**Sermon Title: The Picture of a Consistent Sheep Non-Retaliation Relationship**

**Sermon Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:15**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to a biblical response to counter evil with good.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 3 proposals for the Christian to meet evil with good.**

**Introduction:**

**I. The confirmation to render good. V.15a**

**II. The commitment to render good. V.15b**

**III. The commission to render good. V.15c**

**I. The confirmation to render good. V.15a**

Due to the hostilities the Christians in Thessalonica faced (**2:14**), there was sufficient pressure upon them to seek ways to retaliate, or avenge themselves on their persecutors. There was also the frustration that comes with ministering to the wayward, the worried, the weak, and the wavering in the church family. The temptation is to pay back wrong for wrong, to act out in an evil way due to frustration or anger. (**1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:15**)

**1 Thessalonians 2:14** For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans,

**II. The commitment to render good. V.15b**

The opposite of patience (**5:13**) is retaliation in form or fashion. Another biblical word would be vengeance. Vengeance is when an injured party’s desire for retribution or repayment from those who harmed him. Retaliation is the idea for returning “like for like.” Vengeance demonstrates God’s righteousness in compensating the wrong with right. He takes vengeance against the murders of the helpless (Psalm 94:1-6) and enemies of His people (Joel 3:19-21).

**1 Thessalonians 5:13** and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

**Psalm 94:1-6** O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs-- O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! **2** Rise up, O Judge of the earth; Render punishment to the proud. **3** LORD, how long will the wicked, How long will the wicked triumph? **4** They utter speech, *and* speak insolent things; All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. **5** They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, And afflict Your heritage. **6** They slay the widow and the stranger, And murder the fatherless.

**Joel 3:19-21** "Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate wilderness, Because of violence *against* the people of Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land. **20** But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation. **21** "For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; For the LORD dwells in Zion."

The lex talonis, requiring “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth,” (**Exodus 21:23-25**), is widely understood as prohibiting disproportionate punishment. Vengeance and retaliation ultimately belongs to the Lord God.

**Exodus 21:23-25** "But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life, **24** "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, **25** "burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

**Romans 12:17-21** 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. **20** Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Retaliation is not an option for the Christian. Even if the wrong done to them is caused by a fellow brother or sister, or an action springing from evil intent and motives, the offended. Christian does not have the right to repay with evil for evil or wrong for wrong. (**Matthew 5:38-48**)

**1 Peter 3:9** not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

**III. The commission to render good. V.15c**

The Christian response to a wrong or evil committed against them should be to show kindness in such circumstances and situations. It is not enough to abstain from evil, the Christian is to respond with doing good actions toward the offender. The Christian is to earnestly work at doing good, this kind of reaction to evil takes effort from God within and must become the result of the pursuit of godliness.

A. The Christian is to pursue what is good.

The Christian is instructed to always seek out what is good with an eagerness and zeal, to pursue what is beautiful, noble, and excellent in God’s sight.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; **5** does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; **6** does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; **7** bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

**2 Corinthians 8:21** providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

**Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, putting away lying, "*Let* each one *of you* speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.

B. Pursue good for yourself.

**Matthew 7:12** "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

**Luke 6:31** "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

C. Pursue good with everyone.

**Matthew 7:7-11** "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **8** "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. **9** "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? **10** "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? **11** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

William A. Simmons states:

“From these passages the following principles arise:

1. The character of God serves as the paradigm for interpersonal relationships. The ‘Most High’ is perfect, being kind and merciful to the ungrateful and wicked (**Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:35-36**).

2. Since the standard for conduct is the benevolent heart of God, the moral condition or evil behavior of the neighbor is irrelevant (**Matthew 5:44**).

3. Vengeance and retaliation are prohibited. (**Matthew 5:38-41; Luke 6:27-29**).

Therefore the ‘Golden Rule’ presents God as having unconditional positive regard for all human beings. In order to be perfect as he is perfect, and to be ‘sons of the Most High,’ we are to emulate the purest altruism and uncompromising impartiality of the Father, who seeks only the good of his creatures. – William A Simmons

[**Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996, p.304**]