Verse 16 - Be of the same mind toward one another -* Have a common objective, a common desire, and common thoughts toward one another. Be in harmony with each other. In verse 18, we’ll be told to be at peace with all men, as far as it depends on us. Here, we are told to be in harmony with other Christians.

 *Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.* Paul is saying – mix with all, regardless of their position in life. This is very much in keeping with Jesus. He didn’t call the Pharisees and Sadducees, but fishermen and tax collectors. Matthew 9:10 says *Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.* In Luke 18, we read a parable of a self-righteous Pharisee and a repentant tax collector. At the end of the parable, we read in Luke 18:14 *I tell you, this man (the tax collector) went down to his house justified rather than the other (the Pharisee); for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*” We are to associate with the humble, because we realize the miserable estate we have all been rescued from.

 *Do not be wise in your own opinion.* In order to hear Jesus teachings, we must reject that which we already know. We must reject the wisdom of this world. Proverbs 3:7 says *Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil.* My father used to have a saying – “Don’t confuse me with the facts, I’ve made up my mind.” The time that Satan celebrates is when a Christian decides he or she knows it all.

*Verse 17 - Repay no one evil for evil. Haveregard for good things in the sight of all men.* On the night that Christ was betrayed, a mob came to the garden. Jesus knew what was to come. When they went to grab him, Luke 22:50-51 says *And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, “Permit even this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.* As the mob is gathering, and the hate is burning, and the people are looking to murder, Jesus refused to repay evil for evil. He trusted Proverbs 20:22 *Do not say, “I will recompense evil”; Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.*

In this time of evil, let’s be hallmarks of Christianity in hard times. Let’s be the church in the 21st century. Romans 12 applies today just as it applied then. How are we doing blessing those who hate us? Are we a tax collector realizing our unworthiness? Or Pharisee talking of our righteousness? Jesus told us very clearly which will come home justified… but we alone choose which to be.